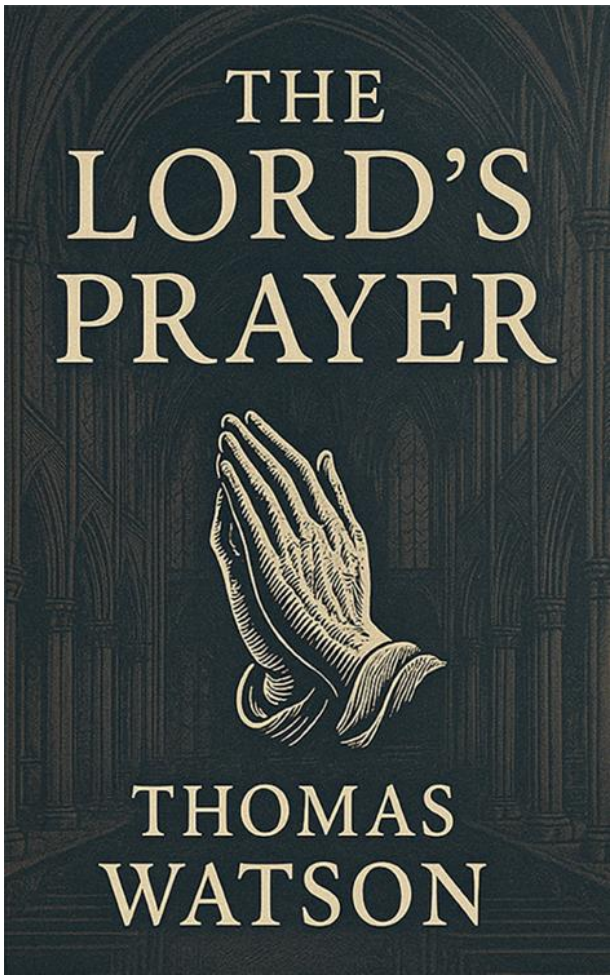
THE LORD'S PRAYER

THOMAS WATSON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The Lord's Prayer

By Thomas Watson

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The Preface to the Lord's Prayer

Having gone over the chief grounds and fundamentals of true religion—and enlarged upon the decalogue, or ten commandments, I shall speak now upon the Lord's prayer.

"This, then, is how you should pray: **Our Father in heaven**." Matthew 6:9

In this Scripture are two things observable: the introduction to the prayer—and the prayer itself.

The introduction to the Lord's prayer is, "This, then, is how you should pray." Our Lord Jesus, in these words, gave to his disciples and to us a *directory for prayer*. The *ten commandments* are the rule of our life, and the sum of our faith—and the *Lord's prayer* is the pattern of our prayer. As God prescribed Moses a pattern of the tabernacle (Exod 25:9), so Christ has here prescribed us a pattern of prayer. "This, then, is how you should pray," etc. The meaning is, *let this be the rule and model according to which you frame your prayers*. [We ought to examine our prayers by this rule.] Calvin. Not that we are tied to the exact words of the Lord's prayer. Christ says, "This, then, is *how* you should pray" that is, let all your petitions agree and harmonize with the things contained in the Lord's prayer;

and well may we make all our prayers consonant and agreeable to this prayer. Tertullian calls this prayer, "a breviary and compendium of the gospel!" It is like a heap of massive gold.

The preciousness of this prayer appears in the dignity of the Author. This prayer has commendation from its Author; it is *the Lord's prayer*. As the moral law was written with the finger of God, so this prayer was dropped from the lips of the Son of God. [The voice is not that of a man—but that of God!] The preciousness of the prayer appears in the excellence of the matter. It is "as silver tried in a furnace, purified seven times." Psalm 12:6. Never was prayer so admirably and intricately composed as this. As *Solomon's Song*, for its excellence is called the "Song of songs," so may this be well called the "Prayer of prayers". The matter of it is admirable:

1. For its **comprehensiveness**. It is short and pithy—a great deal said in a few words. It requires most art to meticulously draw the earth in a little map. This short prayer is a *system,* or *body* of divinity.

2. For its **clearness**. It is plain and intelligible to every capacity. Clearness is the grace of speech.

3. For its **completeness**. It contains the chief things that we have to ask, or God has to bestow.

Use. Let us have a great esteem of the Lord's prayer; let it be the model and pattern of all our prayers. There is a double benefit arising from framing our petitions suitably to this prayer. Hereby error in prayer is prevented. It is easy to write correctly, after this copy. We cannot easily err, when we have our pattern before us. Hereby mercies requested are obtained; for the apostle assures us that God will hear us when we pray "according to his will." 1 John

5:14. And sure we pray according to his will—when we pray according to the pattern he has set us. So much for the introduction to the Lord's prayer, "This, then, is how you should pray."

The prayer itself consists of three parts:

1. A Preface.

2. Petitions.

3. The Conclusion.

1. The preface to the prayer includes, "Our Father;" and, "Who is in heaven."

I. The first part of the preface is "Our Father." *Father* is sometimes taken personally, "*My* Father is greater than I" (John 14:28); but Father in the text is taken essentially for *the whole Deity*. This title, *Father*, teaches us that we must address ourselves in prayer to God alone. There is no such thing in the Lord's prayer, as, "O *saints* or *angels*, hear us"; but, "Our Father in heaven."

In what order must we direct our prayers to God? Here the Father alone is named. May we not direct our prayers to the Son and Holy Spirit also?

Though the Father alone is named in the Lord's prayer—yet the other two Persons are not excluded. The Father is mentioned because he is first in order; but the Son and Holy Spirit are included because they are the same in essence. As all the three Persons subsist in one Godhead. So, in our prayers, though we name but one Person, we must pray to all.

To come more closely to the first words of the preface, "Our Father." Princes on earth give themselves *titles* expressing their greatness, as "High and Mighty." God might have done so—and expressed himself thus, "Our King of glory, our Judge:" but he gives himself another title, "Our Father," an expression of love and condescension. That he might encourage us to pray to him—he represents himself under the sweet notion of a *Father*. "Our Father." [Sweet is the name of *Father*.] The name *Jehovah* carries *majesty* in it—the name *Father* carries *mercy* in it!

In what sense is God a Father?

(1) By **creation**; it is he who has made us: "We are also his offspring." Acts 17:28. "Have we not all one Father?" Mal 2:10. Has not one God created us? But there is little comfort in this; for God is Father in the same way to the devils by creation; but he who *made* them will not *save* them.

(2) God is a Father by **election**, having chosen a certain number to be his children, upon whom he will entail heaven. "He has chosen us in him." Eph 1:4.

(3) God is a Father by **special grace**. He consecrates the elect by his Spirit—and infuses a supernatural principle of holiness, therefore they are said to be "born of God." 1 John 3:9. Such only as are sanctified can say, "Our Father in heaven."

What is the difference between God being the Father of Christ—and the Father of the elect?

He is the Father of Christ in a more glorious and transcendent manner. Christ has the primogeniture; he is the eldest Son, a Son by eternal generation; "I was set up from everlasting, from the

beginning, before the earth was." Proverbs 8:23. "Who shall declare his generation?" Isaiah 53:8. Christ is a Son to the Father, as he is of the same nature with the Father, having all the incommunicable properties of the Godhead belonging to him. But we are sons of God by *adoption* and *grace*, "That we might receive the adoption of sons. Gal 4:5.

What is that which makes God our Father?

Faith. "You are all the children of God *by faith* in Christ Jesus." Gal 3:26. An unbeliever may call God his Creator—and his Judge—but not his Father. Faith legitimizes us—and makes us of the blood-royal of heaven. "You are the children of God by faith." Baptism makes us church members—but faith makes us children. Without faith the devil can show as good a coat of arms as we can.

How does faith make God to be our Father?

As it is a uniting grace. By faith we have union with Christ—and so the kindred comes in; being united to Christ, the natural Son, we become adopted sons. God is the Father of Christ; faith makes us Christ's brethren—and so God comes to be our Father. Heb 2:11.

Wherein does it appear that God is the best Father?

(1) In that he is most ANCIENT. "The Ancient of days did sit." Dan 7:9. A figurative representation of God, who was before all time, which may cause veneration.

(2) God is the best Father, because he is PERFECT. "Your Father in heaven is perfect;" he is perfectly good. Matthew 5:48. Earthly fathers are subject to infirmities; Elijah, though a prophet, "was a man subject to like passions" (James 5:17); but God is

perfectly good. All the perfection we can arrive at in this life, is *sincerity*. We may resemble God a little—but not equal him; he is infinitely perfect.

(3) God is the best Father in respect of WISDOM. "The *only* wise God." 1 Tim 1:17. He has a perfect idea of wisdom in himself; he knows the fittest means to bring about his own designs. The angels light at his lamp. In particular, one branch of his wisdom is, that he knows what is best for us. An earthly parent knows not, in some intricate cases, how to advise his child, or what may be best for him to do; but God is a most wise Father; he knows what is best for us; he knows what comfort is best for us: he keeps his cordials for fainting. "God who comforts those who are cast down." 2 Cor 7:6. He knows when *affliction* is best for us—and when it is fit to give a *bitter potion*. "If need be you are in heaviness." 1 Peter 1:6. He is the only wise God; he knows how to make evil things work for good to his children. Romans 8:28. He can make a sovereign remedy of poison. Thus he is the best Father for wisdom.

(4) He is the best Father, because the most LOVING. "God is love." 1 John 4:16. He who causes affection in others, must needs have more love in himself. The affections in parents are but marble and adamant, in comparison of God's love to his children; he gives them the cream of his love—electing love, saving love. "He will rejoice over you with joy; he will rest in his love; he will rejoice over you with singing." Zeph 3:17. No father like God for love; if you are his child you cannot love your own soul so entirely, as he loves you.

(5) He is the best Father, for RICHES. He has land enough to give to all his children; he has unsearchable riches. Eph 3:8. He gives the hidden manna, the tree of life, rivers of joy. He has treasures that cannot be exhausted, gates of pearl, pleasures that cannot be ended.

If earthly fathers should be ever giving, they would have nothing left to give; but God is ever giving to his children—and yet has not the less. His riches are *imparted,* not *impaired*; like the sun that still shines—and yet has not less light. *He cannot be poor who is infinite.* Thus he is the best Father; he gives more to his children than any father or prince can bestow!

(6) God is the best Father, because he can REFORM his children. When his son takes bad courses, a father knows not how to make him better; but God knows how to make his elect children better—he can change their hearts. When Paul was breathing out persecution against the saints, God soon altered his course—and set him praying. "Behold, he prays." Acts 9:11. None of those who belong to the election are so roughcast and unhewn—but God can polish them with his grace—and make them fit for the inheritance.

(7) God is the best Father, because he NEVER DIES. "Who alone has immortality." 1 Tim. 6:16. Earthly fathers die—and their children are exposed to many injuries—but God lives forever. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending." Rev 1:8. God's crown has no successors.

Wherein lies the dignity of those who have God for their Father?

(1) They have greater honor than is conferred on the princes of the earth; they are precious in God's esteem. "Since you were precious in my sight, you have been honorable." Isaiah 43:4. The wicked are dross (Psalm 119:119)—and chaff (Psalm 1:4); but God numbers his children among his jewels. Mal 3:17. He writes all his children's names in the book of life. "Whose names are in the book of life." Phil 4:3. Among the Romans, the names of their senators were written down in a book. God enrolls the names of his

children—and will not blot them out of the register. "I will not blot his name out of the book of life." Rev 3:5. God will not be ashamed of his children. "God is not ashamed to be called their God." Heb 11:16. One might think it were something below God—to father such children as are dust and sin mingled; but he is not ashamed to be called our God. That we may see he is not ashamed of his children, he writes his own name upon them. "I will write upon him the name of my God;" that is, I will openly acknowledge him before all the angels—to be my child. I will write my name upon him, as the son bears his father's name. Rev 3:12. What an honor and dignity is this!

(2) God confers honorable titles upon his children. He calls them the *excellent of the earth*, or the magnificent, as Junius renders it. Psalm 16:3. They must needs be excellent, who are of the blood royal of heaven! They are the spiritual phoenixes of the world, the glory of the creation. God calls his children his glory. "Israel, my glory." Isaiah 46:13. He honors his people with the title of *kings*. "And has made us kings." Rev 1:6. All God's children are kings, though they have not earthly kingdoms. They carry a kingdom about them. "The kingdom of God is within you." Grace is a kingdom set up in the hearts of God's children. Luke 17:21. They are kings to rule over their sins, to bind those kings in chains. Psalm 149:8. They are like kings. They have their ensigns of royalty and majesty. They have their crown. In this life they are kings in disguise; they are not known, therefore they are exposed to poverty and reproach. "Now are we the sons of God—and it does not yet appear what we shall be." 1 John 3:2. Why, what shall we be? Every son of God shall have his crown of glory, and white robes. 1 Peter 5:4; Rev. 6:2: Robes signify dignity—and white signifies sanctity.

(3) The honor of those who have God for their Father is, that they are all heirs! The youngest son is an heir. God's children

are heirs to the things of this life. God being their Father, they have the best title to earthly things, they have a sanctified right to them. Though they have often the least share, they have the best right; and with what they have they have the blessing of God's love and favor. Others may have more of the venison—but God's children have more of the blessing. Thus they are heirs to the things of this life. They are heirs to the eternal world. "Heirs of salvation" (Heb 1:14); "Joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17). They are co-sharers with Christ in glory. Among men—the eldest son commonly carries away all; but God's children are all joint-heirs with Christ, they have a co-partnership with him in his riches. Has Christ a place in the celestial mansions? So have the saints. "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2. Has he his Father's love? So have they. "That the love with which you have loved me, may be in them." Psalm 146:8; John 17:26. Does he sit upon a throne? So do God's children. Rev 3:21. What a high honor is this!

(4) God makes his children equal in honor to the angels. Luke 20:36. They are equal to the angels; nay, those saints who have God for their Father, are in some sense superior to the angels; for Jesus Christ having taken our nature—has ennobled and honored it above the angelic. Heb 2:16. God has made his children, by adoption, nearer to himself than the angels. The angels are the *friends* of Christ: believers are his *members*—and this honor have all the saints. What a comfort is this, to God's children who are here despised—and loaded with calumnies and invectives! "We are made as the filth of the world," etc. 1 Cor 4:13. But God will put honor upon his children at the last day—and crown them with immortal bliss, to the envy of their adversaries!

How may we know that God is our Father? All cannot say, "Our Father." The Jews boasted that God was their Father. "We have

one Father, even God." John 8:41. Christ tells them their true pedigree. "You are of your father the devil!" ver 44. Those who are of Satanic spirits, and make use of their power to beat down the power of godliness, cannot say, God is their Father; they may say, "Our father, who is in hell." How then may we know that God is our Father?

(1) By having a CHILDLIKE disposition, which is seen in four things.

[1] To melt in tears for SIN, as a child weeps for offending his father. When Christ looked on Peter, and Peter remembered his sin in denying him—he fell to weeping. Clement reports of Peter—that he never heard a rooster crow, but he wept. It is a sign that God is our Father when the heart of stone is taken away—and there is a gracious thaw in the heart; and it melts into tears for sin. He who has a childlike heart, mourns for sin in a spiritual manner, as it is sin he grieves for, as it is an act of pollution. Sin deflowers the virgin soul; it defaces God's image; it turns beauty into deformity; it is called *the plague of the heart*. 1 Kings 8:38. A child of God mourns for the defilement of sin; sin has to him a blacker aspect than hell.

He who has a childlike heart, grieves for sin, as it is an act of enmity towards God. Sin is diametrically opposed to God. It is called walking contrary to God. "If they shall confess their iniquity—and that they have walked contrary unto me." Lev 26:40. It does all it can to spite God; if God is of one mind—sin will be of another; sin would not only unthrone God—but strike at his very being! If sin could help it—God would no longer be God! A childlike heart grieves for this; "Oh!" says she, "that I should have so much enmity in me, that my will should be no more subdued to the will of my heavenly Father!" This springs a leak of godly sorrow.

A childlike heart weeps for sin, as it is an act of ingratitude. It is an abuse of God's love; it is taking the jewels of his mercies—and making use of them to sin. God has done more for his children than others; he has planted his grace and given them some intimations of his favor; and to sin against kindness, dyes a sin in grain—and makes it crimson; like Absalom, who soon as his Father kissed him, and took him into favor, plotted treason against him. Nothing so melts a childlike heart in tears, as sins of unkindness. "Oh, that I should sin against the blood of a Savior—and the affections of a Father! I condemn ingratitude in my child—yet I am guilty of ingratitude against my heavenly Father." This opens a vein of godly sorrow—and makes the heart bleed afresh. Certainly it evidences God to be our Father, when he has given us a childlike frame of heart, to weep for sin as it is sin, an act of pollution, enmity and ingratitude. A wicked man may mourn for the bitter *fruit* of sin—but only a child of God can grieve for the odious nature of sin.

[2] A childlike disposition is to be full of SYMPATHY. We lay to heart the dishonors reflected upon our heavenly Father. When we see his worship adulterated—and his truth mingled with the poison of error, it is as a sword in our bones, to see his glory suffer. "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved." Psalm 119:158. Homer describing Agamemnon's grief when forced to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia, brings in all his friends weeping and condoling with him; so, when God is dishonored, we sympathize—and are as it were, clad in mourning. A child that has any good nature, is cut to the heart to hear his father reproached; so an heir of heaven takes a dishonor done to God, more heinous than a disgrace done to himself.

[3] A childlike disposition, is to LOVE our heavenly Father. He is unnatural, who does not love his father. God who is crowned with excellency, is the proper object of delight; and every true child

of God says as Peter, "Lord, you know that I love you!" But who will not *say* that he loves God? If ours be a true genuine love to our heavenly Father—it may be known by the effects. Then we have a **holy fear**. There is the fear which rises from love to God, of losing the visible tokens of his presence. Eli's "heart trembled for the ark." 1 Sam 4:13. It is not said his heart trembled for his two sons Hophni and Phinehas; but his heart trembled for the ark, because the ark was the special sign of God's presence; and if that were taken, the glory was departed. He who loves his heavenly Father, fears lest the tokens of his presence should be removed, lest profaneness should break in like a flood, lest Popery should make headway—and God should go from his people.

The presence of God in his ordinances, is the glory and strength of a nation. The Trojans had the image of Dallas—and they had an opinion that as long as that image was preserved among them, they would never be conquered; so, as long as God's presence is with a people they are safe. Every true child of God fears lest God should go —and the glory depart. Let us try by this whether we have a childlike disposition. Do we love God—and does this love cause fear and jealousy? Are we afraid lest we should lose God's presence, lest the Sun of Righteousness should move out of our horizon? Many are afraid lest they should lose some of their worldly profits—but not lest they should lose the presence of God. If they may have health and wealth—they care not what becomes of the ark of God. A true child of God fears nothing so much as the loss of his Father's presence. "Woe to them when I depart from them." Hos 9:12.

Love to our heavenly Father is seen by loving his children. "Everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too." 1 John 5:1. If we love God, the more we see of him in any—the more we love them. We love then though they are **poor**, as a child loves to see his father's picture,

though hung in a poor frame. We love the children of our Father, though they are **persecuted**. "Onesiphorus was not ashamed of my chain." 2 Tim 1:16. Constantine kissed the hole of Paphnusius's eye, because he suffered the loss of his eye for Christ. They have no love to God, who have no love to his children; they care not for their company; they have a secret disgust and antipathy against them. Hypocrites pretend great reverence to *departed* saints; they canonize *dead* saints—but persecute *living* ones! I may say of these, as the apostle in Heb 12:8: they are "bastards, not sons."

If we love our heavenly Father, we shall be advocates for him—and stand up in the defense of his truth. He who loves his father will plead for him when he is traduced and wronged. He has no childlike heart, no love to God, who can hear his name dishonored and be silent. Does Christ appear for us in heaven—and are we afraid to appear for him on earth? Such as dare not own God and true religion in times of danger, God will be ashamed to be called their God; it will be a reproach to him to have such children, as will not own him.

A childlike love to God is known by its *degree*. We love our Father in heaven above all other things; above estate, or relations, as oil runs above the water. Psalm 73:25. A child of God seeing a supereminence of goodness and a constellation of all beauties in God—is carried out in love to him in the highest measure. As God gives his children electing love, such as he does not bestow upon the wicked, so his children give to him such love as they bestow upon none else. They give him the flower and best of their love; they love him with a love joined with worship; this spiced wine they keep only for their Father to drink of. Canticles 8:2.

[4] A childlike disposition is seen in HONORING our heavenly Father. "A son honors his father." Mal 1:6.

We show our honor to our Father in heaven, by having a reverential awe of him upon us. "You shall fear your God." Lev 25:17. This reverential fear of God, is when we dare do nothing that he has forbidden in his Word. "How can I do this great wickedness—and sin against God?" Gen 39:9. It is part of the honor a son gives to a father—that he fears to displease him. We show our honor to our heavenly Father, by doing all we can to exalt him and make his excellencies shine forth. Though we cannot lift him up higher in heaven—yet we may lift him higher in our hearts—and in the esteem of others! When we speak well of God, set forth his renown, display the trophies of his goodness; when we ascribe the glory of all we do to him; when we are the trumpeters of his praise—this is honoring our Father in heaven—and a sure sign of a childlike heart. "Whose offers praise, glorifies me." Psalm 123.

(2) We may know God is our Father by RESEMBLING him. The child is his father's picture. "Each one resembled the children of a king", every child of God resembles the king of heaven. Judg 8:18. Herein God's adopted children and man's adopted children differ. A man adopts one for his son and heir, who does not at all resemble him; but whoever God adopts for his child is like him; he not only bears his heavenly Father's name—but his image. "And have put on the new man, which is renewed after the image of him that created him." Col 3:10.

He who has God for his Father, resembles him in holiness, which is the glory of the Godhead. Exod 15:11. The holiness of God is the intrinsic purity of his essence. He who has God for his Father, partakes of the divine *nature*; though not of the divine *essence*—yet of the divine likeness; as the seal sets its print and likeness upon the wax, so he who has God for his Father, has the print and image of his holiness stamped upon him. "Aaron, the saint of the Lord." Psalm

106:16. Wicked men desire to be like God hereafter in glory—but do not want to be like him here in grace; they give it out to the world that God is their Father—yet have nothing of God to be seen in them; they are unclean: they are not only without his image—but hate it.

(3) We may know God is our Father by having his SPIRIT in us.

[1] By having the INTERCESSION of the Spirit. He is a Spirit of prayer. "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." Gal 4:6. Prayer is the soul's breathing itself into the bosom of its heavenly Father. None of God's children are born dumb. [The Holy Spirit fills his instrument—and the Spirit of God touches the hearts of the saints like the threads of harp-strings. Prosper] "Behold, he prays." Acts 9:11. But it is not every prayer that evidences God's Spirit in us. Such as have no grace, may excel in gifts, and affect the hearts of others in prayer, when their own hearts are not affected; as the lute makes a sweet sound in the ears of others—but itself is not sensible.

How shall we know our prayers to be indited by the Spirit?

When they are not only vocal—but mental; when they are not only gifts—but groans. Romans 8:26. The best music is in concert: the best prayer is when the heart and tongue join together in concert.

When they are zealous and fervent. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." James 5:16. When the eyes melt in prayer—and the heart burns. Fervency is to prayer—as fire to incense, which makes it ascend to heaven as a sweet perfume.

When prayer has faith mingled with it. **Prayer is the key of heaven—and faith is the hand which turns it.** "We cry, Abba,

Father." Romans 8:15. "We cry," there is fervency in prayer; "Abba, Father," there is faith. Those prayers suffer shipwreck, which dash upon the *rock of unbelief*. We may know God is our Father, by having his Spirit praying in us; as Christ intercedes above, so the Spirit intercedes within.

[2] By having the RENEWING of the Spirit, which is nothing else but *regeneration*, which is called a being born of the Spirit. John 3:5. This regenerating work of the Spirit is a transformation, or change of nature. "Be transformed, by the renewing of your mind." Romans 12:2. He who is born of God has a new heart: new, not for substance—but for qualities. The strings of a violin may be the same—but the tune is altered. Now, there are spiritual pangs, much heart-breaking for sin. It is called a *circumcision of the heart*. Col 2:11. In circumcision there was a pain in the flesh; so in spiritual circumcision there is pain in the heart; there is much sorrow arising from a sense of guilt and wrath. The jailor's trembling was a pang in the new birth. Acts 16:29. God's Spirit is a spirit of *bondage,* before He is a spirit of *adoption*. This blessed work of regeneration spreads over the whole soul; it irradiates the mind; it consecrates the heart—and reforms the life! Though regeneration is but in part—yet it is in every part. 1 Thess 5:23. Regeneration is the signature and engraving of the Holy Spirit upon the soul, the new-born Christian is bespangled with the jewels of the graces, which are the angels' glory. Regeneration is the spring of all true joy. At our first birth—we come weeping into the world—but at our new birth there is cause of rejoicing; for now, God is our Father—and we are begotten to a living hope of glory. 1 Peter 1:3. We may try by this our relation to God. Has a regenerating work of God's Spirit passed upon our souls? Are we made of another spirit, humble and heavenly? This is a good sign of sonship—and we may say, "Our Father in heaven."

[3] We know God is our Father by having the CONDUCT of the Spirit. We are *led* by the Spirit. "As many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Romans 8:14. God's Spirit does not only *quicken* us in our regeneration—but *leads* us on until we come to the end of our faith. It is not enough that the child has *life*—but he must be *led* every step by the parent. "I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms." Hos 11:3. As the Israelites had the cloud and pillar of fire to go before them—and be a guide to them, so God's Spirit is a guide to go before us—and lead us into all truth—and counsel us in all our doubts—and influence us in all our actions. "You shall guide me with your counsel." Psalm 73:24. None can call God Father but such as have the conduct of the Spirit. Try then what spirit you are led by. Such as are led by a spirit of envy, lust, and avarice--are not led by the Spirit of God! It would be blasphemy for them to call God their Father! They are led by the spirit of Satan, and may say, "Our father, who is in hell."

[4] By having the WITNESS of the Spirit. "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Romans 8:16. This witness of the Spirit, suggesting that God is our Father, is not a *vocal* witness or voice from heaven. The Spirit in the Word witnesses: the Spirit in the Word says—he who is a hater of sin and a lover of holiness—is a child of God, and God is his Father. If I can find such qualifications wrought in my heart—it is the Spirit witnessing with my spirit that I am a child of God. We may carry it higher. The Spirit of God witnesses to our spirit by making more than ordinary impressions upon our hearts, and giving some secret hints and whispers that God has purposes of love to us, which is a concurrent witness of the Spirit with conscience, that we are heirs of heaven, and God is our Father. This witness is better *felt* than *expressed*; it scatters doubts and fears, and silences temptations. But what shall one do, who has not this witness of the Spirit? If we lack

the *witness* of the Spirit, let us labor to find the *work* of the Spirit; if we have not the Spirit *testifying*, let us labor to have him *sanctifying*, and that will be a support to us.

(4) If God is our Father, we are of PEACEABLE spirits. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Matthew 5:9. Grace infuses a sweet, amicable disposition; it files off the ruggedness of men's spirits; it turns the lion-like fierceness into a lamb-like gentleness. Those who have God to be their Father, follow peace as well as holiness. God the Father is called the "God of peace," Heb 13:20: God the Son, the "Prince of Peace," Isaiah 9:6: God the Holy Spirit, a Spirit of peace; "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Eph 4:3. The more peaceable, the more like God. God is not the Father of those who are fierce and cruel, as if, with Romulus, they had sucked the milk of a wolf! "The way of peace have they not known." Romans 3:17. They sport in mischief, and are of a persecuting spirit, as Maximinus, Diocletian, Antiochus, who, as Eusebius says, took more tedious journeys, and ran more hazards in vexing and persecuting the Jews, than any of his predecessors had done in obtaining victories. These furies cannot call God their Father. If they do, they will have as little comfort in saying Father, as Dives had in hell, when he said, "Father Abraham." Luke 16:24.

Nor can those who are makers of division. "Mark those who cause divisions, and avoid them." Romans 16:17. Such as are born of God, are makers of peace. What shall we think of such as are makers of divisions? Will God father these? The devil made the first division in heaven. They may call the devil their father! They may give the *cloven foot* in their coat of arms; their sweetest music is in discord; they unite to divide. Samson's fox tails were tied together only to set the Philistine corn on fire. Judges 15:4. Papists unite only to set the

church's peace on fire. Satan's kingdom grows up by making divisions. Chrysostom observes of the church of Corinth, that when many converts were brought in, Satan knew no better way to dam up the current of religion—than to throw in an apple of strife, and divide them into parties: one was for Paul, and another for Apollo—but few for Christ. Can Christ endure to have his body rent? Surely, God will never father those who are not sons of peace. Of all those whom God hates, he is named for one who is a sower of discord among brethren. Proverbs 6:19.

(5) If God is our Father, we shall love to be near him, and to have CONVERSE with him. A sincere child delights to approach near to his father, and go into his presence. David envied the birds which built their nest near God's altars, when he was debarred his Father's house. Psalm 84:3. True saints love to get as near to God as they can. In the *Word* they draw near to his holy oracle; in the *Lord's Supper* they draw near to his table. A child of God delights to be in his Father's presence; he cannot stay away long from God; his heart has been often melted and quickened in an ordinance; he has tasted that the Lord is good, therefore he loves to be in his Father's presence; he cannot keep away long from God. Such as care not for ordinances cannot say, "Our Father in heaven." Is God the Father of those—who cannot endure to be in his presence!

Use 1. For INSTRUCTION. See the amazing goodness of God, that he is pleased to enter into the sweet relation of a Father to us. He had no need not to adopt us. He did not need a son—but we needed a Father! He showed *power* in being our Maker—but *mercy* in being our Father. When we were enemies, and our hearts stood out as garrisons against God—he conquered our stubbornness, and made us his children! He wrote his name, and put his image upon us, and bestowed a kingdom of glory on us! *What a miracle of mercy is*

this! "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" 1 John 3:1. Every adopted child may say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in your sight." Matthew 11:26.

If God is a Father, then I infer—that whatever he does to his children, is in love.

(1) If he smiles upon them in PROSPERITY, it is in love. They have the world not only with God's *leave*—but with his *love*. He says to every child of his, as Naaman to Gehazi, "Take two portions." So God says to his child, "I am your Father—take two portions. Take health—and take my love with it; take an estate—and take my love with it. Take two portions!" His love is a sweetening ingredient in every mercy.

How does it appear that God gives his children worldly things in love?

Because he has a good title to them. God is his father, therefore he has a good title. A wicked man has a *civil* title to the creature—but no more; he has it not from the hand of a father; he is like one who takes up cloth at the draper's, and it is not paid for. But a believer has a good title to every foot of land he has—for his Father has settled it upon him!

A child of God has worldly things in love, because they are sanctified to him. They make him better, and are loadstones to draw him nearer to God. He has his Father's blessing with them. A little that is blessed by God, is sweet. "He shall bless your bread and your water." Exod 23:25. Esau had the *venison*—but Jacob got the *blessing*. While the wicked have their food *sauced with God's wrath*; believers have their comforts seasoned with God's blessing. Psalm 78:30, 31. It was

a sacred blessing from God, which made Daniel's vegetables nourish him more, and made him look fairer than those who ate of the king's food. Dan 1:15.

A child of God has worldly things in love, because whatever he has is a pledge of more; every bit of bread is a pledge of glory!

(2) God being a Father, if he frowns, if he dips his pen in gall, and writes bitter things, if he DISCIPLINES—it is all done in love! A father loves his child as well when he chastises and disciplines him—as when he settles his inheritance on him. "*Those whom I love—I rebuke and discipline*." Rev 3:19. "Afflictions are sharp arrows," says one—"but they are shot from the hand of a loving Father!" Correction is God's gymnasium. Correction is God's school of character. God afflicts His children--in love! He does it to *humble* and *purify*. Gentle correction is as necessary as daily bread; nay, as needful as ordinances, as Word and sacraments. There is love in all! God smites—that he may save. "For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and punishes every son whom He receives." Hebrews 12:6. "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness." Hebrews 12:10

(3) God being a Father, if he DESERTS and hides his face from his child—it is in love. Spiritual desertion is sad in itself—it is a *short hell*. Job 6:9. When the light is withdrawn, the dew falls. Yet we may see a *rainbow* in the *cloud*—we may see the love of a Father in all this. God hereby quickens grace. Perhaps grace lay dormant. Canticles 5:2. It was as fire *in the embers*, and God withdrew comfort to invigorate and exercise it. Faith like a star, sometimes shines brightest in the dark night of desertion. Jonah 2:4. When God hides his face from his child, he is still a Father, and his heart is towards his child. As when Joseph spoke roughly to his

brethren, and made them believe he would take them for spies—his heart was full of love, and he was glad to go aside and weep. Just so, God's affections yearn towards his children when he seems to look harshly on them. "In a little wrath I hid my face from you—but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you." Isaiah 54:8. Though God may have the look of an enemy—yet still he has the heart of a Father!

Learn hence the deplorable case of the wicked. They cannot say, "Our Father in heaven." They may say, "Our Judge," but not "Our Father." They fetch their pedigree from hell—"You are of your father—the devil." John 8:44. Such as are unclean and worldly, are the vile brood of the old serpent, and it would be blasphemy for them to call God their Father! The case of the wicked is deplorable; if they are in misery, they have none to make their moan to. God is not their Father! He disclaims all kindred with them. "I never knew you! Depart from me—you who work iniquity." Matthew 7:23. The wicked, dying in their sins, can expect no mercy from God as a Father. Many say, He who *made* them will *save* them; but "It is a people of no understanding; therefore he who made them—will not have mercy on them." Isaiah 27:11. Though God was their Father by creation—yet because they were not his children by adoption, therefore He who *made* them would not *save* them.

Use 2. For INVITATION. Let all who are yet strangers to God, labor to come into this heavenly kindred; never cease until they can say, "Our Father in heaven."

But will God be a Father to *me*—who has profaned his name, and have been such a great sinner?

If you will now at last seek God by prayer, and break off your sins, he has the affections of a Father for you, and will never cast you out!

When the *prodigal* arose and went to his father, "his father had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him!" Luke 15:20. Though you have been a prodigal, and almost spent all upon your lusts—yet if you will give a bill of divorce to your sins, and flee to God by repentance, know that he has the affections of a Father; he will embrace you in the arms of his mercy, and seal your pardon with a kiss. What though your sins have been heinous? Your wound is not so broad—as the plaster of Christ's blood. The sea covers great rocks. Just so, the *sea of God's compassion* can drown your great sins! Therefore be not discouraged, go to God, resolve to cast yourself upon his Fatherly compassion. He may be entreated of you, as he was of Manasseh. 2 Chron 33:13. "No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you as white as wool!" Isaiah 1:18

Use 3. For comfort. Here is comfort for such as can, upon good grounds, call God their Father. There is more sweetness in this word *Father,* than if we had ten thousand worlds! David thought it a great matter to be son-in-law to a king. "What is my father's family, that I should be son-in-law to the king?" 1 Sam 18:18. But what is it to be born of God, and have him for our Father!

Wherein lies the happiness, of having God for our Father?

(1) If God is our Father—he will TEACH us. What father will refuse to counsel his son? Does God command *parents* to instruct their children, and will not *he* instruct his children? Deut 4:10. "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit." Isaiah 48:17. "O God, you have taught me from my youth." Psalm 71:17. If God is our Father, he will give us the teachings of his Spirit. "The natural man receives not the things of God, neither can he know them." 1 Cor

2:14. The natural man may have excellent notions in theology—but God must teach us to know the mysteries of the gospel after a spiritual manner. A man may see the figures upon a dial—but he cannot tell how the day goes unless the sun shines; so we may read many truths in the Bible—but we cannot know them savingly—until God by his Spirit shines upon our soul. God teaches not only our *ear* —but our *heart!* He not only informs our *mind*—but inclines our *will*. We never learn anything—until God teaches us. If he is our Father, he will teach us how to order our affairs with discretion (Psalm 112:5) and how to live wisely. "David behaved himself wisely." 1 Sam 18:5. He will teach us what to answer when we are brought before governors; he will put words into our mouths. "You shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake; but take no thought how or what you shall speak; for it is not you who speaks—but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you." Matthew 10:18, 19, 20.

(2) If God is our Father—he has great LOVE towards us. If it is so unnatural for an earthly father not to love his child, can we think God can be defective in his love? All the affections of parents come from God—yet are they but a *spark* from his flame. He is the *Father* of mercies. 2 Cor 1:3. He begets all the mercies and affections in the creature; his love to his children is a love which passes knowledge. Eph 3:19. It exceeds all dimensions; it is higher than heaven, it is broader than the sea!

That you may see God's fatherly love to his children: Consider, God makes a precious valuation of them. "Since you were precious in my sight." Isaiah 43:4. A father prizes his child above his jewels. Their *names* are precious, for they have God's own name written upon them. "I will write upon him the name of my God." Rev 3:12. Their *prayers* are a precious perfume. God bottles their *tears*. Psalm 56:8. He esteems his children as a crown of glory in his hands. Isaiah 62:3.

God loves the *places* where they were born, for their sakes. "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her"; this and that believer was born there. Psalm 87:5. He loves the ground his children tread upon; hence, Judea, the seat of his children and chosen ones, he calls a delightsome land. Mal 3:12. It was not only pleasant for situation and fruitfulness—but because his children, who were his *Hephzibah*, or *delight*, lived there. He charges the great ones of the world not to injure his children, because their persons are sacred. "He allowed no man to do them wrong, yes, he reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not my *anointed* ones!" Psalm 105:14, 15. By *anointed* is meant the children of the high God, who have the unction of the Spirit, and are set apart for God.

He delights in their *company*. He loves to see their face, and hear their voice. Canticles 2:14. He cannot refrain long from their company; let but two or three of his children meet and pray together, he will be sure to be among them. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name—there am I in the midst of them." Matthew 18:20. He bears his children in his bosom, as a nursing father does the sucking child. Numb 11:12; Isaiah 46:4. To be carried in God's bosom shows how near his children lie to his heart. He is full of solicitous care for them. "He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7. His eye is always upon them, they are never out of his thoughts. A father cannot always take care for his child, he sometimes is asleep; but God is a Father who never sleeps. "He shall neither slumber nor sleep." Psalm 121:4. He thinks nothing too good to part with, for his children; he gives them the honey out of the rock, and "wine on the lees well refined." Isaiah 25:6. He gives them three jewels more worth than heaven—the blood of his Son, the grace of his Spirit, and the light of his countenance.

Never was there such an indulgent, affectionate Father. If he has one love better than another, he bestows it upon them; they have the cream and quintessence of his love. "He will rejoice over you, he will rest in his love." Zeph 3:17. He loves his children with the same love as he loves Christ. John 17:26. It is the same love, for the unchangeableness of it. God will no more cease to love his adopted sons—than he will to love Christ, his Son.

(3) If God is our Father—he will be full of SYMPATHY towards his children. "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him." Psalm 103:13. "Is Ephraim my dear son? my affections are troubled for him." Jer 31:20. God pities his children in two cases.

[1] In case of **infirmities**. If the child is deformed, or has any bodily distemper—the father pities it. Just so, if God is our Father, he pities our weaknesses: and he so pities them as to heal them. "I have seen his ways, and will heal him." Isaiah 57:18. As he has *affections* to pity, so he has *balm* to heal.

[2] In case of **injuries**. Every blow to the child goes to the father's heart; so, when the saints suffer, God sympathizes. "In all their affliction he was afflicted." Isaiah 63:9. He did, as it were, bleed in their wounds. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" When the *foot* was trod on—the *head* cried out! God's soul was grieved for the children of Israel. Judges 10:16. As when one string in a lute is touched, all the rest sound; so when God's children are stricken, his affections sound. "He who touches you touches the apple of his eye." Zech 2:8.

(4) If God is our Father—he will take notice of the least good he sees in his children. If there is but a *sigh* for sin—he hears it. "My groaning is not hidden from you." Psalm 38:9. If there

is but a penitential *tear which* comes out of the eye—he sees it. "I have seen your tears." Isaiah 38:5. If there is but a good *intention*, he takes notice of it. "Since it was your desire to build a temple for My name, you have done well to have this desire." 1 Kings 8:18. He punishes intentional *wickedness*, and crowns intentional *goodness*. "You have done well to have this desire." He takes notice of the least spark of grace in his children. "Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." 1 Peter 3:6. The Holy Spirit does not mention Sara's unbelief, or laughing at the promise. *He puts a finger upon the scar*, winks at her failing, and only takes notice of the good that was in her—her obedience to her husband. Nay, that good which the saints scarcely take notice of in themselves, God in a special manner observes. "I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink. Then the righteous will answer Him—Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink?" Matthew 25:35, 37. They as it were overlooked and disclaimed their own works of charity—but Christ takes notice of them—"I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat." What comfort is this! God spies the least good in his children! He can see a grain of corn hidden under chaff. He can see a *little grace*, hidden under *much corruption!*

(5) If God is our Father—he will take all we do in good part. Those duties which we ourselves censure—he will crown. When a child of God looks over his best duties, he sees so much sin cleaving to them—that he is confounded. "Lord," he says, "there is more *sulphur* than *incense,* in my prayers." But for your comfort, if God is your Father, he will crown those duties which you yourselves censure. He sees there is *sincerity* in the hearts of his children—and this gold, though light, shall have grains of allowance. Though there may be many defects in the services of his children, he will not cast away their offering.

"The Lord healed the people." 2 Chron 30:20. The tribes of Israel, being straitened in time, lacked some legal purifications; yet because their hearts were right, God healed them and pardoned them. He accepts of the good *intention*. 2 Cor 8:12. An earthly father kindly receives a letter from his young child—though there are blots and bad spelling in it. What blottings are there in our holy things! Yet our Father in heaven accepts them. "It is my child!" God says, "I will look upon him, through Christ—with a merciful eye!"

(6) If God is our Father—he will correct us, in measure. "I will correct you, in measure." Jer 30:11. This he will do two ways. It shall be in measure—for the **kind**. He will not lay upon us more than we are able to bear. 1 Cor 10:13. He knows our frame. Psalm 103:14. He knows we are not steel or marble, therefore will deal gently—he will not over-afflict. As the wise physician, who knows the temper of the body, will not give too strong a medicine for the body, nor give one grain too much; so God, who is not only the great Physician—but has the affections of a loving father, will not lay too heavy burdens on his children, lest their spirits fail.

God will correct in measure—for **duration**; he will not let the affliction lie too long. "The rod of the wicked shall not *rest* upon the lot of the righteous," Psalm 125:3. It may be there—but not *rest* there. "I will not contend forever." Isaiah 57:16. Our heavenly Father will *love* forever—but he will not *contend* forever. The torments of the damned are forever. "The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever." Rev 14:11. The wicked shall *drink a sea of wrath*—but God's children only *taste of the cup of affliction*, and their heavenly Father will say, "let this cup pass away from them." Isaiah 35:10.

(7) If God is our Father—he will intermix mercy with all our afflictions. If he gives us *wormwood* to drink—he will mix it with *honey*. In the ark, the *rod* was laid up and *manna*; so with our Father's *rod* there is always some *manna*. Asher's shoes were iron and brass—but his foot was dipped in *oil*. Deut 33:24, 25. Affliction is the shoe of brass which pinches. But there is mercy in the affliction—there is the foot dipped in oil. When God afflicts the body, he gives peace of conscience; there is mercy in the affliction. An affliction comes to prevent falling into sin—there is mercy in an affliction. Jacob had his thigh hurt in wrestling—there was the affliction. But when he saw God's face, and received a blessing from the angel—there was the mercy in the affliction. Gen 32:30. In every *cloud*, a child of God may see a *rainbow of mercy* shining. As the painter mixes *dark shadows* and *bright colors* together—so our heavenly Father mingles the dark and bright together, crosses and blessings; and is not this a great happiness, for God thus to *chequer* his providence, and *mingle* goodness with severity?

(8) If God is our Father—the evil one shall not prevail against us. Satan is called *the evil one*, emphatically. He is the grand enemy of the saints; and that both in a *military* sense, as he fights against them with his temptations; and in a *legal* sense, as he is an accuser, and pleads against them; yet neither way, shall he prevail against God's children. As for shooting his fiery darts, God will bruise Satan shortly under the saints' feet. Romans 16:20. As for his accusing, Christ is an advocate for the saints, and answers all bills of indictment brought against them. God will make all Satan's temptations promote the good of his children:

[1] As they set them **praying**. 2 Cor 12:8. Temptation is a medicine for carnal security.

[2] As they are a means to **humble** them. "Lest I should be exalted above measure, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan." 2 Cor 12:7. The thorn in the flesh was an affliction; but it was to pick the *bladder of pride*.

[3] As they **establish** them more in grace. A tree shaken by the wind is more settled and rooted; so the blowing of a temptation does but settle a child of God more in grace. Thus the evil one, Satan, shall not prevail against the children of God.

(9) If God is our Father—no *real* evil shall befall us. "There shall no evil befall you." Psalm 91:10. It is not said, no *trouble*; but, no *evil*. God's children are privileged people; they are privileged from being hurt by anything. "Nothing shall by any means hurt you." Luke 10:19. The hurt and malignity of the affliction is taken away. Affliction to a wicked man has evil in it; it makes him worse. "Men were scorched with great heat—and blasphemed the name of God." Rev 16:9. But no evil befalls a child of God; he is bettered by affliction. "That we might be made partakers of his holiness." Heb 12:10. What hurt does the *furnace* to the *gold*? It only makes it purer. What hurt does *affliction* to *grace*? Only refine and purify it. What a great privilege it is to be freed, though not from the *stroke*—yet from the *sting* of affliction! No evil shall touch a saint. **Christ has drawn the poison out of every affliction, that it cannot injure a child of God.** Again, no evil befalls a child of God, because no condemnation. "No condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1. God does not condemn them, nor does conscience. When both jury and judge acquit—no evil befalls the accused; for nothing is really an evil—but that which damns!

(10) If God is our Father—we may go with cheerfulness to the throne of grace. Were a man to petition his *enemy*—there is

little hope; but when a child petitions his *father*—he may hope with confidence to succeed. The word "Father" works upon God; it touches his very heart. What can a father deny his child? "If his son asks *bread*—will he give him a *stone*?" Matthew 7:9. This may embolden us to go to God for pardon of sin, and further degrees of sanctity. We pray to a Father of *mercy*—sitting upon a throne of *grace!* "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children—how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" Luke 11:13. This quickens the church, and adds wings to prayer. "Look down from heaven." Isaiah 63:15. "Doubtless you are our Father"; ver 16. For whom does God keep his mercies but for his children? Three things may give boldness in prayer:

We have a Father to pray to.

We have the Spirit to help us to pray.

We have an Advocate to present our prayers.

God's children should in all their troubles—run to their heavenly Father, as the sick child in 2 Kings 4:19: "He said unto his father—My head, my head." So pour out your complaint to God in prayer. "Father, my heart, my heart! My dead heart—quicken it! My hard heart—soften it in Christ's blood! Father, my heart, my heart!" Surely God, who hears the cry of *ravens*, will hear the cry of *his children!*

(11) If God is our Father—he will stand between us and danger. A father will keep off danger from his child. God calls himself a *shield*. As a shield he defends the head, guards the vitals, and wards off dangers from his children. "I am with you, and no man shall set on you to hurt you." Acts 18:10. God is a hiding-place. Psalm 27:5. As God has a *breast* to feed—so he has *wings* to cover his

children. "He shall cover you with his feathers, and under his wings shall you trust." Psalm 91:4. He appoints his **holy angels** to be a lifeguard about his children. Heb 1:14. Never was any prince so well guarded, as a believer.

[1] The angels are a **numerous** guard. "The mountain was full of horses of fire round about Elisha." 2 Kings 6:17. "The horses and chariots of fire" were the angels of God to defend the prophet Elisha.

[2] The angels are a **strong** guard. One angel, in one night, slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand. 2 Kings 19:35. If one angel slew so many, what could an army of angels have done?

[3] The angels are a **swift** guard; they are ready in an instant to help God's children. They are described with wings to show their swiftness: they fly to our help. "As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you." Dan 9:23. Here was swift motion for the angel, to come from heaven to earth between the beginning and ending of Daniel's prayer.

[4] The angels are a **watchful** guard; not like Saul's guard, asleep when their king was in danger. 1 Sam 26:12. The angels are a vigilant guard; they watch over God's children to defend them. "The angel of the Lord encamps round about those who fear him." Psalm 34:7. There is an invisible guardianship of angels surrounding God's children.

(12) If God is our Father—we shall not lack anything that he sees to be good for us. "Those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing." Psalm 34:10. God is pleased sometimes to keep his children on hard fare—but it is good for them. As sheep thrive best on short pasture, so God sees that *too much* may not be good for his people; plenty might breed surfeit. [In prosperity, men's characters

run riot.] God sees it good sometimes to *diet* his children, and keep them light—that they may run the heavenly race the better. It was good for Jacob that there was a famine in the land; it was the means of bringing him to his son Joseph. Just so, God's children sometimes see the *world's emptiness*, that they may acquaint themselves more with *Christ's fullness*. If God sees it to be good for them to have more of the world—they shall have it. He will not let them lack any good thing.

(13) If God is our Father—all the promises of the Bible belong to us. His children are called "heirs of the promise." Heb 6:17. A wicked man can lay claim to nothing in the Bible, but the curses; he has no more to do with the promises—than a ploughman has to do with the city charter. The promises are *children's* bread; they are the breasts of the gospel, milking out consolations; and who are to suck these breasts—but God's children? The promise of *pardon* is for them. "I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned against me." Jer 33:8. The promise of *healing* is for them. Isaiah 57:19. The promise of *salvation* is for them. Jer 23:6. The promises are the supports of faith; they are God's sealed deed; they are a Christian's cordial. Oh, the heavenly comforts which are distilled from the promises! Chrysostom compares the Scripture to a garden: the promises are the fruit trees which grow in this garden. A child of God may go to any promise in the Bible, and pluck comfort from it! He is an heir of all the promises!

(14) If God is our Father—he makes all his children conquerors. They conquer *themselves*; [he who conquers himself is stronger than he who conquers the stoutest ramparts.] The saints conquer their own *lusts*; they bind these princes in fetters of iron. Psalm 149:8. Though the children of God may be sometimes foiled, and lose a single battle—yet not the final victory.

They conquer the *world*. The world holds forth her two breasts of profit and pleasure—and many are overcome by it. But the children of God have a world-conquering faith. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4.

They conquer their *enemies*. How can that be, when their enemies often take away their lives? They conquer—by not complying with them; as the three children would not fall down to the golden image. Dan 3:18. They would rather *burn*—than *bow*. Thus they were conquerors. He who complies with another's lust, is a *captive*; he who refuses to comply, is a *conqueror*. God's children conquer their enemies by heroic patience. A patient Christian, like the *anvil*, bears all strokes invincibly. Thus the martyrs overcame their enemies by patience.

God's children are more than conquerors. "We are more than conquerors." Romans 8:37. How are they more than conquerors? Because they conquer without loss, and because they are crowned after death, which other conquerors are not.

(15) If God is our Father—he will now and then send us some token of his love. His children live far from home, and meet sometimes with coarse usage from the unkind world; therefore, to encourage them, he sends them tokens and pledges of his love. What are these? He gives them an answer to prayer, which is a token of love. He quickens and enlarges their hearts in duty, which is a token of love. He gives them the first fruits of his Spirit, which are love tokens. Romans 8:23. As he gives the wicked the first fruits of hell—horror of conscience and despair; so he gives his children the first fruits of his Spirit—joy and peace, which are foretastes of glory. Some of his children, having received those tokens of love from him, have

been so transported, that they have died for joy, as the glass often breaks with the strength of the wine put into it.

(16) If God is our Father—he will indulge and spare us. "I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him." Mal 3:17. God's sparing his children, imports his clemency towards them. He does not punish them as he might. "He has not dealt with us after our sins." Psalm 103:10. We often do that which merits wrath, grieve God's Spirit, and relapse into sin. God passes by much and spares us. He did not spare his natural Son—and yet he spares his adopted sons. Romans 8:32. He threatened Ephraim to make him as the chaff driven with the whirlwind—but he soon repented. "Yet I am the Lord your God." Hos 13:4. "I will be your king;" ver 10. Here God spared him, as a father spares his son. Israel often provoked God with their complaints—but he was merciful towards them; he often answered their *murmurings* with *mercies*. Thus he spared them, as a father spares his son.

(17) If God is our Father—he will put honor and renown upon us at the last day.

[1] He will clear the innocence of his children. His children in this life are badly misrepresented. They are loaded with invectives. They are called factious, seditious; as Elijah, the *troubler of Israel*; and Luther, the *trumpet of rebellion*. Athanasius was accused to the Emperor Constantine as the raiser of tumults; and the primitive Christians were accused as "killers of their children, guilty of incest." Tertullus reported Paul to be a pestilent person. Acts 24:5. Wycliffe was called the idol of the heretics, and reported to have died drunk. If Satan cannot *defile* God's children—he will *disgrace* then; if he cannot strike his fiery darts into their consciences—he will put a dead fly to their names! But God will one day clear their innocence; he will

roll away their reproach. As he will make a resurrection of *bodies*, so of *names*. "The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth." Isaiah 25:8. He will be the saints' vindicator. "He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light." Psalm 37:6.

The *night* casts its dark mantle upon the most beautiful flowers; but the *light* comes in the morning and dispels the darkness, and every flower appears in its orient brightness. So the wicked may by misreports darken the honor and repute of the saints; but God will dispel this darkness, and cause their names to shine forth. "He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light." Thus God stood up for the honor of Moses when Aaron and Miriam sought to eclipse his fame. "Wherefore then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" Numb 12:8. So God will one day say to the wicked, "Why were you not afraid to defame and traduce my children? Having my image upon them, how dared you abuse my picture?" At last his children shall come forth out of all their calumnies, as "a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." Psalm 68:13.

[2] God will make an open and honorable recital of all their good deeds. As the sins of the wicked shall be openly mentioned, to their eternal infamy and confusion; so all the good deeds of the saints shall be openly mentioned, "and then shall every man have praise of God." 1 Cor 4:5. Every prayer made with melting eyes, every good service, every work of charity, shall be openly declared before men and angels. "I was hungry, and you gave me food. I was thirsty, and you gave me drink. I was naked, and you clothed me." Matthew 25:35, 36. Thus God will set a trophy of honor upon all his children at the last day. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father!" Matthew 13:43.

(18) If God is our Father—he will settle a good inheritance upon us. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who has begotten us again unto a living hope—to an incorruptible, and undefiled inheritance." 1 Peter 1:3, 4. A father may have lost his goods, and have nothing to leave his son but his blessing; but God will settle an inheritance on his children, and an inheritance no less than a kingdom! "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!" Luke 12:32. This kingdom is more glorious and magnificent than any earthly kingdom; it is set out by pearls, precious stones, and the richest jewels. Rev 21:19. What are all the rarities of the world, the coasts of pearl, the islands of spices, the rocks of diamonds, compared to this glorious heavenly kingdom! In this heavenly kingdom—are satisfying, unparalleled beauty, rivers of pleasure—and that forever! "At your right hand are pleasures for evermore." Psalm 16:2. Heaven's eminence is its *permanence*; and this kingdom God's children enter into immediately after death.

There is a sudden transition and passage from *death*—to *glory*! "Absent from the body—present with the Lord!" 2 Cor 5:8. God's children shall not wait long for their inheritance; it is but a wink—and they shall see God! How should this comfort those of God's children who are low in the world! Your Father in heaven will settle a kingdom upon you at death, such a kingdom as eye has not seen; he will give you a crown not of *gold*—but *glory*; he will give you white robes lined with immortality. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!"

(19) If God is our Father—it is a comfort in case of the loss of relations. Have you lost a father? If you are a believer, you are no orphan, you have a heavenly Father, a Father who never dies. "Who alone has immortality." 1 Tim 6:16. It is comfort in case of your own death. God is your Father—and death is but going to your

Father! Well might Paul say, *"death is yours!"* 1 Cor 3:22. Death is your friend, which will carry you home to your Father! How glad are children when they are going home! It was Christ's comfort at death that he was going to his Father. "I am leaving the world, and am going to the Father." John 16:28. "I ascend unto my Father." John 20:17. If God is our Father, we may with comfort, at the day of death, resign our souls into his hand. Thus did Christ. "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Luke 23:46.

If a child has any jewel, he will in time of danger put it into his father's hands, where he thinks it will be kept most safe; so the soul, which is our richest jewel, we may resign at death into God's hands, where it will be safer than in our own keeping. "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." What a comfort it is that death carries a believer to his Father's house, where are delights unspeakable and full of glory! How glad was old Jacob when he saw the wagons and chariots to carry him to his son Joseph! "The spirit of Jacob revived." Gen 45:27. Death is a triumphant chariot, to carry every child of God to his Father's mansion-house.

(20) If God is our Father—he will not disinherit us. He may for a time *desert* his children—but will not disinherit them. The sons of kings have sometimes been disinherited by the cruelty of usurpers; but what power on earth can hinder the heirs of the promise from their inheritance? *Men cannot*, and *God will not* cut off his children. The Arminians hold *falling away from grace*, so that a child of God may be deprived of his inheritance. But God's children can never be degraded or disinherited, and their heavenly Father will not cast them off from being his children.

It is evident that God's children cannot be finally disinherited, by virtue of the eternal decree of heaven. God's **decree** is the very pillar

and basis on which the saints' perseverance depends. That decree ties the knot of adoption so fast, that neither sin, death, nor hell, can break it asunder. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called," etc. Romans 8:30. **Predestination** is nothing else but God's decreeing a certain number to be heirs of glory, on whom he will settle the crown of heaven; for whom he predestinates, he glorifies. What shall hinder God's electing love, or make his decree null and void?

Besides God's decree, he has engaged himself by **promise**, that the heirs of heaven shall never be put out of their inheritance. His promises are not like blanks in a lottery—but as a sealed deed which cannot be reversed; they are the saints' royal charter; and one promise is, that their heavenly Father will not disinherit them. "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Jer 32:40. God's *fidelity*, which is the richest pearl of his crown, is engaged in this promise for his children's perseverance. "I will not turn away from them." A child of God cannot fall away while he is held fast in these two arms of God—his *love*, and his *faithfulness*. Jesus Christ undertakes that all God's children by adoption, shall be preserved in a state of grace until they inherit glory. The heathens feigned of Atlas—that he bore up the heavens from falling; but Jesus Christ is that blessed Atlas—who bears up the saints from falling away.

How does Christ preserve the saints' graces, until they come to heaven?

(1) By the influence of the Spirit. He carries on grace in the souls of the elect, by the influence and working of his Spirit. He continually excites and quickens grace in the godly; he by his Spirit

blows up the *sparks* of grace—into a holy *flame*. The Spirit is Christ's *vicar* on earth—his proxy, his executor, to see that all that he has purchased for the saints—be made good. Christ has obtained for them an inheritance incorruptible, and the Spirit is his executor, to see that the inheritance be settled upon them. 1 Peter 1:4, 5.

(2) He carries on his work perseveringly in the souls of the elect, by the prevalence of his intercession. "He ever lives to make intercession for them." Heb 7:25. He prays that every saint may hold out in grace—until he comes to heaven. Can the children of such prayers perish? If the heirs of heaven should be disinherited, and fall short of glory—then God's decree must be reversed, his promise broken, and Christ's prayer frustrated, which would be blasphemy to imagine.

(3) That God's children cannot be disinherited, or put out of their right to the crown of heaven, is evident from their mystic union with Christ. Believers are incorporated into him; they are knit to him as members to the head, by the nerves and ligaments of faith, so that they cannot be broken off. "The church, which is his body." Eph 1:22, 23. What was once said of Christ's natural body, is as true of his mystic body. "A bone of it shall not be broken." As it is impossible to separate the *leaven* and the *dough* when they are once mingled and kneaded together; so it is impossible, when Christ and believers are once united, that they should ever, by the power of death or hell—be separated. Christ and his spiritual members make one Christ. Is it possible that any part of Christ should perish? How can Christ lack any member of his mystic body—and be perfect? Every member is an ornament to the body, and adds to the honor of it. How can Christ part with any mystic member, and not part with some of his glory too?

By all this it is evident that God's children must needs persevere in grace—and cannot be disinherited. If they could be disinherited, the Scripture could not be fulfilled, which tells us of glorious rewards for the heirs of promise. "Truly there is a reward for the righteous." Psalm 58:11. If God's adopted children should fall away finally from grace, and miss of heaven—what reward would there be for the righteous? This would open a door to despair.

But the doctrine of final perseverance, and the certainty of the heavenly inheritance may lead to carnal security, and unholy walking.

Corrupt nature may suck poison from this flower; but he who has felt the efficacy of grace upon his heart, dares not abuse this doctrine. He knows that perseverance is attained in the use of means, and walks steadily, that in the use of the means he may arrive at perseverance. Paul knew that he would not be disinherited, and that nothing could separate him from the love of Christ; but who more holy and watchful than he was? "I keep my body under subjection." 1 Cor 9:27. "I press toward the mark." Phil 3:14. God's children have a holy fear which keeps them from self-security and wantonness; they believe the *promise*, therefore they rejoice in hope; they fear their *hearts*, therefore they watch and pray.

Thus you see what strong consolation there is for all the heirs of the promise. Such as have God for their Father are the happiest people on earth; they are in such a condition that nothing can hurt them; they have their Father's blessing, all things conspire for their good; they have a kingdom settled on them, and know that they can never be disinherited. How comforted should they be in all conditions, let the times be what they will! Their Father who is in heaven rules over all. If troubles arise, they carry them sooner to their Father. The

more violently the wind beats against the sails of a ship, the sooner it is brought to the haven; and the more fiercely God's children are assaulted, the sooner they come to their Father's house. "Therefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thess 4:18.

Use 4. For exhortation. Let us behave as the children of such a Father.

(1) Let us depend upon him in all our straits and exigencies; let us believe that he will provide for all our needs. Children rely upon their parents for the supply of their needs. If we trust God for *salvation*, shall we not trust him for a *livelihood*? There is a lawful and prudent care to be used. But beware of being distrustful. "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; and God feeds them." Luke 12:24. Does God feed the *birds* of the air, and will he not feed his *children*? "Consider the lilies how they grow: they spin not; yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these;" ver 27. Does God clothe the *lilies*, and will he not clothe his *lambs*? Even the wicked taste of his bounty. "Their eyes stand out with fatness." Psalm 73:7. Does God feed his *slaves*, and will he not feed his *family*?

His children may not have a liberal share in the things of this life; they may have but little meal in the barrel; they may be drawn low, and almost dry; but *they shall have as much as God sees to be good for them*. "Those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing." Psalm 34:10. If God gives them not what they want—he will give them what is good for them. If he gives them not always what they *crave*—he will give them what they *need*. If he gives them not a *feast* —he will give them *enough* along the way. Let them depend upon his fatherly providence; let them not give way to distrustful thoughts,

distracting cares, or sinful means. "Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7.

An earthly parent may have affection for his child, and would gladly provide for him—but may not be able; but God is never at a loss to provide for his children, and he has promised an adequate supply. "Truly you shall be fed." Psalm 37:3. Will God give his children heaven, and will he not give them enough to bear their charges there? Will he give them a *kingdom*, and deny them daily *bread*? O put your trust in him, for he has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Heb 13:5.

(2) If God is our Father, let us imitate him. The child not only bears his father's image—but imitates him in his speech, gesture and behavior. If God is our Father, let us imitate him. "Be followers of God, as dear children." Eph 5:1.

Imitate God in **forgiving** injuries. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions." Isaiah 44:22. As the sun scatters not only thin mists—but thick clouds, so God pardons great offences. Imitate him in this. "Forgiving one another." Eph 4:32. Cranmer was a man of a forgiving spirit: he buried injuries and requited good for evil. He who has God for his *Father*, will have him for his *pattern*.

Imitate God in works of **mercy**. "The Lord frees the prisoners." Psalm 146:7. He opens his hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing. Psalm 145:16. He drops his sweet dew upon the *thistle*—as well as the *rose*. Imitate God in works of mercy; relieve the needs of others; be rich in good works. "Be merciful, as your Father also is merciful." Luke 6:36. Be not so hard hearted as to shut out the poor from all charity. Dives denied Lazarus a *crumb of bread*, and Dives was denied a *drop of water!*

(3) If God is our Father, let us submit patiently to his will. If he lay his strokes on us, they are the *corrections of a Father*—not the *punishments of a judge*. This made Christ himself patient. "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" John 18:11. He sees we need affliction. 1 Peter 1:6. He appoints it as a nutritious drink, to purge and sanctify us. Isaiah 27:9. Therefore dispute not—but submit. "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence." Heb 12:9. They might correct out of ill humor—but God does it for our profit. Heb 12:10. Therefore say as Eli, "It is the Lord: let him do what seems good to him". 1 Sam 3:18. What does the child get by struggling—but more blows? What did Israel get by their murmuring and rebelling—but a longer and more tedious march, until, at last, their carcass fell in the wilderness!

(4) If God is our Father, let it cause in us a childlike reverence. "If I am a father, where is my honor?" Mal 1:6. It is part of the honor we give to God—to reverence and adore him; if we have not always a childlike *confidence*, let us always preserve a childlike *reverence*. How ready are we to run into extremes, either to despond or to grow wanton! Because God is a Father, do not think you may take liberty to sin; if you do, he may act as if he were no Father, and throw hell into your conscience. When David presumed upon God's paternal affection, and began to wax wanton under mercy—God made him pay dearly for it, by withdrawing the sense of his love; and, though he had the *heart of a Father*—yet he had the *look of an enemy*. David prayed, "Make me to hear joy and gladness." Psalm 51:8. He lay several months in desertion, and it is thought never recovered his full joy to the day of his death. O keep alive holy fear! With childlike confidence, preserve a humble reverence. The Lord is a tender Father, therefore love to serve him; he is the mighty God, therefore fear to offend him.

(5) If God is our Father, let us walk obediently. "As obedient children." 1 Peter 1:14. When God bids you to be humble and self-denying, deny yourselves; part with your bosom sin. Be sober in your attire, savory in your speech, grave in your deportment. Obey your Father's voice; open to him as the flower to the sun. If you expect your Father's blessing, obey him in whatever he commands, both in first and second table duties. When a musician would make sweet music, he touches upon every string of the lute. The ten commandments are like a ten-stringed instrument, and we must touch every string, obey every commandment, or we cannot make sweet melody in religion. Obey your heavenly Father, though he commands things contrary to flesh and blood; when he commands to mortify sin, the sin which has been most dear—pluck out a right eye, that you may see better to go to heaven; when he commands you to suffer for sin. Acts 21:13.

Every good Christian has a spirit of martyrdom in him, and is ready to suffer for the truth rather than the truth should suffer. Luther said he had rather be a *martyr* than a *monarch*. Peter was crucified with his head downwards, as Eusebius relates. Ignatius called his chains his spiritual pearls, and wore his fetters as a bracelet of diamonds. We act as God's children, when we obey his voice, and count not our lives dear, so that we may show our love to him. "They loved not their lives unto the death." Rev 12:11.

(6) If God is our Father, let us show by our cheerful looks that we are the children of such a Father. Too much drooping and despondency disparages the joyful relation in which we stand to him. What though we meet with hard usage in the world! We are now in a strange land, far from home; it will be shortly better with us when we are in our own country, and our Father has us in his arms. Does not the heir rejoice in hope? Shall the sons of a king walk

dejected? "Why are you, being the king's son, so lean?" 2 Samuel 13:4. Is God an unkind Father? Are his commands grievous? Has he no land to give his heirs? Why, then, do his children walk so sad? Never had children such privileges as those who are of the seed-royal of heaven, and have God for their Father. They should rejoice—who are within a few hours of being crowned with glory!

(7) If God is our Father, let us honor him by walking very holily. "Be holy; for I am holy." 1 Peter 1:16. A young prince, having asked a philosopher how he should behave himself, the philosopher said, "Remember you are a king's son; do nothing but what befits the son of a king." So let us remember we are the adopted sons and daughters of the high God, and do nothing unworthy of such a relation. A debauched child is the disgrace of his father. "Is this your son's coat?" said they to Jacob, when they brought it home dipped in blood. So, when we see a person defiled with malice, passion, drunkenness, we may say, "Is this the coat of God's adopted son? Does he look like an heir of glory?" *It is blaspheming the name of God to call him Father—and yet live in sin.* Such as profess God to be their Father and live unholily—they slander and defraud; they are as bad to God as the heathen. "Are you not as children of the Ethiopians to me, O children of Israel? says the Lord." Amos 9:7. When Israel grew wicked, they were no better to God than Ethiopians, who were uncircumcised, a base and ill-bred people. Loose, scandalous livers under the gospel are no better in God's esteem than Pagans; nay, they shall have a hotter place in hell. Oh! let all who profess God to be their Father, honor him by their unspotted lives.

Scipio abhorred the embraces of a harlot, because he was the general of an army. Abstain from all sin, because you are born of God, and have God for your Father. "Abstain from all appearance of evil." 1

Thess 5:22. It was a saying of Augustus, that "an emperor should not only be free from crimes—but from the suspicion of them." By a holy life you should bring glory to your heavenly Father, and cause others to become his children. The fragrance of virtue, is attractive. Causinus, in his writings, speaks of a dove, whose wings being perfumed with sweet ointments, drew the other doves after her; so the holy lives of God's children are a sweet perfume to draw others to true religion, and make them to be of the family of God. Justin Martyr says, that which converted him to Christianity was beholding the blameless lives of the Christians.

(8) If God is our Father, let us love all that are his children. "How pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Psalm 133:1. It is compared to ointment for its sweet fragrance. "Love the brotherhood." 1 Peter 2:17. The motion of the soul is the same towards the image and the reality. The saints are the walking pictures of God. If God is our Father, we shall love to see his picture of holiness in believers. We pity them for their infirmities—but love them for their graces; we shall prize their company above others. Psalm 119:63. It may justly be suspected that God is not the Father of those who love not his children. Though they retain the communion of saints in their creed, they banish the communion of saints out of their company.

(9) If God is our Father, let us show heavenly-mindedness. Those who are born of God, set their affections on things that are above. Col 3:2. O you children of the high God! do not disgrace your high birth by sordid covetousness. What, a son of God—and a slave to the world! What, born from heaven—and buried in the earth! For a Christian, who pretends to derive his pedigree from heaven, wholly to mind earthly things, is to debase himself; as if a king should leave his throne, to play wih marbles. "Do you seek great things for

yourself?" Jer 45:5. As if the Lord had said, "What you Barak, you who are born of God, akin to angels, and by your office a Levite—do you debase yourself, and spot the silver wings of your grace by besliming them with earth! Do you seek great things? Seek them not." The earth chokes the fire; so earthliness chokes the fire of good affections.

(10) If God is our Father, let us own him as such in the worst times, stand up in his cause, and defend his truths. If suffering comes—do not deny God. He is a bad son who denies his father. Such as are ashamed to own God in times of danger, he will be ashamed to own for his children. "Whoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." Mark 8:38.

II. The second part of the preface is, "Who is in heaven." God is said to be in heaven, not because he is so included there as if he were nowhere else; for "the heaven of heavens cannot contain you." 1 Kings 8:27. But the meaning is, that he is chiefly resident in what the apostle calls "the third heaven," where he reveals his glory most to saints and angels. 2 Cor 12:2.

What may we learn from God being in heaven?

(1) That we are to raise our minds in prayer above the earth. God is nowhere to be spoken with, but in heaven. He never denied that soul its suit—who went as far as heaven to ask it.

(2) We learn his sovereign power. "Our God is in the heavens: he has done whatever he has pleased." Psalm 115:3. In heaven he

governs the universe, and orders all occurrences here below for the good of his children. When the saints are in straits and dangers, and see no way of relief, he sends from heaven and helps them. "He shall send from heaven, and save me." Psalm 57:3.

(3) We learn his glory and majesty. He is in heaven; therefore he is covered with light. Psalm 104:2. He is "clothed with honor." Psalm 104:1: He is far above all worldly princes, as heaven is above earth.

(4) We learn his omniscience. All things are naked and unmasked to his eye. Heb 4:13. Men plot and contrive against the church; but God is in heaven, and they do nothing but what he sees. If a man were on the top of a tower or theater, he might see all the people below; God in heaven, as on a high tower or theater, sees all the transactions of men. The wicked make wounds in the backs of the righteous, and then pour in vinegar; but God writes down their cruelty. "I have surely seen the affliction of my people." Exod 3:7. God can thunder out of heaven upon his enemies. "The Lord thundered in the heavens; yes, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and routed them." Psalm 18:13, 14.

(5) We learn comfort for the children of God. When they pray to their Father, the way to heaven cannot be blocked up. One may have a father living in foreign parts—but the way, both by sea and land, may be so blocked up, that there is no coming to him; but you, saint of God, when you pray to your Father, he is in heaven; and though you are ever so confined, you may have access to him. A prison cannot keep you from your God; the way to heaven can never be blocked up.

III. I shall next speak of the pronoun "our." There is an *appropriation* of the appellation, "Father." "Our Father." Christ, by the word "our," would teach us thus much—that in all our prayers to God, we should exercise faith. Father denotes reverence: Our Father, denotes faith. In all our prayers to God we should exercise faith. Faith baptises prayer, and gives it a name; it is called "the prayer of faith." James 5:15. *Without faith, it is speaking, not praying*. Faith is the breath of prayer; prayer is dead unless faith breathes in it. Faith is a necessary requisite in prayer. The oil of the sanctuary was made up of several sweet spices, pure myrrh, cassia, cinnamon. Exod 30:23, 24. Faith is the chief spice or ingredient in prayer, which makes it go up to the Lord as sweet incense. "Let him ask in faith." James 1:6. "Whatever you shall ask in prayer, *believing*, you shall receive." Matthew 21:22.

"Lord," said Cruciger, "I pray, though with a weak faith—yet with faith." *Prayer* is the gun we shoot with, *fervency* is the fire that discharges it, and *faith* is the bullet which pierces the throne of grace. Prayer is the key of heaven, faith is the hand that turns it. Pray in faith, "Our Father." Faith must take prayer by the hand, or there is no coming near to God. Prayer without faith is unsuccessful. If a poor craftsman, who lives by his labor, has ruined his tools, so that he cannot work, how shall he exsist? Prayer is the tool we work with, which procures all good for us; but unbelief spoils and blunts our prayers, and then we get no blessing from God. A faithless prayer is fruitless. As Joseph said, "You shall not see my face, except your brother be with you" (Gen 43:3); so prayer cannot see God's face unless it brings its brother faith with it. What is said of Israel, "They could not enter in because of unbelief," is as true of prayer; it cannot enter into heaven because of unbelief. Heb 3:19. Prayer often suffers shipwreck because it dashes upon the *rock of unbelief*. O mingle faith with prayer! We must say, "Our Father."

What does praying in faith imply?

Praying in faith implies *having* faith, and the act implies the *habit*. To walk implies a principle of life; so to pray in faith implies a habit of grace. None can pray in faith but believers.

What is it to pray in faith?

(1) It is to pray for that which God has promised. Where there is no promise, we cannot pray in faith.

(2) It is to pray in Christ's meritorious name. "Whatever you shall ask in my name, that will I do." John 14:13. To pray in Christ's name, is to pray with confidence in Christ's merit. When we present Christ to God in prayer; when we carry the Lamb slain in our arms; when we say, "Lord, we are sinners—but here is our surety; for Christ's sake be propitious," we come to God in Christ's name; and this is to pray in faith.

(3) It is to fix our faith in prayer on God's faithfulness, believing that he hears and will help. This is taking hold of God. Isaiah 64:7. *By prayer we draw near to God, by faith we take hold of him.* "They cried unto the Lord;" and this was the crying of faith. 2 Chron 13:14. They "prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers;" ver 18. Making supplication to God, and staying the soul on God, is praying in faith. To pray, and not rely on God to grant our petitions, "is to abuse and put a scorn on God." By praying we seem to honor God; by not believing we affront him. In prayer we say, "Almighty, merciful Father;" by not believing, we blot out all his titles again.

How may we know that we truly pray in faith?

(1) When faith in prayer is **humble**. A presumptuous person hopes to be heard for some inherent worthiness in himself; he is so qualified, and has done God good service, therefore he is confident God will hear him. See an instance in Luke 18:11, 12: "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus, God, I thank you, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess." This was a presumptuous prayer; but a sincere heart evinces humility in prayer as well as faith. "The publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven—but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." "God be merciful," there was faith; "to me a sinner," there was humility and a sense of unworthiness. Luke 18:13.

(2) We may know we pray in faith, when, though we have not the thing we pray for, we **believe** God will grant it, and are willing to wait his leisure. A Christian having a command to pray, and a promise, is resolved to follow God with prayer, and not give up; as Peter knocked, and when the door was not opened, continued knocking until at last it was opened. Acts 12:16. So when a Christian prays, and prays, and has no answer, he continues to knock at heaven's door, knowing an answer will come. "You will answer me." Psalm 86:7. Here is one that prays in faith. Christ says, "Pray, and faint not." Luke 18:1. A believer, at Christ's word, lets down the net of prayer, and though he catches nothing, he will cast the net again, believing that mercy will come. Patience in prayer, is nothing but faith spun out.

Use 1. For reproof of those who pray in formality, not in faith; those who question whether God hears—or will grant. "You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss." James 4:3. He does not say, you ask that which is unlawful; but you ask amiss, and therefore you receive not. *Unbelief clips the wings of prayer, that it will not fly to*

the throne of grace! The rubbish of unbelief—stops the current of prayer!

Use 2. For exhortation. Let us set faith to work in prayer. The farmer sows in hope; prayer is the seed we sow, and when the *hand of faith* scatters this seed, it brings forth a fruitful crop of blessing. Prayer is the ship we send out to heaven; when faith makes an adventure in this ship, it brings home large returns of mercy. O pray in faith; say, "Our Father." That we may exercise faith in prayer, consider:

(1) God's readiness to hear prayer. Did God forbid all addresses to him, it would put a damp upon the trade of prayer; but his ear is open to prayer. One of the names by which he is known, is, "O you who hear prayer." Psalm 65:2. God is both ready to *hear* and *grant* prayer, which should encourage faith in prayer. Some may say, they have prayed—but have had no answer. God may hear prayer, though he does not immediately answer it. We write a letter to a friend, he may have received it, though we have yet had no answer to it. Perhaps you pray for the light of God's face; he may lend you an *ear*, though he does not show you his *face*. God may give an answer to prayer, when we do not perceive it. His giving a heart to pray, and inflaming the affections in prayer, is an answer to prayer. "In the day when I cried you answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul." Psalm 138:3. David's inward strength was an answer to prayer. Therefore let God's readiness to hear prayer, encourage faith in prayer.

(2) That we may exercise faith in prayer, let us consider that we do not pray alone. Christ prays our prayers over again. His prayer is the ground why our prayer is heard. He takes the dross out of our prayer, and presents nothing to his Father but pure gold.

He mingles his sweet fragrances with the prayers of the saints. Rev 5:8. Think of the dignity of his person, he is God; and the sweetness of his relation, he is a Son. Oh, what encouragement is here, to pray in faith! Our prayers are put into the hand of a Mediator. Christ's prayer is mighty and powerful.

(3) We pray to God for nothing but what is pleasing to him, and he has a mind to grant. If a son asks nothing but what his father is willing to bestow, it will make him go to him with confidence. When we pray to God for holy hearts, there is nothing more pleasing to him. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thess 4:3. We pray that God would give us hearts to love him, and there is nothing he more desires than our love. How should it make us pray in faith, when we pray for nothing but what is acceptable to God, and which he delights to bestow!

(4) To encourage faith in prayer, let us consider the many sweet *promises* that God has made to prayer. The cork keeps the net from sinking, so the promises are the cork to keep faith from sinking in prayer. God has bound himself to us by his promises. The Bible is bespangled with promises made to prayer. "He will be very gracious unto you at the voice of your cry." Isaiah 30:19. "The Lord is rich unto all who call upon him." Romans 10:12. "You shall find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart." Jer 29:13. "He will fulfill the desire of those who fear him." Psalm 145:19. The Syrians tied their god Hercules with a golden chain, that he should not leave; God has tied himself fast to us by his promises. How should these animate and spirit faith in prayer! *Faith gets strength in prayer—by sucking from the breast of a promise.*

(5) That we may exercise faith in prayer, consider that Jesus Christ has purchased that which we pray for. We may

think the things we ask for in prayer too great for us to obtain—but they are not too great for Christ to purchase. We pray for pardon. Christ has purchased it with his blood. We pray for the Spirit to animate and inspire us. The sending down of the Holy Spirit into our hearts, is the fruit of Christ's death. It should put life into our prayers, and make us pray in faith, to reflect that the things we ask, though more than we deserve—yet they are not more than Christ has purchased for us.

(6) To pray in faith, consider there is such bountifulness in God, that he often exceeds the prayers of his people. He gives them more than they ask! Hannah asked a son, and God not only gave her a son—but a prophet. Solomon asked wisdom, and God gave him not only wisdom—but riches and honor besides. Jacob prayed that God would give him food and raiment, and he increased his pilgrim's staff into two bands. Gen 32:10. God is often better to us than our prayers, as when Gehazi asked but one talent, Naaman would needs force two upon him. 2 Kings 5:23. We ask one talent, and God gives two. The woman of Canaan asked but a crumb, namely, to have the life of her child; and Christ gave her more, he sent her home with the life of her soul.

(7) The great success which the prayer of faith has found. Like Jonathan's bow, it has not returned empty. *The little word father, pronounced in faith, has overcome God.* "Deliver me, I pray you." Gen 32:11. This was mixed with faith in the promise. "You said, I will surely do you good;" ver 12. This prayer had power with God, and prevailed. Hos 12:4. The prayer of faith has opened prison doors, stopped the chariot of the sun, locked and unlocked heaven. James 5:17. The prayer of faith has strangled the plots of enemies in their birth, and has routed their forces. *Moses' prayer* against Amalek did

more than *Joshua's sword;* and should not this hearten and encourage faith in prayer?

(8) If all this will not prevail, consider how heartless and comfortless it is not to pray in faith! The heart misgives secretly that God does not hear, nor will he grant. Faithless praying must needs be comfortless; for *there is no promise made to unbelieving prayer*. It is sad sailing where there is no anchoring; and sad praying where there is no promise to anchor upon. James 1:7. The disciples toiled all night and caught nothing; so the unbeliever toils in prayer and catches nothing; he receives not any spiritual blessings, pardon of sin, or grace. As for the temporal mercies which the unbeliever has, he cannot look upon them as the fruit of prayer—but as the overflowing of God's bounty. Oh, therefore labor to exert and put forth faith in prayer!

But so much sin cleaves to my prayer, that I fear it is not the prayer of faith, and God will not hear it.

If you mourn for this, it hinders not but that your prayer may be in faith, and God may hear it. Weakness shall not make void the saint's prayers. "I said in my haste, I am cut off." Psalm 31:22. There was much unbelief in that prayer: "I said in my haste:" in the Hebrew, "in my trembling," David's faith trembled and fainted—yet God heard his prayer. The saints' passions do not hinder their prayers. James 5:17. Therefore be not discouraged, for though sin will cleave to your holy offering, yes, these two things may comfort you—that you may pray with faith—though with *weakness*; and God sees the *sincerity*—and will pass by the *infirmity*.

How shall we pray in faith?

Implore the Spirit of God. We cannot say, "Our Father," but by the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit helps us, not only to pray with sighs and groans—but with faith. The Spirit carries us to God, not only as to a Creator—but a Father. "God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Gal 4:6. "Crying:" there the Spirit causes us to pray with fervency. "Abba, Father:" there the Spirit helps us to pray with faith. The Spirit helps faith to turn the key of prayer, and then it unlocks heaven.

The First Petition in the Lord's Prayer

"Hallowed be your name." Matthew 6:9

Having spoken of the introduction to the Lord's prayer, "After this manner therefore pray," and the preface, "Our Father in heaven;" I come, thirdly, to the prayer itself, which consists of seven petitions.

The first petition is: "Hallowed be your name." In the Latin it is, "Sanctified be your name." In this petition, we pray that God's name may shine forth gloriously, and that it may be honored and sanctified by us, in the whole course and tenor of our lives. It was the angels' song, "Glory be to God in the highest;" that is, let his name be glorified and hallowed. This petition is set in the forefront, to show that the hallowing of God's name is to be preferred before all things. It is to be preferred before *life*. We pray, "Hallowed be your name," before we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." It is to be preferred before *salvation*. Romans 9:23. God's glory is more worth than the salvation of all men's souls. As Christ said of love in Matthew 22:38, "This is the first and great commandment;" so I may

say of this petition, "Hallowed be your name:" it is the first and great petition; it contains the most weighty thing in true religion, which is God's glory.

When some of the other petitions shall be useless and out of date, as we shall not need to pray in heaven, "Give us our daily bread," because there shall be no hunger; nor, "Forgive us our trespasses," because there shall be no sin; nor, "Lead us not into temptation," because the old serpent is not there to tempt: yet the hallowing of God's name will be of great use and request in heaven; we shall be ever singing hallelujahs, which is nothing else but the hallowing of God's name. Every Person in the blessed Trinity, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, must have this honor, to be hallowed; their glory being equal, and their majesty co-eternal. "Hallowed be your name." To admire God's name is not enough; we may admire a conqueror; but when we say, "Hallowed be your name," we set God's name above every name, and not only admire him—but adore him; and this is proper to the Deity only. For the further explanation, I shall propound three questions.

I. What is meant by God's name?

[1] His essence. "The name of the God of Jacob defend you" (Psalm 20:1); that is, the God of Jacob defend you.

[2] Anything by which he may be known. As a man is known by his name; so by his attributes of wisdom, power, holiness, and goodness, God is known as by his name.

II. What is meant by hallowing God's name?

To **hallow**, *is to set apart a thing from the common use, to some sacred end.* As the vessels of the sanctuary were said to be hallowed,

so, to hallow God's name, is to set it apart from all abuses, and to use it holily and reverently. In particular, hallowing God's name is to give him high honor and veneration, and render his name sacred. We can add nothing to his essential glory; but we are said to honor and sanctify his name when we lift him up in the world, and make him appear greater in the eyes of others. When a prince is crowned, there is something added really to his honor; but when we crown God with our triumphs and hallelujahs there is nothing added to his essential glory. *He cannot be greater than he is—but we may make him appear greater in the eyes of others.*

III. When may we be said to hallow and sanctify God's name?

[1] When we profess his name. Our meeting in his holy assembly is an honor done to his name. This is good—but it is not enough. All who wear God's livery by profession are not true servants; there are some professors against whom Christ will profess at the last day. "I will profess I never knew you." Matthew 7:23. Therefore, to go a little further:

[2] We hallow and sanctify God's name when we have a high appreciation and esteem of him, and set him highest in our thoughts. The Hebrew word to honor, signifies to esteem precious. We conceive of God in our minds as the most super excellent and infinite good; we see in him a constellation of all beauties and delights; we adore him in his glorious ***attributes***, which are the several beams by which his divine nature shines forth; we adore him in his ***works***, which are bound up in three great volumes — *creation*, *redemption*, and *providence*. We hallow and sanctify his name when we lift him highest in our souls; we esteem him a supereminent and incomprehensible God.

[3] We hallow and sanctify his name when we trust in it. "We have trusted in his holy name." Psalm 33:21. There is no way can we bring more revenues of honor to God, or make his crown shine brighter, than by *confiding* in him. Abraham "was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Romans 4:20. Here was hallowing God's name. Unbelief stains God's honor and eclipses his name. "He who believes not God—has made him a liar" (1 John 5:10); So faith glorifies and hallows his name. The believer trusts his best jewels in God's hands. "Into your hand I commit my spirit." Psalm 31:5. Faith in a Mediator does more honor, and sanctifies God's name more, than martyrdom or the most sublime acts of obedience.

[4] We hallow and sanctify God's name when we never make mention of it but with the highest reverence. His name is sacred, and it must not be spoken of but with veneration. When the Scripture speaks of God, it gives him his titles of honor. "Blessed be the most high God." Gen 14:20. "Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all praise." Neh 9:5. To speak vainly or slightly of God is profaning his name, and is taking his name in vain. By giving God his venerable titles, we hang his jewels on his crown.

[5] We hallow and sanctify God's name when we love his name. "Let those who love your name be joyful." Psalm 5:11. The love which honors God's name must be special and discriminating love — the cream and flower of our love; such as we give to none besides; as the wife honors her husband by giving him such love as she gives to none else — a marital love. Thus we hallow God's name by giving him such love as we give to none else — a love joined with worship. "He is your Lord; and worship you him." Psalm 45:2.

[6] We hallow and sanctify God's name when we give him a holy and spiritual worship.

(1) When we give him the same kind of worship that he has appointed. "I will be sanctified in those who come near me:" that is, I will be sanctified with that very worship I have appointed. Lev 10:3. It is the *purity* of worship, that God loves better than the *pomp*. It dishonors his name to bring anything into his worship which he has not instituted; as if he were not wise enough to appoint the manner in which he will be served. Men prescribe to him and super add their inventions; which he looks upon as offering *strange fire*, and as a high provocation.

(2) When we give to God the same heart devotion in worship, which he has appointed. "Fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." Romans 12:11. The word for fervent is a metaphor, which alludes to water which seethes and boils over; to signify that our affections should boil over in holy duties. To give God outside worship, and not the devotion of the heart, instead of hallowing and sanctifying him in an ordinance, is to abuse him; as if one calls for wine and you give him an empty glass. We hallow God's name and sanctify him in an ordinance when we give him the vitals of religion, and a heart flaming with zeal.

[7] We hallow and sanctify God's name when we hallow his day. "Hallow the sabbath day." Jer 17:22. Our Christian Sabbath, which comes in the place of the Jews' Sabbath, is called the Lord's day. Rev 1:10. It was anciently called *a day of light*, wherein Christ the Sun of Righteousness shines in an extraordinary manner. It is an honor done to God to hallow his Sabbath.

(1) We must rest on this day from all secular works. "Bring in no burden on the sabbath day." Jer 17:24. As when Joseph would speak with his brethren he thrust out the Egyptians; so when we would converse with God on this day, we must thrust out all earthly

employments. Mary Magdalene refused to anoint Christ's dead body on the sabbath day. Luke 23:56. She had before prepared her ointment and spices—but came not to the sepulcher until the Sabbath was past; she rested on that day from civil work, even the commendable and glorious work of anointing Christ's dead body.

(2) We must in a solemn manner devote ourselves to God on this day; we must spend the whole day with God. Some will hear the word—but leave all their religion at church; they do nothing at home, they do not pray or repeat the word in their houses, and so rob God of a part of his day. It is lamentable to see how God's day is profaned. Let no man think God's name is hallowed, while his Sabbath is broken.

[8] We hallow and sanctify God's name when we ascribe the honor of all we do, to him. "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." Psalm 96:8. Herod, instead of hallowing God's name, dishonored it by assuming that praise to himself which was due to God alone. Acts 12:23. We ought to take the honor from ourselves—and give it to God. "I labored more abundantly than they all;" one would think this had savored of pride: but the apostle pulls the crown from his own head and sets it upon the head of free grace: "Yet not I—but the grace of God which was with me." 1 Cor 15:10. If a Christian has any assistance in duty, or victory over temptation, he rears up a pillar and writes upon it, "Hitherto the Lord has helped me." John the Baptist transferred all the honor from himself to Christ; he was content to be eclipsed that Christ might shine the more. "He who comes after me is preferred before me." John 1:15. I am but the herald, the voice of one crying; he is the prince. I am but a lesser star; he is the sun. I baptize with water only; he with the Holy Spirit. This is hallowing God's name, when we transfer all honor from ourselves to God. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us—but unto your name give glory." Psalm 115:1.

[9] We hallow and sanctify God's name by obeying him. How does a son more honor his father, than by obedience? "I delight to do your will, O my God." Psalm 40:8. The wise men showed honor to Christ, not only by bowing the knee to him—but by presenting him with gold and myrrh. Matthew 2:11. We hallow God's name, not only by lifting up our eyes and hands to heaven and bowing the knee in prayer—but by presenting him with golden obedience. We trade for God and lay out our strength in his service. It was a saying of Dr Jewel, "I have spent and exhausted myself in the labors of my holy calling." "To obey is better than sacrifice." The cherubim representing the angels are set forth with their wings displayed, to show how ready they are to do service to God. *To obey is angelic*; to pretend honor to God's name, and yet not obey, is but a *devout compliment*. Abraham honored God by obedience; he was ready to sacrifice his son, though the son of his old age, and a son of the promise. "By myself have I sworn, says the Lord, for because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son: that in blessing I will bless you." Gen 22:16, 17.

[10] We hallow and sanctify God's name when we lift up his name in our praises. God is said to sanctify, and man is said to sanctify. God sanctifies us by giving us grace; and we sanctify him by giving him praise. What were our tongues given for but to be organs of God's praise? "Let my mouth be filled with your praise and with your honor all the day." Psalm 71:8. "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever." Rev 5:13. Thus God's name is hallowed and sanctified in heaven; the angels and glorified saints are singing hallelujahs. Let us begin the work of heaven here. David sang forth God's praises and doxologies in a most melodious manner, and was, therefore, called the sweet singer of Israel. 2 Samuel 23:1. Praising God is hallowing his name; it spreads his renown; it displays the trophies of his

excellency; it exalts him in the eyes of others. "Whoever offers praise, glorifies me." Psalm 123. This is one of the highest and purest acts of true religion.

*In **prayer** we act like men; in **praise** we act like angels!* Praise is the music of heaven, and a work fit for a saint. "Let the saints be joyful: let the high praises of God be in their mouth." Psalm 149:5, 6. None but saints can in a right manner thus hallow God's name by praising him. As everyone has not skill to play on the violin and organ, so everyone cannot rightly sound forth God's harmonious praises; only the saints can do it; they alone can make their *tongue* and *heart* join in concert. "I will praise the Lord with my whole heart." Psalm 111:1. "He was extolled with my tongue." Psalm 66:17. Here was joining in concert. This hallowing God's name by praise is very befitting a Christian. It is unbefitting to murmur, which is dishonoring God's name; but it becomes the saints to be spiritual choristers, singing forth the honor of his name. It is called the "garment of praise." Isaiah 61:3. How lovely and handsome is this garment of praise for a saint to wear! "Praise is lovely for the upright." Psalm 33:1. Especially is it a high degree of hallowing God's name—when we can speak well of him and bless him in an afflicted state. "The Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1:21. Many will bless God when he gives—but to bless him when he takes away, is in a high degree to honor him and hallow his name. Let us thus magnify God's name. Has he not given us abundant matter for praising him? He has given us *grace*, a mercy spun and woven out of his affections; and he intends to crown grace with *glory*. This should make us hallow his name by being trumpets for his praise.

[11] We hallow and sanctify God's name when we sympathize with him; when we grieve when his name

suffers.

(1) We lay to heart his dishonor. How was Moses affected with God's dishonor! He broke the tables of the law. Exod 32:19. We grieve to see God's worship adulterated, the *wine of truth* mingled with error.

(2) We grieve when God's church is brought low, because his name suffers. Nehemiah lays to heart the miseries of Zion; his complexion begins to alter, and he looks sad. "Why is your countenance sad?" Neh 2:2. What! sad, when the king's cup-bearer, and wine is so near! Oh! but it fared badly with the church of God, and true religion seemed to lose ground, and God's name suffered; therefore Nehemiah grows weary of the court; he leaves his wine and mingles his drink with weeping. Such holy sympathy and grieving when God's name suffers, he esteems as honoring and sanctifying his name. Hezekiah grieved when the king of Assyria reproached the living God. He went to the temple, and spread the letter of blasphemy before the Lord. Isaiah 37:17. He no doubt watered the letter with his tears; he seemed not to be so much troubled at the fear of losing his own life and kingdom, as that God should lose his glory.

[12] We hallow and sanctify God's name when we give the same honor to God the Son, that we give to God the Father. "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." John 5:23. The Socinians deny Christ's divinity, saying that he is a mere man: which is to make him below the angels. The human nature, considered in itself, is below the angelic, and thus they reflect dishonor upon the Lord of glory. Psalm 8:5. We must give equal honor to the Son as to the Father; we must believe Christ's deity; he is the picture of his Father's glory. Heb 1:3. If the Godhead be in Christ, he must needs be God; but the Godhead shines in him. "In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;" therefore, he is

God. Col 2:9. How could these divine titles be given to Christ as omnipotence, in Heb 1:3; omnipresence, in Matthew 28:20; a power of sealing pardons in Matthew 9:6; co-equality with God the Father, both in power and dignity, in John 5:21, 23, if he were not crowned with Deity? When we believe Christ's Godhead, and build our hope of salvation on the corner-stone of his merit; when we see that neither the righteousness of the law, nor of angels, can justify—but flee to Christ's blood as to the altar of refuge; this is honoring and sanctifying God's name. God never thinks his name hallowed unless his Son is honored.

[13] We hallow God's name by standing up for his truths. Much of God's glory lies in his truths. His truths are his oracles. He entrusts us with his truths as a treasure; we have not a richer jewel to entrust him with than our souls, nor has he a greater jewel to entrust us with than his truths. His truths set forth his glory. When we are zealous advocates for his truths, it is an honor done to his name. Athanasius was called the bulwark of truth; he stood up in the defense of God's truths against the Arians, and so was a pillar in the temple of God. *We had better have truth without peace, than peace without truth*. It concerns the sons of Zion to stand up for the great doctrines of the gospel; as the doctrine of the Trinity, the hypostatic union, justification by faith, and the saints' perseverance. We are bid to contend earnestly, to strive as in an agony for the faith—that is, the doctrine of faith. Jude 3. This contending for the truth, brings great revenues to heaven's treasury; and hallows God's name. Some can contend for *ceremonies*—but not for the *truth*. We should count him unwise that should contend for a box of pennies, more than for his box of jewels.

[14] We hallow and sanctify God's name by making as many proselytes as we can to him; when, by all holy expedients,

counsel, prayer, example, we endeavor the salvation of others. How did Monica, Augustine's mother, labor for his conversion! She had sorer pangs in travail for his new birth than for his natural birth. It is hallowing God's name when we diffuse the sweet savor of godliness, and propagate true religion to others; when not only we ourselves honor God—but are instruments to make others honor him. Certainly when the heart is seasoned with grace, there will be an endeavor to season others. God's glory is as dear to a saint as his own salvation; and that this glory may be promoted he endeavors the conversion of souls. Every convert is a new member added to Christ. Let us then hallow God's name by laboring to advance piety in others; especially let us endeavor that those who are nearly related to us, or are under our roof, may honor God. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Josh 24:15. Let us make our houses Bethels, places where God's name is called upon. "Salute Nymphas, and the church that is in his house." Col 4:15. Let the parent endeavor that his children may honor God, and the master that his servants may honor him. Read the Word, drop holy instruction, perfume your houses with prayer. The Jews had sacrifices in their families, as well as in the tabernacle. Exod 12:3. This is hallowing God's name when we make proselytes to him, and endeavor that all under our charge should honor and sanctify his name.

[15] We hallow God's name when we prefer the honor of his name before the dearest things.

(1) When we prefer the honor of God's name before our own credit. The saints of old have, for the honor of God, been willing to endure reproach. "For your sake I have borne reproach." Psalm 69:7. David cared not what reproach he suffered, just so that God's name might not suffer. The prophet Elijah was called in derision, the "hairy prophet;" and the prophet Isaiah "the bearer of

burdens;" and the prophet Zephaniah, "the bitter prophet;" but these reproaches, were as a crown about their head. The honor of God's name was dearer to them than their own honor. Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Heb 11:26. The apostles went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ! that they were graced so far as to be disgraced for the name of Christ. Acts 5:41. We hallow God's name when we are content to have our name eclipsed, that his name may shine the more.

(2) When we prefer the honor of God's name before our worldly profit and interest. "We have forsaken all, and followed you." Matthew 19:27. When these two, God and estate, come in competition, we would rather let estate go than God's love and favor. Thus that noble Marquis of Vice parted with a fair estate, using these words, "Let their money perish with them, who count all the gold and silver in the world worth one hour's communion with Jesus Christ."

(3) When we prefer the honor of God's name before our own life. "For your sake we are killed all the day long." Romans 8:36. The honor done to God's name is not by bringing the outward pomp and glory to him as we do to kings—but it comes in another way, and that is by the sufferings of his people. When the world sees how entirely his people love him, that they will die in his service—it exalts and honors his name. God's crown flourishes in the ashes of his martyrs. Basil speaks of a virgin, condemned to the fire, who having her life and estate offered her, if she would bow to the idol, answered, "Let life and money go, welcome Christ!" When God's glory weighs heaviest in the balance, and we are willing to suffer the loss of all rather than God's name should suffer, we do, in a high degree, hallow God's name.

[16] We hallow and sanctify God's name by a holy life. "You are a royal priesthood, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you." 1 Peter 2:9. As an unholy life dishonors God's name, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you;" Romans 2:24, so by our holy and Bible lives—we honor God's name. A holy life speaks louder than all the anthems and praises in the world. Though the main work of religion lies in the heart—yet when our light so shines, that others behold it, we glorify God. When our lives shine, his name shines in us. When we carry the picture of Christ about us in our holy example, we bring honor to God's name.

Use 1. See the true note and character of a godly person: he is a sanctifier of God's name. A true saint ambitiously endeavors to advance God's name. The question which he asks himself in everything he is going about is, "Will this action tend to the honor of God's name? Will it exalt God?" It was Paul's chief design that Christ might be magnified, that the crown upon his head might flourish. Phil 1:20. A godly man thinks it scarce worth his while to live—if he may not bring some revenues of honor to God's name.

Use 2. I may here take up a sad lamentation, and speak, as the apostle Paul, weeping. Phil 3:18. Consider how God's name, instead of being hallowed and sanctified, is dishonored. His name, which is worth more than the salvation of all men's souls, suffers deeply. We are apt to speak of our sufferings; alas! what are all our sufferings! God's name suffers most. His name is the dearest thing he has. How do men stand upon their name and honor! God's name is this day dishonored; it is like the sun in an eclipse. Theodosius took it heinously when they threw dirt upon his statue; but what is far worse, disgrace is thrown upon the glorious name of Jehovah. His

name, instead of being hallowed, is dishonored by all sorts; by heathens, by Turks, by Jews, by Papists, and by Protestants.

(1) By **heathen**; who have a knowledge of a godhead by the light of nature; yet dishonor him, and sin against the light of nature. Romans 1:19. The Egyptians worship an ox; the Persians worship the sun; the Grecians and Romans, Jupiter; and the Parthians worship the devil.

(2) God's name is dishonored by the **Turks**, who adore Mahomet their great prophet, as one divinely inspired. Mahomet was of an impure, wicked nature. He plucked the crown from Christ's head by denying his Deity.

(3) God's name is dishonored by the **Jews**, who give not equal honor and adoration to God the Son, as to God the Father. They expect a Messiah yet to come. They believe not in Christ; they blaspheme him; they reject imputed righteousness; they vilify the Christian Sabbath.

(4) God's name is dishonored by the **Papists**. Theirs is a God-dishonoring religion. They dishonor the name of God by their idolatry, which is spiritual adultery. *Idolatry is to worship a false God, or the true God in a false manner*. They dishonor God by their idolatry, in making graven images, and giving the same honor to those who is due to God. *Images* are teachers of lies. They represent God in a bodily shape. Hab 2:18. They dishonor God by their idolatry in the mass; worshiping the host, and offering it up as a sacrifice for sin. The apostle says, "By one offering, Christ has perfected forever those who are sanctified" (Heb 10:14); but as if his offering on the cross were imperfect, they offer him up daily in the mass, which is a dishonor to Christ's priestly office.

The Papist, instead of hallowing God's name, dishonors it by locking up the Scriptures in an unknown tongue. Like the Philistines, they

pluck out people's eyes, and then make sport with them. The Bible is a shining light—but they draw a curtain over it; they take away the key of knowledge, and hinder God's glory by hindering men's salvation. Luke 11:52.

Instead of hallowing God's name, they dishonor it by giving men indulgences. They say the Pope, as Peter's successor, has power to grant indulgences, by virtue whereof men are set free in the sight of God. This is to steal a flower from the crown of heaven. The Pope assumes a power to pardon, which is God's royal prerogative. "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Mark 2:7. The Pope, by his indulgence, encourages men to sin. What need the Papists care what sins they commit, when they have a license from the Pope to commit sin?

Instead of hallowing God's name, they dishonor it by their invocation to saints. We are to pray to God only. "Pray to your Father;" not pray to a saint or the Virgin Mary—but pray to your Father in heaven. Matthew 6:6. We may pray to none but whom we may believe in. Romans 10:14. The saints in heaven are ignorant of our grievances. "Abraham is ignorant of us." Isaiah 63:16.

Instead of hallowing God's name, they dishonor it, by their luxury and uncleanness. At Rome, fornication keeps open shop, and is in some cases preferred before honorable matrimony. [The whole city is now a brothel.]

Instead of hallowing God's name, they dishonor it, by their blasphemies. They give equal, nay, more honor to the Virgin Mary than to Christ; they ascribe more to her breast-milk, than to his blood; they call her *Scala Coeli*, the ladder of heaven; *Janua paradisi*, the gate of Paradise. In their doxologies they say, "Praise be to the Virgin Mary, and also to Christ." What blasphemy is this, to set

the creature above the Creator! They say to her, "O happy Mother of a Son, who purges away our crimes!"

Instead of hallowing God's name, they dishonor it, by their lies. Their golden legend is an imposture, and is full of lying wonders. They show John Baptist's forehead for a relic in Spain—yet his whole head they affirm to be seen in St. Sylvester's in Rome. They show Peter's shadow at Rome. We read of Peter's shadow in Acts 5:15; but it is strange how the Papists could catch it, and keep it with them so long.

Instead of hallowing God's name, they dishonor it, by baptising sin with the name of virtue. Breach of oaths is with the Papists a virtue. If a man has bound his soul to God by an oath, to violate it is virtuous, if it may propagate the Catholic cause. Killing those who are of a different religion, is not only venial—but a virtue among Catholics! Destroying two hundred thousand of the Albigenses, who were Protestants, was commended as a glorious action, honored with a triumph at Rome, and crowned with *his holiness'* blessing. Is not this a high dishonor to God, to gild over the foulest crimes with the name of virtue and piety? Instead of hallowing God's name, they dishonor it, by their damnable assertions. The Papists affirm that the Pope is above Scripture; that he may dispense with it, and that his canon binds more then the Word of God. They teach salvation by good works; but if a debtor cannot pay his creditor, how can he merit at his hands? They affirm that the Scripture is not a perfect rule of faith and manners; and therefore eke it out with their traditions, which they hold to be of equal authority. They teach that an intellectual faith is saving. They say, that the inward act of the mind is not required in God's worship. Diversion of the mind in duty, though one prays and never thinks of God, is no sin, as Angelus and Sylvester, and other Papists say. They make habitual love to God unnecessary. "It is not needful," says Bellarmine, "to perform any

acts of religion out of love to God." Stapleton and Cajetan affirm, that the precept of loving God with all our heart is not binding; by which they cut asunder the sinews and soul of all religion. Thus, instead of honoring God's name, the Papists dishonor it. Let us pray heartily, that this Romish religion may never again get footing in this nation. God grant that this poisonous weed of Popery may never be watered here; but that being a plant which our heavenly Father has not planted, it may be rooted up!

(5) God's name is dishonored by **Protestants**. How is his name this day dishonored in England! Christians, instead of hallowing God's name, preach and dishonor it by their **tongues**. They speak irreverently of his name. God's name is sacred. "That you may fear this glorious and fearful name: *the Lord Your God*." Deut 28:58. The names of kings are not mentioned without giving them their tides of honor, high and mighty; but men speak irreverently of God, as if he were like one of them. Psalm 50:21. This is taking God's name in vain. They swear by his name. Many seldom mention God's name but in oaths. How is he dishonored, when men rend and tear his name by oaths and imprecations! "Because of swearing, the land mourns." Jer 23:10. If God will reckon with men for idle words, shall not idle oaths be put into the account-book! "Oh! but," says one, "I cannot help it: it is a custom of swearing I have got, and I cannot help it. I hope God will forgive me." Is the *habit of swearing* a good plea? It is no excuse —but an aggravation of sin; as if one who had been accused of killing a man should plead with the judge to spare him, because it was his habit to murder. That would be an aggravation of the offence; for would not the judge say, "You shall surely die!" So it is here.

As men dishonor God by their tongues, so by their **lives**. What is it to say, "Hallowed be your name," when in their lives they profane his name? They dishonor God by their atheism, uncleanness, perjury,

intemperance, and injustice. Men hang out a flag of defiance against heaven. As the Thracians, when it thunders, shoot their arrows against heaven, so men shoot their sins as bearded arrows against heaven. Sinners are hardened in sin, they despise counsel, they laugh at reproof, they cast off the veil of modesty. Satan has taken such full possession of them, that when they sin, they glory in their shame. Phil 3:19. They brag how many new oaths they have invented, how often they have been drunk, how many they have defiled; they declare their sin as Sodom. Such horrid impieties are committed, that a modest heathen would blush at. *Men in this age sin at that rate, as if either they did not believe there were a hell, or as if they feared hell would be full before they could get there!* Was God's name ever so openly dishonored? All our preaching will not make them leave their sins.

What a black veil is drawn over the face of religion at this day? "We live in the dregs of time," wherein the common sewer of wickedness runs. Physicians call it cachexia, when there is no part of the body free from distemper. England has such a disease. "The whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint." Isaiah 1:5. As black vapors rising out of the earth cloud and darken the sun, so the sins of people in our age, like hellish vapors, cast a cloud upon God's glorious name. O that our eyes were rivers of water of holy tears, to see how God's name, instead of being hallowed, is polluted and profaned! May we not justly fear some heavy judgements on this account? Can God put up with our affronts any longer? Can he endure to have his name reproached? Will a king allow his crown-jewels to be trampled in the dust? Do we not see the symptoms of God's anger? Do we not see his judgements hovering over us? Surely God is whetting his sword, he has bent his bow, and is preparing his arrows to shoot!

The body politic is in a paroxysm, or burning fit; and may not the Lord cause a sad phlebotomy? Seeing we will not leave our sins, he may make us lose our blood. May we not fear that the ark should remove, the vision cease, the stars in God's church be removed, and we follow the gospel to the grave? When God's name, which should be hallowed, is profaned by a nation, it is just with God to write that dismal epitaph upon its tomb, "The glory is departed." It were well if the profane party only were guilty; but may not many professors be called to the bar, and indicted for having dishonored God's name? "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" 2 Chron 28:10. Are these the spots of God's children? Deut 32:5. If you are diamonds, have you no flaws? Have you not your vanities? If your discourse be not profane, is it not vain? Have you not your self-seekings, rash censures, indecent dresses? If the wicked of the land *swear*, do not you sometimes *slander*? If they are drunk with *wine*, are not you sometimes drunk with *passion*? If their sin is *blaspheming*, is not your sin *murmuring*? "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord?"

The sins of God's children go nearer to his heart than the sins of others. "When the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters." Deut 32:19. The sins of the wicked *anger* God, the sins of his own people *grieve* him; he will be sure to punish them. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Amos 3:2. O that our head were waters, that we could make this place a Bochim, a place of weeping, that God's children might mix blushing with tears, that they have so little hallowed, and so much eclipsed, God's name! Truly his own people have sinned enough to justify him in all his severe acting against them.

Use 3. For exhortation. Let us hallow and sanctify God's name. Could we but see a glimpse of God's glory, as Moses did in the rock, it would draw adoration and praise from us. Could we "see God face to face," as the angels in heaven do, could we behold him sitting on his throne, at the sight of his glory we would do as the twenty-four elders, who "worship him that lives forever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power." Rev 4:11. That we may be stirred up to this great duty of hallowing, adoring, and sanctifying God's name—let us consider:

(1) It is the very end of our being. Why did God give us life—but that by living we may hallow his name? Why did he give us souls—but to admire him? and tongues—but to praise him? The excellence of a thing—is the *end* for which it was made; as of a star to give light, and of a plant to be fruitful. So the excellence of a Christian is to answer the end of his creation, which is to hallow God's name, and live to that God by whom he lives. He who lives, and of whom God has no honor, buries himself alive, and exposes himself to a curse. Christ cursed the barren fig-tree.

(2) God's name is so excellent that it deserves to be hallowed. "How excellent is your name in all the earth!" Psalm 8:9. "You are clothed with honor and majesty." Psalm 104:1. As the sun has its brightness, whether we admire it or not, so God's name is illustrious and glorious, whether we hallow it or not. In him are all shining perfections—holiness, wisdom, and mercy. He is "worthy to be praised." 2 Samuel 22:4. God is *dignus honore*, worthy of honor, love, and adoration. We often bestow titles of honor upon those who do not deserve them; but God is worthy to be praised; his name deserves hallowing; he is above all the honor and praise which angels in heaven give him.

(3) We pray, "hallowed be your name"; that is, let your name be honored and magnified by us. If we do not magnify his name, we contradict our own prayers. To say, "hallowed be your name," yet not to bring honor to God's name, is to take his name in vain.

(4) If men will not hallow God's name, and bring revenues of honor to him—he will get honor upon them. "I will get honor upon Pharaoh." Exod 14:17. Pharaoh would not hallow God's name; he said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him?" Well, says God, if Pharaoh will not honor me, I will get honor upon him. When God overthrew him and his chariots in the sea, he got honor upon him. God's power and justice were gloried in his *destruction*. There are some whom God has raised to great power and dignity, and they will not honor his name; they make use of their power to dishonor him; they cast reproach upon his name, and revile his servants. If they will not honor God, he will get honor upon them in their final ruin. Herod did not give glory to God—but God got glory upon him. "The angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not God the glory, and he was eaten by worms!" Acts 12:23.

(5) It will be no small comfort to us when we come to die, that we have hallowed and sanctified God's name. Christ's comfort a little before his death was, "I have glorified you on the earth." John 17:4. His redeeming mankind was hallowing and glorifying God's name. Never was more honor brought to God's name than by this great undertaking of Christ. Here was his comfort before death, that he had hallowed God's name, and brought glory to him. So, what a cordial will it be to us at last, when our whole life has been a hallowing of God's name! We have loved him with our *hearts*, praised him with our *lips*, honored him with our *lives*; we have been to the praise of his glory. Eph 1:6. At the hour of death, all your

earthly comforts will vanish; to think how rich you have been, or what pleasures you have enjoyed upon earth, will not give one grain of comfort. What is one the better for an estate that is spent? But to have conscience witnessing that you have hallowed God's name, that your whole life has been glorifying him—what sweet peace and satisfaction will this give!

How glad is that servant who has been all day working in the vineyard, when evening comes, that he shall receive his pay! How sweet will death be when those who have spent their lives in honoring God, shall receive the recompense of reward! What comfort was it to Hezekiah, when on his sick bed, that he could appeal to God, "Remember, Lord, how I have walked before you with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in your sight." Isaiah 38:3. I have hallowed your name, I have brought all the honor I could to you, "I have done that which is good in your sight."

(6) There is nothing lost by what we do for God. If we bring honor to his name, he will honor us. As Balak said to Balaam, "Am not I able to promote you to honor?" Num 22:37. So if we hallow and sanctify God's name, is he not able to promote us to honor? He will honor us in our life. He will put honor upon our **persons**: he will number us among his jewels. Mal 3:17. He will make us a royal diadem in his hand. Isaiah 62:3. He will lift us up in the eyes of others. "They shall be as the stones of a crown lifted up, as an ensign of glory." Zech 9:17. He will esteem us as the cream and flower of the creation. "Since you were precious in my sight, you have been honorable." Isaiah 43:4.

God will put honor upon our **names**. "The memory of the just is blessed." Proverbs 10:7. How renowned have the saints been in all ages, who have hallowed God's name! How renowned was Abraham

for his faith, Moses for his meekness, David for his zeal, Paul for his love to Christ! Their names as a precious ointment, send forth a sweet perfume in God's church to this day.

God will honor us at our **death**. He will send his angels to carry us up with triumph into heaven. "The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Luke 16:22. Amasis king of Egypt, had his chariot drawn by four kings, whom he had conquered in war; but what is this, compared to the glory every believer shall have at his death? He shall be carried by the angels of God!

God will put honor upon us after death. He will put glory upon our **bodies**. We shall be as the angels, not for substance—but quality; our bodies shall be agile and nimble. Now they are as a weight, then they shall be as a wing, moving swiftly from place to place; they shall be full of clarity and brightness, like Christ's glorious body. Phil 3:21. The bodies of the saints shall be as cloth dyed into a scarlet color, made more illustrious; they shall be so clear and transparent, that the soul shall sparkle through them, as the wine through the glass. God will put glory upon our souls. If the *cabinet* of the body shall be so illustrious, of what orient brightness shall the *jewel* be! Then will be the great coronation day, when the saints shall wear the robe of immortality, and the crown of righteousness which fades not away. Oh, how glorious will that garland be, which is made of the flowers of paradise! Who then would not hallow and glorify his name, and spread his renown in the world, who will put such immortal honor upon his people, "as eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of man to conceive"?

(7) If men do not hallow—but profane and dishonor God's name, he will pour contempt upon them. Though they be ever so great, and though clothed in purple and scarlet, they shall be

abhorred by God, and their name shall rot! Though the name of Judas is in the Bible, and the name of Pontius Pilate be in the Creed —yet their names stand there for infamy, as traitors to the crown of heaven. "I will make your grave, for you are vile." Nahum 1:14. It is said of Antiochus Epiphanes, though he was a king, and his name signifies illustrious—yet God esteemed him vile. To show how base the wicked are in God's esteem, he compares them to things most vile—to chaff (Psalm 1:4); to dross (Psalm 119:119); to the filth that foams out of the sea (Isaiah 57:20). As God vilely esteems such as do not hallow his name, so he sends them to a vile place at last. Vagrants are sent to the house of correction; and hell is the house of correction to which the wicked are sent when they die. Let all this prevail with us to hallow and sanctify God's name.

What should we do to honor and sanctify God's name?

(1) Get a sound **knowledge** of God. Take a view of his superlative excellencies; his holiness, his incomprehensible goodness. The angels know God better than we, therefore they sanctify his name, and sing hallelujahs to him. Let us labor to know him to be our God. "This God is our God." Psalm 48:14. We may dread him as a judge—but we cannot honor him as a *father*, until we know he is *our* God.

(2) Get a sincere **love** to God; a love of appreciation, and a love of delight to delight in him. "Lord, you know that I love you." John 21:15. He can never honor his master—who does not love him. The reason God's name is no more hallowed, is because his name is no more loved.

So much for the first petition, **"Hallowed be your name."** Matthew 6:9.

The Second Petition in the Lord's Prayer

"May Your kingdom come." Matthew 6:10

A soul truly devoted to God, joins heartily in this petition, "your kingdom come." In these words it is implied that **God is a king**, for he who has a kingdom, can be no less than a king. "God is the King of all the earth." Psalm 47:7. He is a King upon his **throne**. "God sits upon the throne of his holiness." Psalm 47:8. He has a regal **title**, high and mighty. "Thus says the high and lofty One." Isaiah 57:15. He has the *ensigns of royalty*. He has his **sword**. "If I whet my glittering sword." Deut 32:41. He has his **scepter**. "A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom." Heb 1:8. He has his royal **crown**. "On his head were many crowns." Rev 19:12. He has his *jura regalia,* his **kingly prerogatives**. He has power to make laws, to seal pardons, which are the flowers and jewels belonging to his crown. Thus the Lord is King.

Further, he is a **great King**. "A great King above all gods." Psalm 95:3. He is great in and of himself; and not like other kings, who are made great by their subjects. That he is so great a King appears by the immensity of his being. "Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord." Jer 23:24. His center is everywhere; he is nowhere included—yet nowhere excluded. He is so immensely great, that "the heaven of heavens cannot contain him". 1 Kings 8:27.

His greatness appears by the effects of his power. He "made heaven and earth," and can unmake it. Psalm 124:8. With a breath he can crumble us to dust; with a word he can unpin the world, and break the axle-tree of it in pieces. "He pours contempt upon princes." Job 12:21. "He shall cut off the spirit of princes." Psalm 76:12. He is Lord

paramount, who does whatever he will. Psalm 115:3. He weighs "the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance." Psalm 40:12.

God is a glorious King. "Who is this King of glory? The Lord Almighty, he is the King of glory." Psalm 24:10. He has **internal** glory. "The Lord reigns, he is clothed with majesty." Psalm 93:1. Other kings have royal and sumptuous apparel to make them appear glorious to beholders—but all their magnificence is borrowed. But God is clothed with his own majesty; his own glorious essence is instead of royal robes, and "he has girded himself with strength." Kings have their guard about them to defend their person, because they are not able to defend themselves; but God needs no guard or assistance from others. "He has girded himself with strength." His own power is his lifeguard. "Who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?" Psalm 89:6. He has a pre-eminence above all other kings for majesty. "He has on his vesture a name written, *Rex Regum*, KING OF KINGS." Rev 19:16. He has the highest throne, the richest crown, the largest dominions, and the longest possession. "The Lord sits King forever." Psalm 29:10. Though he has many heirs —yet no successors. He sets up his throne where no other king does; he rules the *will* and *affections*; his power binds the *conscience*. Angels serve him, all the kings of the earth hold their crowns and diadems by immediate tenure from this great King. "By me kings reign," Proverbs 8:15. To this Lord Jehovah, all kings must give account; and from his tribunal there is no appeal.

Use 1. For instruction

(1) If God is so great a King, and sits King forever, it is no disparagement for us to serve him! It is an honor to serve a king. If the angels fly swiftly upon the King of heaven's message, then

well may we look upon it as a favor to be taken into his royal service. Dan 9:21. Theodosius thought it a greater honor to be God's servant —than to be an emperor. It is more honor to serve God—than to have kings serve us. Every subject of this King is crowned with regal honor! He "has made us kings." Rev 1:6. therefore, as the queen of Sheba, having seen the glory of Solomon's kingdom, said, "Happy are these your servants who stand continually before you." 1 Kings 10:8. So happy are those saints who stand before the King of heaven, and wait on his throne.

(2) If God is such a glorious King, crowned with wisdom, armed with power, be spangled with riches, it shows us what prudence it is to have this King to be ours; to say, "*My* King, and *my* God!" Psalm 5:2. It is counted great policy to be on the strongest side. If we belong to the King of heaven, we are sure to be on the strongest side. The King of glory can with ease destroy his adversaries; he can pull down their pride, befoul their policy and restrain their malice. That stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which smote the image (Dan 2:34), was an emblem, says Augustine, of Christ's monarchial power, conquering and triumphing over his enemies. If we are on God's side, we are on the strongest side; he can with a word destroy his enemies. "Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath." Psalm 2:5. Nay, with a *look* he can destroy them. "Look upon everyone that is proud and bring him low." Job 40:12. It needs cost God no more to confound those who rise up against him, than a look, a cast of his eye. "In the morning watch, the Lord looked unto the army of the Egyptians, through the pillar of fire, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot-wheels." Exod 14:24. What wisdom is it then to have this King to be ours! Then we are on the strongest side.

Use 2. For exhortation

(1) If God is so glorious a King, full of power and majesty, let us TRUST in him. "Those who know your name will put their trust in you." Psalm 9:10. Trust him with your soul; you cannot put this jewel in safer hands. And trust him with church and state affairs; he is King. "The Lord is a man of war." Exod 15:3. He can bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations. If means fail, he is never at a loss; there are no impossibilities with him; he can make the dry bones live. Ezek 37:10. As a *King* he can command, and as a *God* he can create salvation. "I create Jerusalem a rejoicing." Isaiah 65:18. Let us trust all our affairs with this great King. Either God can *remove* mountains—or he can *leap* over them! Canticles 2:8.

(2) If God is so great a King, let us FEAR him. "Do you not fear me? says the Lord: will you not tremble at my presence?" Jer 5:22. We have enough of fear of *men*. Fear makes danger appear greater, and sin less; but let us fear the King of kings, who has power to cast body and soul into hell. Luke 12:5. As one wedge drives out another, so the fear of God would drive out all base carnal fear. Let us fear that God whose throne is set above all kings; they may be *mighty*—but he is *almighty*. Kings have no power—but what God has given them; their power is limited, his is infinite. Let us fear this King, whose eyes are "as a flame of fire." Rev 1:14. "The mountains quake at him; and the rocks are thrown down by him." Nahum 1:5, 6. If he stamps with his foot, all the creatures are presently up in a battalion to fight for him. Oh, tremble and fear before this God. The fear of God, is the doorkeeper of the soul. It keeps sin from entering. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen 39:9.

(3) If God is so glorious a King, he has the power of life and death in his hand. Let all the potentates of the earth take heed how they employ their power against the King of heaven. They

employ their power against God, who with their scepters beat down his truth, which is the most orient pearl of his crown; who crush and persecute his people, who are the apple of his eye (Zech 2:8); who trample upon his laws, and royal edicts, which he has set forth (Psalm 2:3). What is a king without his laws? Let all who are invested with worldly power and grandeur, take heed how they oppose the King of glory. The Lord will be too hard for all who come against him. "Have you an arm like God?" Job 40:9. Will you measure arms with the Almighty? Shall a little child fight with an archangel? "Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with you?" Ezek 22:14. Christ will put all his enemies at last under his feet. Psalm 110:1. All the multitude of the wicked, who set themselves against God, shall be but as so many clusters of ripe grapes, to be cast into the winepress of the wrath of God, to be trodden by him until their blood comes forth. The King of glory will come off victor at last. Men may set up their standard—but God always sets up his *trophies* of victory.

The Lord has a golden scepter, and an iron rod. Psalm 2:9. Those who will not *bow* to the one, shall be *broken* by the other.

(4) Is God so great a king, having all power in heaven and earth in his hand—let us learn subjection to him. You who have gone on in sin, and by your impieties hung out a flag of defiance against the King of heaven, O come in quickly, and make your peace, submit to God. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry." Psalm 2:12. Kiss Christ with a kiss of love, and a kiss of obedience. Obey the King of heaven, when he speaks to you by his ministers and ambassadors. 2 Cor 5:20. When God bids you flee from sin, and espouse holiness, obey him: to obey is better than sacrifice. "To obey God," says Luther, "is better than to work miracles." Obey God **willingly**. Isaiah 1:19. That is the best obedience, which is *cheerful*, as that is the

sweetest honey which *drops* out of the comb. Obey God **swiftly**. "Then lifted I up my eyes, and, behold, two women, and the wind was in their wings." Zech 5:9. Wings are swift—but wind in the wings denotes great swiftness; such should our obedience to God be. Obey the King of glory.

Use 3. For consolation. Here is comfort to those who are the subjects of the King of heaven. God will put forth all the royal power for their support and comfort.

(1) The King of heaven will plead their cause. "I will plead your cause, and take vengeance for you." Jer 51:36.

(2) He will protect his people. He sets an invisible guard about them. "I will be unto her a wall of fire round about." Zech 2:5. A wall, that is defensive; a wall of fire, that is offensive.

(3) When it may be for the good of his people, he will raise up deliverance to them. "The Lord saved them by a great deliverance." 1 Chron 11:14. God reigning as a king, can save any way; even by *contemptible* means, as the blowing of the trumpets, and blazing of lamps. Judges 7:20. He can save by *contrary* means; as when he made the sea a wall to Israel, and the waters were a means to keep them from drowning. The fish's belly was a ship in which Jonah sailed safe to shore. God will never lack ways of saving his people; rather than fail, their very enemies shall do his work. 2 Chron 20:23. He sets Ammon and Mount Seir one against another. As God will deliver his people from *temporal danger*, so from *spiritual danger*, as from *sin*, and from *hell*. "Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come." 1 Thess 1: l0.

Use 4. For intimidation. If God is king, he will set his utmost strength against those who are the enemies of his kingdom. "A fire

goes before him, and burns up his enemies round about." Psalm 97:3.

(1) He will set **himself** against his enemies. He will set his attributes against them, his power and justice; and "who knows the power of your anger?" Psalm 90:2.

(2) He will set the **creatures** against them. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera." Judges 5:20. Tertullian observes, that when the Persian fought against the Christians, a mighty wind arose, which made the Persian arrows to fly back in their own faces. Every creature has a quarrel with a sinner; the stone out of the wall, the hail and the frost. Hab 2:11. "He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycomore-trees with frost." Psalm 78:47.

(3) God will set **men** against themselves. He will set conscience against them. How terrible is this rod—when turned into a serpent! Melanchthon calls it a hellish fury! It is called *vermis conscientiae*, the worm of conscience. Mark 9:44. What a worm did Spira feel in his conscience! He was a terror to himself. The worst civil wars are between a man and his conscience.

(4) God will set the **diseases** of men's bodies against them. "The Lord smote Jehoram in his bowels with an incurable disease." 2 Chron 21:18. God can raise an army against a man out of his own body; he can set one humor of the body against another; the heat to dry up the moisture, and the moisture to drown the heat. The Lord needs not go far for instruments to punish the sinner; he can make the joints of the same body to smite one against another. Dan 5:6.

(5) God will set men's **friends** against them. Where they used to have honey, they shall have nothing but aloes and wormwood. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to

be at peace with him." Proverbs 16:7. When he opposes God, he makes his friends to be his enemies. The wife of emperor Commodes, gave him poison in perfumed wine. Sennacherib's two sons were the death of him. 2 Kings 19:37.

(6) God will set **Satan** against them. "Let Satan stand at his right hand." Psalm 109:6. What does Satan do, at the sinner's elbows? He helps him to contrive sin. He tempts him to commit sin. He terrifies him for sin. He who has Satan standing at his *right* hand, is sure to be set at God's *left* hand. Here is the misery of such as oppose God's royal scepter, that he will set everything in the world against them. **If there is either justice in heaven or fire in hell—the ungodly shall not be unpunished!**

Use 5. For encouragement. If God is such an absolute monarch, and crowned with such glory and majesty—let us all engage in his service, and stand up for his truth and worship. Dare to own God in the worst time. He is King of kings, and is able to reward all his servants. We may be losers *for* him, we shall never be losers *by* him. We are ready to say, as Amaziah, "What shall I do for the hundred talents?" 2 Chron 25:9. If I appear for God, I may lose my estate, or my life. I say with the prophet, God is able to give you much more than this; he can give you for the *present* inward peace, and for the *future* a crown of glory which fades not away.

What kingdom is meant when Christ says, "Your kingdom come"?

Let us show first what he does NOT mean.

(1) He does not mean a political or **earthly** kingdom. The apostles indeed did desire Christ's temporal reign. "Will you at this time restore the kingdom again to Israel?" Acts 1:6. But Christ said his

kingdom was not of this world. John 18:36. So that, when Christ taught his disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come," he did not mean it of any earthly kingdom, that he should reign here in outward pomp and splendor.

(2) It is not meant of God's **providential** kingdom. "His kingdom rules over all;" that is, the kingdom of his providence. Psalm 103:19. This kingdom we do not pray for when we say, "Your kingdom come;" for this kingdom is already come. God NOW exercises the kingdom of his providence in the world. "He puts down one and sets up another." Psalm 75:7. Nothing stirs in the world but God has a hand in it; he sets every wheel at work; he humbles the proud, and raises the poor out of the dust to set them among princes. 1 Sam 2:8. The kingdom of God's providence rules over all; kings do nothing but what his providence permits and orders. Acts 4:27, 28. This kingdom of God's providence we do not pray should come—for it is already come.

What kingdom then is meant when we say, "Your kingdom come"? Positively a twofold kingdom is meant.

(1) The kingdom of **grace**, which God exercises in the consciences of his people. This is God's lesser kingdom. When we pray, "Your kingdom come," we pray that the kingdom of grace may be set up in our hearts and increased.

(2) We pray also, that the kingdom of **glory** may hasten, and that we may, in God's good time be translated into it. These two kingdoms of grace and glory, differ not in nature—but in degree only. The kingdom of *grace* is nothing but the beginning of the kingdom of *glory*. The kingdom of grace is glory in the seed; and the kingdom of glory is grace in the flower. The kingdom of grace is glory in the daybreak, and the kingdom of glory is grace in the full meridian. The

kingdom of grace is glory militant, and the kingdom of glory is grace triumphant. There is such an inseparable connection between these two kingdoms, grace and glory, that there is no passing into the one but by the other.

At Athens there were two temples, a temple of *virtue* and a temple of *honor*; and there was no going into the temple of honor—but through the temple of virtue. Just so, the kingdoms of grace and glory are so closely joined together, that we cannot go into the kingdom of glory but through the kingdom of grace. Many people aspire after the kingdom of glory—but never look after grace; but these two, which God has joined together, may not be put asunder. The kingdom of grace leads to the kingdom of glory.

I. The first thing implied in this petition, "Your kingdom come," is that we are in the kingdom of *darkness*. We pray that we may be brought out of the kingdom of *darkness*. The state of nature, is a kingdom of darkness, where sin is said to *reign*. Romans 6:12. It is called, "the power of darkness." Col 1:13. Man, before the fall, was illuminated with perfect knowledge—but this light is now eclipsed, and he is fallen into the kingdom of darkness. "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Colossians 1:13-14

How many ways is a natural man in the kingdom of darkness?

(1) He is under the darkness of **ignorance**. "Having the understanding darkened." Eph 4:18. Ignorance is a black veil drawn over the mind. Men by nature may have a deep understanding in the things of the world—and yet be ignorant of the things of God. Nahash the Ammonite would make a covenant with Israel to thrust out their

right eyes. 1 Sam 11:2. Since the fall, our left eye remains—a deep insight into worldly matters; but our right eye is thrust out—we have no saving knowledge of God. Some things we know by nature—but nothing as we ought to know. 1 Cor 8:2. Ignorance draws the curtains round about the soul. 1 Cor 2:14.

(2) A natural man is under the darkness of **pollution**. Hence sinful actions are called "works of darkness." Romans 13:12. Pride and lust darken the glory of the soul. A sinner's heart is a dark conclave, which looks blacker than hell.

(3) A natural man is under the darkness of **misery**; he is exposed to divine vengeance; and the sadness of this darkness is, that men are not sensible of it. They are blind—yet they think they see. The darkness of Egypt was such thick darkness as "might be felt." Exod 10:21. Men by nature are in thick darkness. But here is the misery—the darkness cannot be felt! They will not believe they are in the dark—until they are past recovery!

Use 1. See what the state of nature is! It is a "kingdom of darkness," and it is a bewitching darkness. "Men loved darkness rather than light;" as the Athlantes in Ethiopia curse the sun. John 3:19. Darkness of sin leads to "chains under darkness." Jude 6. What comfort can such take in earthly things? The Egyptians might have food, gold, silver; but they could take but little comfort in them, while they were in such darkness as might be felt; so the natural man may have riches and friends to delight in—yet he is in the kingdom of darkness, and how dead are all these comforts! You who are in the kingdom of darkness—do not know where you are going. As the ox is driven to the shambles—but knows not where he is going; so the devil is driving you before him to hell—but you know not where you are going! Should you die in your natural state, while you are in the

kingdom of darkness, blackness of darkness is reserved for you! "To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever!" Jude 13.

Use 2. Let us pray that God will bring us out of this kingdom of darkness. God's kingdom of grace cannot come into our hearts—until we are brought out of the kingdom of darkness. Col 1:13. Why should not we strive to get out of this kingdom of darkness? Who would desire to stay in a dark dungeon? O fear the chains of darkness. Jude 6. These chains are God's power, binding men as in chains under wrath forever. O pray that God would deliver you out of the kingdom of darkness!

(1) Be sensible of your dark, damned estate—that you have not one spark of fire to give you light! (2) Go to Christ to enlighten you! "Christ shall give you light;" he will not only bring your light to you—but open your eyes to see it. Eph 5:14. That is the first thing implied, "Your kingdom come;" we pray that we may be brought out of the kingdom of darkness.

II. The second thing implied is "Your kingdom come," is that we pray against the devil's kingdom; that his kingdom may be demolished in the world. His kingdom stands in opposition to Christ's kingdom; and when we pray, "Your kingdom come," we pray against Satan's kingdom. He has a kingdom: "The prince of this world." John 16:11. He got it by conquest: he conquered mankind in paradise. He has his throne. "You dwell where Satan's throne is." Rev 2:13. His throne is set up in the hearts of men; he does not care for their purses—but their hearts. He is served upon the knee. Eph 2:2. "They worshiped the dragon," that is, the devil. Rev 13:4. Satan's empire is very large. Most kingdoms in the world pay tribute to him. His kingdom has two qualifications or characters: [1] It is *regnum*

nequitiae—a kingdom of impiety. [2] It is regnum servitutis—a kingdom of slavery.

[1] The kingdom of Satan is a **kingdom of IMPIETY**. Nothing but sin goes on in his kingdom. Murder and heresy, lust and treachery, oppression and division—are the constant trade driven in his dominions. He is called "the unclean spirit." Luke 11:24. What else is propagated in his kingdom, but a mystery of iniquity?

[2] Satan's kingdom is a **kingdom of SLAVERY**. He makes all his subjects slaves. The sinner is held captive under the grim tyranny of the devil! Satan is a usurper and a tyrant; he is a worse tyrant than any other!

(1) Other tyrants do but rule over the body—but Satan's kingdom rules over the soul! He rides some men—as we do upon horses.

(2) Other tyrants have some pity on their slaves. Though they make them work in the galleys—yet they give them food, and let them have their hours for rest. But Satan is a merciless tyrant, who gives his slaves poison instead of food, and hurtful lusts to feed on. 1 Tim 6:9. Nor will he let his slaves have any rest: he wearies them out to do his drudgery. "They weary themselves to commit iniquity." Jer 9:5.

When the devil had entered into Judas, he sent him to the high priests, and from thence to the garden, and never let him rest until he had betrayed Christ and hanged himself. Thus he is the worst of tyrants. When men have served him to their utmost strength, he welcomes them to hell with fire and brimstone!

Use. Let us pray that Satan's kingdom, set up in the world, may be overthrown. It is sad to think that, though the devil's kingdom be so bad—yet that it should have so many to support it. He has more to

stand up for his kingdom than Christ has for his. What a large harvest of souls has Satan! and God only a few gleanings. The Pope and the Turk give the power to Satan. If in God's visible church, the devil has so many loyal subjects that serve him with their lives and souls, how do his subjects swarm in places of idolatry and paganism, where there is none to oppose him—but all vote on the devil's side!

Men are *willing* slaves to Satan; they will fight and die for him; therefore he is not only called "the prince of this world," but "the god of this world" (John 12:31; 2 Cor 4:4), to show what power he has over men's souls. O let us pray that God would break the scepter of the devil's kingdom; that Michael may destroy the dragon; that the hellish kingdom of the prince of darkness may be beaten down! Satan's kingdom must be thrown down before Christ's kingdom can flourish in its power and majesty. "Then they may come to their senses and escape the Devil's trap, having been captured by him to do his will." 2 Timothy 2:26

When we pray, "Your kingdom come," something is positively intended.

III. We pray that the kingdom of GRACE may be set up in our hearts.

When we pray, "May Your kingdom come," we pray that the kingdom of grace may come into our hearts. This is *regnum Dei mikron*, God's *lesser* kingdom. "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking—but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." Romans 14:17. "The kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:21.

Why is grace called a kingdom?

Because, when grace comes, there is a kingly government set up in the soul. Grace rules the will and affections, and brings the whole man in subjection to Christ; it kings it in the soul, sways the scepter, subdues mutinous lusts, and keeps the soul in a spiritual decorum.

Why is there such need to pray that this kingdom of grace may come into our hearts?

(1) Because, until the kingdom of grace comes, we have no right to the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace is sweetened with love, bespangled with promises; it is our Magna Charta, by virtue of which God passes himself over to us to be our God. *Who are heirs of the covenant of grace?* Only such as have the kingdom of grace in their hearts. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Ezek 36:26. Here the kingdom of grace is set up in the soul; it then follows, "I will be your God", 36:28. The covenant of grace is to an ungracious person—as a sealed fountain; it is kept as a paradise with a flaming sword, that the sinner may not touch it. Without grace, you have no more right to it, than a farmer to the city-charter.

(2) Unless the kingdom of grace is set up in our hearts, our purest offerings are defiled. They may be good as to the *matter*—but not as to the *manner*; they lack that which should meliorate and sweeten them. Under the law, if a man who was unclean by touching a dead body, carried a piece of holy flesh in his skirt, the holy flesh could not cleanse him—but he polluted it. Hag 2:12. Until the kingdom of grace be in our hearts, ordinances do not purify us—but we pollute them. Even the prayer of an ungracious person is sin. "The Lord hates the sacrifice of the wicked" Proverbs 15:8. In what a sad condition is a man before God's kingdom of grace is set up in his heart! Whether he comes or comes not to the ordinance, he sins. If

he does not come to the ordinance, he is a despiser of it; if he does come, he is a polluter of it. A sinner's works are *opera mortua*, dead works; and those works which are dead, cannot please God. A dead flower has no sweetness. Heb 11:6.

(3) We had need pray that the kingdom of grace may come, because until this kingdom come into our hearts, we are loathsome in God's eyes. "My soul loathed them." Zech 11:8. How great is the foulness of a corrupt mind! A heart void of grace looks blacker than hell. Sin transforms man into a devil. "Have I not chosen you twelve—and one of you is a devil?" John 6:70. *Envy* is the devil's eye, *hypocrisy* is his cloven foot. Thus it is before the kingdom of grace come. So deformed is a graceless person, that when once he sees his own filth and leprosy, the first thing he does is to loathe himself. "You shall loathe yourself in your own sight for all your evils." Ezek 20:43. I have read of a woman who always used flattering mirrors, and who, by chance, seeing her face in a true mirror, in insaniam delapsa est, she ran mad. When once God gives those who now dress themselves by the flattering mirror of presumption, a sight of their own filthiness, they will abhor themselves. "You shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils."

(4) Before the kingdom of grace comes unto us we are spiritually illegitimate, of the bastard brood of the old serpent. "You are the children of your father the Devil!" John 8:44. To be illegitimate is the greatest infamy. "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord even to his tenth generation." Deut 23:2. He was to be kept out of the holy assemblies of Israel as an infamous creature. A bastard by law cannot inherit. Before the kingdom of grace comes into the heart, a person is to God as

illegitimate, and so continuing he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

(5) Before the kingdom of grace be set up in men's hearts, the kingdom of Satan is set up in them. They are said to be under "the power of Satan." Acts 26:18. Satan commands the will; though he cannot force the will, by his subtle temptations he can draw it. He is said to take men captive "at his will." 2 Tim 2:26. The Greek word signifies to take them alive as the fowler does the bird in the snare. The sinner's heart is the devil's mansion-house. "I will return into my house." Matthew 12:44. The sinner's heart is Satan's workshop, where he works. "Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air, who now works in the children of disobedience." Eph 2:2. The members of the body are the tools with which Satan works. He possesses men. In Christ's time many had their *bodies* possessed—but it is far worse to have the *souls* possessed. One is possessed with an impure devil, another with a revengeful devil, another with a *covetousness* devil, etc. No wonder the ship goes full sail when the wind blows; no wonder men go full sail in sin when the devil, the prince of the air, blows them. Thus, until the kingdom of grace comes—men are under the power of Satan, who, like Draco, writes all his laws in blood.

(6) Until the kingdom of grace comes, a man is exposed to the wrath of God. "Who knows the power of your anger?" Psalm 90:11. If when but a spark of God's wrath flies into a man's conscience in this life it is so terrible, what will it be when God stirs up all his anger? So inconceivably torturing is God's wrath, that the wicked call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from it. Rev 6:16. The hellish torments are compared to a fiery lake. Rev 20:15. Other fire is but *painted* fire—in comparison with this! This lake of fire burns forever. Mark 9:44. God's breath kindles this

fire. Isaiah 30:33. Where shall we find buckets to quench it? Time will not finish it; tears will not quench it. To this fiery lake men are doomed, until the kingdom of grace is set up in them.

(7) Until the kingdom of grace comes, men cannot die with comfort. He only who takes Christ in the arms of his faith can look death in the face with joy. It is sad to have the king of terrors in the *body*—and not the kingdom of grace in the *soul*. It is a wonder every graceless person does not die crazy. What will a grace-despiser do—when death comes to arrest him? **Hell follows death.** "Behold, a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was death, and hell followed with him." Rev 6:8. Thus you see what need we have to pray that the kingdom of grace may come. Of him that dies without Christ I may say, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born." Matthew 26:24. Few believe the necessity of having the kingdom of grace set up in their hearts, as appears by this, that they are well content to live without it. Does that man believe the necessity of pardon, who is content to be without it? Most people, if they may have trading, and may sit quietly under their vine and fig-trees, are in their kingdom, though they have not the kingdom of God within them. If the candle of prosperity shine upon their head, they care not whether the grace of God shines in their hearts. Do these men believe the necessity of grace? Were they convinced how needful it is to have the kingdom of God within them—they would cry out as the jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:30.

How may we know that the kingdom of grace is set up in our hearts?

It concerns us to examine this, for our salvation depends upon it, and we had need be cautious in the search, because there is something which looks like grace, which is not. "If a man think himself to be

something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself." Gal 6:3. Many think they have the kingdom of grace come into their heart, and it is only a chimera, a golden dream. *"How many with vain hope go down to hell!"* Augustine. Zeuxis painted grapes so lively—that he deceived the living birds. **There are many deceits about grace.**

(1) Men think they have the kingdom of grace in their hearts because they have the means of grace. They live where the silver trumpet of the gospel sounds, they are lifted up to heaven with ordinances. "I have a Levite for my priest," surely I shall go to heaven. Judges 17:13. The Jews cried, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." Jer 7:4. We are apt to glory in this, that the oracles of God are committed to us, that we have the Word and sacrament. Alas! this is a fallacy; we may have the means of grace, and yet the kingdom of grace may not be set up in our hearts. We may have the kingdom of God come near us—but not into us. We may have the sound of the Word in our ears—but not the savor of it in our hearts. Luke 11:20. Many of the Jews, who had Christ for their preacher, were not the better for it. Hot clothes will not put warmth into a dead man. You may have hot clothes, warn and lively preaching, and yet be spiritually dead. "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out." Matthew 8:12.

(2) Men think they have the kingdom of grace set up in their hearts, because they have some *common works* of the Spirit.

[1] They may have great *enlightening of mind*, profound knowledge, and almost speak like angels dropped from heaven. But the apostle supposes a case in which, after men have been enlightened, they may fall away. Heb. 6:4, 5, 6.

But wherein does this illumination come short?

The illumination of hypocrites is not powerful and effective—it does not leave an impression of holiness behind; it is like weak physic that will not work. The mind is enlightened—but the heart is not renewed. A Christian professor who is *all head*—but no feet, does not walk in the ways of God.

[2] Men have had *convictions and stirrings of conscience for sin*, they have seen the evil of their ways, and now hope the kingdom of grace is come; but though convictions are a step towards grace, they are not grace. Had not Pharaoh and Judas convictions? Exod 10:16.

What makes convictions prove abortive? Wherein do they fail?

They are not deep enough. A sinner never saw himself lost without Christ. The seed which lacked depth of earth, withered. Matthew 13:5. These convictions are like blossoms blown off before they come to maturity. They are also involuntary. The sinner does what he can to stifle them; he drowns them in wine and mirth; he labors to get rid of them. As the deer when shot runs and shakes out the arrow, so does he the arrow of conviction; or as the prisoner files off his fetters, and breaks loose, so he breaks loose from convictions. His *corruptions* are stronger than his *convictions*.

[3] Men have had some kind of *humiliation*, and have shed tears for their sins, and therefore hope the kingdom of grace is come into their hearts. But this is no infallible sign of grace. *Saul* wept; *Ahab* humbled himself.

Why ishumiliation *not* a grace? Wherein does it come short of it?

Tears in the wicked do not spring from love to God—but are *forced by affliction*, as water that drops from distillation is forced by the

fire. Gen 4:13. The tears of sinners are forced by God's fiery judgments. They are deceitful tears. Men weep—yet go on in sin; *they do not drown their sins in their tears.*

[4] Men have begun some *reformation*, therefore now they surely think that the kingdom of grace is come! But there may be deceit in this. A man may leave his oaths and drunkenness, and still be in love with sin. He may leave his sin—out of fear of hell, or because it brings shame and poverty—but still his heart goes after it, "They set their heart on their iniquity" (Hos 4:8); as Lot's wife left Sodom—but still her heart was in Sodom. Hypocrites are like the snake which casts off her skin—but keeps her poison. They keep the *love of sin,* as one who has long been an unsuccessful suitor to another—yet still he has a hankering love to her. It may be a partial reformation. He may leave off one sin and live in another. He may refrain from drunkenness—and live in covetousness. He may refrain from swearing—and live in the sin of slandering. One devil may be cast out—and another as bad may come in its place! A man may forsake gross sins—but have no reluctance against heart sins—such as proud, lustful thoughts. Though he dams up the *stream*, he lets the *fountain* alone.

Oh, therefore, if there is so many deceits, and men may think the kingdom of heaven is come into their hearts when it is not, how careful and critical had we need be in our search whether we have it really in our hearts! If a man is deceived in the title of his land, it is but the loss of his *estate*; but if he is deceived about his grace, it is the loss of his *soul!*

How may we positively know, that the kingdom of grace is set up in us?

In general, by having a metamorphosis or change wrought in the soul, which is called the "new creation." 2 Cor 5:17. The faculties are not new—but there is a new nature; as the strings of a lute are the same—but the tune is altered. When the kingdom of grace is set up, there is light in the *mind*, order in the *affections*, pliableness in the *will*, tenderness in the *conscience*. Those who can find no such change of heart, and are the same as they were--as vain, as earthly, as unclean as ever--have no sign of God's kingdom of grace in them.

More particularly we may know the kingdom of grace is set up in our hearts.

(1) By having TRUE DESIRES AFTER GOD, which is the smoking flax that Christ will not quench. A true desire of grace is grace: by the beating of this pulse we conclude there is life. "O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servants who desire to fear your name." Neh 1:11. But may not a hypocrite have good desires? "Let me die the death of the righteous." Num 23:10. True desires after God, evidence the kingdom of God within a man.

How may these true desires be known?

A *true* desire after God is **sincere**. We desire God *for himself, for his intrinsic excellencies*. The savor of the ointment of Christ's graces draws the virgins' desires after him. Canticles 1:3. A true saint desires him not only for what he *has*—but for what he *is*; not only for his *rewards*—but for his *holiness*. No hypocrite can thus desire God; he may desire him for his jewels—but not for his beauty.

A *true* desire after God is **insatiable**. It cannot be satisfied without God; let the world heap her honors and riches, they will not satisfy. No flowers or music will content him who is thirsty; so nothing will

quench the soul's thirst—but the blood of Christ! He faints away, his heart breaks with longing for God. Psalm 84:2; Psalm 119:20.

A *true* desire after God is **active**; it flourishes into *endeavor*. "With my soul have I desired you in the night; yes, with my spirit within me will I seek you early." Isaiah 26:9. A soul that desires aright says, "I must have Christ; I must have grace; I will have heaven, though I take it by storm." He who desires water will let down the bucket into the well to draw it up.

A *true* desire after God is **supreme**. We desire Christ, not only more than the world—but more than heaven. "Whom have I in heaven but you?" Psalm 73:25. Heaven itself would not satisfy—without Christ. Christ is the diamond in the ring of glory! If God should say to the soul, I will put you into heaven—but I will hide my face from you, I will draw a curtain between us, that you shall not behold my glory; the soul would not be satisfied—but say, as Absalom, "I want to see the king's face!" 2 Samuel 14:32.

A *true* desire after God is **increasing**. It increases as the sun in the horizon. A little of God will not satisfy—but the pious soul desires still more. A drop of water is not enough for the thirsty traveler. Though a Christian is thankful for the least degree of grace—yet he is not satisfied with the greatest; he still thirsts for more of Christ, and his Spirit. A saint would have more knowledge, more sanctity, more of Christ's presence. A glimpse of Christ through the lattice of an ordinance is sweet; but the soul will never stop longing—until it sees him face to face. It desires to have *grace* perfected in *glory*. It desires to be wholly plunged into the sweetness of God. We would be swallowed up in God, and be ever bathing ourselves in those perfumed waters of pleasure which run at his right hand forever. Surely this sincere desire after God is a blessed sign that the kingdom

of grace is come into our hearts. The beating of this pulse shows life! "Desires for God—are from God." Augustine. If iron moves upwards contrary to its nature, it is a sign some loadstone has been there drawing it. Just so, if the soul move towards God in sincere desires—it is a sign the loadstone of the Spirit has been drawing it!

(2) We may know the kingdom of grace has come into our hearts by having the princely grace of FAITH. "Faith is the most sacred jewel of the human heart." Gemma. Faith cuts us off from the wild olive tree of nature—and ingrafts us into Christ. *Faith is the vital artery of the soul.* "The just shall *live* by faith." Heb 10:38. Faith makes a holy adventure on Christ's merits. As a princely grace—it *reigns* in the soul, when the kingdom of God is come unto us. The Hebrew word for faith, signifies *to nourish*; faith nourishes the soul, and is the nurse of all the graces. But, who will not say he is a believer? Simon Magus believed—yet was in the gall of bitterness. Acts 8:13, 23. The hypocrite can put on faith's mantle, as the devil did Samuel's.

How shall we know therefore that our faith is sound, that it is the faith of the operation of God, and that the kingdom of God is within us?

True faith is wrought by the ministry of the Word. "Faith comes by hearing." Romans 10:17. Peter let down the net of his ministry, and at one draught caught three thousand souls. Let us examine how our faith was wrought. Did God in the ministry of the Word humble us? Did he break up the fallow ground of our heart, and then cast in the seed of faith? A good sign; but, if you know not how you came by your faith, suspect yourselves; as we suspect men to have stolen goods, when they know not how they came by them.

True faith is at first small, like a grain of mustard-seed; it is full of doubts and fears; it is smoking flax: it smokes with desire—but does not flame with comfort. It is so small that a Christian can hardly discern whether he has faith or not.

True faith is long in working—it does not come about in a moment. It costs many searchings of heart, many prayers and tears; there is a spiritual *combat*. The soul suffers many sore *pangs of humiliation* before *the child of faith* is born. To those whose faith is in one leap, who leap out of sin into a confidence that Christ is theirs, we may say, as Isaac concerning his son's venison, "How is it that you have found it so quickly?" Gen 27:20. How is it that you came by your faith so soon? The seed in the parable which sprung up *suddenly*, withered. Mark 4:5, 6. [Things which grow too quickly—have a way of suddenly wilting].

True faith is joined with ***sanctity***. As a little musk sweetens, so a little faith purifies. "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." 1 Tim 3:9. Though faith does but *touch* Christ, it fetches a healing virtue from him. Justifying faith does that in a spiritual sense which miraculous faith does—*it removes the mountains of sin, and casts them into the sea of Christ's blood!*

True faith will trust God, even in times of ***trial***. Though a Christian is cut short in provisions — though the fig-tree does not blossom — yet he will trust in God. Faith fears not famine. God has given us his promise as his bond. "Truly you shall be fed." Psalm 37:3. Faith puts this bond in suit, that God will rather work a miracle—than his promise shall fail. He has cause to suspect his faith, who says, he trusts God for the greater—but dares not trust him for the less: he trusts God for salvation—but dares not trust him for daily bread.

True faith is ***prolific***. It brings forth fruit; it has Rachel's beauty and Leah's fruitfulness. Faith is full of good works. *It believes as if it did not work—and it works as if it did not believe.* Faith is the spouse-like grace which marries Christ—and good works are the children which it bears. By having such faith we may know the kingdom of God is within us; that grace is certainly in our hearts.

(3) We may know that the kingdom of grace has come into our hearts by having the grace of LOVE. Faith and love are the two hinges, on which all true religion turns. "The upright love you." Canticles 1:4.

True love to love God is out of **choice**. It turns the soul into a seraphim; it makes it burn in a flame of affection; it is the truest touchstone of sincerity. Love is the queen of the graces; it commands the whole soul. "Christ's love compels us." 2 Corinthians 5:14. If our love to God is genuine, we let him have the supremacy of our love; we set him in the highest place of our soul; we give him the purest of our love. "I would give you spiced wine to drink, my sweet pomegranate wine." Canticles 8:2. If the spouse had anything better—a cup more juicy and spiced—Christ would drink of that. We give the creature the *milk* of our love; but God gets the *cream!*

In short, if we love God aright, we love his **laws**. We also love his picture drawn in the **saints**, by the pencil of the Holy Spirit. We also love his presence in his **ordinances**. Sleidan says, that the Protestants in France had a church which they call paradise; as if they thought themselves in paradise while they had God's presence in his sanctuary. The soul that loves God, loves his **appearing**. 2 Tim 4:8. It will be a glorious appearing to the saints, when their union with Christ shall be complete; then their joy shall be full. The bride longs for the marriage day. "The Spirit and the bride say,

Come! Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev 22:17, 20. By this sacred love we may know the kingdom of God is within us.

(4) We may know the kingdom of grace is come into our hearts—if our duties are spiritualized. "You are a holy priesthood to offer up *spiritual* sacrifices." 1 Peter 2:5 Spiritualizing duty consists in three things:

[1] Fixedness of mind. We spiritualize duty when our minds are fixed on God. "That you may attend on the Lord without distraction." 1 Cor 7:35. Though impertinent thoughts sometimes come into the heart in duty, they are not allowed. Psalm 119:113. They come as unwelcome guests, which are no sooner spied but they are turned out.

[2] Fervency of devotion. "Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Romans 12:11. The allusion is to water that seethes and boils over; so the affections boil over, the eyes melt in tears, and the heart flows in holy ejaculations. We not only bring our *offering* to God—but our *hearts*.

[3] Uprightness of aim. A man whose heart is upright—has three ends in duty:

First, that he may grow more like God. Moses on the mount had some of God's glory reflected on him: "his face shined."

Secondly, that he may have more communion with God. "Our fellowship is with the Father." 1 John 1:3.

Thirdly, that he may bring more glory to God. 1 Peter 4:11 "That Christ shall be magnified." Phil 1:20. Sincerity aims at God in all things. Though we shoot short—yet we take a right aim, which is a

sure evidence of grace. The spirits of wine are best, so is the spiritual part of duty. A little spiritualness in duty—is better than all the gildings of the temple, or outward pompous worship which dazzles carnal eyes.

(5) We may know the kingdom of grace has come into us—by antipathy and opposition against every known SIN. "I hate every false way." Psalm 119:104. Hatred is against *all* sin. Hatred is implacable; anger may be reconciled, hatred cannot. A gracious soul not only *forsakes* sin (as a man forsakes his country, never to return to it more)—but *hates* sin. As there is an antipathy between the crocodile and the scorpion, so, if the kingdom of God be within us, we not only hate sin *for* hell—but we hate it *as* hell, as being contrary to God's holiness and happiness.

(6) We may know the kingdom of grace grace has come into us--when we have given up ourselves to God by OBEDIENCE.As a servant gives up himself to his master, as a wife gives up herself to her husband—so we give up ourselves to God by obedience. This obedience is *free*—as that is the sweetest honey which drops from the honeycomb. This obedience is *uniform*. We obey God in one thing—as well as another. "Then shall I not be ashamed;" or, as it is in the Hebrew, I shall not blush "when I have respect unto *all* your commandments." Psalm 119:6. As a compass has one end upon the center and the other goes round the circle; so a Christian, by faith, stands on God the center, and by obedience goes round the circle of his commandments.

It is a sign that the kingdom of grace has come into the heart, when it reigns there by universal obedience. Hypocrites would have Christ to be their Savior—but they pluck the crown from his head—and will not have him rule. But he who has the kingdom of God within him,

submits cheerfully to every command of God; he will *do* what God will have him do; he will *be* what God will have him be. He puts a blank paper into God's hand, and says, "Lord, write what you will, I will obey."

Blessed is he who can find all these things in his soul. He is "all glorious within." Psalm 45:13. He carries a kingdom about him—and this kingdom of *grace* will certainly bring to a kingdom of *glory*.

I shall now answer some **doubts** and **objections** that a Christian may make against himself

I fear the kingdom of grace is not yet come into my heart.

When a Christian is under temptation, or grace lies dormant—he is not fit to be his own judge; but must take the witness of others who have the spirit of discerning. But let us hear a Christian's objections against himself, why he thinks the kingdom of grace is not yet come into his heart.

I cannot discern grace.

A child of God may have the kingdom of grace in his heart, and yet not know it. The cup was in Benjamin's sack, though he did not know it was there; so you may have faith in your heart, the cup may be in your sack, though you know it not. Old Jacob wept for his son Joseph, when Joseph was alive; so you may weep for lack of grace, when grace may be alive in your heart. The seed may be in the ground, when we do not see it spring up; so the seed of God may be sown in your heart, though you do not perceive it springing up. Think not grace is lost—because it is hidden.

*"Before the kingdom of grace comes into the heart, there must be some preparation for it; the fallow ground must be broken up. But I fear the plough of the law has not gone deep enough. I have not been **humbled** enough; therefore I have no grace."*

God does not prescribe an exact proportion of sorrow and humiliation; Scripture mentions the *reality* of godly sorrow—but not the *extent*. Some are more flagitous sinners than others, and must have a greater degree of humiliation. A knotty piece of timber requires more wedges to be driven into it. Some stomachs are sicker than others, therefore need stronger medicine.

But would you know when you have been humbled enough for sin? When you are willing to let go your sins. The gold has lain long enough in the furnace—when the dross is purged out; so, when the love of sin is purged out, a soul is humbled enough for divine acceptance, though not for divine satisfaction. Now, if you are humbled enough, what needs more? If a *needle* will let out the abscess, the *lance* is not needed. Be not more cruel to yourself than God would have you.

*"If the kingdom of God were within me, it would be a kingdom of **power**; it would enable me to serve God with vigor of soul. But I have a spirit of in infirmity upon me, I am weak and impotent, and untuned to every holy action."*

There is a great difference between the weakness of grace and the lack of grace. A man may have *life*, though he is *sick* and *weak*. Weak grace is not to be despised—but nourished. Christ will not break the bruised reed. Do not argue from the *weakness* of grace—to the *absence* of grace.

(1) Weak grace will give us a title to Christ—as well as strong grace. A *weak hand of faith* will receive the *rich alms of Christ's merits*.

(2) Weak faith is capable of growth. The plant springs up by degrees, first the blade, and then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. The faith that is strongest—was once in its infancy. Grace is like the waters of the sanctuary, which rose higher and higher. Be not discouraged at your weak faith; though it be but blossoming, it will by degrees come to more maturity.

(3) The weakest grace shall persevere—as well as the strongest. A *child* was as safe in the ark, as Noah. An infant believer that is but newly laid to the breast of the promise, is as safe in Christ as the most eminent heroic saint.

"But I fear the kingdom of grace is not yet come, because I find the kingdom of sin so strong in me. Had I faith, it would purify my heart; but I find much pride, worldliness, and passion."

The best of saints have remainders of corruption. "They had their *dominion* taken away—yet their lives were prolonged for a season." Dan 7:12. So in the regenerate, though the *dominion* of sin is taken away—yet the *life* of sin is prolonged for a season. What pride was there in Christ's own disciples, when they strove who should be greatest! The life of sin will not be quite stopped until death. The Lord is pleased to let the in-dwelling of sin continue—to humble his people, and make them prize Christ more. Because you find corruptions stirring, do not therefore presently unsaint yourselves, and deny the kingdom of grace to be come into your souls. That you feel sin is an evidence of spiritual life; that you mourn for it is a fruit of love to God; that you have a combat with sin, argues antipathy against it. Those sins which you once wore as a crown on your head, are now as fetters on the leg. Is not all this from the Spirit of grace in

you? Sin is in you, as poison in the body, which you are sick of, and use all Scripture antidotes to expel. Should we condemn all those who have indwelling sin, nay, who have had sin sometimes prevailing, we would blot some of the best saints out of the Bible.

"Where the kingdom of grace comes, it softens the heart; but I find my heart frozen and congealed into hardness; I can hardly squeeze out one tear. Do flowers grow on a rock? Can there be any grace in such a rocky heart?"

There may be grief—where there are no tears. The best sorrow, is *rational*. If in your judgment, you esteem sin to be the most dreadful evil—you have a disgust against it which is a rational sorrow, and such as God will accept. A Christian may have some hardness in his heart, and yet not have a hard heart. A field may have tares in it, and we call it a field of wheat. Just so, in the best heart there may be a mixture of hardness—yet because there is some softness and melting, God looks upon it as a soft heart. Therefore, Christian, dispute not against yourself, if you can find but this one thing, that the frame and temper of your soul be holy. Are you still breathing after God, delighting in him? Is the complexion of your soul heavenly? Can you say, as David, "When I awake, I am still with you"? Psalm 139:18. As colors laid in oil, or a statue carved in gold abide—so does a holy person; the soul is still pointing towards God. If it is thus with you, assure yourself, that the kingdom of grace is come into the soul. Be not unkind to God, to deny any work of his Spirit, which he has wrought in you.

Use 1. For exhortation. Labor to find that this kingdom of grace is set up in your hearts. While others aspire after earthly kingdoms, labor to have the kingdom of God within you. Luke 17:21. The

kingdom of *grace* must come into us before we can go into the kingdom of *glory*. The motives to this are:

(1) The kingdom of God within—is our spiritual BEAUTY. The kingdom of grace adorns a person, and sets him off in the eyes of God and of angels. It makes the king's daughter all glorious within. Psalm 45:13. Grace sheds a glory and luster upon the soul. As the diamond to the ring, so is grace to the soul. A heart beautified with grace has the King of heaven's picture hung in it!

(2) The kingdom of grace set up in the heart—is our spiritual DEFENSE. Grace is called "the armor of light." Romans 13:12. It is light for beauty, and armor for defense. He who has the kingdom of grace within him, is "strengthened with all might according to God's glorious power." Col 1:11. He has the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, and the breastplate of righteousness. His armor can never be shot through. He is fortified against the assaults of temptation, and the terrors of hell.

(3) The kingdom of grace set up in the heart—brings PEACE with it. "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace." Romans 14:17. There is a secret peace proceeding from holiness. Peace is the best blessing of a kingdom. [One peace is better than countless victories.] The kingdom of grace is a kingdom of peace. Grace is the root—peace is the flower which grows out of it. It is 'peace in a storm'—such peace that no worldly affliction can shake. The doors of Solomon's temple were made of olive tree, carved with open flowers; so in a gracious heart is the olive of peace, and the open flowers of joy. 1 Kings 6:32.

(4) The kingdom of grace—ENRICHES the soul. A kingdom has its riches. A believer is said to be *rich in faith*. James 2:5. How rich is he who has God for his God, who is heir to all the promises!

Heb 6:17. A man may be rich in bills and bonds—but a believer may say as Peter, "Silver and gold have I none (Acts 3:6); yet I am rich in bills and bonds, an heir to all God's promises;" and to be heir to the promises, is better than to be heir to the crown.

(5) When the kingdom of grace comes—it fixes and ESTABLISHES the heart. "O God, my heart is fixed." Psalm 57:7. Before the kingdom of grace comes, the heart is very unfixed and unsettled; like a ship without ballast. But when the kingdom of grace comes, it fixes the heart on God; and when the heart is fixed, it rests quiet as in its center.

(6) This kingdom of grace is DISTINGUISHING. It is a sure pledge of God's love. God may give kingdoms in anger; but wherever the kingdom of grace is set up, it is in love. He cannot give grace in anger. The *crown* always goes with the *kingdom*; let us therefore be ambitious of this kingdom of grace.

What must we do to obtain this kingdom?

(1) In general, take pains for it. We cannot have the world without labor, and do we think to have grace? "If you Seek her as silver." Proverbs 2:4. A man may as well expect a crop without sowing, as grace without labor. We must not think to have grace as Israel had manna; who did not plough nor sow—but it was rained down from heaven upon them. No, we must operam dare, take pains for grace. Our salvation cost Christ blood, and will cost us sweat.

(2) Let us go to God to set up this kingdom of grace in our hearts. He is called the "God of all grace." 1 Peter 5:10. Say, Lord, I lack this kingdom of grace, I lack a humble, believing heart. O enrich me with grace; let your kingdom come. Be importunate suitors. As Achsah said to her father Caleb, "You have given me a south land,

give me also springs of water;" so, Lord, you have given me enough of the world, here is a south land; but Lord, give me the upper springs of grace; let your kingdom come. Josh 15:19. What is the venison you have given me, without the blessing? When we are importunate with God, and will take no denial, he will set up his kingdom within us.

(3) Keep close to the Word preached. The Word preached, is virga virtutis, the rod of God's strength; it is the great engine he uses for setting up the kingdom of grace in the heart. "Faith comes by hearing." Romans 10:17. Though God could work grace immediately by his Spirit, or by the ministry of angels from heaven—yet he chooses to work by the Word preached. This is the usual mean, by which he sets up the kingdom of grace in the heart; and the reason is, because he has put his divine sanction upon it; he has appointed it for the means of working grace, and he will honor his own ordinance. 1 Cor 1:21. What reason could be given why the waters of Damascus should not have as sovereign virtue to heal Naaman's leprosy, as the waters of Jordan—but this, that God appointed and sanctified the waters of Jordan to heal, and not the others? Let us keep the Word preached, because the power of God goes along with it.

Use 2. For thanksgiving. What will you be thankful for—if not for a kingdom! Grace is the best blessing—it is the result and product of God's electing love. In setting up his kingdom of grace, God has done more for you than if he had made you kings and queens; for you are born of God, and of the blood-royal of heaven. Oh! admire and exalt free grace! "Make God's praise glorious." Psalm 66:2. The apostle seldom mentions the work of grace—but he joins praise. "Giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Col 1:12. If God has crowned you with the kingdom of grace—you crown him with your praises.

IV. We pray that the kingdom of grace may increase, that it may come more into us: and this may answer a question.

Why do we pray, "Your kingdom come," when the kingdom of grace is already come into the soul?

Though the kingdom of grace be already come into us—yet still we must pray, "Your kingdom come," that grace may be **increased**, and that this kingdom may **flourish** still more in our souls. Until we come to live among the angels—we shall need to pray this prayer, "Your kingdom come." "Lord, let your kingdom of grace come in more power into my soul; let grace be more augmented and increased."

Question: When does the kingdom of grace increase in the soul? When is it a flourishing kingdom?

1. When a Christian has further degrees of grace—there is more oil in the lamp—his knowledge is clear, his love is more inflamed. Grace is capable of degrees, and may rise higher, as the sun in the horizon. It is not with us as it was with Christ, who received the Spirit without measure. John 3:34. He could not be more holy than he was; but our grace is capable of further degrees; we may have more sanctity, we may add more inches to our spiritual stature.

2. The kingdom of grace increases when a Christian has got more strength than he had. "He who has clean hands, shall be stronger and stronger." Job 17:9. "He shall add to his strength." A Christian has *strength* to resist temptation, to forgive his enemies, to suffer affliction. It is not easy to suffer; a man must deny himself, before he can take up the cross. The way to heaven is like the way which Jonathan and his armor bearer had in climbing up a steep

place. "There was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other." 1 Sam 14:4. It requires much strength to climb up this rocky way. That grace which will carry us through *prosperity*, will not carry us through *sufferings*. The ship needs stronger tackling to carry it through a storm, than a calm. Now, when we are so strong in grace, that we can bear up under affliction without murmuring or fainting, the kingdom of grace is increased. What mighty strength of grace had he, who told the emperor Valentinian, "You may take away my life—but you cannot take away my love to the truth!"

3. The kingdom of grace increases when a Christian has most conflict with spiritual corruptions; when he not only abstains from gross evils—but has a combat with inward, hidden, heart corruptions; such as pride, envy, hypocrisy, vain thoughts, carnal confidence, which are spiritual wickedness, and both defile and disturb. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." 2 Cor 7:1. There are two sorts of corruptions, one of the *flesh*, the other of the *spirit*. When we grieve for and combat with spiritual sin, which is the root of all gross sins, then the kingdom of grace increases, and spreads its territories in the soul.

4. The kingdom of grace flourishes when a Christian has learned to live by FAITH. "I live by faith in the Son of God." Gal 2:20. There is the habit of faith, and the drawing of this habit into exercise. For a Christian to graft his hope of salvation, only upon the stock of Christ's righteousness, and make Christ all in justification; to live on the promises, as a bee on the flower, and suck out the sweetness of them; *to trust in God's heart—where we cannot trace his hand;* to believe his love through a frown; to persuade ourselves, when he has the face of an enemy, that he has the heart of a Father—when we are arrived at this, the kingdom of grace is flourishing in our souls.

5. It flourishes when a Christian is full of holy ZEAL. Numb 25:13. Phinehas was zealous for his God. Zeal is the flame of the affections, it turns a saint into a seraphim. A zealous Christian is impatient when God is dishonored. Rev 2:2. He will wrestle with difficulties, he will swim to Christ through a sea of blood. Acts 21:13. Zeal loves truth when it is despised and opposed. "They have made void your law, therefore I love your commandments." Psalm 119:126, 127. Zeal resembles the Holy Spirit. "There appeared cloven tongues like as of fire, which sat upon each of them." Acts 2:3. Tongues of fire were an emblem of that fire of zeal which the Spirit poured on them.

6. The kingdom of grace increases when a Christian is as diligent in his particular calling, as he is devout in his general calling. He is the wise Christian, who carries things equally; who so lives by faith—that he lives in a calling. Therefore it is worthy of notice, that when the apostle had exhorted the Thessalonians to increase in grace, he presently adds, "And that you mind your own business, and work with your own hands." 1 Thess 4:10, 11. It is a sign grace is increasing, when Christians go cheerfully about their secular calling.

Indeed, to be all the day in the mount with God, and to have the mind fixed on glory, is more sweet to a man's self, and is a heaven upon earth; but to be conversant in our callings, is more profitable to others. Paul says, "To be with Christ is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." Phil 1:23, 24. So, to converse with God in prayer and sweet meditation all the week long, is more for the comfort of a man's own person; but to be sometimes employed in the business of a calling, is more profitable for the family to which he belongs. It is not good to be as the lilies, which toil not, neither do they spin. It shows the increase of grace, when a

Christian keeps a due decorum. He joins *piety* and *industry*; when zeal runs forth in *piety*, and diligence is put forth in a *calling*.

7. The kingdom of grace increases when a Christian is established in the belief and love of the TRUTH. The heart by nature is as a ship without ballast, which wavers and fluctuates. Beza writes of one Bolezius, that his religion changed as the moon. Such as are *wandering* stars will be *falling* stars; but when a soul is built on the rock Christ, and no winds of temptation can blow it away, the kingdom of grace flourishes. One calls Athanasius, *an invincible adamant,* in respect of his stability in the truth. "*Rooted* and built up in him." Col 2:7. The rooting of a tree evidences growth.

8. The kingdom of grace increases in a man's own heart when he labors to be instrumental to set up this kingdom in others. Though it is the greatest benefit to have grace wrought in *ourselves*, it is the greatest honor to be instrumental to work it in *others*. "Of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ is formed in you." Gal 4:19. Such as are masters of a family should endeavor to see the kingdom of grace set up in their servants; such as are godly parents should not let God alone by prayer—until they see grace in their children. What a comfort to be both the natural and spiritual fathers of your children! Augustine says his mother Monica travailed with greater care and pain for his *new* birth, than his *natural* birth. It shows the increase of grace when we labor to see the kingdom of grace set up in others. As water abounds in the river, when it overflows and runs into the meadows, so grace increases in the soul when it has influence upon others, and we seek their salvation.

Question: What need is there that the kingdom of grace should be increased?

God's design in keeping up a standing ministry in the church is to increase the kingdom of grace in men's hearts. "He gave gifts unto men;" that is, ministerial gifts. Why so? "For the edifying of the body of Christ." Eph 4:8, 12. Not only for conversion—but for edification; therefore the Word preached is compared not only to *seed*—but to *milk*; because God designs our growth in grace.

We need have the kingdom of grace increase, as we have a great deal of work to do, and a little grace will hardly carry us through. A Christian's life is laborious: there are many temptations to resist, many promises to believe, many precepts to obey, so that it will require a great deal of grace. A Christian must not only pray—but "be zealous, and repent" (Rev 3:19); not only love—but be sick with love. Canticles 2:5. What need, therefore, to have the kingdom of grace enlarged in his soul? As his work increases upon him, so his grace need increase.

If the kingdom of grace does not increase, it will decay. "You have left your first love." Rev 2:4. Grace, for lack of increasing, is sometimes like a winter plant, in which all the sap runs to the root, and it looks as if it were dead. "Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." Rev 3:2. Though true grace cannot *expire*, it may *wither*; and a withering Christian loses much of his beauty and fragrance. What great need have we to pray, "Your kingdom come," that this kingdom of grace may be increased! If grace be not improved, it will soon be impaired. A Christian, for lack of increasing his grace, loses his strength; he is like a sick man who cannot either walk or work; his *prayers* are sick and weak; he is as if he had no life in him; his *faith* can hardly fetch breath, and you can scarcely feel the pulse of his *love* to beat.

To have grace increasing, is suitable to Christianity. Christians are called trees of righteousness. Isaiah 61:3. The saints are not only *jewels* for sparkling luster—but *trees* for growth. They are called the lights of the world. Phil 2:15. Light is still increasing. First there is the daybreak, and so it shines brighter, to the full meridian. Those who are the lights of the world must increase until they come to the meridian of glory. Not to grow is suspicious; painted things do not grow.

As the kingdom of *grace* increases, so a Christian's *comforts* increase. Comfort belongs to the *well-being* of a Christian; like sweetfood, it is delicious to the taste. Psalm 94:19. The more *grace*, the more *joy*; as the more sap in the root, the more wine in the grape. Who more increased in grace than David? And who more in consolation? "You have put gladness in my heart." Psalm 4:7. Grace turns to joy, as milk to cream.

How may they be comforted who bewail their lack of growth, and weep that they cannot find the kingdom of grace to increase?

To see and bewail our decay in grace, argues not only the *life* of grace —but *growth* in grace. It is a sign that a man recovers and gets strength—when he feels his weakness. It is a step forward in grace to see our imperfections. The more the Spirit shines in the heart, the more evil he unveils. A Christian thinks it worse with him than it was, whereas his grace may not grow less—but his light greater.

If a Christian does not increase in one grace, he may in another; if not in knowledge he may in humility. If a tree does not grow so much in the branches, it may grow in the root: and to grow downwards in the root, is good growth.

A Christian may grow less in affection when he grows more in judgement. As the fingers of a musician, when he is old, are stiff, and not so nimble at the lute as they were—but he plays with more art and judgement than before. Just so, a Christian may not have so much *affection* in duty as at the first conversion—but he is more *solid* in religion, and more settled in his judgement than he was before.

A Christian may think he does not increase in grace because he does not increase in gifts; whereas there may be a decay of natural parts, the memory and other faculties, when there is not a decay of grace. *Gifts* may be impaired, when *grace* is improved. Be not discouraged, it is better to decay in *gifts*, and be enlarged in *grace*, than to be enlarged in *gifts*, and to decay in *grace*.

A Christian may increase in grace, and not be sensible of it. As seed may grow in the earth, when we do not perceive it to spring up, so grace may grow in time of desertion, and not be perceived.

V. We pray that the kingdom of GLORY may hasten, and that God would in his due time translate us into it. Under this we have now to consider—

[1] What this kingdom of glory is?

[2] What are the properties of it?

[3] Wherein it exceeds all other kingdoms?

[4] When this kingdom comes?

[5] Wherein appears the certainty of it?

[6] Why we should pray for its coming?

[1] What is the kingdom of glory? By this kingdom of glory is meant, that glorious estate which the saints shall enjoy when they shall reign with God and angels forever. If a man stands upon the sea-shore, he cannot see all the dimensions of the sea, its length, breadth, and depth—yet he may see it is of vast extension, so, though the kingdom of heaven is of that incomparable excellence, that neither tongue of man or angels can express—yet we may conceive of it to be an exceeding glorious thing, such as the eye has not seen.

Concerning the kingdom of heaven I shall show what it implies, and what it imports.

First, the kingdom of heaven implies a blessed freedom from all evil.

(1) It implies a freedom from the necessities of nature. We are in this life subject to many necessities; we need food to nourish us, clothes to cover us, armor to defend us, sleep to refresh us. But in the kingdom of heaven there will be no need of these things; and it is better not to need them than to have them; as it is better not to need crutches than to have them. What need will there be of **food** when our bodies shall be made spiritual? 1 Cor 15:44. Though not spiritual for substance—yet for qualities. What need will there be of **clothing** when our bodies shall be like Christ's glorious body? What need will there be of **armor** when there is no enemy? What need will there be of **sleep** when there is no night? Rev 22:5. The saints shall be freed, in the heavenly kingdom, from these necessities of nature to which they are now exposed.

(2) In the kingdom of heaven—we shall be freed from the imperfections of nature. Since the fall, our **knowledge** has suffered an eclipse.

Our **natural** knowledge is imperfect; it is chequered with ignorance. There are many hard knots in nature which we cannot easily untie. He who sees clearest, has a mist before his eyes. Socrates said on his death-bed, that there were many things he had yet to learn. Our *ignorance* is more than our *knowledge*.

Our **divine** knowledge is imperfect. "We know but in part," said Paul, though he had many revelations, and was enrapt up in the third heaven. 1 Cor 13:9. We have but dark conceptions of God. "Can you by searching find out God?" Job 11:7. Our narrow capacities would no more contain God, than a little glass cup would hold all the water in the sea. We cannot unriddle the mystery of the incarnation, the

human nature assumed into the person of the Son of God; the human nature not God—yet united with God. We see now in a glass darkly; but in the kingdom of heaven the veil shall be taken off—all imperfection of nature shall be done away. When the sunlight of glory shall begin to shine in the heavenly horizon, all dark shadows of ignorance shall fly away, our lamp of knowledge shall burn brightly, we shall have a full knowledge of God, though we shall not know him fully.

(3) In the kingdom of heaven—we shall be freed from the toilsome labors of this life. God enacted a law in paradise, "in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread." Gen 3:19. There is the labor of the *hand* in manufacture, and the labor of the *mind* in study. "All things are full of labor" (Eccl 1:8); but in the kingdom of heaven we shall be freed from our labors.

There needs no labor when a man has got to the *haven*, he has no more need of sailing. In heaven there needs no labor, because the saints shall have the glory which they labored for.

There shall be no labor. "They rest from their labors." Rev 14:13. As when God had finished the work of creation, he rested from his labors; so, when his saints have finished the work of sanctification, they rest from theirs. Where should there be rest—but in the heavenly center? Not that this sweet rest in the kingdom of heaven excludes all motion, for spirits cannot be idle; but the glorified saints shall rest from all *wearisome employment*. It will be a labor full of ease, a motion full of delight. The saints in heaven shall love God, and what labor is that? Is it any labor to love beauty? They shall praise God, and that surely is delightful. When the bird sings—it is not so much a labor, as a pleasure.

(4) In the kingdom of heaven—we shall be freed from original corruption, which is the root of all actual sin. There would be no *actual* sin if there were no *original* sin; there would be no water in the *stream,* if there were none in the *fountain*. Original sin is incorporated into our nature; it is as if the whole mass of blood were corrupted. Thus, to offend the God whom he loves, makes a Christian weary of his life. What would he give to have his chains taken off, to be rid of vain thoughts? How did Paul, that bird of paradise, bemoan himself for his sins! Romans 7:24. We cannot exercise either our *duties* or our *graces*, without sin. The soul that is most refined and purified by grace, is not without some dregs of corruption; but in the kingdom of heaven the fountain of original sin shall be quite dried up. What a blessed time will that be, never to grieve God's Spirit any more! In heaven are virgin souls; their beauty is not stained with lust. Nothing enters there, which defiles. Rev 21:27.

(5) In the kingdom of heaven—we shall be freed from all sorrows. "There shall be no more sorrow." Rev 21:4. Our life here is interwoven with trouble. Psalm 31:10. Either losses grieve, or law-suits vex, or unkindness breaks the heart. We may as well separate light from the sun, or weight from lead—as troubles from man's life. "What is long life—but long torment?" Augustine. But, in the kingdom of heaven, sorrow and sighing shall fly away. Here the saints sit by the rivers weeping—but one smile from Christ's face will make them forget all their sufferings. Their water shall then be turned into wine, their mourning into singing!

(6) In the kingdom of heaven—we shall be beyond the reach of temptation. Satan is not yet fully cast into prison; like a prisoner under bail, he walks about tempting, and laboring, to draw us into sin. He is either laying snares, or shooting darts. The devil stands

girded for battle. He laid a train of temptations to blow up the castle of Job's faith. It is as great a grief to a believer to be followed with temptations to sin, as for a virgin to have her chastity assaulted. But in the kingdom of heaven the saints shall be freed from the red dragon, who is cast out of paradise, and shall be forever locked up in chains! Jude 6.

(7) In the kingdom of heaven—we shall be freed from all vexing cares. The Greek word for care comes from a word which signifies to cut the heart in pieces. Care tortures the mind, wastes the spirits, and eats out the comfort of life. Care to prevent future dangers, and preserve present comforts—is an evil spirit which haunts us. All care is full of fear, and fear is full of torment. 1 John 4:18. God threatens it as a judgement. "They shall eat their bread with carefulness." Ezek 12:19. Every comfort has its care, as every rose has its thorns; but in the kingdom of heaven we shall shake off *the viper of care*. What needs a glorified saint to take any anxious care—who has all things provided to his hand? There is the tree of life, bearing all sorts of fruit. When the *heart* shall be freed from sin —the *head* shall be freed from care.

(8) In the kingdom of heaven—we shall be freed from all doubts and scruples. In this life, the best saint has his doubting, as the brightest star has his twinkling. If there were no doubting—there would be no unbelief. Assurance itself does not exclude all doubting. "Your loving kindness is before my eyes." Psalm 26:3. At another time, "Lord, where are your former loving-kindnesses?" Psalm 89:49. A Christian is like a ship at anchor, which, though safe, may sometimes be *tossed* upon the water. Sometimes a Christian questions his interest in Christ, and his title to the promise. As these doubtings eclipse a Christian's comfort, so they bear false witness against the Spirit. But, when the saints shall come into the kingdom

of heaven, there shall be no more doubting; the Christian shall then say, as Peter, "Now I know of a surety that the Lord has sent his angel and has delivered me." Acts 12:11. Now I know that I am passed from death to life, and I am got beyond all rocks! I have passed the gulf, now I am in my Savior's embraces forever!

(9) In the kingdom of heaven—we shall be freed from all society with the wicked. Here we are sometimes forced to be in their company. "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar." Psalm 120:5. Kedar was Ishmael's son, whose children dwelt in Arabia; they were a profane, barbarous people. Here the wicked are still raising persecutions against the godly, and crucifying their ears with their oaths and curses. Christ's *lily* is among *thorns*; but in the heavenly kingdom there shall be no more any pricking brier. "The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil." Matthew 13:41. As Moses said, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord! For the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall never see them again forever!" So will God say, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God; these your enemies, that vex and molest you, you shall never see them again forever!" Exod 14:13. At that day, God will separate the precious from the vile; Christ will thoroughly purge his threshing floor; he will gather the wheat into the garner; and the wicked, which are the chaff, shall be blown into hell!

(10) In the kingdom of heaven—we shall be freed from all signs of God's displeasure. Here he may be angry with his people. Though he has the heart of a father, he may have the look of an enemy; and this is sad. As when the sun is gone, the dew falls; so when the light of God's face is gone, tears drop from the saints' eyes. But in the kingdom of heaven, there shall be no spiritual eclipses, there shall never appear any tokens of God's displeasure; the saints

shall have a constant aspect of love from him, they shall never complain any more, "My beloved had withdrawn himself." Canticles 5:6.

(11) In the kingdom of heaven—we shall be freed from all divisions. The saddest thing in the world is to see divisions among the godly. It is sad that such as have one faith—should not be of one heart. Ephraim envies Judah, and Judah vexes Ephraim. It is matter of tears, to see those who are united to Christ, divided one from another. *The soldier's spear pierced Christ's side—but the divisions of saints wound his heart!* But in the kingdom of heaven, there shall be no vilifying one another, nor censuring. Those who before could hardly pray together, shall praise God together. There shall not be one jarring string in the saints' music.

(12) In the kingdom of heaven—we shall be freed from vanity and dissatisfaction. What Job says of wisdom, in chapter 28:14; "The depth says, It is not in me; and the sea says, It is not with me;" I may say concerning satisfaction; every creature says, "It is not in me." Take things most pleasing and from which we promise ourselves most contentment, still, of the spirit and essence of them all—we shall say, "Behold, all was vanity." Eccl 2:11. **God never did, nor ever will—put a satisfying virtue into any creature.** In the sweetest music the world makes, either some string is lacking, or out of tune. Who would have thought that Haman, who was so great in the king's favor, that he "set his seat above all the princes" of the provinces, for lack of the bowing of a knee, would be dissatisfied? Est 3:1. But in the kingdom of heaven, we shall be freed from these dissatisfactions. The world is like a landscape painting, in which you may see gardens with fruit trees, beautifully drawn—but you cannot enter them; but into the joys of heaven you may enter. "Enter into the joy of your Lord." The soul shall be satisfied while it bathes in

those rivers of pleasure at God's right hand. "When I awake, I will be fully satisfied, for I will see you face to face." Psalm 17:15.

(13) In the kingdom of heaven—we shall be freed from the torments of hell. "Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come." 1 Thess 1:10.

1. Consider the **multiplicity** of those torments. In this life, the body is usually exercised but with one pain, the stone or headache, at one time; but in hell there is a **diversity** of torments; there is *darkness* to affright, *fire* to burn, a *lake of sulphur* to choke, *chains* to bind, and the *worm* to gnaw.

2. The torments of hell will seize upon **every part of the body and soul**. The *eye* shall be tortured with the sight of devils, and the *tongue* that has sworn so many oaths, shall be tortured. "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue." Luke 16:24. The *memory* will be tormented to remember the mercies that have been abused, and seasons of grace neglected. The *conscience* will be tormented with self-accusations.

3. The pains of hell are **unmitigated**, with no mixture of mercy. In this life, God in anger remembers mercy. Hab 3:2. But in hell there is no alleviation or lessening of the pains. As in the sacrifice of jealousy, God would have no oil or frankincense put into it, so, in hell, there is no oil of mercy to assuage the sufferings of the damned, no incense of prayer to appease his wrath. Numb 5:15.

4. In the pains of hell there is no **intermission**. The poets feign of Endymion, that he got permission from Jupiter always to sleep. What would the damned in hell give for one hour's sleep! "The smoke of their torment rises forever and ever, and they will have no rest day or night." Rev 14:11. They are perpetually on the rack.

5. There is no **expiration** in the pains of hell; they must always lie scorching in flames of wrath.

But in the heavenly kingdom, the elect shall be freed from all infernal torments. "Jesus delivered us from the wrath to come." A prison is not made for the king's children. Christ drank that bitter cup of God's wrath—that the saints might never drink it!

Secondly, the kingdom of heaven implies a glorious fruition of all good. Had I as many tongues as hairs on my head, I could not fully describe this. It is a place where there is no lack of anything. Judges 18:10. It is called "the excellent glory." 2 Peter 1:17. I might as well measure the skies, or drain the ocean—as set forth the glory of this kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is above all hyperbole. Were the sun ten thousand times brighter than it is, it could not parallel the luster of this kingdom. Apelles' pencil would but blotch it, angels' tongues would but lessen it. I can but give you the *shadowings* of it. Do not expect to see it in all its orient colors—until you are mounted above the stars! But let us not stand afar off, as Moses, to behold this Canaan—but enter into it, and taste the honey. The privileges of this heavenly kingdom are:

(1) We shall have an immediate COMMUNION with God himself, who is the inexhaustible sea of all happiness. This divines call "the beatific vision." The psalmist triumphed in the enjoyment he had of God in this life. "Whom have I in heaven but you?" Psalm 73:25. If God, enjoyed by faith, gives so much comfort to the soul—how much more when he is enjoyed by immediate vision! Here we see God darkly through the glass of ordinances; but in the kingdom of heaven we shall see him "face to face." 1 Cor 13:12. We shall have an intellectual sight of him; we shall see him with the eyes

of our mind; we shall know him as much as the angels in heaven do. Matthew 18:10; we shall know as we are known. 1 Cor 13:12.

We shall have a **full** knowledge of God, though not know him fully; as a cup in the sea is full of the sea, though it holds not all the sea. To see and enjoy God will be most delicious; in him are beams of majesty, and affections of mercy. God has all excellencies concentrated in him—the good in which are all good things. If one flower should have the sweetness of all flowers—how sweet would that flower be! All the beauty and sweetness which lies scattered in the creature—is infinitely to be found in God. To see and enjoy him, therefore, will ravish the soul with delight. We shall see God so as to love him, and be made sensible of his love; and when we shall have this sweet communion with him, he shall be "all in all;" light to the *eye*, manna to the *taste*, and music to the *ear*. 1 Cor 15:28.

(2) In the kingdom of heaven, we shall, with these eyes, see the glorified body of JESUS CHRIST. The Savior makes it a great part of the glory of heaven—to view the glory of his human nature. "That they may behold my glory." John 17:24. When Christ was transfigured upon earth, it is said, that "his face did shine as the sun, and his clothing was white as the light." Matthew 17:2. If the glory of his *transfiguration* was so great, what will the glory of his *exaltation* be! Much of the glory of God shines in Christ, by virtue of the hypostatic union. "In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Col 2:9. Through Christ's humanity, as through a bright mirror, we may see some beams of the divine majesty shine forth. Our capacities will be enlarged to a wonderful degree, to receive this glorious object! We will not only see God's glory—but some of his glory shall be put upon us. "Glory will be not only present—but within." Bernard. A beggar may behold the glory of a king and not be

the happier; but Christ's glory shall be ours, "We shall be like him." 1 John 3:2. We shall shine by his beams.

(3) In the kingdom of heaven we shall enjoy the society of "an innumerable company of ANGELS." Heb 12:22.

But is there not enough in God to fill the soul with delight? Can the sight of angels add to its happiness? What need is there of the light of *torches*, when the *sun* shines?

Besides the divine essence, the sight of angels is desirable. Much of God's curious workmanship shines in the angels; they are beautiful, glorious creatures; and as the several strings in a lute make the harmony sweeter, and the several stars make the sky brighter, so the society with angels will make the delight of heaven the greater; and we shall not only see them with the glorified eye of our understanding—but converse with them!

(4) In the kingdom of heaven, we shall have sweet society with glorified SAINTS. Oh! what a blessed time will it be when those who have prayed, wept, and suffered together—shall rejoice together! We shall see the saints, in their white linen of purity, and see them as so many crowned kings: in beholding the glorified saints, we shall behold a heaven full of suns. Some have asked whether we shall know one another in heaven? Surely, our knowledge will not be diminished—but increased! The judgment of Luther and Anselm, and many other divines is, that we shall know one another; yes, the saints of all ages, whose faces we never saw! And, when we shall see the saints in glory without their infirmities of pride and passion—it will be a glorious sight. We see how Peter was transported when he saw but two prophets in the transfiguration; but what a blessed sight will it be when we shall see the whole glorious company of prophets, and martyrs, and holy men of God! Matthew 17:3. How sweet will the

music be, when all shall sing together in concert in the heavenly choir! And though, in this great assembly of saints and angels, "one star may differ from another in glory," yet no such *weed as envy* shall ever grow in the paradise of God! There shall be *perfect love*, which, as it casts out fear, so also envy. Though one vessel of glory may hold more than another, every vessel will be *full*.

(5) In the kingdom of heaven there shall be incomprehensible JOY. When the saints' union with Christ is perfected in heaven, their joy shall be full. All the birds of the heavenly paradise sing for joy! What joy, when the saints shall see the great gulf crossed, and know that they are passed from death to life! What joy, when they are as holy as they would be, and as God would have them to be! What joy to hear the music of angels; to see the golden banner of Christ's love displayed over the soul; to be drinking that water of life which is sweeter than all nectar and ambrosia! What joy, when the saints shall see Christ clothed in their flesh, sitting in glory above the angels! Then they shall enter into the joy of their Lord. Matthew 25:21.

Here on earth, joy enters into the saints; in heaven "they enter into joy." O saint of God, who now hang your harp upon the willows, and mingle your drink with weeping, in the kingdom of heaven your water shall be turned into wine; you shall have so much felicity that your soul cannot wish for more. The sea is not so full of water—as the heart of a glorified saint is of joy. There can be no more *sorrow in heaven*—than there is *joy in hell*.

(6) In heaven HONOR and DIGNITY are put upon the saints. A kingdom implies honor. All that come into heaven are kings.

1. They have a royal **crown**. Rev 2:10. "I will give you a crown of life." A crown is the sign of royal power. This crown is not lined with thorns—but hung with jewels; it is a never-fading crown! 1 Peter 5:4.

2. The saints in heaven have their royal **robes**. They exchange their sackcloth, for white robes. "I beheld a great multitude, which no man could number, clothed with white robes." Rev 7:9. *Robes* signify their glory, *white* their sanctity.

3. They sit with Christ upon the royal **throne**. Rev 3:21. We read in 1 Kings 6:32, the doors of the holy of holies were made of palm-trees, and open flowers covered with gold — an emblem of that victory, and that garland of glory, which the saints shall wear in the kingdom of heaven. When all the titles and ensigns of worldly honor shall lie in the dust—the saints' honor shall remain.

(7) In the kingdom of heaven we shall have a blessed REST. Rest is the end of motion; heaven is the blessed center where the soul acquiesces and rests. In this life we are subject to unquiet motions and fluctuations. "We were troubled on every side" (2 Cor 7:5). We are like a ship on the sea having the waves beating on both sides; but in the kingdom of heaven there is rest. Heb 4:9. How welcome is rest to a weary traveler! When death cuts asunder the string of the body—the soul, as a dove, flies away, and is at rest. This rest is when the saints shall lie on Christ's bosom—that hive of sweetness, that bed of perfume.

(8) The saints in the kingdom of heaven shall have their BODIES richly bespangled with glory. They shall be full of brightness and beauty. As Moses' face shined, that the people were not able to behold the glory (Exod 34:30); so the bodies of the saints shall shine seven times brighter than the sun, as Chrysostom says; they shall have such a resplendence of beauty on them, that the

angels shall fall in love with them; and no wonder, for they shall be made like Christ's glorious body. Phil 3:21. The bodies of glorified saints need no jewels—when they shall shine like Christ's body.

(9) The heavenly kingdom is ETERNAL. It is an eternal fruition, they shall never be put out of the throne. "They shall reign forever and ever." Rev 22:5. It is called "the everlasting kingdom" (2 Peter 1:11), and an "eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor 4:17. The *flowers of paradise*, of which the saints' garland is made, never wither. If there could be a cessation of heaven's glory, or the saints had but the least fear or suspicion of losing their felicity—it would infinitely abate and cool their joy. But their kingdom is forever—the *rivers of paradise* cannot be dried up. "At your right hand there are pleasures forevermore." Psalm 16:2: The kingdom of heaven was typified by the temple which was built with stone, covered with cedar overlaid with gold—to show that the fixed permanent state of glory abides forever. Well may we pray, "Your kingdom come."

[2] What are the PROPERTIES of the kingdom of heaven?

(1) The glory of this kingdom is SOLID and SUBSTANTIAL. The Hebrew word for *glory* signifies a *weight*—to show how solid and weighty the glory of the celestial kingdom is. The glory of the worldly kingdom is airy and imaginary, like a blazing comet, or a dream. The earth hangs like a ball in the air, without anything to uphold it. Job 26:7. The glory of the heavenly kingdom is substantial, it has twelve foundations. Rev 21:14. That which God and angels count glory, is true glory.

(2) The glory of this kingdom is SATISFYING. "With you is the *fountain* of life." Psalm 36:9. How can they not be satisfied—who are at the fountainhead? "When I awake, I shall be satisfied with

your likeness," that is, when I awake in the morning of the resurrection, having some of the beams of your glory shining in me—I shall be satisfied. Psalm 17:15. The creature says, concerning satisfaction, "It is not in me." Job 28:14. If we go for happiness to the creature, we go to the wrong place. Heaven's glory alone, is commensurate to the vast desires of an immortal soul. A Christian bathing himself in these rivers of pleasures, cries out in divine ecstasy, "I have enough!" The soul is never satisfied until it has God for its portion, and heaven for its haven. Dissatisfaction arises from some defect—but God is an infinite good, and there can be no defect in that which is infinite.

(3) The glory of heaven's kingdom is PURE and UNMIXED. The streams of paradise are not muddied. All are clear, all are delightful. There gold has no alloy. There is no bitter ingredient in that glory—it is pure as the honey which drops from the comb. There, the rose of Sharon grows without thorns. There is—ease without pain, honor without disgrace, life without death. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." Revelation 21:4.

(4) The glory of this kingdom is constantly EXHILARATING and REFRESHING. There is fullness—but no excess. Worldly comforts, though sweet—yet grow stale in time. A down-bed pleases awhile—but soon we are weary and must rise. Too much pleasure is a pain; but the glory of heaven never surfeits or nauseates; because, as there are all rarities imaginable, so every moment fresh delights spring from God into the glorified soul.

(5) The glory of this kingdom is distributed to EVERY individual saint. In an earthly kingdom the crown goes but to one,

a crown will fit but one head; but in that kingdom above, the crown goes to all. Rev 1:6. All the elect are kings. Earthly inheritances are settled chiefly upon one heir; but in the kingdom of heaven all the saints are heirs. "Heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ." Romans 8:17. God has land enough to give to all his heirs!

(6) Lucid and TRANSPARENT. This kingdom of heaven is adorned and bespangled with light. 1 Tim 6:16. Light is the glory of the creation. "The light is sweet." Eccl. 11:7. *Hell is a dark dungeon; fire—but no light*. Matthew 22:13. The kingdom of heaven is a transparency, all embroidered with light, clear as crystal. How can there be lack of light, where Christ the Sun of Righteousness displays his golden beams? "The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp." Rev 21:23.

(7) The glory of this kingdom is adequate and proportionable to the desire of the soul. In creature fruitions, that which commends them, and sets them off to us, is *suitableness*. The contentment of marriage lies not in beauty or portion—but in *suitableness* of disposition. The excellence of a feast is, when the food is suited to the palate. One ingredient in the glory of heaven is—that it exactly suits the desires of the glorified saints. We shall not say in heaven, "Here is a dish, I do not love!" There shall be *music* to suit the ear in the anthems of angels; and *food* which suits the glorified palate in the hidden manna of God's love.

(8) The glory of this kingdom will be SEASONABLE. The seasonableness of a mercy adds to its beauty and sweetness, like apples of gold to pictures of silver. After a hard winter in this cold climate, is it not seasonable to have the spring flowers of glory appear, and the singing of the birds of paradise come? When we have

been wearied, and tired out in battle with sin and Satan, will not a *crown* be seasonable?

[3] The kingdom of heaven infinitely EXCELS all the kingdoms of the earth.

(1) It excels in its ARCHITECT. Other kingdoms have men to raise their structures—but God himself laid the first stone in this kingdom. Heb 11:10. This kingdom is of the greatest antiquity. God was the first King and founder of it; no angel was worthy to lay a stone in this building.

(2) This heavenly kingdom excels in ALTITUDE. It is higher than any kingdom. The higher anything is, the more excellent it is. Fire being the most sublime element, is most noble. The kingdom of heaven is seated above all the visible orbs. There is—

1. The **airy** heaven, which is the space from the earth to the sphere of the moon.

2. The **starry** heaven, the place where the planets are, of a higher elevation, as Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars.

3. The **empyrean** heaven, which Paul calls the third heaven; where Christ is, there the kingdom of glory is situated. This kingdom is so high that no scaling ladders of enemies can reach it; so high that the old serpent cannot shoot up his fiery darts to it. If wicked men could build their nests among the stars, the least believer would be vastly above them.

(3) The kingdom of heaven excels all others in SPLENDOR and RICHES. It is described by precious stones. Rev 21:19. What

are all the rarities of the earth, compared to this kingdom — coasts of pearl, rocks of diamonds, islands of spices? What are the wonders of the world to it — the Egyptian pyramids, or the temple of Diana? What a rich kingdom is that, where God will lay out all his cost! Those who are poor in the world, soon as they come into this kingdom, grow rich—as rich as the angels. Other kingdoms are enriched with gold, this is enriched with the Deity.

(4) The kingdom of heaven excels all other kingdoms in HOLINESS. Kingdoms on earth are for the most part unholy; there is a common sore of luxury and uncleanness running in them. Kingdoms are stages for sin to be acted on. "All the tables are covered with vomit and there is not a spot without filth." (Isaiah 28:8); but the kingdom of heaven is so holy, that it will not mix with any corruption. "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful." Rev 21:27. It is so pure a soil, that no serpent of sin will breed there. There *beauty* is not stained with lust, and *honor* is not swelled with pride. Holiness is the brightest jewel of the crown of heaven.

(5) The kingdom of heaven excels all other kingdoms in its PEACEFUL nature. It is a kingdom of peace. Peace is the glory of a kingdom. One peace is better than countless victories. A king's crown is more adorned with the *white lily of peace*, than when beset with the *red roses of a bloody war*. But where shall we find an uninterrupted peace upon earth? Either there are home-bred divisions, or foreign invasions. "There was no peace to him who went out, nor to him who came in." 2 Chron 15:5. But the kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of peace; there are no enemies to conflict with; for all Christ's enemies shall be under his feet. Psalm 110:1. The gates of that kingdom always stand open: "The gates shall not be shut at all;" to show that there is no fear of an assault of an enemy. Rev

21:25. When the saints die they are said to enter into peace. Isaiah 57:2. There is no beating of drums or roaring of cannons; but the voice of harpers harping, in token of peace. Rev 14:2. In heaven, "righteousness and peace kiss each other."

(6) The kingdom of heaven excels all other kingdoms in MAGNITUDE; it is of vast dimensions. Though the gate of the kingdom is narrow, and we must pass into it through the narrow gate of mortification—yet, when once we are in it, it is very large. Though there are an innumerable company of saints and angels—yet there is room enough for them all. The kingdom of heaven may be called by the name of that well in Gen 26:22, Isaac "called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the Lord has made room for us." You who are now confined to a small cottage, when you come into the celestial kingdom, shall not be straitened for room. As every star has a large orb to move in, so it shall be with the saints, when they shall shine as stars in the kingdom of heaven.

(7) The kingdom of heaven excels in UNITY. All the inhabitants agree together in love. Love will be the perfume and music of heaven. As love to *God* will be intense—so to the *saints*. As perfect love casts out *fear*—so it casts out *envy* and *discord*. Those Christians who could not live quietly together on earth (which was the blemish of their profession) in the heaven shall be all love; the fire of strife shall cease; there shall be no vilifying, or censuring one another, or raking into one another's sores—but all shall be tied together with the heart-strings of love. There Luther and Zwingli are agreed. Satan cannot put in his cloven foot in there, to make divisions. There shall be perfect harmony and concord, and not one jarring string in the saints' music. It were worth dying—to be in that kingdom!

(8) This kingdom exceeds all earthly kingdoms in JOY and PLEASURE, and is therefore called paradise. 2 Cor 12:4. For delight, there are all things to cause pleasure; there is the *water of life* clear as crystal; there is the *honeycomb of God's love* dropping. It is called "entering into the *joy* of our Lord." Matthew 25:23. There are two things which cause joy.

[1] Separation from sin shall be complete—and then joy follows. There can be no more sorrow in heaven—than there is joy in hell.

[2] Perfect union with Christ. Joy flows from *union* with the object. When our union with Christ shall be perfect—our joy shall be full. If the joy of *faith* is so great, what will the joy of *sight* be? 1 Peter 1:8. Joseph gave his brethren provision for the way—but the full sacks of corn were kept until they came to their father's house. God gives the saints a *taste* of joy here—but the full sacks are kept until they come to heaven. Not only the physical parts, the outward senses, the eye, ear, taste—but the heart of a glorified saint shall be filled with joy. The understanding, will, and affections, are such a triangle as none can fill but the Trinity. There must needs be infinite joy, where nothing is seen but beauty; nothing is tasted but love. "You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." Psalm 16:11

(9) This kingdom of heaven excels all earthly kingdoms in PERFECTION. Other kingdoms are defective, they have not all provision within themselves—but must traffic abroad to supply their needs at home, as King Solomon sent to Ophir for gold. 2 Chron 8:18. But there is no defect in the kingdom of heaven; it has all commodities naturally supplied. Rev 22:2. There is the pearl of great price, the morning star, the mountains of spices, the bed of love;

there are those sacred rarities, wherewith God and angels are delighted!

(10) This kingdom of heaven excels all others in HONOR and nobility. It not only equals them in the ensigns of royalty, the throne and white robes—but it far transcends them. Other kings are of royal blood—but they in this heavenly kingdom, are born of God. Other kings converse with nobles; the saints glorified are fellow commoners with angels! They have a more noble **crown**; it is made of the flowers of paradise, and is a crown which can never fade away. 1 Peter 5:4. They sit on a better **throne**. King Solomon sat on a throne of ivory overlaid with gold (1 Kings 10:18); but the saints in heaven are higher advanced, they sit with Christ upon his throne! Rev 3:21. They shall judge the princes and great ones of the earth. 1 Cor 6:2. This honor have all the glorified saints.

(11) This kingdom of heaven excels all others in HEALTHFULNESS. Death is *a worm which is ever feeding at the root of our gourd!* Earthly kingdoms are often hospitals of sick people; but the kingdom of heaven is a most healthful climate. There are no physicians there—for there is no sickness there. There is no passing death-bell. "Neither can they die any more." Luke 20:36. In the heavenly climate, there are no ill vapors to breed diseases—but a sweet, aromatic healing fragrance coming from Christ; all his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia.

(12) This kingdom of heaven excels in DURATION, it abides forever. Suppose earthly kingdoms to be more glorious than they are, their foundations of gold, their walls of pearl, their windows of sapphire; yet they are corruptible and fleeting. "I will cause to cease the kingdom." Hos 1:4. Troy and Athens now lie buried in their ruins; corn now grows where Troy once stood. *Mortality* is the

disgrace of all earthly kingdoms; but the kingdom of heaven has *eternity* written upon it—it is an everlasting kingdom. 2 Peter 1:11. It is founded upon the strong pillar of God's omnipotence. The saints shall never be turned out of this kingdom, or be deposed from their throne, as some kings have been—but shall reign forever and ever! Rev 22:5.

How should all this affect our hearts! What should we mind but this kingdom of heaven, which more outshines all the kingdoms of the earth than the sun outshines the light of a candle!

[4] WHEN shall this kingdom of heaven begin? This glory in the kingdom of heaven shall be begun at death—but not be perfected until the resurrection.

(1) The saints shall enter upon the kingdom of glory immediately after death.

Before their *bodies* are buried, their *souls* shall be crowned. "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ." Phil 1:23. From this connection, *departing, and being with Christ*, we see clearly that there is a speedy passage from death to glory; no sooner is the soul of a believer divorced from the body—but it immediately goes to Christ! "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." 2 Cor 5:8. It would be better for believers to stay here on earth—if immediately after death they were not with Christ in glory; for here the saints are daily increasing their grace; here they may have many foretastes, sweet tastes of God's love: so that it would be better to stay here, if their soul should sleep in their body, and they should not have a speedy sight of God in glory.

But the consolation of believers, is that they shall not stay long from their kingdom. Quick as a wink—and they shall see God. It will not only be a **blessed** change to a believer, from a desert to a paradise, from a bloody battle to a victorious crown—but a **sudden** change. No sooner did Lazarus die—but he had a convoy of angels to conduct his soul to the kingdom of glory. You who now are full of bodily diseases, with scarcely a pain free day, saying, "My life is spent with grief!" (Psalm 31:10); be of good comfort, you may be eternally happy before you are aware! Before another week or month is over, you may be in the kingdom of glory, and then all tears shall be wiped away! "I assure you: Today you will be with Me in paradise!" Luke 23:43.

(2) The glory in the kingdom of heaven will be fully perfected at the resurrection and general day of judgment. Then the bodies and souls of believers will be reunited. What joy will there be at the reunion and meeting together of the soul and body of a saint! Oh, what a welcome will the **soul** give to the body! "O my dear body, you often joined with me in prayer, and now you shall join with me in praise; you were willing to suffer with me, and now you shall reign with me; you were sown a vile body—but now you are made like Christ's glorious body; we were once for a time divorced—but now we are married, and crowned together in a kingdom, and shall mutually congratulate each other's felicity."

[5] The certainty and infallibility of this kingdom of glory.

That this blessed kingdom shall be bestowed on the saints—is beyond all dispute.

(1) God has promised it. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12:32. "I appoint unto you a kingdom." Luke

22:29. "I bequeath it as my last will and testament." Has God promised a kingdom—and will he not make his promise good? God's promise is better than any bond. "In hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised." Titus 1:2. The whole earth hangs upon the word of God's *power*; and cannot our faith hang upon the word of his *promise?*

(2) There is a price laid down for this kingdom. Heaven is not only a kingdom which God has *promised*—but which Christ has *purchased*; it is called a purchased possession. Eph 1:14. Though this kingdom is given us freely—yet Christ bought it with the price of his blood; which is a heaven procuring blood. "Having boldness to enter into the holiest (that is, into heaven) by the blood of Jesus." Heb 10:19. The cross of Christ is the key of paradise! **Christ's blood is the key which opens the gates of heaven!** Should the saints not obtain this kingdom—then Christ should lose his purchase. Christ on the cross was in hard travail. Isaiah 53:11. He travailed to bring forth salvation to the elect: should not they possess the kingdom when they die—Christ would lose his travail; all his pangs and agonies of soul upon the cross would be in vain.

(3) Christ prays that the saints may have this kingdom settled upon them. "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory." That is, in heaven. John 17:24. This is Christ's prayer, that the saints may be with him in his kingdom, and be bespangled with some of the beams of his glory. Now, if they should not go into this heavenly kingdom, then Christ's prayer would be frustrated; but that cannot be, for he is God's favorite. "I know that you hear me always;" and besides, what Christ prays for, he has power to give. John 11:42. Observe the manner of Christ's prayer, "Father, I will;" *Father*, there he prays as man; *"I will,"* there he gives as God.

(4) The saints must have this blessed kingdom by virtue of Christ's ascension. "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." John 20:17. Where lies the comfort of this? Jesus Christ ascended to take possession of heaven for all believers. As a husband takes up land in another country in behalf of his wife, so Christ went to take possession of heaven in behalf of all believers. "I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2. My ascension is to make all things ready against your coming: I go to prepare the heavenly mansions for you.

The flesh that Christ has taken into heaven, is a sure pledge that our flesh and bodies shall be where he is before long. Christ did not ascend to heaven as a private person—but as a public person, for the good of all believers; his ascension was a certain forerunner of the saints ascending into heaven.

(5) The elect must have this blessed kingdom, in regard of the previous work of the Spirit in their hearts. They have the *beginning* of the kingdom of heaven in them here. *Grace* is heaven begun in the soul. Besides, God gives them the first-fruits of the Spirit. Romans 8:23. The first-fruits are the comforts of the Spirit. These first-fruits under the law were a certain sign to the Jews of the full crop of vintage which they would after receive. The first-fruits of the Spirit, consisting of joy and peace, assure the saints of the *full vintage of glory* they shall be ever reaping in the kingdom of God. The saints in this life are said to have the pledge of the Spirit in their hearts. 2 Cor 5:5. As a pledge is part of payment, and an assurance of payment in full to be made in due time—so God's Spirit in the hearts of believers, giving them his comforts, bestows on them a pledge, or taste of glory, which further assures them of that full reward which they shall have in the kingdom of heaven. "Believing, you rejoice;"

there is the *pledge* of heaven. 1 Peter 1:8. "Receiving the end of your faith," salvation; there is the *full payment*; ver 9.

(6) The elect must have this blessed kingdom by virtue of their union with Jesus Christ; they are members of Christ, therefore they must be where their head is. Indeed, the Arminians hold, that a justified person may fall from grace, and so his union with Christ may be dissolved and the kingdom lost. But I ask them—can Christ lose a member of his body? Then he is not perfect; and if Christ may lose *one* member of his body, why not as well *all*, by the same reason? He will then be a head without a body; but be assured a believer's union with Christ cannot be broken, and so long he cannot be hindered of the kingdom. John 17:12. What was said of Christ's natural body, is as true of his mystical. "A bone of him shall not be broken." John 19:36. Look how every bone and limb of Christ's natural body was raised up out of the grave, and carried into heaven; so shall every member of his mystical body be carried up into glory.

(7) We read of some who have been translated into this kingdom. Paul had a sight of it, for he was caught up into the third heaven. 2 Cor 12:2. And the converted thief on the cross was translated into glory. "Today shall you be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43. By all that has been said, it is most evident that believers have a glorious kingdom laid up for them in heaven, and that they shall go to this kingdom when they die. None doubt the certainty of the heavenly kingdom—but such as doubt the verity of Scripture.

[6] We should pray earnestly, "Your kingdom come."

(1) Because it is a kingdom worth praying for. It exceeds the glory of all earthly kingdoms, it has gates of pearl. Rev 21:21. We

have heard of a *cabinet* of pearl—but when did we hear of *gates* of pearl? In that kingdom is the bed of love, the mountains of spices; there are the cherubim, not to keep us out—but to welcome us into the kingdom. Heaven is a kingdom worth praying for; nothing is lacking in that kingdom which may complete the saints' happiness; for, wherein does happiness consist? Is it in *knowledge*? We "shall know as we are known." Is it in *royal fare*? We shall be at the "marriage supper of the Lamb." Is it in *rich apparel*? We shall be "clothed in long white robes." Is it in *exquisite music*? We shall hear the choir of angels singing. Is it in *dominion*? We shall reign as kings, and judge angels. Is it in *pleasure*? We shall enter into the joy of our Lord. Surely then this kingdom is worth praying for! "Your kingdom come." Would God give us a vision of heaven for a moment, as he did Stephen, who saw "the heavens opened" (Acts 7:56), we would be overwhelmed! "You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." Psalm 16:11. How importunately would we put up this petition, "Your kingdom come!"

(2) We must pray for this kingdom of glory, because God will not bestow it on any without prayer. "To those who seek for glory and immortality" (Romans 2:7); and how do we seek but by prayer? God has promised a kingdom, and we must by prayer put the bond in suit. *God is not so foolish as to throw away a kingdom on those who do not ask for it!* And certainly, if Christ himself, who had merited glory, did pray, "Now, O Father, glorify me with your own self" (John 17:5), how much more ought we to pray for the excellent glory who have this kingdom granted as a charter of God's mere grace and favor!

(3) We must pray that the kingdom of glory may come, that by going into it we may make an end of sinning. I think

sometimes, what a blessed time it will be, never more to have a sinful thought! though we must not pray, "Your kingdom come," out of discontent, because we would be rid of the troubles and crosses of this life. This was Jonah's fault; he would die in a fit, because God took away his gourd; "Lord," says he, "take my life from me." Jonah 4:3. But we must pray, "Your kingdom come," out of a holy design that the fetters of corruption may be pulled off, and we may be as the angels, those virgin spirits, who never sin. This made the church pray in Rev 22:20, *Veni, Domine Jesus* [Come, Lord Jesus].

(4) Because that all Christ's enemies shall be put under his feet. The devil shall have no more power to tempt, nor wicked men to persecute; the anti-christian hierarchy shall be pulled down, and Zion's glory shall shine as a lamp, and the Turkish strength shall be broken.

(5) We must pray earnestly that the kingdom of glory may come, that we may see God "face to face," and have an uninterrupted and eternal communion with him in the empyrean heaven. Moses desired but a glimpse of God's glory. Exod 33:18. How then should we pray to see him in all his embroidered robes of glory—when he shall shine ten thousand times brighter than the sun in its meridian splendor! Here, in this life, we rather *desire* God than *enjoy* him; how earnestly therefore should we pray, "Your kingdom of glory come!" *The beholding and enjoying God will be the diamond in the ring, the very quintessence of glory!* And must we pray, "Your kingdom come"? How then are they ever like to come to heaven who never pray for it? Though God gives some profane people "daily bread" who never pray for it—yet he will not give them the kingdom of heaven—who never pray for it! God may *feed* them—but he will never *crown* them.

Use 1. For information.

(1) From all this, you see that nothing within the whole sphere of true religion, is imposed upon unreasonable terms. When God bids us serve him, it is no unreasonable request; out of free grace he will enthrone us in a kingdom. When we hear of repentance—steeping our souls in brinish tears for sin; or of mortification—beheading our king-sin, we are ready to grumble, and think this is hard and unreasonable. "But, do we serve God for nothing?" Is it not infinite bounty to reward us with a glorious kingdom? This kingdom is as far above our *thoughts*, as it is beyond our *deserts*. No man can say, without wrong to God, that he is a hard master; for though he sets us about hard work—yet he is no hard master. God gives double pay; he gives great perks in his service—sweet joy and peace; and a great reward after, "an eternal weight of glory!" God gives the spring-flowers, and a crop; he settles upon us such a kingdom as exceeds our faith. Such as mortal eye has not seen, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive. 1 Cor 2:9. Alas, what an infinite difference is there between duty enjoined, and the kingdom prepared! What is the shedding of a tear—compared to an eternal crown! So that God's "commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3. Our service cannot be so hard—as a kingdom is sweet.

(2) See hence the royal bounty of God to his children, that he has prepared a kingdom for them, a kingdom bespangled with glory; infinitely above the model we can draw of it in our thoughts! The painter going to draw the picture of Helena, as not being able to draw her beauty to the life, drew her face covered with a veil; so, when we speak of the kingdom of heaven, we must draw a veil, we cannot set it forth in all its orient beauty and magnificence; gold and pearl do but faintly shadow it out. Rev 21:21. The glory of this kingdom is better felt—than expressed.

Those who inherit this kingdom are "clothed with white robes." Rev 7:9. **White robes** denote three things:

[1] Their DIGNITY. The Persian were arrayed in white, in token of *honor*.

[2] Their PURITY. The magistrates among the Romans were clothed in white—to show their integrity. Thus the queen, the Lamb's wife, is arrayed in fine linen, pure and white, which is "the righteousness of the saints." Rev 19:8.

[3] Their JOY. White is an emblem of joy. "Eat your bread with joy, let your garments be always white." Eccl 9:7, 8.

The dwellers in this kingdom have "**palms** in their hands," in token of VICTORY. Rev 7:9. They are conquerors over the world: and, being victors, they have now palm-branches. They sit upon the throne with Christ. Rev 3:21. Thus the saints in glory, after their heroic victories, shall sit upon a throne with Christ. It is royal bounty in God, to bestow such an illustrious kingdom upon the saints. It is a mercy to be *pardoned*—but what is it to be *crowned!* It is a mercy to be delivered from wrath to come—but what is it to be invested with a glorious kingdom! "Behold, what manner of love is this!" Earthly princes may bestow great gifts and donations upon their subjects—but they keep the kingdom to themselves. Though king Pharaoh advanced Joseph to honor, and took the ring off his finger and gave it to him—yet he would keep the kingdom to himself. Gen 41:40. But God enthrones the saints in a kingdom. He thinks nothing too good for his children. We are ready to think much of a tear, a prayer, or to sacrifice a sin for him; but he does not think much to bestow a kingdom upon us!

(3) See hence, that true religion is no ignominious disgraceful thing. Satan labors to cast all the odium and reproach upon it that he can; that it is devout frenzy, ingrain folly. Acts 28:22. "As concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against." But wise men measure things by the *outcome*. What is the outcome of a pious life? It ends in a kingdom. Would a prince regard the slightings of a few frantics, when he is going to be crowned? You who are beginners, bind their reproaches as a crown about your head; despise their *censures* as much as their *praise*: a kingdom is coming.

(4) See what contrary ways the godly and the wicked go at death! The godly go to a glorious kingdom—the wicked go to a foul prison! The devil is the jailer, and they are bound with the chains of darkness. Jude 6. But what are these chains? Not iron chains—but worse; the chain of God's *decree*, decreeing them to torment; and the chain of God's *power*, whereby he binds them fast under eternal wrath! The deplorable condition of impenitent sinners, is that they do not go to a kingdom when they die—but to a dreadful prison. Oh, think what horror and despair will possess the wicked, when they see themselves engulfed in misery, and their condition *hopeless, helpless, endless!* They are in a fiery prison, and there is no possibility of getting out. A servant under the law, who had a hard master—at every seventh year might go free; but in hell there is no year of release when the damned shall go free—the fire, the worm, the prison are eternal! If the whole world, from earth to heaven, were filled with grains of sand, and once in a thousand years an angel should come and fetch away one grain—how many millions of ages would pass before that vast heap of sand would be quite spent! Yet, if after all this time the sinner might come out of hell, there would be some hope: but this word "FOREVER!" breaks the heart with despair!

(5) See that which may make us in love with holy duties; that every duty spiritually performed brings us a step nearer to the kingdom! The *end* makes the *means* loveable. He whose heart is set on riches, counts trading pleasant, because it brings him riches. If our hearts are set upon heaven, we shall love duty, because it brings us by degrees to the kingdom; we are going to heaven in the way of duty. Holy duties increase grace; and as grace ripens, so glory hastens. The duties of piety are irksome to flesh and blood—but we should look upon them as spiritual chariots to carry us apace to the heavenly kingdom! The Protestants in France call their church paradise; and well they might, because the ordinances led them to the paradise of God. As every flower has its sweetness, so would every duty, if we would look upon it as giving us a lift nearer heaven!

(6) It shows us what little cause the children of God have to envy the prosperity of the wicked. "Who needs a full purse when he owns a treasury"? Seneca. The wicked have the "waters of a full cup wrung out to them." Psalm 73:10. As if they had a monopoly of happiness: they have all they can desire; nay, they have "more than heart can wish." Psalm 73:7. *They steep themselves in pleasure!* "They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ." Job 21:12. The *wicked* are high when God's people are low in the world. The *goats* scramble up the mountains of prosperity—when *Christ's sheep* are below in the valley of tears! The wicked are clothed in purple, while the godly are in sackcloth.

The prosperity of the wicked is a great stumbling-block. This made Asaph say, "Truly I have cleansed my heart in vain." Psalm 73:13. But there is no cause of envy at their prosperity, if we consider two things. *First, this is all they have!* "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things:" you had all your heaven here.

Luke 16:25. Luther calls the whole Turkish empire a bone which God casts to dogs. *Secondly, that God has laid up better things for his children*. He has prepared a kingdom of glory for them. They shall have the beatific vision: they shall hear the angels sing in concert; they shall be crowned with the pleasures of paradise forever. Oh, then do not envy the flourishing prosperity of the wicked! They go through pleasant way—to execution! The godly go through foul way—to coronation!

(7) Is there a kingdom of glory coming? See how happy all the saints are at death! They go to a kingdom! They shall see God's face, which shines ten thousand times brighter than the sun in its meridian glory. The godly at death shall be installed into their honor, and have the crown royal set upon their head. They have in the kingdom of heaven the quintessence of all delights; they have the water of life clear as crystal; they have all aromatic perfumes; they feed on the manna of angels; they lie in Christ's bosom, that bed of spices. There is such a pleasant variety in the happiness of heaven, that after millions of years it will be as fresh and desirable as the first hour's enjoyment!

In the kingdom of heaven, the saints are crowned with all those perfections which they are capable of. The desires of the glorified saints are infinitely satisfied; there is nothing absent that they could wish might be enjoyed; there is nothing present that they could wish might be removed. Those who are arrived into this kingdom would be opposed to come back to the earth again, for it would be much to their loss. They would not leave the fullness and the sweetness of the olive, to court the bramble; the things which delight us here on earth —they would scorn. What are golden bags—compared to the golden beams of the Sun of Righteousness?

In the kingdom of heaven there is glory in its highest elevation; in that kingdom is knowledge without ignorance, holiness without sin, beauty without blemish, strength without weakness, light without darkness, riches without poverty, ease without pain, liberty without restraint, rest without labor, joy without sorrow, love without hatred, plenty without surfeit, honor without disgrace, health without sickness, peace without war, contentment without cessation! Oh, the happiness of those that die in the Lord! They go into this blessed kingdom! And if they are so happy when they die, then let me make **two inferences**.

[1] What little cause have the saints to fear death! Are any afraid of going to a glorious kingdom? What is there in this world that should make us desirous to stay here? Do we not see God dishonored—and how can we bear it? Is not this world "a valley of tears"—and do we weep to leave it? Are we not in a wilderness among fiery serpents—and are we afraid to go from these serpents? Our best friends live above. God is ever displaying the banner of his love in heaven, and is there any love like his? Are there any sweeter smiles, or softer embraces than his? What news is so welcome—as leaving the world and going to a kingdom? Christian, your dying day will be your wedding day—and do you fear it? Is a slave afraid to be set free? Is a virgin afraid to be matched into the crown? Death may take away a few worldly comforts—but it gives that which is better; it takes away a flower and gives a jewel! It takes away a short lease and gives land of inheritance. If the saints possess a kingdom when they die, they have no cause to fear death. A prince would not be afraid to cross the sea, though tempestuous—if he were sure to be crowned as soon as he came to shore!

[2] If the godly are so happy when they die, that they go to a kingdom, what cause have we to mourn immoderately for

the death of godly friends? Shall we mourn for their advancement? Why should we shed tears immoderately for those who have all tears wiped from their eyes? Why should we be swallowed up with grief—for those who are swallowed up with joy? They are gone to their kingdom! They are not lost—but gone a little before us! They are not perished—but translated into heaven! They are removed for their advantage; as if one should be removed out of a smoky cottage—to a palace. Elijah was removed in a fiery chariot to heaven. Shall Elisha weep inordinately because he enjoys not the company of Elijah? Shall Jacob weep when he knows his son Joseph is advanced and made chief ruler in Egypt? We should not be excessive in grief when we know our godly friends are advanced to a kingdom.

I confess when any of our relations die in their impenitence, there is just cause of mourning—but not when our friends take their flight to glory. But though we are to weep to think any of our flesh should burn in hell—yet let us not be cast down for those who are so highly advanced at death—as to a kingdom. Our godly friends who die in the Lord, are in that blessed estate, and are crowned with such infinite delights, that if we could hear them speak to us out of heaven, they would say, "Weep not for us—but weep for yourselves!" Luke 23:28. We are in our kingdom, weep not for our advancement, "but weep for yourselves," who are in a sinful sorrowful world. You are tossing on the troublesome waves—but we have got to the haven: you are fighting with temptations, while we are wearing a victorious crown, "Weep not for us—but weep for yourselves."

(8) See the wisdom of the godly. They have the *serpent's eye* in the *dove's head*. They are "wise virgins." Matthew 25:2. Their wisdom appears in their choice. They choose that which will bring them to a kingdom; they choose grace, and wha*t is grace but the seed*

of glory! They choose Christ with his cross—but this cross leads to a crown! Moses chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." Heb 11:25. It was a wise, rational choice, for he knew that if he *suffered*, he would *reign*! At the day of judgment, those whom the world accounted foolish—will appear to be wise. They made a prudent choice—they chose holiness; and *what is happiness, but the quintessence of holiness?* They chose affliction with the people of God; but, through this *purgatory of affliction* they pass to *paradise!* God will proclaim the saints' wisdom before men and angels.

(9) See the folly of those who, for vain pleasures and profits, will lose such a glorious kingdom; like that cardinal of France who said, "He would lose his part in paradise, if he might keep his cardinalship in Paris." I may say (as Eccl 9:3), "Madness is in their heart." Lysimachus, for a draught of water, lost his empire; so, for a draught of sinful pleasure, these fools will lose heaven! We too much resemble our grandfather, Adam, who for an apple lost paradise. Many for trifles, to get a dollar more in the shop or bushel —will venture the loss of heaven. It will be an aggravation of the sinner's torment, to think how foolishly he was undone; for a flash of impure joy—he lost an eternal weight of glory! Would it not vex a king, to think he would lose his kingdom—for a feather! Such are those who let heaven go—for a song. This will make the devil insult at the last day, to think how he has befooled men, and made them lose their souls and their happiness for "lying vanities." If Satan could make good his brag, in giving all the glory and kingdoms of the world, it could not countervail the loss of the celestial kingdom. All the tears in hell are not sufficient to lament the loss of heaven!

Use 2. For reproof.

(1) It reproves such as do not look after this kingdom of glory, and live as if all we say about heaven were but a fiction. That they mind it not appears, because they do not labor to have the kingdom of grace set up in their hearts. If they have some thoughts of this kingdom—yet it is in a dull, careless manner; they serve God as if they served him not; they do not put forth their strength for the heavenly kingdom. How industrious were the saints of old for this kingdom! "Reaching forth unto those things which are before;" the Greek word is *epekteinomenos*, 'stretching out the neck," a metaphor from racers, that strain every limb, and reach forward to lay hold on the prize. Phil 3:13. Luther spent three hours a day in prayer. Anna, the prophetess, "departed not from the temple—but served God with fasting and prayers night and day." Luke 2:37. How zealous and industrious were the martyrs to get into this heavenly kingdom! They wore their fetters as ornaments, snatched up torments as crowns, and embraced the flames as cheerfully as Elijah did the fiery chariot which came to fetch him to heaven; and do we not think this kingdom worth our labor?

The great pains which the heathens took in their Olympic races, when they ran but for a crown made of olive intermixed with gold, will rise up in judgment against such as take little or no pains in seeking after the kingdom of glory. The dullness of many in seeking after heaven is such, as if they did not believe there was such a kingdom; or as if heaven would not countervail their labor; or as if they thought it were indifferent whether they obtained it or not, which is as much as to say, whether they were saved or not; whether they were crowned in glory, or chained as galley slaves in hell forever.

(2) It reproves those who spend their sweat more in getting the world than the kingdom of heaven. "Their mind is on

earthly things." Philippians 3:19. The world is the *great Diana* they cry up, as if they would fetch happiness out of the earth—which God has cursed; they labor for honor and riches. Like Korah's household, "The earth swallowed them up!" Numb 16:32. It swallows up their time and thoughts. If they are not pagans, they are infidels. Like the serpent, they lick the dust! Oh, what is there in the world that we should so idolize it, and Christ and heaven are to be disregarded as worthless? What has Christ done for you? Died for your sins! What will the world do for you? Can it pacify an angry conscience? Can it procure God's favor? Can it escape death? Can it bribe the glorious judge? Can it purchase for you a place in the kingdom of heaven? Oh, how are men bewitched with worldly profits and honors—that for these things they will let go paradise! It was a good prayer of Bernard, "Let us so possess temporal things, that we do not lose eternal things."

(3) It reproves such who delay and put off seeking this kingdom until it be too late; like the foolish virgins who came when the door was shut. Delay brings danger. People let the lamp of life blaze out, and when the symptoms of death are upon them, and they know not what else to do, will look up to the kingdom of heaven. Christ bids them seek God's kingdom *first*, and they will seek it *last*; they put off the kingdom of heaven to a death-bed, as if it were as easy to make their peace with God—as to make their will. How many have lost the heavenly kingdom through delays and procrastinations! Plutarch reports of Archias, the Lacedemonian, that when, being among his cups, one delivered him a letter and desired him to read it immediately, being of serious business, he replied, "I will mind serious things tomorrow;" and that night he was slain. You who say that you will look after the kingdom of heaven tomorrow—you know not but that you may be in hell before tomorrow! Sometimes death comes suddenly: it strikes without giving warning. What folly is it to

put off seeking the kingdom of heaven until the day of grace expires; until the whole life is spent. As if a man should begin to run a race when his last breath is in his mouth.

(4) It reproves such as were once great zealots in religion, and seemed to be touched with a coal from God's altar—but have since cooled in their devotion, and left off pursuing the celestial kingdom. "Israel has cast off the thing that is good." They have left off the house of prayer, and gone to play-houses; they have left off pursuing the heavenly kingdom. Hos 8:3.

Whence is this?

[1] For lack of a supernatural principle of grace. That branch must needs die—which has no root to grow upon. That which moves from a principle of life endures—as the beating of the pulse. But that which moves from an artificial spring only, when the spring is down, the motion ceases. The hypocrite's religion is artificial, not vital; he acts from the outward spring of applause or gain, and if that is down, his motion towards heaven ceases.

[2] From unbelief. "An evil heart of unbelief—in departing from the living God." Heb 3:12. "They believed not in God." Psalm 78:22. "They turned back;" 5:41. Sinners have hard thoughts of God: they think they may pray and hear; yet be never the better. Mal 3:14. They question whether God will give them the kingdom at last; then they turn back, and throw away Christ's colors; they distrust God's love, and no wonder they desert his service. *Unbelief is the root of apostasy!*

[3] Men leave off pursuing the heavenly kingdom, from some secret lust nourished in the soul, perhaps a wanton or a covetous lust. Demas, for love of the world, forsook true

religion. One of Christ's own apostles was caught with a *silver bait*. Covetousness will make men betray a godly cause, and make shipwreck of a good conscience. *If there is any lust unmortified in the soul—it will bring forth the bitter fruit either of scandal or apostasy*.

[4] Men leave off pursuing the kingdom of heaven out of timidity. If they persist in religion, they may lose their places of profit, perhaps their lives. The reason, says Aristotle, why the chameleon turns into so many colors—is through excessive fear. When carnal fear prevails, it makes men change their religion as fast as the chameleon does its colors. When many of the Jews, who were great followers of Christ, saw the swords and staves, they deserted him. What Solomon said of the sluggard, is as true of the coward: he says, "There is a lion outside!" Proverbs 22:13. He sees dangers before him; he would go on in the way to the kingdom of heaven—but there is a lion in the way! This is dismal. "If any man draws back (in the Greek, if he deserts, as a soldier, from his colors), my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Heb 10:38.

Use 3. For trial. Let us examine whether we shall go to this kingdom when we die. Heaven is called a "kingdom prepared." Matthew 25:34.

How shall we know this kingdom is prepared for us?

If we are prepared for the kingdom.

How may that be known?

1. By being heavenly people. An earthly heart is no more fit for heaven, than a clod of dust is fit to be a star; there is nothing of Christ or grace in such a heart. It were a miracle to find a pearl in an

ash heap; and it is as great a miracle to find Christ, the pearl of price, in an earthly heart. Would we go to the kingdom of heaven? Are we heavenly?

(1) Are we heavenly in our **contemplations**? Do our thoughts run upon this kingdom? Do we get sometimes upon Mount Pisgah, and take a prospect of glory? Thoughts are as travelers: most of David's thoughts traveled heaven's road. Psalm 139:17. Are our minds heavenlized? "Walk about Zion, count the towers thereof, mark well her bulwarks," Psalm 68:12, 13. Do we walk into the heavenly mount, and see what a glorious situation it is? Do we count the towers of that kingdom? While a Christian fixes his thoughts on God and glory, he does as it were tread upon the borders of the heavenly kingdom, and peep within the veil. As Moses had a sight of Canaan, though he did not enter into it, so the heavenly Christian has a sight of heaven, though he is not yet entered into it.

(2) Are we heavenly in our **affections**? Do we set our affections on the kingdom of heaven? Col 3:2. If we are heavenly, we despise all things below—in comparison with the kingdom of God; we look upon the world but as *a beautiful prison*; and we cannot be much in love with our fetters, though they are made of gold. Our hearts are in heaven. A stranger may be in a foreign land to gather up debts owing him—but he desires to be in his own kingdom and nation: so we are here awhile as in a strange land—but our desire is chiefly after the kingdom of heaven, where we shall be forever. The world is the place of a saint's *abode*, not his *delight*. Is it thus with us? Do we, like the patriarchs of old, desire a better country? Heb 11:16. This is the temper of a true saint, his affections are set on the kingdom of God: his anchor is cast in heaven, and he is carried there with the sails of desire.

(3) Are we heavenly in our **speech**? Christ, after his resurrection, spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3. Are your tongues turned to the language of the heavenly Canaan? "Then those who feared the Lord, spoke often one to another." Mal 3:16. Do you in your visits, season your discourses with heaven? There are many who say, they hope they shall be saved—but you shall never hear them speak of the kingdom of heaven. You will hear them speak of their wares and recreations, or of some rich purchase they have gotten—but nothing of the kingdom. Can men travel together in a journey, and not speak a word of the place they are traveling to? Are you travelers for heaven, and never speak a word of the kingdom you are traveling to? Herein many discover they do not belong to heaven, for you shall never hear a good word come from them. **The words are the looking-glass of the mind, they show what the heart is.**

(4) Are we heavenly in our trading? Is our traffic and merchandise in heaven? Do we trade in the heavenly kingdom by faith? A man may live in one place, and trade in another; he may live in Ireland, and trade in the West Indies; so we trade in the heavenly kingdom. Those who do not trade in heaven while they live—shall never go to heaven when they die. Do we send up to heaven, volleys of sighs and groans? Do we send forth the *ship of prayer* there, which fetches in returns of mercy? Is our communion with the Father and his Son Jesus? 1 John 1:3. Phil 3:20.

(5) Are our lives heavenly? Do we live as if we had seen the Lord with bodily eyes? Do we emulate and imitate the angels in sanctity? Do we labor to copy out Christ's life in ours? 1 John 2:6. It was a custom among the Macedonians, on Alexander's birth-day, to wear his picture around their necks set with pearl and diamond. Do we carry Christ's picture about us, and resemble him in the heavenliness

of our lives? If we are thus heavenly, we shall go to the kingdom of heaven when we die; and truly there is a great deal of reason why we should be thus heavenly in our thoughts, affections, and lives—if we consider that the main end why God has given us our souls, is, that we may mind the kingdom of heaven.

Our souls are of noble extraction, they are akin to angels. Now, is it rational to imagine that God would have breathed into us such noble souls—only to look after sensual objects? Were such bright stars made only to fall to the earth? Were these immortal souls made only to seek after dying comforts? Had this been the only end of our creation, to eat and drink, and converse with earthly objects, worse souls would have served us: animal natures would have been good enough for us. What need our souls to be rational and divine, to do that work only which a beast may do?

Great reason we should be heavenly in our thoughts, affections, lives, if we consider what a blessed kingdom heaven is. It is beyond all hyperbole. Earthly kingdoms scarcely deserve the names of *cottages,* compared with it. We read of an angel coming down from heaven, who set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth. Rev 10:2. Had we but once been in the heavenly kingdom, and viewed the superlative glory of it, how might we, in holy scorn, trample with one foot on the earth, and with the other foot upon the sea? There are rivers of pleasure, gates of pearl, sparkling crowns, white robes; and should not this make our hearts heavenly? It is a heavenly kingdom, and such only go into it who are heavenly.

Use 4. For exhortation to all in general.

(1) If there is such a glorious kingdom, believe this great truth. It should be engraved upon our hearts as with the point of a diamond, that there is a blessed kingdom in reversion. "Truly, there

is a reward for the righteous." Psalm 58:11. Let us not hesitate through unbelief. *Doubting* principles is the next way to *denying* them. Unbelief, like Samson, would pull down the pillars of true religion. Be confirmed in this, there is a kingdom of glory to come; whoever denies this, cuts asunder the main article of the creed, "life everlasting."

(2) If there is such a blessed kingdom of glory to come, let us take heed lest we miss this kingdom; let us fear lest we lose heaven by shooting short. *Trembling* in the body, is a malady; in the soul, a grace. This fear is not a fear of doubt or distrust, such as discourages the soul, for such fear frights from piety, it cuts the sinews of endeavor; but it is a *holy fear,* lest we miss the kingdom of heaven; it is a fear of diligence; it quickens us in the use of means, and puts us forward, that we may not fail of our hope. "Noah moved with fear, prepared an ark." Heb 11:7. Fear is an alarm to awaken sleepy Christians; it guards against carnal security; it is a spur to a sluggish heart. He who fears he shall come short of his journey, rides the faster. And indeed this exhortation to fear lest we miss this kingdom, is most necessary, if we consider two things:

[1] There are many who have gone many steps in the way to heaven, and yet have fallen short of it. "You are not far from the kingdom of God;" yet he was not near enough. Mark 12:34.

How many steps may a man take in the way to the kingdom of God, and yet miss it?

He may be adorned with *civility*; he may be *moral* and *upright*; he may be prudent, just, temperate; he may keep all the laws of the land; all which is good—but not enough to bring a man to heaven.

He may hang out the flag of a glorious profession, and yet fall short of the kingdom. The Scribes and Pharisees went far; they sat in Moses' chair, were expounders of the law; they prayed, gave alms, were strict in the observation of the Sabbath; if one had got a thorn in his foot, he would not pull it out on the Sabbath-day, for fear of breaking the Sabbath. They were so externally devout in God's worship, that the Jews thought, that if but two in all the world went to heaven, the one would be a Scribe, and the other a Pharisee. But the mantle of their profession, was not lined with sincerity; they did all for the applause of men, and therefore missed heaven. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:20.

A man may be a frequenter of church ordinances, and yet miss the kingdom. It is a good sight to see people flock as doves to the windows of God's house; it is good to lie in the way where Christ passes by; yet, be not offended, if I say, one may be a hearer of the word, and fall short of glory. Herod heard John the Baptist gladly—yet beheaded John—instead of beheading his sin. The prophet Ezekiel's hearers came with as much delight to his preaching, as one would do to a piece of beautiful music. "You are to them as a very lovely song of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words—but they do them not." Ezek 33:32. What is it to hear one's duty, and not do it? It is as if a physician prescribed a good remedy—but the patient would not take it.

A man may have some trouble for sin, and weep for it, and yet miss the heavenly kingdom.

Whence is this?

A sinner's tears are forced by God's judgments; as water which comes out of a distillery is forced by the fire. *Trouble for sin* is transient, it is quickly over again. As some that go to sea are sea- sick—but when they come to land are well again; so hypocrites may be sermon-sick—but this trouble does not last, the sick-fit is soon over. *A sinner weeps—but goes on in sin; his sins are not drowned in his tears!*

A man may have good desires and yet miss the kingdom. "Let me die the death of the righteous." Numb 23:10.

Wherein do these desires come short?

They are **sluggish**. A man would have heaven—but will take no pains. As if one should say, he desires water—but will not let down the bucket into the well. "The desire of the slothful kills him, for his hands refuse to labor." Proverbs 21:25. The sinner desires mercy but not grace; he desires Christ as a Savior—but not as he is the Holy One; he desires Christ only as a bridge to lead him over to heaven. *Such desires as these may be found among the damned!*

A man may forsake his sins, oaths, drunkenness, uncleanness—and yet come short of the kingdom. He may forsake gross sins, and yet have no reluctance to heart-sins, such as pride, unbelief, and the first risings of malice and lust. Though he dams up the *stream*, he lets alone the *fountain!* Though he lops and prunes the *branches*, he does not strike at the *root* of it. Though he leaves sin for fear of hell, or because it brings shame and poverty—yet he still loves sin; as if a snake should cast off her skin—and yet retain her poison! "They set their heart on their iniquity." Hos 4:8. It is but a partial forsaking of sin; though he leaves one sin, he lives in some other. Herod reformed very much. "He did many things;" but he lived in incest. Mark 6:20. Some leave drunkenness, and live in covetousness; they forbear swearing, and live in slandering. It is but a partial reformation, and

so they miss of the kingdom of glory. Thus you see there are some who have gone many steps in the way to heaven, and yet have come short. Some have gone so far in profession, that they have been confident their estate has been good, and that they should go to the kingdom of heaven, and yet have missed it. "When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut to the door, and you begin to stand without, and to knock, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us." Luke 13:25. How confident were these of salvation! They did not beseech—but knock, as if they did not doubt but to be let into heaven; yet to these Christ says, "I never knew you; depart from me, all you workers of iniquity." Therefore fear and tremble, lest any miss of this kingdom of heaven.

[2] This fear is necessary—if we consider what a loss it is to lose the heavenly kingdom. *All the tears in hell are not sufficient to lament the loss of heaven!* Those who lose the heavenly kingdom, lose God's sweet presence, the ravishing views and smiles of his glorious face. *God's presence is the diamond in the ring of glory!* "In your presence is fullness of joy." Psalm 16:11. If God is the fountain of all bliss, then, to be separated from him, is the fountain of all misery.

Those who lose the heavenly kingdom, lose the society of angels; and, what sweeter music than to hear them praise God in concert? They lose all their treasure, their white robes, their sparkling crowns; they lose their hopes. "Whose hope shall be cut off." Job 8:14. Their hope is not an anchor—but a spider's web. If hope deferred makes the heart sick, what is hope disappointed? Proverbs 13:12. They lose the purpose of their being. Why were they created—but to be enthroned in glory? Now, to lose this, is to lose the end of their being, as if an angel should be turned to a worm! There are many aggravations of the loss of this heavenly kingdom.

The eyes of the wicked shall be opened to see their loss; now they care not for the loss of God's favor, because they know not the worth of it. A man who loses a rich diamond, and took it but for an ordinary stone, is not much troubled at the loss of it; but when he comes to know what a jewel he lost, he laments. He whose heart would never break at the sight of his sins, breaks at the sight of his loss. When the wife of Phinehas heard the ark was lost, she cried out, "The glory is departed." 1 Sam 4:21. When the sinner sees what he has lost, that he has lost the beatific vision, he has lost the kingdom of heaven—he will cry out in horror and despair, "The glory, the everlasting glory, is departed!"

2. A second aggravation of the loss of this kingdom will be, that sinners shall be upbraided by their own conscience. This is the worm which never dies, a self-accusing mind. Mark 9:44. When sinners shall consider that they were in a fair way to the kingdom; that they had a possibility of salvation; that though the door of heaven was narrow—yet it was open; that they had the means of grace; that the jubilee of the gospel was proclaimed in their ears; that God called but they refused; that Jesus Christ offered them a plaster of his own blood to heal them—but they trampled it under foot; that the Holy Spirit stood at the door of their heart, knocking and crying to them to receive Christ and heaven—but they repulsed the Spirit, and sent away this dove; and that now, through their own folly and foolish wilfulness, they have lost the kingdom of heaven; *a self-accusing conscience will be terrible, it will be like a venomous worm gnawing at the heart.*

3. A third aggravation of the loss of heaven will be, to look upon others that have gained the kingdom. "There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you

yourselves thrown out!" Luke 13:28. The happiness of the godly in heaven, will be an eyesore to the damned in hell. When the wicked shall see those whom they hated and scorned—exalted to a kingdom, and shine with robes of glory, and they themselves miss the kingdom--it will be a dagger at the heart, and make them gnash their teeth for envy!

4. A fourth aggravation is, that this loss of the kingdom of heaven is accompanied with the punishment of sense. He who leaps short of the bank, falls into the river; such as come short of heaven, fall into the river of fire and brimstone! "The wicked shall be turned into hell!" Psalm 9:17. How dreadful is that! If to have but a spark of God's anger light upon the conscience be so torturing here on earth, what will it be to have mountains of God's wrath thrown upon the soul? "Who knows the power of your anger?" Psalm 90:11. The angel never poured out his vial—but some woe followed. Rev 16:3. When the bitter vials of God's wrath are poured out, damnation follows. Dives cries out, "I am tormented in this flame." Luke 16:24. In hell there is not a drop of mercy. There was no oil nor frankincense used in the sacrifice of jealousy. Numb 5:15. In hell there is no oil of mercy to assuage the sufferings of the damned, nor incense of prayer to appease God's wrath.

5. A fifth aggravation of the loss of this kingdom will be to consider on what easy and reasonable terms men might have had this kingdom. If indeed God had commanded impossibilities, to have satisfied divine justice in their own persons—it would have been another matter. But what God did demand was reasonable, and was for their good, which was to accept of Christ for their Lord and Husband—and to part with that which would ruin them. These were the fair terms on which they might have enjoyed the heavenly kingdom. Now, to lose heaven, which might have been

had upon such easy terms—will be a cutting aggravation. It will rend a sinner's heart with rage and grief, to think how easily he might have prevented the loss of the heavenly kingdom!

6. It will be an aggravation of the loss of heaven for sinners to think how active they were in doing that which lost them the kingdom. What pains they took to resist the Spirit and to stifle conscience! They sinned until they were out of breath. "They weary themselves to commit iniquity." Jer 9:5. What difficulties men went through! How much they endured for their sins! How much shame and pain! How sick was the drunkard with his cups! How sore in his body was the adulterer! What marks of sin he carried about him! What dangers men adventure upon for their lusts! They adventure God's wrath! Oh, how will this aggravate the loss of heaven! How will it make men curse themselves to think what pains they were at to lose happiness! How will it sting men's consciences to think that had they but taken as much pains for heaven as they did for hell—they had not lost it!

7. It will be an aggravation of the loss of this kingdom, that it will be irreparable: heaven once lost can never be recovered. Worldly losses may be made up again. If a man loses his health—he may have it repaired; if he is driven out of his kingdom—he may be restored to it again as king Nebuchadnezzar was, "My honor returned unto me, and I was established in my kingdom." Dan 4:36. But those who once lose heaven—can never be restored to it again. After millions of years they are as far from obtaining glory as at first. Thus you see how needful this exhortation is, that we should fear lest we fall short of this kingdom of heaven.

What shall we do that we may not miss this kingdom of glory? Take heed of those things which will make you miss heaven.

(1) Take heed of spiritual SLOTH. Many Christians are settled upon their lees; they are loath to put themselves to too much pains. It is said of Israel, "They despised the pleasant land." Psalm 106:24. Canaan was a paradise of delights, a type of heaven; yes—but some of the Jews thought it would cost them a great deal of trouble and hazard in the getting, and they would rather go without it. "They despised the pleasant land." I have read of certain Spaniards that live where there is a great store of fish—but are so lazy that they will not be at the pains to catch them—but buy from their neighbors. Such sinful sloth is upon the most, that though the kingdom of heaven is offered to them—yet they will not put themselves to any labor for it. They have some faint wishes and desires. "O that I had this kingdom!" They are like a man who wishes for venison—but will not hunt for it. "The soul of the sluggard desires, and has nothing." Proverbs 13:4. Men would be content to have the kingdom of heaven if it would drop as a ripe fig into their mouths—but they are loath to fight for it. O take heed of spiritual sloth! God never made heaven to be a hive for drones. We cannot have the world without labor, and do we think to have the kingdom of heaven? Heathens will rise up in judgment against many Christians. What pains did they take in their Olympic races when they ran but for a crown of olive or myrtle intermixed with gold; and do we stand still when we are running for a kingdom? "Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep." Proverbs 19:15. Sloth is the soul's sleep. Adam lost his rib when he was asleep. Many a man loses the kingdom of heaven when he is in this deep sleep of sloth.

(2) Take heed of UNBELIEF. Unbelief kept Israel out of Canaan. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Heb 3:19. And it keeps many out of heaven. Unbelief is an enemy to salvation, it is a damning sin; it whispers thus, "To what purpose is all this pain for the heavenly kingdom? I had as good sit still." "And

they said—There is no hope." Jer 18:12. Unbelief destroys hope; and if you cut this sinew, a Christian goes but lamely in religion, if he goes at all. Unbelief raises jealous thoughts of God; it represents him as a severe judge; it discourages many a soul, and takes it off from duty. Beware of unbelief. Believe the promises. "The Lord is good to the soul that seeks him." Seek him earnestly and he will open both heart and heaven to you. Lam 3:25. [God does not fail those who desire him.] Do what you are able, and God will help you. While you spread the sails of your endeavor, God's Spirit will blow upon these sails, and carry you swiftly to the kingdom of glory.

(3) If you would not miss the heavenly kingdom, take heed of imagining the way to be easier than it is; as though it were but a sigh, or, "Lord have mercy." There is no going to heaven at a leap; one cannot leap out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom. The sinner is "dead in trespasses." Eph 2:1. Is it easy for a dead man to restore himself to life? Is regeneration easy? Are there no pangs in the new birth? Does not the Scripture call Christianity a *warfare* and a *race*? And do you imagine this easy? The way to the kingdom is not easy—but a mistake about the way is easy.

(4) If you would not miss the heavenly kingdom, take heed of delays and PROCRASTINATION. [Delay brings danger.] It is a usual delusion, "I will mind the kingdom of heaven—but not yet; when I have gotten an estate, and grown old, then I will look after heaven." But suddenly, death surprises men, and they fall short of heaven. **Delay** strengthens sin, hardens the heart, and gives the devil fuller possession of a man. Take heed of adjourning and putting off seeking the kingdom of heaven until it is too late. Caesar, deferring to read a letter put into his hand, was killed in the senate-house. Consider how short your life is; it is a candle which is soon blown out. [The life of everyone living is *fleeing away*.] Delay not the

business of salvation a day longer; sometimes death strikes, and gives no warning.

(5) If you would not come short of the kingdom of heaven—take heed at PREJUDICE. Many take a prejudice at religion, and on this rock dash their souls. They are prejudiced at Christ's *person*, his *truths*, his *followers*, his *ways*.

1. They are prejudiced at Christ's PERSON. "And they took offense at him." Matthew 13:57. What is there in Christ that men should be offended at him? He is the "pearl of great price." Matthew 13:46. Are men offended at pearls and diamonds? Christ is the wonder of beauty. "Fairer than the children of men." Psalm 45:2. Is there anything in beauty to offend? He is the mirror of mercy. Heb 2:17. Why should mercy offend any? He is a Redeemer. Why should a captive slave be offended at him who comes with a sum of money to ransom him? *The prejudice men take at Christ, is from the inbred depravity of their hearts*. The eye that is sore cannot endure the light of the sun: the fault is not in the sun—but in the sore eye. There are two things in Christ against which men are prejudiced:

[1] His BASENESS. The Jews expected a monarch for their Messiah; but Christ came not with outward pomp and splendor. His kingdom was not of this world. The stars which are seated in the brightest orbs are least seen. Christ, who is the bright morning-star, was not much seen; his divinity was hidden in the dark lantern of his humanity, all who saw the man did not see the Messiah. The Jews stumbled at the baseness of his person.

[2] Men are prejudiced at Christ's STRICTNESS. They look upon him as austere, and his laws as too severe. "Let us break their bands, and cast away their cords from us." Psalm 2:3. Though to a saint, Christ's laws are no more burdensome than wings to a bird—

yet to the wicked his laws are a yoke; and they love not to come under restraint, therefore they hate Christ. Though they pretend to love him as a Savior, they hate him as he is the Holy One.

2. They are prejudiced at Christ's TRUTHS.

[1] Self-denial. A man must deny his righteousness. Phil 3:9. He will graft the hope of salvation upon the stock of his own righteousness.

[2] He must deny his unrighteousness. The Scripture seals no patents to sin; it teaches us to deny all "ungodliness and worldly lusts." Titus 2:12. We must divorce those sins which bring in pleasures and profit.

[3] Forgiveness of injuries. Mark 11:25. These truths men are prejudiced at; they can rather lack forgiveness from God, than they can forgive others.

3. They are prejudiced at Christ's FOLLOWERS.

[1] Their paucity. There are but few, in comparison, who embrace Christ; but why should this offend? Men are not offended at pearls and precious stones, because they are few.

[2] Their poverty. Many who wear Christ's livery are low in the world; but why should this give offence? Christ has better things than these to bestow upon his followers; such as the holy anointing, the white stone, the hidden manna, and the crown of glory. All Christ's followers are not humbled with poverty. Abraham was rich with gold and silver, as well as rich in faith. Though not many noble are called —yet some noble are. "Many of them believed, including a number of the prominent Greek women as well as men." Acts 17:12. Constantine

and Theodosius were godly emperors. So that this stumbling block is removed.

[3] Their scandals. Some of Christ's followers, under a mask of piety, commit sin, which begets a prejudice against religion; but does Christ or his gospel teach any such thing? The rules he prescribes are holy. Why should the master be thought the worse of, because some of his servants prove bad?

4. They are prejudiced at Christ's WAYS. They expose them to sufferings. "Let him take up his cross and follow me." Matthew 16:24. Many stumble at the cross. There are, as Tertullian says, *"silken Christians,"* who love their ease; they will follow Christ to mount Tabor, to see him transfigured—but not to mount Golgotha, to suffer with him. But, alas! what is affliction, compared to the glory which follows! The weight of glory makes affliction light. O take heed of prejudice, which has been a stumbling-stone in men's way to heaven, and has made them fall short of the kingdom!

(6) If you would not miss the kingdom of heaven—take heed of PRESUMPTION. Most men presume all is well with their souls, and take it as a principle not to be disputed—that they shall go to heaven when they die. The devil has given them opium, to cast them into a deep sleep of carnal security. The presumptuous sinner is like the leviathan, made "without fear;" he lives as bad as the worst—yet hopes he shall be saved as well as the best; he blesses himself and says that he shall have peace, though he goes on in sin. Deut 29:19. This is the same as if a man would drink poison—yet not fear but he will have his health.

But whence does this presumptuous hope arise? Surely from a conceit that God is made up of all mercy. It is true that God is *merciful*—but he is *just* also. "Keeping mercy for thousands, and that

will by no means clear the guilty." Exod 34:7. If a king proclaimed that those only should be pardoned, who came in and submitted, ought any still persisting in rebellion, to claim the benefit of the pardon? Do you hope for mercy who will not lay down your weapons —but stand out in rebellion against heaven? None might touch the ark but the priests: none may touch this ark of God's mercy—but holy, consecrated people. Presumption is the great devourer of souls. A thousand have missed heaven—by putting on the *broad spectacles of presumption.*

(7) If you would not miss the heavenly kingdom, take heed of the delights and pleasures of the FLESH. Soft pleasures harden the heart; many people cannot endure a serious thought—but are for comedies and romances; they play away their salvation. "Men are caught by pleasure, as fish by the hook." Cicero. Pleasure is the sugared bait men bite at—but there is a hook under it! "They sing with tambourine and harp. They make merry to the sound of the flute." Job 21:12. "How terrible it will be for you who sprawl on ivory beds surrounded with luxury, eating the meat of tender lambs and choice calves. You sing idle songs to the sound of the harp. You drink wine by the bowlful, and you perfume yourselves with exotic fragrances." Amos 6:4-6.

The pleasures of the world keep many from the pleasures of paradise! Beard speaks of one who had a room richly hung with beautiful pictures, he had most lovely music, he had the rarest beauties, he had all the candies and dainties to gratify his senses with pleasure; and swore that he would like to live one week in such a state, though he were sure to be damned in hell the next day! One observes, that the dogs of Sicily while hunting among the sweet flowers, lose the scent of the rabbit; so, many while hunting after the sweet pleasures of the world, lose the kingdom of heaven. "It is," says

Theophylact, "one of the worst sights—to see a sinner go laughing to hell."

(8) If you would not fall short of the kingdom of heaven—take heed of WORLDLY-MINDEDNESS. A *covetous* spirit chokes holy affections, as the earth puts out the fire. The world hindered the young man from following Christ; he went away sorrowful, which extorted these words from our Savior: "How hard it is for rich people to get into the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!" Luke 18:24-25. "The riches of the world are the snares of the devil!" Bernard. Riches are golden snares. If a man were to climb up a steep rock, and had weights tied to his legs, it would hinder him in his ascent. Just so, many golden weights will hinder us from climbing up the steep rock which leads to heaven. "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in." Exod 14:3. So it may be said of many, they are entangled in earthly affairs, the world has shut them in.

The *world* is no friend to *grace*. The more the babe sucks—the weaker the mother is. Just so, the more the world sucks—the weaker our grace is.

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15. Had a man a monopoly of all the wealth of the world; could he heap up riches to the stars--yet his heart would not be filled. Covetousness is never satisfied. Joshua could stop the course of the sun—but could not stop Achan in his covetous pursuit of the wedge of gold. He whose heart is locked up in his *chest*, will be locked out of heaven. Some ships which have escaped the rocks--have been wrecked upon the sands.

Just so, many who have escaped gross sins--have been wrecked upon the world's golden sands!

(9) If you would not come short of the kingdom of heaven—take heed of indulging any SIN. One millstone will drown, as well as more; *one sin lived in* will damn, as well as more. If any one sin reigns—it will keep you from reigning in the kingdom of heaven. Especially keep from sins of your natural constitution; your darling sin; "I kept myself from *my* iniquity," that sin which my heart would soonest decoy and flatter me into. Psalm 18:23. As in the hive there is one master bee--so in the heart there is one master-sin. Oh, take heed of this!

How may this *darling-sin* be known?

1. That sin for which a man cannot endure the arrow of a reproof, is the bosom-sin. Herod could not brook to have his incest meddled with, that was a *touch me not*. Men can be content to have other sins declaimed against; but if a minister puts his finger upon the sore, and touches upon that one special sin—then their eyes flash with fire, they are enraged, and spit the venom of malice!

2. That sin which a man's heart runs out most to, and he is most easily captivated by—is the Delilah in the bosom. One man is overcome with wantonness, another by worldliness. It is a sad thing for a man to be so bewitched by a beloved sin—that if it asks him to part with not only one half the kingdom—but the whole kingdom of heaven, he must part with it to gratify that lust!

3. That sin which most troubles a man and flies in his face in an hour of sickness and distress—is the sin he has allowed himself in, and is his complexion-sin. When Joseph's brethren were distressed, their sin in *selling their brother* came into

their remembrance. "We are truly guilty concerning our brother," etc. Gen 42:21. So, when a man is upon his sick-bed, and conscience shall say, "You have been guilty of such a sin, the sin of slandering or uncleanness," conscience reads a man a sad lecture, and affrights him most for one sin; that is the complexion-sin.

4. That sin which a man is least inclined to part with, is the endeared sin. Of all his sons Jacob could most hardly part with Benjamin. "Will you take *Benjamin* away!" Gen 42:35. So says the sinner, this and that sin I have left—but must *Benjamin* go too? Must I part with this delightful sin? That goes to the heart!

As with a castle which has several forts about it, the first and second forts of which are yielded, when it comes to the main castle, the governor will rather fight and die than yield it. Just so, a man may allow many of his sins to be demolished; but when it comes to one—which is like the taking of a castle—he will never yield to part with that; surely that is the master-sin. Take heed especially of this sin; the strength of sin lies in the *beloved* sin, which, like a cancer striking at the heart, brings death.

I have read of a monarch, who being pursued by the enemy, threw away the crown of gold on his head, that he might run the faster. Just so, the sin which you wore as a crown of gold must be thrown away, that you may run the faster to the kingdom of heaven. Oh, if you would not lose glory, mortify the beloved sin! Set it, as Uriah—in the forefront of the battle to be slain. By plucking out this *right eye*—you will see the better to go to heaven!

(10) If you would not fall short of the kingdom of heaven—take heed of inordinate PASSION. Many a ship has been lost in the storm; and many a soul has been lost in a storm of unruly passions. Every member of the body is infected with sin, as every

branch of wormwood is bitter; but "the *tongue* is full of deadly poison." James 3:8. Some care not what they say in their passion; they will censure, slander, and wish evil to others. *How can Christ be in the heart—when the devil has taken possession of the tongue?* Passion disturbs reason, it is a *temporary insanity*. Jonah in a passion flies out against God. "I do well to be angry, even unto death." Jon 4:9. What! to be angry with God, and to justify it? "I do well to be angry;" the man was not well in his wits. Passion unfits for prayer. "I want men everywhere to lift up *holy* hands in prayer, without anger or disputing." 1 Tim 2:8. He who prays in anger may lift up his hands in prayer—but he does not lift up *holy* hands. Water, when hot, soon boils over; so, when the heart is heated with anger, it soon boils over in fiery passionate speeches. Some curse others in their passion. Let those whose tongues are set on fire, take heed that they do not one day in hell desire a drop of water to cool them! Oh, if you would not miss the heavenly kingdom—beware of giving way to unbridled passions. Some say, "words are but wind;" but they are such a wind as may blow them to hell.

(11) If you would not fall short of the heavenly kingdom—beware of too much indulging the sensual appetite. "Make no provision for the flesh." Romans 13:14. The Greek word, *to make provision*, signifies to be *caterers for the flesh*. "Whose god is their belly." Phil 3:19. The throat is a slippery place. Judas received the devil in the sop; and often the devil slides down in the liquor. Excess in food and drink clouds the mind, chokes holy affections, and provokes lust. Many a man digs his own grave with his teeth. The heathen Seneca could say, "I am great and born to greater things than to be a slave to my body." He was higher born than to be a slave to his body. To pamper the body, and neglect the soul, is to feed the slave and to starve the wife. Take such a proportion of food as may recruit nature—but do not surfeit it. Excess in things lawful has lost

many the kingdom of heaven. A bee may suck a *little* honey from the leaf—but put it in a *barrel* of honey, and it is drowned! To suck *moderately* from the creature, God allows; but *excess* engulfs men in perdition.

(12) If you would not fall short of the kingdom of heaven—take heed of injustice in your dealings. Defrauding lies in two things:

1. Mixing commodities, as if anyone should mix bad wheat with good, and sell it for pure wheat, which is to defraud. "Your wine mixed with water." Isaiah 1:22.

2. Giving scant measure. "Making the ephah small." Amos 8:5. The ephah was a measure which the Jews used in selling: they made the ephah small; they gave not full measure. I wish this were not the sin of many. "He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand." Hos 12:7. Can they be *holy*—who are not *just*? "Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances?" Micah 6:11. Is his heart sincere—who has false weights? Many cannot reach heaven—because of their over-reaching.

(13) If you would not miss the kingdom of heaven—take heed of evil company. There is a necessary commerce with men in buying and selling, or, as the apostle says, we must go out of the world—but do not *voluntarily* choose the company of the wicked. 1 Cor 5:10. "I have written unto you not to keep company." 1 Cor 5:11. Do not incorporate into the society of the wicked, or be too much familiar with them. The wicked are God-haters. "Should you love those who hate the Lord?" 2 Chron 19:2. A Christian is bound, by virtue of his oath of allegiance to God in baptism, not to have intimate converse with such as are God's sworn enemies. What company can Christ's doves have—among birds of prey? What

company can virgins have—among harlots? The company of the wicked is very defiling, it is like going among those who have the plague.

"They mingled among the pagans and adopted their evil customs." Psalm 106:35. If you mingle bright armor with rusty, the bright armor will not brighten the rusty—but the rusty armor will spoil the bright. By mixing with the wicked—you are apt to receive hurt. The bad will sooner corrupt the good, than the good will convert the bad. Pharaoh taught Joseph to swear—but Joseph did not teach Pharaoh to pray. There is a strange attractive power in evil company to corrupt and poison the best dispositions; they damp good affections. Throw a *fire-ball* into the *snow*—and it is soon quenched. Among the wicked, the heat of zealous affections is lost. By holding familiar correspondence with the wicked, they will dissuade us from strict godliness, and debar us our liberty and pleasure. "This sect everywhere is spoken against." Acts 28:22.

Hereupon he, who before looked towards heaven, begins to be discouraged, and gradually declines from holiness. There steals upon him a dislike of his former religious course of life; he thinks he was righteous overmuch, stricter than needed. There is instilled into his heart a secret delight of evil. He begins to like foolish scurrilous discourse; he can hear true religion spoken against, and be silent, nay, well pleased; he loves vanity, and makes sport of sin. He is by degrees so metamorphosed, and made like the company he converses with, that he now grows into disgust and hatred of his former sober ways. He is ill-affected towards godly men, transformed into scoffing Ishmael, a breathing devil; and becomes at last as much the child of hell as any of that graceless damned crew he conversed with! And what is the end of all? A blot in the name, a moth in the estate, a worm in the conscience. Oh, if you would not miss the

kingdom of heaven, beware of evil company! Bad company is the bane and poison of the youth of this age. Such as were once soberly inclined, by coming among the profane, grow familiar, until at last they keep one another company in hell.

(14) If you would not miss the kingdom of heaven—take heed of parleying with the fleshly part. The flesh is a bosom traitor. When an enemy is gotten within the walls of a castle, it is in great danger of being captured. The flesh is an enemy within—it is a bad master. It says, "There is a lion in the way!" It discourages from religious strictness; it says as Peter did to Christ, "Spare yourself;" it says as Judas, "Why all this waste? Why all this praying? Why do you waste your strength and strength in piety? Why all this waste?" The flesh cries out for ease and pleasure. How many, by consulting with the flesh, have lost the kingdom of heaven!

(15) If you would not fall short of heaven—take heed of carnal relations. Our carnal friends are often bars and hindrances in our way to heaven; they will say, "Piety is preciseness and singularity. "A wife in the bosom, may be a tempter. Job's wife was so. "Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God, and die!" Job 2:9. "What! still pray? What do you get by serving God? Job, where are your earnings? What can you show you have had in God's service—but boils and ulcers? And do you still retain your integrity? Throw off God's livery, renounce religion!" Here was a temptation handed over to him by his wife. *The woman was made of the rib, the devil turned this rib into an arrow, and would have shot Job to the heart—but his faith quenched this fiery dart!* Beware of carnal relations!

We read that some of Christ's kindred laid hold on him, and would have hindered him when he was going to preach. "They said—He's out of his mind!" Mark 3:21. Our kindred sometimes would stand in

our way to heaven, and, judging all zeal rashness, would hinder us from being saved. Such carnal relations Spira had; for having consulted with them whether he should remain constant in his orthodox opinion, they persuaded him to recant; and so, abjuring his former faith, he fell into horror and despondency of mind. Galeacius, Marquis of Vice, found his carnal relations a great block in his way; and what ado had he to break through their temptations! *Take heed of a snare in your bosom!* It is a brave saying of Jerome, "If my parents should persuade me to deny Christ, if my wife should charm me with her embraces—I would forsake all, and fly to Christ."

(16) If you would not fall short of the kingdom of heaven—take heed of falling away. Beware of apostasy. He misses the prize—who does not hold out in the race; he who makes shipwreck of the faith—who cannot come to the haven of glory. We live in the fall of the leaf; men fall from that goodness they seemed to have; some are turned to error, others to vice; some to drinking and dicing; the very mantle of their profession is fallen off. It is dreadful for men to fall off from hopeful beginnings. "The apostate," says Tertullian, "seems to put God and Satan in the balance, and having weighed both their services, prefers the devil's service, and proclaims him to be the best master; in which respect he is said to put Christ to open shame." Heb 6:6. This is sad at last. Heb 10:38. If you would not miss the glory, take heed of apostasy. Those who fall away, must needs fall short of the kingdom.

What MEANS must we use—that we do not fall short of the kingdom of heaven?

(1) If we would not come short of this heavenly kingdom—let us be much in the exercise of SELF-DENIAL. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." Matthew 16:24. He who would go to heaven must deny self-righteousness. We must beware of our own righteousness. "That I may be found in him, not having my own righteousness." Phil 3:9. The spider weaves a web out of her own bowels. Just so, a hypocrite would spin a web of salvation out of his own righteousness. We must deny our morality in point of justification. *Morality is a good staff to walk with among men—but it is a bad ladder to climb up to heaven!* We must deny our holy things, in point of justification. Alas! how are our duties chequered with sin! Put gold in the fire, and out comes the dross. Just so, our most golden services are mixed with unbelief. Deny self-righteousness; use duty—but trust to Christ. Noah's dove made use of her wings to fly—but trusted to the ark for safety! Let duties have your diligence—but not your confidence. Self-denial is the way to the kingdom. There is no getting into heaven, but through this strait gate of self-denial.

(2) The second means for obtaining the kingdom is serious CONSIDERATION. Most men fall short of heaven for lack of consideration.

We should often consider **what a kingdom heaven is.** It is called a *prepared* kingdom, which implies something that is rare and excellent. Matthew 25:34. God has prepared in his kingdom such things as "eye has not seen nor ear heard." 1 Cor 2:9. *Heaven is beyond hyperbole.* In particular in this celestial kingdom are two things—a stately palace, and a royal feast.

The stately palace is *large* and *spacious*. The dimensions of it are twelve thousand furlongs, or, as it is in some Greek copies, twelve

times twelve thousand furlongs, a finite number put for an infinite; no arithmetician can number these furlongs. Rev 21:15. Though there be an innumerable company of saints and angels in heaven—yet there is infinitely enough room to receive them. The palace of this kingdom is *lucid* and *transparent*; it is adorned with light, and the light is sweet. Hell is a dark dungeon—but the palace above is bespangled with light. Col 1:12. Such illustrious beams of glory shine from God, as shed a brightness and splendor upon the empyrean heaven. This palace of the kingdom is *well situated* for good air and a pleasant prospect. There is the best air, which is perfumed with the fragrance of Christ's ointments; and a most pleasant prospect of the bright morning-star. The palace is *rich* and *sumptuous*. It has gates of pearl. Rev 21:21. It is enriched with white robes and crowns of glory; it never falls to decay, and the dwellers in it never die. "They shall reign forever and ever." Rev 22:5.

There is also **a royal feast**. It is called "the marriage-supper of the Lamb." Rev 19:9. Bullinger and Gregory the Great understood this of the magnificent supper prepared in the kingdom of heaven. A glorious feast it will be in respect of the founder. The glorified saints shall feast their *eyes* with God's beauty, and their *hearts* with his love.

A delicious feast it will be in respect of the festivity and holy mirth. What joy shall there be in the anthems and triumphs of glorified spirits! Saints and angels shall mingle together in an inseparable union of love, and lie in each others sweet embrace.

A royal banquet it will be, where there is no surfeit, because a fresh course is continually served in.

The serious consideration of what a kingdom of heaven is, would be a means to quicken our endeavors in the pursuit after it. What causes

men to make voyages to the Indies, but the consideration of the gold and spices which are to be had there? Did we survey and contemplate the glory of heaven, we would soon take a voyage, and never leave until we had arrived at the celestial kingdom.

How it will trouble you if you should perish to think you came short of heaven for lack of of a little more pains! The prophet Elisha bid the king of Israel smite the ground six times, and he smote but thrice, and stopped. 2 Kings 13:19. He lost many victories by it. Just so, when a man shall think thus, "I did something in religion—but did not do enough; I prayed—but it was coldly; I did not put coals to the incense. I heard the word—but did not meditate on it. I smote but thrice, when I should have smote six times; had I taken a little more pains I had been happy—but I have lost the kingdom of heaven by short-shooting!" The consideration, how terrible the thought will be of losing heaven for lack of a little more pains, should be a means to spur on our sluggish hearts, and make us more diligent to get the kingdom.

(3) The third means for obtaining this kingdom is to keep up daily PRAYER. "I give myself unto prayer." Psalm 109:4. Prayer inflames the affections, and oils the wheels of endeavor. Prayer prevails with God, unlocks his affections, and then he unlocks heaven. All who have gotten to heaven—have crept there upon their knees. The saints now in heaven have been men of prayer. Daniel prayed three times a day, Jacob wrestled with God in prayer, and as a prince, prevailed. Prayer must be fervent, else it is, as Luther says, *a golden censer without fire*. O follow God with prayers and tears; say as Jacob to the angel, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." Gen 32:26. As Luther says, "Prayer conquers the Omnipotent." Elijah by prayer opened heaven; by ardent and constant prayer, heaven is opened to us.

(4) If you would obtain the heavenly kingdom—get a LOVE to heaven. Love puts a man upon the use of all means to enjoy the thing loved. He who loves the world—how active is he! He will break his sleep and peace for it. He who loves honor—what hazards will he run! He will swim to the throne in blood. Jacob loved Rachel—and what would he not do, though it were serving two seven-year apprenticeships for obtaining her! Love carries a man out aggressively to the object loved. Love like wings to the bird, like sails to the ship—carries a Christian full sail to heaven. Heaven is a place of rest and joy, it is paradise—and will you not love it? *Love heaven, and you cannot miss it!* Love breaks through all opposition; it takes heaven by storm. Though it labors, it is never weary. It is like the myrtle rod in the traveler's hand, which makes him fresh and lively in his travel, and keeps him from being weary.

(5) If you would obtain the kingdom of heaven—make religion your MAIN CONCERN. What a man looks upon as an unnecessary thing—he does not much mind. If ever we would have heaven, we must look upon it as our main concern; other things do but concern our livelihood, this concerns our salvation. We make religion our business when we wholly devote ourselves to God's service. Psalm 139:18. We count those the best hours which are spent with God; we give God the cream of our affections, the flower of our time and strength; we traffic in heaven every day, we are merchants for the "pearl of great price." He will not get an estate—who does not mind his trade; he will never get heaven—who does not make religion his main business.

(6) If you would obtain the kingdom of heaven—bind your hearts to God by sacred VOWS. Vow to the Lord that, by his grace, you will be more intent upon heaven than ever. "Your vows are upon me, O God." Psalm 56:12. A vow binds the votary to duty; he

looks upon himself as obliged by his vow to cleave to God. When bees fly in a great wind, they ballast themselves with little stones, that they may not be carried away. Just so, we must fortify ourselves with strong vows, that we may not be carried away from God with the violent wind of temptation. No question, a Christian may make such a vow, because the ground of it is morally good, he vows nothing but what he is bound to do by virtue of his baptismal vow, namely, to walk with God more closely, and to pursue heaven more vigorously.

(7) If you would obtain the kingdom—embrace all SEASONS and opportunities for your soul's welfare. "Redeeming the time." Eph 5:16. Opportunity is the cream of time; improving seasons of grace is as much as our salvation is worth. The mariner, by taking the present season while the wind blows, gets to the haven. Just so, by taking the season, while we have the means of grace, and the wind of the Spirit blows—we may arrive at the kingdom of heaven. We know not how long we shall enjoy the gospel. The seasons of grace, like Noah's dove, comes with an olive branch in their mouth—but they soon take wings and fly. Though they are sweet—yet they are swift. God may remove the golden candlestick from us, as he did from the churches of Asia. We have many sad symptoms, "Grey hairs are here and there upon him." Hos 7:9. Therefore let us lay hold upon the present seasons. Those who sleep in seedtime, will beg in harvest.

(8) If you would go to the kingdom of heaven—you must keep a daily WATCH. "I say unto all, watch." Mark 13:37. Many have lost heaven for lack of watchfulness. Our *hearts* are ready to decoy us into sin, and the *devil* lies in ambush by his temptations. We must every day set a spy, and keep sentinel in our souls. "I will stand upon my watch." Hab 2:1.

1. We must watch our **eye**. "I made a covenant with my eyes." Job 31:1. Much sin comes in by the eye. When Eve *saw* that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes—then she took. Gen 3:6. First she looked—and then she lusted. The eye, by beholding an impure object, sets the heart on fire. The devil often creeps in at the window of the eye. Watch your eyes!

2. Watch your **ear**. Much poison is conveyed through the ear. Let your ear be open to God—and shut to sin.

3. Watch your **hearts**. We watch suspicious people. "The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked." Jer 17:9. Watch your heart:

[1] When you are about holy things, it will be slipping out to vanity. "When I am at prayer," says Jerome, "either I am walking through galleries or casting up accounts."

[2] Watch your hearts when you are in company. The basilisk poisons the herbs he breathes on. Just so, the breath of the wicked is infectious. Nay, watch your hearts when you are in good company. Such as have some good in them may be some grains too light, and have much levity of discourse; so that, if no *scum* boils up—yet there may be too much *froth*. The devil is subtle, and he can as well creep into the *dove* as he did once into the *serpent*. Satan tempted Christ by an apostle.

[3] Watch your hearts in prosperity. Now you are in danger of pride. The higher the water of the Themes rises, the higher the boat is lifted up. Just so, the higher men's estates rise, the higher their hearts are lifted up in pride. In prosperity, you are in danger not only to forget God—but to lift up the heel against him. "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked." Deut 32:15. It is hard to carry a full cup without spilling.

Just so, it is hard to carry a full, prosperous estate without sinning. "Soft riches have ruined the age by disgraceful luxury." Seneca. As Samson fell asleep in Delilah's lap--so many have fallen so fast asleep in the lap of prosperity--that they never awoke until they awoke in hell!

[4] Watch your hearts after holy duties. When Christ had been praying and fasting, the devil tempted him. Matthew 4:3. After combating with Satan in prayer, we are apt to grow secure and take our spiritual armor off—and then the devil falls on and wounds us! Oh, if you would get to heaven, be always upon your watch-tower, set a spy, keep close sentinel in your souls. Who would not watch—when it is for a kingdom!

(9) If you would arrive at the heavenly kingdom—get these three GRACES, which will undoubtedly bring your there.

[1] Divine KNOWLEDGE. There is no going to heaven blindfold. In the *creation*, light was the first thing that was made. Just so, it is in the *new creation*. Knowledge is the pillar of fire which goes before us, and lights us into the heavenly kingdom. It is light which must bring us to the "inheritance in light." Col 1:12.

[2] FAITH. Faith ends in salvation. "Receiving the end of your faith, salvation." 1 Peter 1:9. He who truly believes, is as sure to go to heaven as if he were in heaven already. Acts 16:31. Faith touches Christ; and can he miss of heaven who touches Christ? Faith unites to Christ; and shall not the members be where the head is? All have not the same degree of faith; we must distinguish between faith and assurance; yet the least seed and spark of faith gives an undoubted title to the heavenly kingdom. I am justified because I believe—not because I know I believe.

[3] LOVE to God. Heaven is prepared for those who love God. 1 Cor 2:9. Love is the soul of obedience, the touchstone of sincerity; by our loving God, we may know he loves us. 1 John 4:19. And those whom God loves, he will lay in his bosom. Ambrose, in his funeral oration for Theodosius, brings in the angels hovering about his departing soul, and ready to carry it to heaven, who ask him, "What that grace was he had practiced most on earth?" Theodosius replied, "I have loved, I have loved," and straightway, by a convoy of angels, he was translated to glory. Love is a sacred fire kindled in the breast; in the flames of which the devout soul ascends to heaven.

(10) If we would obtain this heavenly kingdom—let us labor for SINCERITY. "Whoever walks uprightly, shall be saved." Proverbs 28:18. The sincere Christian may fall short of some degrees of grace—but he never falls short of the kingdom. God will pass by many failings, where the heart is right. "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has he seen perverseness in Israel" Numb 23:21. True gold may have grains of alloy. "You desire truth in the inward parts." Psalm 51:6. Sincerity is the sauce which seasons all our actions, and makes them savory to God. Sincerity is an ingredient in every grace; it is called "sincere faith," and "love in sincerity." 2 Tim 1:5; Eph 6:24. Coin will not go current, which lacks the king's stamp; and grace is not current, if it is not stamped with sincerity. *Glorious* duties soured with hypocrisy, are rejected; when great infirmities sweetened with sincerity, are accepted. If anything in the world will bring us to heaven—it is sincerity. Sincerity signifies plainness of heart. "In whose spirit there is no deceit," Psalm 32:2. The plainer the diamond is, the richer.

Sincerity is when we serve God with our heart; when we do not *worship* him only—but *love* him. Cain brought his *sacrifice*—but not his *heart*. God's delight is a sacrifice flaming upon the altar of the

heart. A sincere Christian, though he has a double principle in him, flesh and spirit—has not a double heart, his heart is for God.

Sincerity is when we aim purely at God in all we do. The glory of God is more worth than the salvation of all men's souls. Though a sincere Christian comes short in duty, he takes a right aim. As the sunflower turns about according to the motion of the sun, so a godly man's actions all move towards the glory of God.

(11) If we would obtain the heavenly kingdom—let us keep up fervency in duty. What is a dead form without the power? "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of my mouth." Rev 3:16. Fervency puts life into duty. "Fervent in spirit, serving God;" in the Greek it is "boiling over." Romans 12:11. Christ prayed "more earnestly." Luke 22:44. When the fire on the golden censor was ready to go out, Aaron was to put more coals to the incense. Just so, praying with devotion is putting more coals to the incense. It is not *formality*—but *fervency*, which will bring us to heaven. The formalist is like Ephraim, a cake not turned, hot on one side, and uncooked dough on the other. In the external part of God's worship, he seems to be hot; but as for the spiritual part of God's worship, he is cold. Oh! if you would have the kingdom of heaven, keep up heart and fervor in duty. Elijah was carried up to heaven in a fiery chariot. Just so, if you would go to heaven, you must be carried there in the fiery chariot of zeal. It is violence which takes the kingdom of heaven.

(12) If we would arrive at the heavenly kingdom—let us nourish the motions of God's Spirit in our hearts. The mariner may spread his sails—but the ship cannot get to the haven without a *gale of wind*. Just so, we may spread the sails of our endeavor—but we cannot get to the *haven of glory* without the north

and south wind of God's Spirit. How greatly therefore, does it concern us to make much of the motions of the Spirit—motions to prayer, motions to repentance. "As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move quickly, because that will mean the Lord has gone out in front of you." 2 Samuel 5:24. So, when we hear a voice within us, a secret inspiration stirring us up to godly duties, we should bestir ourselves. While the Spirit works in us, we should work with the Spirit.

Many men have God's Spirit striving with them, he puts good motions in their hearts and holy purposes; but they neglect to prosecute these good motions, and the Spirit is grieved, and, being grieved, withdraws his assistance, and that assistance being gone, there is no getting to heaven. Oh! make much of the motion of the Spirit; it is as much as your salvation is worth.

The Spirit of God is compared to *fire*. Acts 2:3. If we are careful to blow the spark, we may have fire to inflame our affections, and to light our feet into the way of heaven. If we quench the Spirit by neglecting and resisting his motions, we cut ourselves off from salvation. The Spirit of God has a drawing power. Canticles 1:4. The blessed Spirit draws by attraction, as the loadstone the iron. In the preaching of the Word, the Spirit draws the heart up to heaven in holy longings and ejaculations. Now, when the Spirit is about thus to draw us, let us take heed of drawing back, lest it be to perdition. Heb 10:39. Do as Noah, who, when the dove came flying to the ark, put forth his hand, and took it into the ark; so when the sweet dove of God's Spirit comes flying to your hearts, and brings a gracious impulse as an olive-branch of peace in its mouth, O take this dove into the ark; entertain the Spirit in your hearts, and he will bring you to heaven.

How shall we know the motions of the Spirit from a delusion?

The motions of the Spirit are always agreeable to the Word. If the Word is for holiness, so is the Spirit. The Spirit persuades to nothing but what the Word directs. Whichever way the *tide of the Word* runs —that way the *wind of the Spirit* blows.

(13) We obtain the kingdom of heaven—by uniform and cheerful OBEDIENCE. Obedience is the road through which we travel to heaven. Many say they *love* God—but refuse to *obey* him. Does he love the prince—who slights his commands?

1.Obedience must be **uniform**. "Then I shall not be ashamed" (Heb. I shall not blush) "when I have respect unto all your commandments." Psalm 119:6. As the sun goes through all the signs of the zodiac, so we must go through all the duties of piety. If a man has to go a hundred miles, and he goes ninety nine, and there stops, he comes short of the place he is to travel to. If, with Herod, we do many things which God commands—yet, if we die in the total neglect of any duty, we come short of the kingdom of heaven. For instance, if a man seems to make conscience of duties of the first table, and not the duties of the second; if he seems to be religious—but is not just, he is a transgressor, and is in danger of losing heaven. As the needle which points the way which the loadstone draws—so an obedient heart moves the whichever way the Word draws.

2. Obedience must be **cheerful**. "I delight to do your will, O my God, yes, your law is within my heart." Psalm 40:8. That is the sweetest obedience which is cheerful, as that is the sweetest honey which *freely drops* from the honey-comb. God sometimes accepts willingness without the work—but never of the work without willingness. "The wind was in their wings." Zech 5:9. Wings are swift —but wind in the wings denotes great swiftness; and is an emblem of

the swiftness and cheerfulness which should be in obedience. We go to heaven in the way of obedience.

(14) If we would obtain this kingdom—we must be much in the COMMUNION of saints. One coal of juniper will warm and inflame another; so, when the heart is dead and frozen, the communion of saints will help to warm it. "Those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another." Mal 3:16. "Christians should never meet," says Mr. Boston, "without speaking of their meeting together in heaven." One Christian may be very helpful by prayer and conference to another, and give him a lift towards heaven. Old Latimer was much strengthened and comforted by hearing Bilney's confession of faith. We read that when Moses' hands were heavy, and he was ready to let them fall, Aaron and Hur held them up. Exod 17:12. A Christian who is ready to faint under temptation, and lets down the hands of his faith—by conversing with other Christians is strengthened, and his hands are held up. A great benefit of holy conference is counsel and advice. "If a man," says Chrysostom, "who has but one head to advise him, could make that head a hundred, he would be very wise; but a single Christian has this benefit by the communion of saints, that they are as so many heads to advise him what to do in such a case or exigency." By Christian conference the saints can say, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" Communion of saints we have in our *creed*—but it is too little in our *practice*. Men usually travel fastest in *company*. Just so, we travel fastest to heaven in the communion of saints.

(15) If we would attain to this kingdom of heaven—let us be willing to come up to Christ's terms. Many will cheapen, and bid something for the kingdom of heaven. Some will avoid gross sin, and will come to church, and say their prayers; and yet all this while they are not willing to come up to God's price, that is, they will not

resist the *idol of self-righteousness*, flying only to Christ as the horns of the altar. Others will not sacrifice their bosom-sin. Others will not give God spirit-worship, serving him with zeal and intenseness of soul. John 4:24. Others will not forgive their enemies. Others will not part with their carnal profits for Christ. Many would have the kingdom of heaven—but they will not come up to the price. If you would have this kingdom, do not barter and bargain with Christ—but accept of his terms. Say, "Lord, I am willing to have the kingdom of heaven, whatever it cost me; I am willing to pluck out my right eye, to part with all for the kingdom. Here is a blank paper I put into your hand, Lord, write your own articles, I will subscribe to them!"

(16) If we would obtain the heavenly kingdom—let us attend to the holy ORDINANCES, by which God brings souls to heaven. "Except these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved." Acts 27:31. Some people would leap out of the ship of ordinances, and then God knows where they leap; but except you abide in the ship of ordinances, you cannot be saved. Especially, if you would get to heaven, attend to the *Word preached*. It was by the ear—by our first parents listening to the serpent, that we lost paradise; and it is by the ear—by hearing of the Word, that we get to heaven. "Hear, and your soul shall live." Isaiah 55:3. God sometimes in the preaching of the Word—drops the *holy oil* into the *ear*, which softens and sanctifies the *heart!* The Word preached is called the "ministry of the Spirit," because the Spirit of God makes use of the engine to convert souls. 2 Cor 3:8.

If the Word preached does not work upon men, nothing will; not judgment, nor miracles; no, not though one should rise from the dead! "If they won't listen to Moses and the prophets, they won't listen even if someone rises from the dead!" Luke 16:31. If a glorified saint should come out of heaven, and assume a body, and tell you of

all the glory of heaven, and the joys of the blessed, and attempt to persuade you to believe; if the preaching of the Word will not bring you to heaven, neither would his rhetoric do it, who rose from the dead.

In heaven there will be no need of ordinances—but while we live here there is. The lamp needs oil—but the star needs none. While the saints have their *lamp of grace* burning here, they need the *oil of ordinances* to be continually dropping upon them; but there will be no need of this oil when they are *stars* in heaven! If you intend to get to heaven, be swift to hear: for faith comes by hearing. Romans 10:14, 17. Peter let down the net of his ministry, and at one draught caught three thousand souls. If you would have heaven's door opened to you, wait at the posts of wisdom's door.

(17) If you would arrive at heaven—have this kingdom ever in your eye. Our blessed Lord looked at the joy which was set before him; and Moses had an "eye to the recompense of the reward." Heb 11:26. Let the kingdom be much in your thoughts. **Meditation** is the means to help us to heaven. How does it help?

To meditate on the kingdom of heaven—would be a means to prevent sin. There is no sword like meditation, to cut asunder the sinews of temptation. It is almost impossible to sin presumptuously, with lively thoughts and hopes of heaven. It was when Moses was out of sight, that Israel set up a calf, and worshiped it. Just so, when the kingdom of heaven is out of sight, out of men's thoughts, they set up their lusts and idolize them. The meditation of heaven banishes sin; he who thinks of the weight of glory, throws away the weight of sin!

To meditate on the kingdom of heaven—would excite and quicken obedience. We should think that we could never pray

enough, never love God enough—who has prepared such a kingdom for us! Glory possesses an immeasurable stimulus. Paul had heaven in his eye, he was once caught up there; and how active was he for God! 1 Cor 16:10. This oils the wheels of obedience.

To meditate on the kingdom of heaven—would make us strive after holiness, because none but such are holy—are admitted into this kingdom. Only the pure in heart shall see God. Matthew 5:8. Holiness is the language of heaven, it is the only coin which will pass current there. This consideration should make us "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor 7:1.

(18) The last means for obtaining the heavenly kingdom—is PERSEVERANCE in holiness. "Be faithful unto death—and I will give you a crown of life." Rev 2:10. "It is not the beginning—but the end which wins praise." Jerome. "It is the one who has endured to the end, who will be saved." Matthew 10:2.

Is there such a thing as persevering until we come to heaven? That anyone endures to the kingdom of heaven, is a wonder, if you consider:

(1) What a great mass of sin and corruption is mingled with grace. Grace is apt to be stifled, as the coal to be choked with its own ashes. Like a spark in the sea, it is a wonder that grace is not quenched. It is a wonder that sin does not overlay grace, as the nurse sometimes does the child, that it dies.

(2) The implacable malice of Satan. He envies that we should have the kingdom of heaven, when he himself is cast out. It cuts him to the heart, to see a piece of dust and clay made a bright star in glory, and he himself a demon of darkness. He will work with all the

powers of hell—to hinder us from the kingdom! Satan spits his venom, shoots his fiery darts, raises a storm of persecution; yes, and prevails against some. "There appeared a great red dragon, and his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth." Rev 12:3, 4. By the red dragon is meant the heathenish empire; now, when his tail cast so many to the earth, it is a wonder that any of the stars keep fixed in their orb.

(3) The blandishments of riches. The young man in the gospel went very far—but he had rich possessions, and these *golden weights* hindered him from the kingdom. Luke 18:23. Jonathan pursued the battle until he came at the *honeycomb*, and then he stood still. 1 Sam 14:27. Many are forward for heaven, until they taste the sweetness of the world; but when they come at the *honeycomb*, they stand still, and go no further. "The gain of money, is the ruin of the soul!" Those who have escaped the rocks of gross sins, have been cast away upon the golden sands. What a wonder therefore that anyone holds on, until he come to the kingdom!

(4) It is a wonder that any hold out in grace, and do not tire in their march to heaven, if you consider the difficulty of the Christian's work. He has no **time** to waste. He is either watching or fighting! Nay, he is to do those duties which to the eye of sense and reason, seem inconsistent. While he does one duty, he seems to cross another. He must come with holy boldness to God in prayer—yet must serve him with fear. He must mourn for sin—yet rejoice. He must be contented—yet covet the greater gifts (1 Cor 12:31). He must condemn men's impieties—and yet reverence their authority. What difficult work is this! It is a wonder that any saint arrives at the heavenly kingdom!

To this I might add, the *evil examples* all around us, which are so attractive, that we may say that the devils have come among us in the likeness of men! What a wonder is it that any soul perseveres until he comes to the kingdom of heaven! But great as the wonder is, there is such a thing as perseverance. A saint's perseverance is built upon three immutable pillars:

1. A saint's perseverance is built upon **God's eternal love**. We are inconstant in our love to God; but he is not so in his love to us. "I have loved you with an everlasting love!" Jer 31:3. God's love to the elect is not like a king's love to his favorite, which when it is at the highest spring-tide, soonest ebbs; but God's love is eternal. He may *desert* us for a time, but he will never *disinherit* us. He may change his love into a *frown*, but never into *hatred*. He may alter his *providence*, but never his *decree*. When once the sunshine of God's electing love is risen upon the soul—it never sets finally!

2. A saint's perseverance is built upon the **covenant of grace**. It is a firm, impregnable covenant; as you read in the words of the sweet singer of Israel. "God has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." 2 Samuel 23:5. It is a *sweet* covenant, that God will be our God. This is the marrow and quintessence of all blessing. The covenant of grace is a *sure* covenant, that he will put his fear in our heart, and we shall never depart from him. Jer 32:40. This covenant is *inviolable*, it cannot be broken. Indeed, sin may break the *peace* of the covenant—but it cannot break the *bond* of the covenant.

3. The third pillar upon which perseverance is built, is the **mystic union with Christ**. Believers are incorporated into Christ, they are knit to him as members to the head—by the nerve and ligament of faith, so that they cannot be broken off. Eph 5:23. What was once

said of Christ's natural body is as true of his mystic body. "No bone of his shall be broken." John 19:36. As it is impossible to sever the leaven and the dough when they are once mingled—so it is impossible when Christ and believers are once united, ever by the power of death or hell, to be separated. How can Christ lose any member of his body and be perfect? You see upon what strong pillars the saints' perseverance is built.

How does a Christians hold on until he comes to the kingdom? How does he persevere?

(1) By the help of the Spirit. God carries on a Christian to perseverance by the energy and vigorous working of his Spirit. The Spirit maintains the essence and seed of grace; it blows up the sparks of grace into a holy flame. "The Spirit is the Vicar of Christ." Tertullian. He is Christ's deputy and proxy; he is every day at work in a believer's heart, exerting grace into exercise, and ripening it into perseverance. The Spirit carves and polishes the vessels of mercy, and makes them fit for glory.

(2) Christ causes perseverance, and carries on a saint until he comes to the heavenly kingdom—by his intercession. He is an *advocate* as well as a *surety*; he prays that the saints may arrive safely at the kingdom. "Therefore he is able to save them to the uttermost (that is perfectly), seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them." Heb 7:25. That prayer he made for Peter on earth, he prays now in heaven for the saints, *that their faith fail not, and that they may be with him where he is*. Luke 22:32. John 17:24. And surely if he prays that they may be with him in his kingdom, they cannot perish along the way. Christ's prayer is efficacious. If the saints' prayers have so much force and prevalence in them, as Jacob, who had power with God, and as a prince prevailed, and Elijah by

prayer unlocked heaven; if the prayers of the saints have so much power with God—what has Christ's prayer? How can the children of such prayers miscarry? How can they fall short of the kingdom, who have him praying for them, who is not only a Priest—but a Son? Besides, what he prays for—he has power to give as he is God.

But methinks I hear some Christian say, if only perseverance obtains the kingdom, they fear they shall not come there; they fear they shall faint along the way, and the weak legs of their grace will never carry them to the kingdom of heaven.

Were you indeed to stand in your own strength, you might fall away. The branch withers and dies—which has no root to grow upon. You grow upon the root Christ, who will be daily sending forth vital influence to strengthen you; though you are imbecile and weak in grace—yet fear not falling short of heaven: For,

(1) God has made a promise to weak believers. What is a bruised reed—but an emblem of a weak faith? Yet it has a promise made to it, "A bruised reed shall he not break." Matthew 12:20. God has promised to supply the weak Christian with as much grace as he shall need, until he comes to heaven. Beside the two pence which the good Samaritan left to pay for the cure of the poor wounded man, he pledged his word for all that he should need beside. Luke 10:35. So, Christ does not only give a little grace in hand—but his bond for more, that he will give as much grace as a saint should need until he comes to heaven. "The Lord will give *grace* and *glory*," that is, a fresh supply of grace, until we are perfected in glory. Psalm 84:11.

(2) God has most care of his weak saints, who fear they shall never hold out until they come to the kingdom. Does not the mother tend the weak child most? "He shall gather the *lambs* with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." Isaiah 40:11. If you think

that you are so weak that you shall never hold out until you come to heaven, you shall be carried in the arms of the Almighty. He gathers the *lambs* in his arms. Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, marches before his people, and his power upholds them—so that none of them faint or die in their march to heaven.

What are the ENCOURAGEMENTS to make Christians hold on until they come to the kingdom of heaven?

(1) It is a great credit to a Christian, to hold fast the truth until he comes to heaven. When grace flourishes into perseverance, and with the church of Thyatira, our last works are more than our first, it is *insigne honouris*, a star of honor. Rev 2:1. It is matter of renown to see *grey hairs* shine with *golden virtues*. The excellency of a thing lies in the *finishing* of it. Where is the excellence of a building? Not when the first stone is laid—but when it is finished. So the beauty and excellence of a Christian is, when he has finished his faith, having done his work, and is landed safe in heaven.

(2) You who have made a progress in religion, have not many miles to go before you come at the kingdom of heaven. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Romans 13:11. You who have hoary hairs, your green tree is turned into an almond tree; you are near to heaven, it is but going a little further and you will set your feet within heaven's gates. Oh! therefore now be encouraged to hold out, your salvation is nearer than when you first began to believe. Our diligence should be greater, when our salvation is nearer. When a man is almost at the end of the race, will he now tire and faint? Will he not put forth all his strength, and strain every limb, that he may lay hold upon the prize? Our salvation is now nearer; the kingdom is as it were within sight; how should we now put forth all our strength, that we may lay hold upon the garland

of glory! Doctor Taylor, when going to his martyrdom, said, "I have but two stiles to go over, and I shall be at my Father's house." Though the way to heaven is up-hill, you must climb the steep rock of mortification; and though there are thorns in the way—you have gone the greatest part of it, and are within a few days march of the kingdom—and will not you persevere? Christian, pluck up your courage, fight the good fight of faith, pursue holiness. Before long you will take off your armor, and end all your weary marches, and receive a victorious crown; your salvation is nearer, you are within a little distance of the kingdom, therefore now persevere, you are ready to commence and take your prize of glory.

(3) The blessed promise annexed to perseverance is an encouragement. The promise is a crown of life. Rev 2:10. Death is a worm which feeds in the crowns of princes—but behold here a living crown, and a never-fading crown. 1 Peter 5:4. "He who overcomes, and keeps my works to the end, I will give him the morning-star." Rev 2:28. The morning-star is brighter than the rest. This morning-star is meant of Christ; as if Christ had said, I will give to him who perseveres some of my beauty; I will put some of my illustrious rays upon him; he shall have the next degree of glory to me, as the morning-star is next the sun. Will not this animate and make us hold out? We shall have a kingdom, and that which is better than a kingdom, a bright morning-star!

What are the MEANS which conduce to perseverance, or, what shall we do that we may hold out to the kingdom?

(1) Take up religion upon good grounds—not in a fit or humor, or out of worldly design; but be deliberate, weigh things well in the balance. "For which of you, wanting to build a tower, doesn't first sit down and *calculate the cost* to see if he has enough to complete it?"

Luke 14:28. Think with yourselves what religion must cost you; it must cost you the parting with your sins; and may cost you the parting with your lives. Consider if a kingdom will not counterbalance your sufferings. Weigh things well, and then make your choice. "I have *chosen* the way of truth." Psalm 119:30. Why do many apostatize, and fall away—but because they never sit down and count the cost?

(2) If we would hold out to the kingdom—let us cherish the grace of FAITH. "By faith you stand." 2 Cor 1:24. Faith, like Hercules' club—beats down all opposition before it. Faith is a conquering grace.

How does faith come to be so strong?

Faith fetches Christ's strength into the soul. Phil 4:13. A captain may give his soldier armor—but not strength. Faith partakes of Christ's strength, and gets strength from the promise; as the child by sucking the breast gets strength—so faith gets strength by sucking the breast of the promise; hence faith is such a wonder-working grace, and enables a Christian to persevere.

(3) If you would hold out to the kingdom, set before your eyes the EXAMPLES of those noble heroic saints who have persevered to the kingdom. *Vivitur exemplis* [Life is lived by examples.] Examples have more influence upon us than precepts. "My foot has held his steps." Job 23:11. Though the way of religion has flints and thorns in it—yet my foot has held its steps; I have not fainted in the way, nor turned out of the way. Daniel held on his religion, and would not leave off prayer, though he knew the writing was signed against him, and a prayer might cost him his life. Dan 6:10. The blessed martyrs persevered to the kingdom through sufferings. A martyr, kissing the stake, said, "I shall not lose my life—

but exchange it for a better; instead of coals I shall have pearls." What a spirit of gallantry was in these saints! Let us learn constancy from their courage. A soldier, seeing his general fight valiantly, is animated by his example, and has new spirits put into him.

(4) Let us add fervent PRAYER to God, that he would enable us to hold out to the heavenly kingdom. "Hold me up—and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117. Let us not presume on our own strength. When Peter cried to Christ on the water, "Lord save me!" then Christ took him by the hand. Matthew 14:30. When he grew confident of his own strength, Christ let him fall. Oh pray to God for persevering grace. The child is safe when held in the father's arms. Just so, are we safe in Christ's arms. Let us pray that God will put his fear in our hearts, that we do not depart from him; and that prayer of Cyprian, "Lord, perfect that which you have begun in me, that I may not suffer shipwreck when I am almost at the haven."

Use 5. Here let me lay down some powerful persuasive, or divine arguments to make you put to all your strength for obtaining this blessed kingdom.

(1) The great purpose for which God sent us into the world, is to prepare for this heavenly kingdom. "Seek first the kingdom of God." Matthew 6:33. First in time—*before* all things; and first in affection—*above* all things. Great care is taken for securing worldly things. Matthew 6:25. To see people laboring for the earth, as ants on an anthill, would make one think that this was the only purpose they were here for. But, alas! what is all this, compared to the kingdom of heaven? I have read of a devout pilgrim traveling to Jerusalem, who passing through several cities, where he saw many stately edifices, wares and monuments, would say, "I must not stay here, this is not Jerusalem." Just so, when we enjoy worldly things,

peace and plenty, and have our baskets full, we should say to ourselves, "this is not the kingdom we are to look after, this is not heaven!" It is wisdom to remember our purpose. It will be but sad upon a death-bed for a man to find he has busied himself about trifles—played with a *feather*—and neglected the main thing he came into the world for.

(2) Seeking the heavenly kingdom will be judged most prudent by all men at last. Those who are most heedless of their souls now, will wish when they die, that they had minded *eternity* more. When conscience is awakened, and men begin to come to themselves, what would they give for the kingdom of heaven! How happy would it be if men were of the same mind now—as they will be at death! Death will alter men's opinions! Those who most slighted and disparaged the ways of religion, will wish their time and thoughts had been taken up about the excellent glory. At death, men's eyes will be opened, and they will see their folly when it is too late. All men, even the worst, will wish at last that they had minded the kingdom of heaven. Why should not we do now what all will wish they had done, when they come to die?

(3) This kingdom of heaven deserves our utmost pains and diligence.

1. It is GLORIOUS, beyond hyperbole. Suppose earthly kingdoms more magnificent than they are—their foundations of gold, their walls of pearl, their windows of diamond—even then, they would not be comparable to the heavenly kingdom. If the *pavement* of heaven is bespangled with so many bright shining lights and glorious stars, what is the kingdom itself? "It does not yet appear what we shall be." 1 John 3:2. This kingdom exceeds our imagination. How sublime and

wonderful is that place where the blessed Deity shines forth in his immense glory, infinitely beyond the comprehension of angels!

2. The kingdom of heaven is a place of HONOR. There are glorious triumphs and sparkling crowns. In other kingdoms there is but one king—but in heaven, *all are kings!* Rev 1:6. Every glorified saint partakes of the same glory as Christ does. "The glory which you gave me, I have given them." John 17:22.

3. This kingdom is a place of JOY. "Enter into the joy of your Lord." Matthew 25:21. To have a continual aspect of God's lovely face, to be crowned with immortality, to be as holy as the angels, to drink of the rivers of pleasure forever—this will cause raptures of joy! Surely it deserves our utmost pains to pursue and to secure this kingdom. If we will not take pains for the kingdom of heaven—what kingdom will we take pains for? It was the speech of the spies to their brethren, "We have seen the land, and it is very good. You should not hesitate to go and take possession of it." Judg 18:9. We have had a lively description of the glory of heaven, we find the kingdom is very good; why then do we sit still? Why do we not put forth our utmost zeal and industry for this kingdom? The diligence of others in seeking after earthly kingdoms, shames our coldness and indifference in pursuing after the kingdom of heaven!

(4) The time we have to make sure of the heavenly kingdom, is very short and uncertain. "What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes away!" James 4:14. Take heed it does not slip away before you have prepared for the kingdom. Time passes on apace! It will not be long before the silver cord of life snaps and the golden bowl is broken. Eccl 12:6. The skull wherein the brains are enclosed, is a bowl which will soon be broken. Our soul is in the body, as the bird in the shell,

which soon breaks—and the bird flies out. The shell of the body is soon broken—and the soul flies into eternity! We know not whether we shall live another day. Before we hear another sermon-bell ring, our death-bell may ring. Our life runs as a swift stream—into the ocean of eternity!

Brethren, if our time is so short and transient; if the *candle of life* is so soon consumed, or perhaps blown out by an unexpectant death--how should we use all our strength, that we may obtain the kingdom of glory! If time is so short, why do we waste it on trivial things--and neglect the "one thing needful," which is the kingdom of heaven? A man who has a great work to be done, and but one day for doing it, needs to work hard. We have a great work to do, we are striving for a kingdom, and alas! we are not certain of one day to work in! Therefore what need have we to bestir ourselves, and what we do for heaven, to do it with all our might!

(5) To excite our diligence, let us consider how inexcusable we shall be, if we miss the kingdom of heaven. Who have had such helps for heaven as we have had? Indians who have mines of gold, have not such advantages for glory as we. They have the light of the sun, moon, and stars, and the light of reason—but this is not enough to light them to heaven. We have had the light of the gospel shining in our horizon; we have been lifted up to heaven with ordinances; we have had the Word in season and out of season. The ordinances are the pipes of the sanctuary, which empty the golden oil of grace into the soul; they are the ladder by which we ascend to the kingdom of heaven. "What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him?" Deut 4:7. We have had heaven and hell set before us; we have had counsels of friends, warnings, examples, the motions and inspirations of the Holy Spirit! How should all these *spurs*

quicken us in our pace to heaven? Should not that ship sail apace to the haven which has the tide of ordinances, and the wind of the Spirit to carry it? Surely if we, through negligence, miss the kingdom of heaven, we shall have nothing to say for ourselves; we shall be as far from *excuse* as from *happiness!*

(6) You cannot do too much for the kingdom of heaven. You cannot pray too much, nor love God too much. In secular things a man may labor too hard—he may kill himself with work; but there is no fear of working too hard for heaven. "In righteousness there is no need to fear excess." Seneca. The world is apt to censure the godly, as if they were too zealous, and overstrained themselves in religion. Indeed, a man may follow the world too much, he may make too much haste to be rich. The ferry-man may take too many passengers into his boat, so as to sink it. Just so, a man may heap up so much gold and silver—as to sink himself in perdition. 1 Tim 6:9. We cannot be too earnest and zealous for the kingdom of heaven; there is no fear of excess here; when we do all we can, we come short of the golden rule set us, and of Christ's golden pattern. When our faith is highest, like the sun in the meridian, still there is something lacking in our faith—so that all our labor for the kingdom is little enough. 1 Thess 3:1. When a Christian has done his best, still he has sins, and needs to bewail.

(7) You may judge of the state of your souls, whether you have grace or not, by your earnest pursuit after the heavenly kingdom. Grace infuses a spirit of activity into a person; it does not lie dormant in the soul; it is not a sleepy habit—but it makes a Christian like the seraphim, swift and winged in his heavenly motion. Like fire, it makes him burn in love to God; and the more he loves him, the more he presses forward to heaven, where he may fully enjoy him!

Hope is an active grace, it is called "a living hope." 1 Peter 1:3. It is like the spring in the watch, which sets all the wheels of the soul running. Hope of a crop makes the *farmer* sow his seed; hope of victory makes the *soldier* fight; and a true hope of glory makes a *Christian* vigorously pursue it. Here is a spiritual touchstone by which to test our grace. If we have the anointing of the Spirit, it will oil the wheels of our endeavor, and make us lively in our pursuit of the heavenly kingdom. No sooner had Paul received saving grace, that it is said, "Behold, he prays." Acts 9:11. The affections are by divines called "the feet of the soul;" if these feet move not towards heaven, it is because there is no life in them.

(8) Your labor for heaven is not lost. Perhaps you may think that you have served God in vain; but know that your pains are not lost. The seed is cast into the earth, and it dies—yet at last it brings forth a plentiful crop. Just so, your labors seem to be fruitless—but at last they bring you to a kingdom! Who would not work hard for one hour, when, for that hour's work, he would be a king as long as he lived? And let me tell you, the more labor you have put forth for the kingdom of heaven—the more degrees of glory you shall have. As there are degrees of torment in hell—so there are degrees of glory in heaven. Matthew 23:14. As one star differs from another in glory—so shall one saint. 1 Cor 15:41. Though every vessel of mercy shall be *full* —yet one may hold *more* than another. Such as have done more work for God, shall have more glory in the heavenly kingdom. Could we hear departed saints speaking to us from heaven, surely they would speak after this manner: "Were we to leave heaven awhile, and live on the earth again, we would do God a thousand times more service than ever we did; we would pray with more life, act with more zeal; for now we see, the more has been our labor, the greater is our reward in heaven!"

(9) While we are laboring for the kingdom, God will help us. "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Ezek 36:27. The *promise* encourages us, and God's *Spirit* enables us. A master gives his servant *work* to do—but he cannot give him *strength* to work. But God both gives us our work—and gives us strength. "Give your strength unto your servant." Psalm 86:16. God not only gives us a crown when we have done running—but he also gives us legs to run! He gives enabling, assisting grace. [Law commands, grace assists]; the Spirit helping us in our work for heaven, makes it easy. If the loadstone draws the iron—it is not hard for the iron to move. Just so, if God's Spirit draws the heart, it moves towards heaven with adeptness and alacrity.

(10) The more pains we have taken for heaven, the sweeter heaven will be when we come there. When a farmer has long been working hard--it is pleasant to enjoy the fruit his labors. Just so, when in heaven, we shall remember our former zeal and earnestness for the kingdom, which will sweeten heaven. It will add to the joy of heaven, for a Christian to ponder, "Such a day I spent in examining my heart. Such a day I was weeping for sin. When others were at their amusements, I was at prayer. And now, have I lost anything by my devotion? No! My tears are wiped away, and the wine of paradise cheers my heart. I now enjoy him whom my soul loves, I am possessed of a glorious kingdom! My labor is over--but my joy remains forever!"

(11) If you do not take pains for the kingdom of heaven now, there will be nothing which can be done for your souls after death. This is the only fit season for working; and if this season be lost—the kingdom is forfeited! "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom."

Eccl 9:10. It was a saying of Charles V, "I have spent my *treasure*—but that I may recover again; I have lost my *health*—but that I may have again; but I have lost a great many brave *soldiers*—but them I can never regain." So other temporal blessings may be lost and recovered again; but if the term of life, wherein you should work for heaven, is once lost, it is past all recovery, you can never have another season again for your souls!

(12) There is nothing else but this kingdom of heaven, of which we can make sure.

We cannot make sure of **life**. When our breath goes *out*, we know not whether we shall draw it *in* again! How many are taken away suddenly! "Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes away!" James 4:14.

We cannot make sure of **riches**. It is uncertain whether we shall ever get them. The world is like a lottery, in which everyone is not sure to draw a prize. If we do *get* riches, we are not sure to *keep* them! "Riches make themselves wings—they fly away!" Proverbs 23:5. Experience seals the truth of this. Many who have had plentiful estates, by fire, or losses at sea, have been squeezed as sponges, and all their estates exhausted. But even if men should keep their estates awhile—death strips them of all! When death's gun goes off, away flies the estate. "We didn't bring anything with us when we came into the world, and we certainly cannot carry anything with us when we die!" 1 Tim 6:7. "I have observed something else in this world of ours. The fastest runner doesn't always win the race, and the strongest warrior doesn't always win the battle. The wise are often poor, and the skillful are not necessarily wealthy. And those who are educated don't always lead successful lives." Ecclesiastes 9:11. "Command

those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God." 1 Timothy 6:17.

So that there is no making sure of anything here below—but we may make sure of the kingdom of heaven. "To him who sows righteousness, shall be a sure reward." Proverbs 11:18. He who has grace is sure of heaven, for he has heaven begun in him! A believer has an evidence of heaven. "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." Heb 11:1. He has a pledge of glory. "Who has given us the pledge of the Spirit." 2 Cor 1:22. A pledge is part of the whole sum. He has a sure hope. "Which hope we have as an anchor." Heb 6:19. This anchor is cast upon God's promise. "In hope of eternal life, which God who cannot lie, has promised." Tit 1:2. So that here is great encouragement to take pains for heaven, that we may make sure of this kingdom.

(13) The kingdom of heaven cannot be obtained without labor. The way from earth to heaven is not easy. A boat may as well get to land without oars, as we to heaven without labor. We cannot have the world without labor, and do we think we can have heaven without labor? If a man digs for *gravel*—much more for *gold*. "I press toward the mark." Phil 3:14. Heaven's gate is not like that iron gate which opened to Peter of its own accord. Acts 12:10. Heaven is not like those ripe figs which fall into the mouth of the eater. Nah 3:12. No, there must be taking pains. Two things are requisite for a Christian, a *watchful eye* and a *working hand*. We must force a way to the heavenly kingdom through difficulties. We must win the garland of glory by labor, before we wear it with triumph. God has enacted this law, "That no man shall eat of the tree of paradise, but in the sweat of his brow." How, then, dare any censure Christian diligence? How dare they say, that you take more pains for heaven

than are needful? God says, "Strive as in an agony: fight the good fight of faith;" and they say, "You are too strict:" but whom shall we believe, a holy God who bids us strive, or a profane atheist who says we strive too much?

(14) Much of our time being already misspent, we had need work the harder for the kingdom of heaven. He who has lost his time at school, and often played truant, had need ply it the harder, that he may gain a stock of learning; and he who has slept and loitered in the beginning of his journey, had need ride the faster in the evening, lest he fall short of the place to which he is traveling. Some are in their youth, others in the flower of their age, others have grey hairs, the almond tree blossoms, and yet perhaps have been very regardless of their souls and heaven. **Time spent unprofitably is not time lived—but time lost.** "Redeeming the time." Ephesians 5:16. Those who have misspent their golden hours, they have not only been slothful—but wasteful servants. They had need now to redeem the time, and press forward with might and main to the heavenly kingdom. "The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles." 1 Peter 4:3. It may suffice that we who have lost so much time already, should now work the harder. Those who have *crept as snails*, had need now *fly as eagles* to the paradise of God. If, in the former part of your life, you have been as willows, barren in goodness; in the latter part, be as "an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits." Canticles 4:13. Recompense former remissness, with future diligence.

(15) How unfitting and sordid, a slothful temper of soul is! "Warn those who are idle." 1 Thessalonians 5:14. "I will punish the men who are settled on their lees;" (Heb. "Curdled on their lees.") Zeph 1:12. Settling on the lees is an emblem of a dull, inactive soul. The snail, by reason of its slow motion, was reckoned among the

unclean. Lev 11:30. "A slothful man hides his hand in his bosom:" he is reluctant to pull it out, though it be to lay hold on a crown. Proverbs 19:24. [The gate of heaven does not receive those who are dull with sloth.] Brugensis. The devil himself cannot be charged with idleness. He "walks about." 1 Peter 5:8. An idle soul stands in the world for a cipher, and God writes down no ciphers in the book of life. Heaven is no hive for drones. An idle person is an easy target for temptation. When the bird sits still upon the bough, it is in danger of being shot. Just so, when one sits still in sloth, the devil shoots him with a temptation. Standing water putrifies. Heathen will rise up in judgment against sleepy Christians. What pains did they take in the Olympic games! They ran but for a garland of flowers, or an olive branch; and do we sit still—who run for a glorious kingdom! How can he who never works—expect a reward! How can he who never fights—expect a crown? Sloth is the soul's sleep. Adam, when asleep, lost his rib; and when a person is in the deep sleep of sloth, he loses salvation.

(16) Holy activity and industry ennoble a Christian. [Work is adorned with honor.] Cicero. The more excellent anything is, the more active. The *sun* is a glorious creature—and it is ever in motion, going its circuit. *Fire* is the purest element, and the most active, it is ever sparkling and flaming. The *angels* are the most noble creatures, they are represented by the cherubim, with wings displayed. The more active for heaven, the more illustrious, and the more do we resemble the angels. The phoenix flies with a coronet on its head. Just so, the industrious soul has his coronet, his labor is his ensign of honor.

(17) It is a mercy that there is a possibility of happiness, and that upon our pains taking we may have a kingdom. By our fall in Adam we forfeited heaven. Why might not God have dealt

with us as with the lapsed angels? They had no sooner sinned than they were expelled from heaven, never to come there more. We may say, as the apostle, "Behold the goodness and severity of God." Romans 11:22. The apostate angels behold the severity of God—that he should throw them down to hell forever! We behold the goodness of God in that he has put us into a possibility of mercy. Just so, that if we do but take pains, a kingdom stands ready for us. How should this whet and sharpen our industry, that we are in a capacity of salvation; and that if we do but what we are able—we shall receive an eternal weight of glory!

(18) Our labor for the kingdom of heaven is light and transient. It is not to endure long; it expires with our life. It is but a short while—and we shall be finished with our working. For a little labor—we shall have an eternal rest! Who would think much to wade through a little water, if he were sure to be crowned as soon as he came on shore? Christians, let this encourage you, you have but a little more pains to take, a few tears more to shed—and, behold an eternal recompense of reward. What are a few tears—compared to a crown. What are a few minutes of time—compared to an eternity of glory?

(19) What striving is there for earthly kingdoms, which are corruptible, and subject to change! With what vigor and alacrity did Hannibal's soldiers continue their march over the Alps, and craggy rocks! Men will will swim to a crown in blood. Will they venture thus for earthly promotions, and shall not we strive more for a heavenly kingdom? This is "a kingdom which cannot be moved" (Heb 12:28); a kingdom where there is unparalleled beauty, unstained honor, unmixed joy; a kingdom where there shall be nothing present which we could wish were removed, and nothing absent which we could wish were enjoyed. Surely if there is any spark

of grace, or true generosity in our breasts, we shall not allow ourselves to be out-striven by others; we shall not let them take more pains for earthly honors, than we do for that excellent glory which will crown all our desires.

(20) What pains some men take to go to hell, and shall not we take more pains to go to heaven? "They weary themselves to commit iniquity." Jer 9:5. Sinners hire themselves out in the devil's service. What pains some men take to satisfy their unclean lusts! They waste their estates, wear the shameful marks of their sin about them, and visit the harlot's house, though it stands the next door to hell. "Her house is the way to hell." Proverbs 7:27.

What pains do others take in persecuting the godly! Holiness is the mark they shoot at. The devil blows the horn and men run speedily to hell--as if they feared hell would be full before they could get there! When Satan had entered into Judas, how active was he! He went to the high priests, from them to the band of soldiers, and with them back again to the garden, and never left until he had betrayed Christ! How industrious were the idolatrous Jews! So fiercely were they bent upon their sin, that they would sacrifice their sons and daughters to their idol-gods. Jer 32:35. Do the ungodly take all these pains for hell —and shall not we take pains for the kingdom of heaven? The wicked have nothing to encourage them in their sins, they have all the threatenings of God as a flaming sword against them. Oh, let it never be said, that the ungodly serve the devil better--who rewards them only with fire and brimstone; than we serve God--who rewards us with a glorious kingdom!

(21) The labor we take for heaven is a labor full of pleasure. Proverbs 3:17. A man sweats at his recreation, tires himself with hunting—but there is a delight he takes in it which sweetens it. "I

delight in the law of God after the inward man." (Gr. I take pleasure) Romans 7:22. Not only is the kingdom of heaven delightful—but the way there is also pleasurable. What a delight has a gracious soul in prayer! "I will make them joyful in my house of prayer." Isaiah 56:7. While a Christian weeps, *joy* drops with tears; while he is musing on God, he has such quickening of the Spirit, and, as it were, such transfigurations of soul, that he thinks himself half in heaven! "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," etc. Psalm 63:5, 6.

A Christian's work for heaven is like a bridegroom's work on the morning of the marriage-day, he puts on his vesture and wedding-robes in which he shall be married to his bride; so, in all the duties of piety, we are putting on those wedding robes in which we shall be married to Christ in glory. Oh, what solace and inward peace is there in close walking with God! "The work of righteousness shall be peace." Isaiah 32:17. Serving God is like gathering spices or flowers, wherein there is some labor—but the labor is recompensed with delight. Working for heaven is like digging in a gold mine; the digging is labor—but getting the gold is pleasure! O, then, let us bestir ourselves for the kingdom of heaven; it is a *labor of pleasure*. A Christian would not part with his joy for the most delicious music; he would not exchange his *anchor of hope* for a *crown of gold*. Well might David say, "In keeping your precepts there is great reward," not only *after* keeping your precepts—but *in* keeping them. Psalm 19:11. A Christian has both the spring-flowers and the crop; inward delight in serving God is the spring-flowers, in the kingdom of glory at last is the full crop.

(22) How industrious have the saints in former ages been! They thought they could never do enough for heaven; they could

never serve God enough, love him enough. Augustine, "Lord, I have loved you too little!" What pains did Paul take for the heavenly kingdom. "Reaching forth unto those things which are before." Phil 3:13. The Greek word, to reach forth, signifies to stretch out the neck; a metaphor from racers, who strain every limb, and reach forward to lay hold on the prize. Anna, the prophetess, "departed not from the temple—but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." Luke 2:37. Basil, by much labor for the kingdom, exhausted his bodily strength. "Let racks, pulleys, and all torments come upon me," said Ignatius, "just so that I may win Christ." The industry and courage of former saints, who are now crowned with glory, should provoke our diligence, that so at last we may sit down with them in the kingdom of heaven.

(23) The more pains we take for heaven, the more welcome will death be to us. What is it that makes men so reluctant to die? They are like a tenant which will not go out of the house until the officer pulls him out. They do not like to hear of death. Why so? Because their conscience accuses them, that they have taken little or no pains for heaven; they have been sleeping when they should have been working—and now they are afraid lest death should carry them prisoners to hell. But he who has spent his time in serving God, can look death in the face with comfort. He was wholly taken up about heaven—shall now be taken up to heaven; he traded before in heaven, and now he shall go to live there. "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ." Phil 1:23. Paul had wholly laid himself out for God, and now he knew there was a crown laid up for him, and he longed to take possession.

Thus I have given you twenty-three persuasive or arguments to exert and put forth your utmost diligence for obtaining the kingdom of heaven. O that they were written in all your hearts, as with the point

of a diamond! Because delays in these cases are dangerous, let me desire you to set upon this work for heaven at once. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep your commandments." Psalm 119:60. Many people are convinced of the necessity of looking after the kingdom of glory—but they say as those in Hag 1:2, "The time is not come." They adjourn and put off until their time has slipped away—and so they lose the kingdom of heaven. Beware of this fallacy. **Delay** strengthens sin, hardens the heart, and gives the devil fuller possession of a man.

"The king's business required haste." Just so, the business of salvation requires haste. 1 Sam 21:8. Do not put off an hour longer. [The fleeting hour flies on fickle wings.] What assurance have you, that you shall live another day? Have you any lease of life granted? Why then do you not immediately arise out of the bed of sloth, and put forth all your strength and effort, that you may possessed the kingdom of glory? Should not things of the highest importance be done first? Settling a man's estate, and clearing the title to his land, is not delayed—but done in the first place. What is there of such grand importance as the saving of your souls, and the gaining a kingdom? Therefore *today* hear God's voice; *now* mind eternity; *now* get your title to heaven cleared before the *decree of death* brings forth. What imprudence is it to lay the heaviest load upon the weakest horse! So it is to lay the heavy load of repentance on yourself—when you are enfeebled by sickness, the hands shake, the lips quiver, and the heart faints. O be wise in time; prepare now for the kingdom. If a man begins his voyage to heaven in *the storm of death*—it is a thousand to one—that he suffers an eternal shipwreck!

Use 6. For exhortation to those who have any good hope through grace. You who are the heirs of this kingdom—let me exhort you to six things:

(1) Often take a prospect of this heavenly kingdom. Climb up the celestial mount; take a turn, as it were, in heaven every day by holy meditation. "Walk about Zion, go around her, count her towers, consider well her ramparts, view her citadels." Psalm 48:12, 13. See what a glorious kingdom heaven is! Christian, show your heart the gates of pearl, the beds of spices, the clusters of grapes which grow in the paradise of God. Say, "O my soul, all this glory is yours! It is your Father's good pleasure to give you this kingdom." The thoughts of heaven are very delightful and ravishing. Can men of the world so delight in viewing their bags of gold, and fields of corn—and shall not the heirs of promise take more delight in contemplating the celestial kingdom? The serious meditation of the kingdom of glory would work these three effects:

1. Meditation on the heavenly kingdom, would put a damp and slur upon all worldly glory. To those who stand upon the top of the Alps—the great cities of Campania seem but small in their eye. Just so, could we look through the telescope of faith, and take a view of heaven's glory, how small and minute would all other things appear! Moses slighted the honors of Pharaoh's court, having an eye to the recompense of reward. Heb 11:26. When Paul had a vision of glory, and John was carried away in the Spirit, and saw the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven, having the glory of God in it—how did the world appear in an eclipse to them!

2. Meditation on the heavenly kingdom, would much promote holiness in us. Heaven is a holy place: "an *undefiled* inheritance." 1 Peter 1:4. It is described by transparent glass, to denote its purity. Rev 21:21. Contemplating heaven would put us upon the study of holiness, because none but those who are holy, are admitted to that kingdom. Heaven is not like Noah's ark, into which

came clean and unclean animals. Only the pure in heart shall see God. Matthew 5:8.

3. Meditation on the heavenly kingdom, would be a spur to diligence. [Glory possesses an immeasurable stimulus.] "Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." 1 Cor 15:58. When the mariner sees the haven, he plies harder with his oars. Just so, when we have a sight and prospect of glory, we should be much in prayer and watching; it should add wings to duty, and make the *lamp of our devotion* burn brighter.

(2) If you have hopes of this kingdom—be content though you have but a little of the world! Contentment is a rare thing, it is a jewel which few Christians wear; but if you have a grounded hope of heaven, it may work your heart to contentment. What though you have but little in possession, you have a kingdom in reversion! Were you to take an estimate of a man's estate, how would you value it? By what he has in his house, or by his land? Perhaps he has little money or jewels in his house—but he owns vast lands—there lies his worth. A believer has but a little oil in the cruse, and meal in the barrel—but he has a title to a kingdom, and may not this satisfy him? If a man who lived here in England, had a great estate beyond the seas, and perhaps had no more money at present but just to pay for his voyage, he is content; he knows when he comes to his estate he shall have money enough. Just so, you who are a believer have a kingdom befallen you; though you have but little in your purse—yet if you have enough for your voyage to heaven, it is sufficient. God has given you grace, which is the fore-crop, and will give you glory, which is the after-crop; and may not this make you content?

(3) If you have hope of this blessed kingdom—pray often for its coming. Say, "May Your kingdom come." Only believers can pray heartily for the hastening of the kingdom of glory.

They cannot pray that Christ's kingdom of glory may come, who never had the kingdom of grace set up in their hearts. Can the guilty prisoners pray that the trial may come?

They cannot pray heartily that Christ's kingdom of glory may come, who are lovers of the world. They have found paradise, they are in their kingdom already; this is their heaven, and they desire to hear of no other; they are of his mind who said, that if he might keep his cardinalship in Paris, he would give up his part in paradise.

They cannot pray heartily that Christ's kingdom of glory may come, who oppose his kingdom of grace, who break his laws, which are the scepter of his kingdom, who shoot at those who bear Christ's name and carry his colors. Surely these cannot pray that Christ's kingdom of glory may come, for then Christ will judge them; and if they say this prayer, they are hypocrites, they mean not what they speak.

But you who have the kingdom of grace set up in your hearts, pray much that the kingdom of glory may hasten; say, "May Your kingdom come." When this kingdom comes, then you shall behold Christ in all his embroidered robes of glory, shining ten thousand times brighter than the sun in all its meridian splendor. When Christ's kingdom comes, the bodies of the saints that sleep in the dust shall be raised in honor, and made like Christ's glorious body; then your souls like diamonds, shall sparkle with holiness; you shall never more have a sinful thought, you shall be as holy as the angels; you shall be as holy as you desire to be, and as holy as God would have you to be. Then you shall be in a better state than in innocence. Adam was created a *glorious* creature—but *mutable*; a *bright* star—

but a *falling* star; but in the kingdom of heaven is a *fixation of happiness*. When Christ's kingdom of glory comes, you shall be rid of all your enemies; as Moses said, "The Egyptians whom you have seen to day, you shall see them no more forever." Exod 14:13. So those enemies who have ploughed on the backs of God's people, and made deep their furrows, when Christ shall come in his glory, you shall see no more. All Christ's enemies shall be "put under his feet." 1 Cor 15:25. Before the wicked are destroyed, the saints shall judge them. "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?" 1 Cor 6:2. It will cut the wicked to the heart that those whom they have formerly scorned and scourged, shall sit as judges upon them, and vote with Christ in his judicial proceedings. Oh, then, well may you pray for the hastening of the kingdom of glory, "May Your kingdom come."

(4) If you have any good hope of this blessed kingdom—be of a joyful, cheerful temper. Have you a title to a kingdom, and are sad? "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Romans 5:2. Christians, the trumpet is ready to sound, an eternal jubilee is at hand, when a freedom from sin shall be proclaimed; your coronation-day is coming. It is but putting off your clothes, and laying your head upon a pillow of dust—and you shall be enthroned in a kingdom, and invested with the embroidered robes of glory! Does not all this call for a cheerful spirit? Cheerfulness adorns religion. It is a temper of soul who Christ loves. "If you loved me, you would rejoice." John 14:28. It makes many suspect heaven is not so pleasant, when they see those who are going there sad. How does the heir rejoice in hope of the inheritance? Who should rejoice if not a believer, who is heir of the kingdom, and such a kingdom as eye has not seen? When the flesh begins to droop, let faith lift up its head, and cause a holy jubilation and rejoicing in the soul.

(5) Let the saints long to be in that blessed kingdom. Does not a prince who travels in foreign countries, long to be in his own nation, that he may be crowned? The bride desires the marriage day. "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come! Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev 22:17, 20. Surely our unwillingness to go hence, shows either the weakness of our faith in the belief of the heavenly kingdom, or the strength of our doubts whether we have an interest in it. Were our title to heaven more clear, we would need patience to be content to stay here any longer.

Again, our unwillingness to go hence, declares we love the world too much, and Christ too little. "Love," as Aristotle says, "desires union." Did we love Christ as we should, we should desire to be united to him in glory, when we might take our fill of love. Be humbled that you are so unwilling to go hence. Let us labor to arrive at that divine temper of soul, which Paul had: "Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ." Phil 1:23.

We are compassed with a body of sin; should we not long to shake off this viper? We are in Mesech, and the tents of Cedar, in a place where we see God dishonored. Should we not desire to be gone? We are in a valley of tears. Is it not better to be in a glorious kingdom? Here we are combating with Satan. Should we not desire to be called out of the bloody field, where the bullets of temptation fly so fast, that we may receive a victorious crown? O you saints, breathe after the heavenly kingdom. Though we should be willing to stay to do service—yet we should anxiously desire to be always sunning ourselves in the light of God's countenance. Think what it will be to be forever with the Lord! Are there any sweeter smiles or embraces than his! Is there any bed so soft as Christ's bosom! Is there any such joy as to have the golden banner of Christ's love displayed over us! Is

there any such honor as to sit upon the throne with Christ! Rev 3:21. O, then, long for the celestial kingdom!

(6) Wait for this kingdom of glory. It is not incongruous or improper to long for heaven—yet wait for it. Long for it because it is a kingdom—yet wait your Father's good pleasure. God could bestow this kingdom at once—but he sees it good that we should wait awhile.

[1] Had we the kingdom of heaven as soon as ever grace is infused, then God would lose much of his glory. Where would be our living by faith, which is the grace that brings in the chief revenues of glory to God? Romans 5:20. Where would be our suffering for God, which is a way of honoring him which the angels in heaven are not capable of? Where would be the active service we are to do for God? Would we have God give us a kingdom, and we do nothing for him before we come there? Would we have rest before labor, a crown before victory? This were hypocritical. Paul was content to stay out of heaven awhile that he might be a means of bringing others there. Phil 1:24.

[2] While we wait for the kingdom, our grace is increasing. Every duty piously performed, adds a jewel to our crown. Do we desire to have our robes of glory shine brighter? Let us wait and work. The longer we wait for the principal, the greater will the interest be. As the farmer waits until the seed springs up, wait for the harvest of glory. Christ says, men ought to pray, and not to faint. Luke 18:1. So, wait, and faint not. Be not weary, the kingdom of heaven will make amends for waiting. "I have waited for your salvation, O Lord," said the dying patriarch. Gen 49:18.

Use 7. For comfort to the people of God.

(1) In all their sufferings. "The true saint," as Luther says, "is heir to the cross." Affliction is his portion, but this keeps him from fainting—that his sufferings bring a kingdom. "The hope of the kingdom of heaven," says Basil, "should soften and sweeten all our troubles." "If we suffer—we shall also reign with him." 2 Tim 2:12. It is but a short fight—but an eternal triumph. This light suffering produces an "eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor 4:17. The more weighty precious things are, the more they are worth, as the more weight in a crown of gold, the more it is worth. Did this heavenly glory last only for awhile only, it would much abate and embitter the joys of heaven; but it runs parallel with eternity. God will be a deep sea of blessedness, and the glorified saints shall forever bathe themselves in this ocean! One day's wearing the crown will abundantly pay for all the saints' sufferings; how much more when "they will reign forever and ever!" Revelation 22:5.

O let this be our support under all the calamities and sufferings in this life. What a vast difference is there between a believer's sufferings and his reward! "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Romans 8:18. For a few tears--we shall receive rivers of pleasure! For mourning, white robes. This made the primitive Christians laugh at imprisonments, and snatch up torments as so many crowns. Though now we drink in a wormwood-cup, there is sugar in the bottom to sweeten it. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!" Luke 12:32

(2) Comfort in death. That which takes away from God's children the *terror of death*, is that they are entering into the kingdom. No wonder if wicked men are appalled and terrified at the approach of death, for they die unpardoned. Death carries them to the jail, where they must lie forever, without bail or deliverance; but why should any

of God's children be scared with thoughts of death? What hurt can death do to them—but lead them to a glorious kingdom! Faith gives a *title* to heaven—but death gives a *possession* of heaven. Let this be a gospel antidote to expel the fear of death. Let them fear death who do not fear sin; but let not God's children be over much troubled at the grim face of that messenger, which brings them to the end of their sorrow, and the beginning of their joy.

"Death is yours," it is a part of the believer's inventory. 1 Cor 3:22. Is a prince afraid to cross a narrow sea, who shall be crowned when he comes to shore? Death to the saints shall be an usher to bring them into the presence of the King of glory! This thought puts lilies and roses into the ghastly face of death, and makes it look amiable. Death brings us to a crown of glory which never fades away. The day of death is better to a believer than the day of his birth. Death is an entrance into a blessed eternity! Fear not death—but rather let your hearts revive when you think these *rattling wheels of death's chariot* are but to carry you home to an everlasting kingdom!

The Third Petition in the Lord's Prayer

**"May your will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven."** Matthew 6:10

This petition consists of two parts:
the **matter**—doing God's will;
the **manner**—as it is in heaven.

What is meant by the will of God? There is a twofold will.

(1) God's **secret** will, or "the will of his decree". We pray not that God's secret will may be done by us. This secret will cannot be known, it is locked up in God's own breast, and neither man nor angel has a key to open it!

(2) God's **revealed** will. This will is written in the book of Scripture, which is a declaration of God's will, and reveals what he would have us do in order to our salvation.

What do we pray for in these words, "May your will be done"?

We pray for two things:

1. For *active* obedience—that we may do God's will actively in what he commands.

2. For *passive* obedience—that we may *submit* to God's will patiently, in whatever he inflicts.

We pray that we may do God's will **actively**, subscribe to all his commands, believe in Jesus, which is the cardinal grace, and lead holy lives. This is the sum of all religion, the two tables epitomized, the doing God's will. "May your will be done." We must *know* his will before we can do it. Knowledge is the *eye* which must direct the *foot* of obedience. At Athens there was an altar set up, "To the unknown God." Acts 17:23. Knowledge is the pillar of fire to give light to practice; but though knowledge is requisite—yet the knowledge of God's will is not enough, without doing it. If one had a system of divinity in his head; if he had "all knowledge," yet, if obedience were lacking, his knowledge were lame, and would not carry him to heaven. 1 Cor 13:2. Knowing God's will may make a man *admired*—but it is doing it, which makes him *blessed!* Knowing God's will without doing it, will not crown us with eternal happiness.

[1] The bare knowledge of God's will is inefficacious, it does not better the heart. Knowledge alone is like a winter-sun, which has no heat or influence; it does not warm the affections, or purify the conscience. Judas was a great luminary, he knew God's will—but he was a traitor.

[2] Knowing without doing God's will, will make the case worse. It will heat hell the hotter. "That servant who knows his master's will and does not do what his master wants, will be beaten with many blows." Luke 12:47. Many a man's knowledge is a torch to light him to hell. You who have knowledge of God's will, but do not obey it—wherein do you excel the devil, who transforms himself into an angel of light? It is improper to call such Christians, who are *knowers* of God's will but not *doers* of it. It is improper to call him a tradesman who never wrought in his trade. Just so, to call him a Christian, who never wrought in the trade of true religion. Let us not rest in knowing God's will. Let it not be said of us, as Plutarch speaks of the Grecians, "They knew what was just—but did it not." Let us set upon the doing God's will. "May your will be done."

WHY is the doing God's will necessary?

(1) Out of equity. God may justly claim a right to our obedience. He is our *Creator*, and we have our being from him; and it is but just that we should do his will—at whose word we were created. God is our *Benefactor*. It is but just that, if he gives us our allowance, we should give him our allegiance.

(2) The great design of God in the Word is to make us doers of his will.

[1] All God's royal edicts and precepts are to bring us to be doers of his will. Why did take the effort to give us the copy of his

law, and write it out with his own finger—but for this end? The Word of God is not only a rule of what we are to *believe*—but what we are to *practice*. "This day the Lord your God has commanded you to *do* these statutes; you shall therefore keep and do them." Deut 26:16. If you tell your children what is your mind, it is not only that they may know your will—but do it. God gives us his Word, as a master gives his scholar a copy, to write after it; he gives it as his will and testament, that we should be the executors to see it performed.

[2] The end of all God's promises is to draw us to do his will. The promises are loadstones to obedience. "A blessing if you obey;" as a father gives his son money to bribe him to obedience. Deut 11:27. "If you shall hearken unto the voice of the Lord your God, to do all his commandments, the Lord your God will set you on high above all the nations of the earth; blessed shall you be in the city and in the field." Deut 28:1, 3. The *promises* are a royal charter settled upon *obedience*.

[3] The threatenings of God, stand as the angel with a flaming sword to deter us from sin, and make us doers of his will. "A curse if you will not obey." Deut 11:28. "God shall wound the hairy scalp of such an one as goes on still in his trespasses." Psalm 68:21. These threatenings often take hold of men in this life; they are made examples, and hung up in chains to scare others from disobedience.

[4] All God's providence are to make us doers of his will. As he makes use of all the seasons of the year for harvest—so all his various providence are to bring on the harvest of obedience.

[5] Afflictions are said to be sent us to make us do God's will. "When Manasseh was in affliction, he besought the Lord, and humbled himself greatly." 2 Chron 33:12. The rod has this voice, "Be

doers of God's will." Affliction is called a furnace. The furnace melts the metal, and then it is cast into a new mold. *God's furnace* is to melt us and mold us into obedience.

[6] God's mercies are to make us do his will. "I beseech you by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice." Romans 12:1. Body is by synecdoche put for the whole man; if the soul should not be presented to God as well as the body, it could not be a reasonable service; therefore the apostle says, "I beseech you by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice." Mercies are the strongest obligations to duty. "I drew them with cords of a man;" that is, with golden cords of my mercy. Hos 11:4. In a word, all that is written in the law or gospel tends to this, that we should be doers of God's will. "May your will be done."

(3) By doing the will of God, we evidence SINCERITY. As Christ said in another sense, "The works that I do, bear witness of me." John 10:25. It is not all our golden words--but our works--our doing

of God's will--which bears witness of our sincerity. We judge not the health of a man's body by his high color—but by the pulse of the arm, where the blood chiefly stirs. Just so, a Christian's soundness is not to be judged by his profession; but the estimate of a Christian is to be taken by his obediential acting, his doing the will of God. This is the best certificate and testimonial to show for heaven.

(4) Doing God's will propagates the GOSPEL. It is the diamond which sparkles in religion. Others cannot see that faith which is in the heart—but when they see we do God's will on earth, it makes them have a venerable opinion of the Christian religion, and become proselytes to it. Julian, in one of his epistles, writing to

Arsatius, says, "that the Christian religion did much flourish, by the sanctity and obedience of those who professed it."

(5) By doing God's will, we show our love to Christ. "He who has my commandments, and keeps them—he it is that loves me." John 14:21. What greater love to Christ than to do his will, though it crosses our own? Everyone would be thought to love Christ; but, how shall it be known but by this? Do you do his will on earth? It is a vain thing for a man to say he loves Christ—when he slights his commands.

Not to do God's will on earth is a great evil.

Not to do God's will is SINFUL. We go against our prayers; we pray, "May your will be done," and yet we do not obey his will; we confute our own prayer! We go against our vow in baptism; we have vowed to fight under the Lord's banner, to obey his scepter, and this vow we have often renewed in the Lord's supper; if we do not God's will on earth, we break our vows, and God will indict us for perjury.

Not to do God's will is FOOLISH; because there is overcoming God. If we do not *obey* him, we cannot *resist* him. "Are we stronger than he?" 1 Cor 10:22. "Have you an arm like God?" Job 40:9. Can you measure arms with him? To oppose God, is as if a child should fight with an archangel! To oppose God, is as if a heap of briers should put themselves into a battalion against the blazing fire.

Not to do God's will is foolish; because, if we do it not, we do the devil's will. Is it not folly to gratify an enemy—to do his will, who seeks our ruin? But are any so wicked as to do the devil's will? Yes! "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do." John 8:44. When a man tells a lie, does he not do the devil's

will? "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" Acts 5:3.

Not to do God's will is DANGEROUS. It brings a spiritual suicide. If God's will is not done *by* us—he will have his will *upon* us! If we obey not his will in *commanding*, we shall obey it in *perishing*. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who obey not the gospel." 2 Thess 1:7, 8. Either we must *do* his will, or *suffer* it!

(6) To do God's will is for OUR BENEFIT. It promotes our own self-interest. As if a king commands a subject to dig in a mine of gold, and gives him all the gold he had dug. God bids us do his will—for our own good. "And now, Israeli what does the Lord your God require of you—but to fear the Lord your God, to keep the commandments of the Lord, which I command you this day, *for your good"* Deut 10:13. It is God's will that we should *repent*, and this is for our good; for repentance ushers in remission of all our sins! "Repent, that your sins may be blotted out." Acts 3:19. It is God's will that we should *believe*; and why is it—but that we should be crowned with salvation! "He who believes, shall be saved." Mark 16:16. What God wills, is not so much our duty, as our privilege; he bids us obey his voice, and it is greatly for our good. "Obey my voice, and I will be your God." Jer 7:23. I will not only give you my angels to be your guard—but myself to be your portion; my spirit shall be yours to sanctify you; my love shall be yours to comfort you; my mercy shall be yours to save you; "I will be your God."

(7) To do God's will is our HONOR. A person thinks it an honor to have a king speak to him to do a thing. The angels count it their highest honor in heaven to do God's will. [They do not burden us but adorn us.] Salvian. To be employed in doing God's will is the highest

honor that a mortal creature is capable of! Christ's precepts do not burden us—but adorn us!

(8) To do God's will on earth makes us LIKE CHRIST, and akin to him. It makes us like Christ. Is it not our prayer that we may be like Christ Jesus Christ did his Father's will. "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will—but the will of him who sent me." John 6:38. As God the Father and Christ have but one essence—so but one will. Christ's will was melted into his Father's. "My food is to do the will of him who sent me." John 4:34. By doing God's will on earth, we resemble Christ, nay, we are akin to him and are of the blood royal of heaven! Alexander called himself cousin to the gods; but what honor is it to be akin to Christ! "Whoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven—the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Matthew 12:50. Did king Solomon rise off his throne to meet his mother and set her on a throne by him? 1 Kings 2:19. Such honor will Christ bestow on such as are doers of God's will; he will salute them as his kindred, and set them on a glorious throne in the amphitheater of heaven.

(9) Doing God's will on earth brings PEACE in life and death.

[1] Doing God's will brings peace in **life**. "*In* keeping your precepts, there is great reward," not only *after* keeping them—but *in* keeping them. Psalm 19:11. When we walk closely with God in obedience, there is a secret joy let into the soul—and how swiftly and cheerfully do the wheels of the soul move when they are oiled with the oil of gladness!

[2] Doing God's will brings peace in **death**. When Hezekiah thought he was about to die, what gave him comfort? That he had done the will of God. "Remember O Lord, I beseech you, how I have walked

before you in truth, and have done that which is good in your sight." Isaiah 38:3. If anything make our pillow easy at death, it will be that we have endeavored to do God's will on earth. Did you ever hear any cry out on their death-bed, that they have done God's will too much? No! Has it not been, that they have done his will no more, that they came so short in their obedience? Doing God's will, will be both your *comfort* and your *crown!*

(10) If we are not doers of God's will, we shall be looked upon as despisers of his will. Let God say what he will—yet men will go on in sin, which is to condemn God. "Why does the wicked despise God?" Psalm 10:13. To despise God is worse than to rebel. The tribes of Israel rebelled against Rehoboam, because he made their yoke heavier. 1 Kings 12:16. But to despise God is worse: it is to slight him; it is to put a scorn upon him, and affront him to his face! Such an affront will make him draw his sword in vengeance!

In what MANNER are we to do God 's will, that we may find acceptance?

The *manner* of doing God's will is the chief thing. The schoolmen say well, "the *manner* of a thing, is as well required as the thing itself." If a man builds a house, and the owner does not like it—if it is not according to his mind—all his expenses are lost. Just so, if we do not God's will in the right manner, it is not accepted. We must not only do *what* he appoints—but as he appoints. Here lies the very life-blood of saving religion. It is a great question, therefore, "In what manner are we to do God's will that we may find acceptance?"

(1) We do God's will acceptably—when we do duties SPIRITUALLY. "We worship God in the spirit." Phil 3:3. To serve God spiritually, is to do duties from an inward principle. The Pharisees were very exact about the external part of God's worship.

How zealous were they in the outward observation of the Sabbath, even charging Christ with the breach of it! But all this was external obedience only: there was nothing of spirituality in it. We do God's will acceptably when we serve him from a renewed principle of grace. A crab tree may bear fruit, as well as a good apple tree—but it is not so good fruit as the other, because it does not come from so sweet a root. Just so, an unregenerate person may do as much external obedience as a child of God—he may pray as much, hear as much—but his obedience is harsh and sour, because it does not come from the sweet and pleasant root of grace!

The inward principle of obedience is faith; therefore it is called "the obedience of faith." Romans 16:26. But why must *this silver thread of faith* run through the whole work of obedience? Because *faith looks at Christ in every duty*—it touches the hem of his garment; and through Christ, both the person and the offering are accepted. Eph 1:6.

(2) We do God's will acceptably—when we PREFER his will before all others. If God wills one thing, and man wills the contrary, we are not to obey man's will—but God's. "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God—you judge." Acts 4:19. God says, "You shall not make a graven image." King Nebuchadnezzar set up a golden image to be worshiped; but the three Hebrew *children*, or rather *champions*, resolved God's will should prevail, and they would obey him, though with the loss of their lives! "Be it known unto you, O king, that *we will not* serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." Dan 3:18.

(3) We do God's will acceptably—when we do it as it is done in heaven, that is, as the ANGELS do it. To do God's will as the

angels "marks our *likeness* to them, not our *equality* with them," Brugensis. It denotes this much, that we are to resemble them, and make them our pattern. Though we cannot *equal* the angels in doing God's will—yet we must *imitate* them; a child cannot write as well as the original—yet he copies and imitates it.

[1] We do God's will as the angels in heaven, when we do it REGULARLY, without wavering; when we go according to the divine institutions, not decrees of councils, or traditions of men. Angels do nothing but what is commanded; they are not for mere formal *ceremonies*. As there are statute laws in the land which bind—so the Scripture is God's statute law, which we must exactly observe. As the watch is set by the *sundial*—so our obedience is right when it goes by the *sundial* of the Word. If obedience has not the Word for its rule, it is not doing God's will—but our own; it is will-worship.

The Lord would have Moses make the tabernacle *according to the pattern*. Exodus 25:40. If Moses had left out anything or added anything to it, it would have been very provoking to God. To mix anything of our own devising in God's worship, is to go *outside*, yes, *contrary* to the pattern. His worship is the apple of his eye, that which he is the most tender of; and there is nothing he has more showed his displeasure against than *corrupting his worship*. How severely did he punish Nadab and Abihu for offering up strange fire, that is, such fire as God has not sanctioned! Lev 10:2. Whatever is not divinely appointed, is offering up strange fire. There is in many, a strange itch after superstition. They love a gaudy religion, and are more for the *pomp* of worship than the *purity* of worship; which cannot be pleasing to God. As if God were not wise enough to appoint the manner how he will be served, man will be so bold as to prescribe for him. To thrust human inventions into sacred things, is doing our will, not God's; and he will say, "Who has required *this* at

your hand!" Isaiah 1:12. We do God's will as it is done in heaven when we do it regularly, when we reverence his institutions, and the mode of worship—which have the stamp of divine authority upon them.

[2] We do God's will as it is done by the angels in heaven, when we do it ENTIRELY, with nothing cut away—when we do *all* God's will. The angels in heaven do all that God commands; they leave nothing of his will undone. "You his angels, that do his commandments." Psalm 103:20. If God sends an angel to the virgin Mary—he goes on God's errand; if he gives his angels a charge to minister for the saints—they obey. Heb 1:14. It cannot stand with angelic obedience, to leave the least iota of God's will unfulfilled. It is to do God's will as the angels when we do all his will. This was God's charge to Israel. "Remember and do *all* my commandments." Numb 15:40, It is said of David, "I have found David, a man after my own heart, who shall fulfill all my will." (Gr. all my wills.) Acts 13:22. Every command has the same authority; and if we do God's will uprightly, we do it uniformly; we obey *every* part and branch of his will; we join first and second table. Surely we owe to God our Father, what the Papists say they owe to their false church, unlimited obedience. We must incline to every command, as the needle moves which ever way which the loadstone draws it.

Many do God's will by halves, they pick and choose in religion: in some tings they comply with God's will—but not in others. They are like a lame horse, which sets some of its feet on the ground—but favors one. He who is to play upon a lute, must strike upon every string, or he spoils all the music. God's commandments may be compared to a ten-stringed lute; we must obey his will in every command, strike upon every string, or we can make no good melody in piety. The badger has one foot shorter than the other—so

hypocrites are shorter in some duties than others. Some will pray—but not give alms. Some hear the word—but not forgive their enemies. Others receive the sacrament—but not make restitution. How can they be holy—who are not just? Hypocrites profess fair—but when it comes to sacrificing the *Isaac*, crucifying the beloved sin, or parting with some of their estate for Christ, they pause and say, as Naaman, "In this thing—may the Lord pardon your servant." 2 Kings 5:18. This is far from doing God's will as the angels do. God does not accept, such as do his will by halves. If your servant should do some of your work which you command him—but not all—how would you like it?

But who is able to do all God's will?

Though we cannot obey all God's will *legally*, we may *evangelically*; which is:

(1) When we mourn that we can do God's will no better; when we fail we weep. Romans 7:24.

(2) When it is the desire of our soul to do God's whole will, "O that my ways were directed to keep your precepts." Psalm 119:5. What a child of God lacks in strength, he makes up in desire, [in great matters it is enough to have had the will.]

(3) When we endeavor as far as we are able, to do the whole will of God. When a father bids his child lift a heavy object—and the child is not able—but tries, and does his best, the father accepts it as if he had done it. Just so, to endeavor to do our best, is to do God's will evangelically. Though it be not to our satisfaction, it is to God's acceptance.

[3] We do God's will as it is done in heaven by the angels, when we do it SINCERELY and without pretense. To do God's will sincerely lies in two things, first, to do God's will out of a pure respect to his command. Abraham's sacrificing Isaac was contrary to flesh and blood. To sacrifice the son of his love, the son of the promise, and by no other hand but the father's own, was hard service; but, because God commanded it, and out of pure respect to the command, Abraham obeyed. This is to do God's will aright, when though we feel no present joy or comfort in duty—yet, because God commands we obey. Not comfort—but the command is the ground of duty. Thus the angels do God's will in heaven. His command is the weight that sets the wheels of their obedience going. Secondly, to do God's will sincerely, is to do it with a pure eye to his glory. The Pharisees did the will of God giving alms; but that which was a dead fly in the ointment, was that they did not aim at his glory—but vain glory; they blew a trumpet. Jehu did the will of God in destroying the Baal-worshipers, and God commended him for it; but because he aimed more at setting himself in the kingdom, than at the glory of God, God looked upon it as no better than murder, and said he would avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu. Hos 1:4. Let us look to our ends in obedience; though we shoot short, let us take a right aim. We may do God's will, and yet not with a perfect heart. "Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord—but not with a perfect heart." 2 Chron 25:2. The action was right for the matter—but his aim was not right; and the action which lacks good aim, lacks a good issue. He does God's will rightly that does it uprightly, whose end is to honor God and lift up his name in the world. A gracious soul makes God his center. As Joab, when he had taken Rabbah, sent for King David, that he might have the glory of the victory—so when a gracious soul has done any duty, it desires that the glory of all may be given to God. 2 Sam 12:27, 28. "That God in all things may be glorified." 1 Peter 4:11. It is to do God's will as

the angels, when we not only advance his glory—but design his glory. The angels are said to cast their crowns before the throne. Rev 4:10. Crowns are signs of the greatest honor—but these the angels lay at the Lord's feet, to show they ascribe the glory of all they do to him.

[4] We do God's will as it is done in heaven by the angels when we do it WILLINGLY, and without complaint. The angels love to be employed in God's service. It is their heaven to serve God. They willingly descend from heaven to earth, when they bring messages from God, and glad tidings to the church. Heaven being a place of much joy, the angels would not leave it a minute were it not that they take such infinite delight in doing God's will. We resemble the angels when we do God's will willingly. "And you Solomon, my son, serve the Lord with a willing mind." 1 Chron 28:9. God's people are called a willing people; they give God a freewill offering; though they cannot serve him perfectly, they serve him willingly. Psalm 110:3.

A hypocrite may be able to do some right things—yet he has no delight in duty; he does it rather out of fear of hell than love to God. When he does God's will it is against his own will. Cain brought his sacrifice—but grudgingly; his worship was rather a *task* than an offering, rather *penance* than a sacrifice; he did God's will—but against his own will. We must be carried upon the wings of delight in every duty. Israel were to blow the trumpets when they offered burnt offerings. Num 10:10. This was to show their joy and cheerfulness in serving God. We must read and hear the Word with delight. "Your Words were found, and I ate them, and your Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jer 15:16. A pious soul goes to the Word as to a feast, or as one would go with delight to hear music.

Sleidan reports that the Protestants of France had a church which they called paradise, because, when they were in the house of God, they thought themselves in paradise. The saints flock as doves to the windows of God's house. "Who are these that fly as the doves to their windows?" Isaiah 60:8. Not that a truly regenerate person is always in the same cheerful temper of obedience; he may sometimes find an indisposition and weariness of soul—but his weariness is his burden; he is weary of his weariness; he prays, weeps, uses all means to regain the alacrity and freedom in God's service that he was accustomed to have. To do God's will acceptably is to do it willingly. Delight in duty is better than duty itself. The musician is not commended for playing long—but well; it is not how much we do—but how much we love. "O, how love I your law!" Psalm 119:97. Love is as musk among linen, which perfumes it; it perfumes obedience, and makes it go up to heaven as a sweet incense. It is doing God's will as the angels in heaven do. They are ravished with delight while praising God; they are said to have harps in their hands, to signify their cheerfulness in God's service. Rev 15:2.

[5] We do God's will as the angels in heaven when we do it FERVENTLY, and without slackness. "Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" a metaphor taken from water when it seethes and boils over. Just so, our affections should boil over in zeal and fervor. Romans 12:11. The angels serve God with such fervor and intenseness that they are called *seraphim*, from a Hebrew word which signifies to *burn*, to show they are all on fire; they burn in love and zeal in doing God's will. Psalm 104:4. Grace turns a saint into a seraphim. Aaron must put burning coals to the incense. Lev 16:12. Incense was a type of prayer, burning coals of zeal, to show that the fire of zeal must be put to the incense of prayer. Formality starves duty. Is it like the angels—to serve God dully and coldly? Duty

without fervor is as a sacrifice without fire. We should ascend to heaven in a fiery chariot of devotion.

[6] We do God's will as the angels in heaven when we give him the BEST in every service. "Out of all your gifts, you shall offer all the best thereof." Numb 18:29. "In the holy place shall you cause the strong wine to be poured unto the Lord for a drink offering." Numb 28:7. The Jews might not offer to the Lord, wine which was weak or mixed—but the strong wine, to imply that we must offer to God the best, the strongest of our affections. If the spouse had a cup more juicy and spiced, Christ should drink of that. "I would cause you to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate." Canticles 8:2. Thus the angels in heaven do God's will; they serve him in the best manner; they give him their seraphic high stringed praises. Just so, he who loves God, gives him the cream of his obedience. God demanded the fat of all the sacrifice as his due. Lev 3:16. Hypocrites care not what services they bring to God; they think to put him off with anything; they put no cost in their duties. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground." Gen 4:3. The Holy Spirit took notice of Abel's offering that it was costly. He "brought of the *firstlings* of his flock, and of the fat thereof." Gen 4:4. When he speaks of Cain's offering, he says only, "He brought of the fruit of the ground." We do God's will aright when we offer fat things, dedicate to him the best. Domitian would not have his image carved in wood or iron—but in gold. God will have the best we have—golden services.

[7] We do God's will as the angels in heaven when we do it READILY and swiftly. The angels do not dispute or reason the case—but soon as they have their charge and commission from God, they immediately obey. To show how ready they are to execute God's will, the cherubim, representing angels, are described with wings. Thus should we do God's will as the angels. As soon as ever God

speaks the Word—we should be ambitious to obey. Alas! how long is it sometimes before we can get permission from our hearts to go to a duty! Christ went more readily to the cross—than we to the throne of grace! How many disputes and excuses have we! Is this to do God's will as the angels in heaven do it? O let us shake off this backwardness to duty, as Paul shook off the viper.

"Behold two women, and the wind was in their wings." Zech 5:9. Wings are swift—but wind in the wings is great swiftness; such readiness should be in our obedience. As soon as Christ commanded Peter to let down his net, he let it down, and you know what success he had. Luke 5:4. It was prophesied of such as were brought home to Christ, "As soon as they hear from me, they shall obey me." Psalm 18:44.

[8] We do God's will as the angels in heaven when we do it CONSTANTLY. The angels are never weary of doing God's will; they serve him day and night. Rev 7:15. Thus we should imitate them. "Blessed is he who does righteousness at all times." Psalm 106:3. Constancy crowns obedience. [The righteousness consists not in beginning but in completing the work.] Cyprian. Our obedience must be like the fire of the altar, which was *continually* kept burning. Lev 6:13. Hypocrites soon give over doing God's will. They are like chrysolite, which is of a golden color in the morning, very bright to look upon—but towards evening grows dull and loses its splendor. We should continue doing God's will, because of the great loss which will befall us if we do it not. There will be a loss of honor. "That no man take your crown;" implying, if the church of Philadelphia left off her obedience, she would lose her crown that is, her honor and reputation. Rev 3:2: Apostasy creates infamy. Judas came from an apostle to be a traitor, which was a dishonor. If we give over our obedience, it is a loss of all that has been already done; as if one

should work in silver, and then pick out all the stitches. All a man's prayers are lost, all the Sabbaths he has kept are lost; he unravels all his good works. "All his righteousness that he has done shall not be mentioned." Ezek 18:24. He undoes all he has done; as if one drew a beautiful picture with the pencil, and then came with his sponge and wiped it out again. A loss of the soul and happiness. "We were in a fair way for heaven—but left off doing God's will, missed the excellent glory, and are plunged deeper in damnation." "It had been better not to have known the way of righteousness than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment." 2 Peter 2:21. Therefore let us continue in doing God's will. Constancy sets the crown upon the head of obedience.

Use 1. For instruction.

(1) See hence our impotence. We have no innate power to do God's will. What need to pray, "May your will be done," if we have power of ourselves to do it? I wonder that free-willers pray this petition.

(2) If we are to do God's will on earth as it is done by the angels in heaven, see the folly of those who go by a wrong pattern. They do as most of their neighbors do: if they talk vain on the Sabbath, if now and then they swear an oath, it is the custom of their neighbors to do so; but we are to do God's will, as the angels in heaven. We must make the angels our patterns, and not our neighbors. If our neighbors do the devil's will—shall we do so too? If our neighbors go to hell—shall we go there too for company?

(3) See here that which may make us long to be in heaven, where we shall do God's will perfectly, as the angels do. Alas! how defective are we in our obedience here! How far we fall short! We cannot write a line of holiness without blotting. Our holy things are blemished like

the moon, which, when it shines brightest, has a dark spot in it; but in heaven we shall do God's will perfectly, as the angels in glory.

Use 2. For reproof.

(1) It reproves such as do not God's will. They have a knowledge of God's will—but though they know it, they do it not. They know what God would have them avoid. They know they should not swear. "Swear not at all." Matthew 5:34. "Because of swearing the land mourns." Jer 23:10. Yet, though they pray "hallowed be your name," they profane it by shooting oaths, like bullets against heaven. They know they should abstain from fornication and uncleanness—yet they cannot but bite at the devil's hook—if he baits it with flesh. Jude 7.

They know what God would have them practice—but they "Leave undone those things which they ought to have done." They know it is the will of God they should be true in their promises, just in their dealings, good in their relations; but they do it not. They know they should read the Scriptures, consult with God's oracles—but the Bible, like rusty armor, is hung up, and seldom used; they look softener upon a pack of cards—than upon a Bible. They know their houses should be nurseries of piety—yet they have no piety in them; they do not perfume their houses with prayer. What hypocrites are those who kneel down in the church, and lift up their eyes to heaven and say, "May your will be done," and yet have no care at all to do God's will! What is this, but to hang out a flag of defiance against heaven! Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.

(2) It reproves those who do not God's will in a right acceptable manner. They do not God's will entirely. They will obey him in some things—but not in others; as if a servant should do some of your work you command him—but not all. Jehu destroyed the idolatry of

Baal—but let the golden calves of Jeroboam stand. 2 Kings 10:28, 29. Some will observe the duties of the second table—but not the first. Others make a high profession, as if their tongues had been touched with a coal from God's altar—but live idly; of whom the apostle thus complains: "We hear there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all." 2 Thess 3:11. Living by faith, and living in a vocation, must go together. It is an evil thing not to do all God's will.

They do not God's will ardently, nor cheerfully. They do not put hot coals to the incense; they bring their sacrifice—but not their heart. This is far from doing God's will as the angels. How can God like heartless service? How can he mind our duties, when we ourselves do not mind them?

Use 3. For examination.

Let us examine all our actions, whether they are according to God's will. The will of God is the rule and standard: it is the sun-dial by which we must regulate all our actions. He is no good workman who does not work by rule. Just so, he can be no Christian who goes not according to the rule of God's will. Let us examine our actions whether they square with, and agree to the will of God. Are our speeches according to his will? Are our words savory, being seasoned with grace? Is our apparel according to God's will? "In like manner I want women to adorn themselves in modest apparel," not wanton and garish. 1 Tim 2:9. Is our diet according to God's will? Do we hold the golden bridle of temperance, and only take so much as may rather satisfy nature than surfeit it? Too much oil chokes the lamp. Is our whole behavior according to God's will? Are we patterns of prudence and piety? Do we shine as bright lights in the dark world? We pray, "May your will be done as it is in heaven." Are we like our

pattern? Would the angels do this if they were on earth? Would Jesus Christ do this? It is to be like Christ—when we live our prayer, and our actions are the counterpart of God's will.

Use 4. For exhortation.

Let us be doers of the will of God, "May your will be done." It is our **wisdom** to do God's will. "Keep and do these statutes, for this is your wisdom." Deut 4:6. Further, it is our **safety**. Has not misery always attended the doing our own will, and happiness the doing of God's will?

(1) Misery has always attended the doing our own will. Our first parents left God's will to fulfill their own, in eating the forbidden fruit; and what came of it? The apple had a bitter core in it! They purchased a curse for themselves, and all their posterity. King Saul left God's will to do his own; he spared Agog and the best of the sheep, and what was the outcome—but the loss of his kingdom?

(2) Happiness has always attended the doing God's will. Joseph obeyed God's will, in refusing the embrace of his mistress; and was not this his preferment? God raised him to be the second man in the kingdom. Daniel did God's will contrary to the king's decree; he bowed his knee in prayer to God, and did not God make all Persia bow their knees to Daniel?

(3) The way to have our will—is to do God's will. Would we have a blessing in our estate? Let us do God's will. "You will experience all these blessings if you obey the Lord your God: You will be blessed in your towns and in the country. You will be blessed with many children and productive fields. You will be blessed with fertile herds and flocks. You will be blessed with baskets overflowing with fruit, and with kneading bowls filled with bread. You will be blessed

wherever you go, both in coming and in going. The Lord will conquer your enemies when they attack you. The Lord will bless everything you do and will fill your storehouses with grain. The Lord your God will bless you in the land he is giving you. If you obey the commands of the Lord your God and walk in his ways, the Lord will establish you as his holy people as he solemnly promised to do." Deuteronomy 28:2-9. This is the way to have a good harvest. Would we have a blessing in our souls? Let us do God's will. "Obey my voice, and I will be your God." Jer 7:23. "I will bestow myself upon you, as an everlasting portion; my *grace* shall be yours to sanctify you, my *mercy* shall be yours to save you!" You see you lose nothing by doing God's will; it is the way to have your own will. Let God have his will in being obeyed, and you shall have your will in being saved.

How shall we do God's will aright?

(1) Get sound knowledge. We must *know* his will before we can *do* it; knowledge is the eye to direct the foot of obedience. The Papists make ignorance the mother of *devotion*; but Christ makes ignorance the mother of *error*. "You are in error, not knowing the Scriptures." Matthew 22:29. We must know God's will before we can do it aright. Affection without knowledge, is like a horse full of heart —but his eyes are put out.

(2) If we would do God's will aright, let us labor for self-denial. Unless we deny our own will, we shall never do God's will. His will and ours are like the wind and tide when they are contrary. He wills one thing, we will another; he calls us to be crucified to the world, by nature we love the world; he calls us to forgive our enemies, by nature we bear malice in our hearts. His will and ours are contrary, and until we can cross our own will, we shall never fulfill his will.

(3) Let us get humble hearts. Pride is the spring of disobedience. "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Exod 5:2. A proud man thinks it below him, to stoop to God's will. Be humble. The humble Christian says, "Lord what will you have me to do?" He puts, as it were, a blank paper into God hand; and bids him write what he will, and he will subscribe to it.

(4) Beg grace and strength of God to do his will. "Teach me to do *your* will;" as if David had said, Lord, I need not be taught to do *my* own will, I can do it fast enough—but teach me to do *your* will. Psalm 143:10. And that which may add wings to prayer, is God's gracious promise, "I will put my Spirit within you, and *cause* you to walk in my statutes." Ezek 36:27. If the loadstone draws the iron, it is not hard for the iron to move. Just so, if God's Spirit enables, it will not be hard—but rather delightful to do God's will.

II. We pray that we may have grace to submit to God's will patiently, in whatever he inflicts. The text is to be understood as well of **suffering** God's will, as of **doing** it. Just so, the most judicious interpreters understand the text. A Christian, when under any disastrous providence, should lie quietly at God's feet, and say, "May your will be done."

What this patient submission to God's will is *not*?

There is something that looks like patience which is not: as when a man bears a thing because he cannot help it; he takes affliction as his *fate* and *destiny*, therefore he endures quietly what he cannot avoid —this is *necessity* rather than *patience*.

What accompanies patient submissions to God's will?

(1) A Christian may be deeply sensible of affliction, and yet patiently submit to God's will. We ought not to be Stoics, insensible and unconcerned with God's dealings; like the sons of Deucalion, who, as the poets say, were begotten of a stone. Christ was sensible when he sweat great drops of blood—but there was submission to God's will. "Nevertheless, not as I will—but as you will." Matthew 26:39. We are bid to humble ourselves under God's hand, which we cannot do unless we are sensible of it. 1 Peter 5:6.

(2) A Christian may weep under an affliction, and yet patiently submit to God's will. God allows tears. It is a sin to be "without natural affection." Romans 1:31. Grace makes the heart tender; [grief which is held in, chokes the heart]; weeping gives vent to sorrow; [grief is poured out in tears.] Joseph wept over his dead father; Job, when he had much ill news brought him at once, tore his mantle, as an expression of grief—but did not tear his hair in anger. Worldly grief, however, must not be immoderate; a vein may bleed too much; the water rises too high when it overflows the banks.

(3) A Christian may complain in his affliction, and yet be submissive to God's will. "I cry out to the Lord; I plead for the Lord's mercy. I pour out my complaints before him and tell him all my troubles." Psalm 142:1, 2. We may, when under oppression, tell God how it is with us, and desire him to write down our injuries. Shall not the child complain to his father when he is wronged? Holy complaint may agree with patient submission to God's will; but though we may complain to God, we must not complain of God.

What is inconsistent with patient submission to God's will?

(1) DISCONTENT with God's dealings in providence. Discontent has a mixture of *grief* and *anger* in it—and both these must needs raise a storm of passion in the soul. When God has

touched the apple of our eye, and smitten us in that we loved—we are huffy and sullen, and he has not a good look from us. We are like a petulant bird which is angry, and beats herself against the cage. Gen 4:6.

(2) MURMURING is not consistent with submission to God's will. Murmuring is the height of impatience, it is a kind of mutiny in the soul against God. "The people began to murmur against God." Numb 21:5. When a cloud of sorrow is gathered in the soul, and it not only drops in tears—but out of it come hailstones, murmuring words against God, this is far from patient submission to his will. When water is hot the scum boils up; when the heart is heated with anger against God, then murmuring boils up.

[1] Murmuring springs from **pride**. Men think they have deserved better at God's hand; and, when they begin to swell, they spit poison!

[2] Murmuring springs from **distrust**. Men do not believe that God can make a cordial out of poison—that he cannot bring good out of all their troubles, therefore they murmur. "They believed not his word—but murmured." Psalm 106:24, 25. Men murmur at God's *providence* because they distrust his *promises*. God has much ado to bear this sin. Numb 14:27. It is far from submission to God's will.

(3) DISQUIETNESS cannot agree with quiet submission to God's will. As when a man says, I am so encompassed with trouble that I know not how to get out; head and heart are so taken up, that I am not fit to pray. When the strings of a lute are snarled, the lute can make no good music. Just so, when a Christian's spirits are perplexed and disturbed, he cannot make melody in his heart to the Lord. To be under discomposure of mind, is as when an army is routed, one runs this way and another that way—and all is in disorder. Just so, when a Christian is in a hurry of mind, his thoughts run up and down distracted, as if he were undone, which cannot consist with patient submission to God's will.

(4) SELF-JUSTIFICATION cannot agree with submission to God's will; when, instead of being humbled under God's hand, a person justifies himself. A proud sinner stands upon his own defense, and is ready to accuse God of unrighteousness, which is, as if we should charge the sun with darkness. This is far from submission to God's will. God smote Jonah's gourd, and he stood upon his own vindication. "I do well to be angry, even unto death!" Jonah 4:9. What! to be angry with God—and to *justify* this! "I do well to be angry!" This was strange to come from a prophet, and was far from the prayer Christ taught us, "May your will be done."

What is patient submission to God's will?

It is a gracious frame of soul, whereby a Christian is content to be at God's disposal, and acquiesces in his wisdom. "It is the Lord's will—let him do what he thinks best." 1 Sam 3:18. "The will of the Lord be done." Acts 21:14. That I may further illustrate this, I shall show you wherein this submission to the will of God lies. It lies chiefly in three things:

(1) Patient submission to God's will, lies in acknowledging God's hand; seeing God in the affliction. "Affliction does not spring from the soil, and trouble does not sprout from the earth." Job 5:6. Affliction does not come by chance. Job eyed God in all that befell him. "The Lord gave me everything I had, and *the Lord has taken it away*. Praise the name of the Lord!" Job 1:21. He complains not of the Chaldeans, or the influence of the planets. Job looks beyond second causes, he sees God in the affliction. "The Lord has taken it away." There can be no submission to God's will—until there is an acknowledging of God's hand in the affliction.

(2) Patient submission to God's will, lies in justifying God. "O my God, I cry but you hear not," you turn a deaf ear to me in my

affliction. Psalm 22:2. "But you are holy;" ver 3. God is holy and just, not only when he punishes the wicked—but when he afflicts the righteous. Though he puts wormwood in our cup—yet we vindicate him, and proclaim his righteousness. When Mauricius, the emperor, saw his son slain before his eyes, he exclaimed, "Righteous are you, O Lord, in all your ways." We justify God, and confess he punishes us less than we deserve. "Now we are being punished because of our wickedness and our great guilt. But we have actually been punished far less than we deserve." Ezra 9:13.

(3) Patient submission to God's will, lies in accepting the punishment. "And they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity." Lev 26:41. Accepting the punishment, is receiving all that God does in good part. He who accepts of the punishment says, "Good is the rod of the Lord;" he kisses the rod, yes, blesses God that he would use such a *merciful severity*, and rather afflict him than lose him.

Patient submission to God's will in affliction shows a great deal of wisdom and piety. The skill of a pilot is most discerned in a storm—so a Christian's grace in the storm of affliction. Submission to God's will is most requisite for us while we live in this world. In heaven there will be no more need of patience, than there is need of the starlight when the sun shines. In heaven there will be all joy, and what need of patience then? It requires no patience to wear a crown of gold; but while we live here in a valley of tears, patient submission to God's will is much needed. "You have need of patience." Heb 10:36.

The Lord sometimes lays **heavy** afflictions upon us. "*Your arrows* have struck deep, and your blows are crushing me." Psalm 38:2. God sometimes melts his people in a furnace. He sometimes lays **many**

afflictions upon us. "He multiplies my wounds." Job 9:17. God shoots many kinds of arrows.

(1) Sometimes God afflicts with POVERTY. The widow had nothing left—but a pot of oil. 2 Kings 4:2. Poverty is a great affliction. To have an estate reduced almost to nothing, is hard to flesh and blood. "The Almighty has made life very bitter for me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me home empty." Ruth 1:20, 21.

This exposes to contempt. When the prodigal was poor, his brother was ashamed to own him. "This your son;" he said not, this my brother—but this your son; he scorned to call him brother. Luke 15:30. When the deer is shot and bleeds, the rest of the herd push it away—so when God shoots the arrow of poverty at one, others are ready to push him away. When Terence was grown poor, his friend Scipio cast him off. The poets write that Jupiter's daughters had no suitors, because they lacked a dowry.

(2) God sometimes afflicts with REPROACH. Such as have the light of grace shining in them may be eclipsed in their name. The primitive Christians were reproached, as if they were guilty of incest. Luther was called a trumpeter of rebellion. David calls reproach heart-breaking. Psalm 69:20. God often lets his dear saints be exercised with this. Dirt may be cast upon a pearl, and those names may be blotted which are written in the book of life. Piety shields from hell—but not from slander.

(3) God sometimes afflicts with the DEATH of loved ones. "Son of man, I am going to take away your dearest treasure. Suddenly she will die." Ezek 24:16. This is like pulling away a limb from the body. He takes away a holy child: Jacob's life was bound up in Benjamin. Gen 44:30. That which is worse than the loss of children is, when they are continued as living crosses; where the

parents expected honey, there to have wormwood. What greater trial to a godly parent, than a child who disclaims his father's God? A corrosive applied to the body may do well—but a bad child is a corrosive to the heart. Such an foul son had David, who conspired treason, and would not only have taken away his father's crown—but his life.

(4) God sometimes afflicts with INFIRMITY of body. Sickness takes away the comfort of life. Sometimes God lets the infirmity continue long. Some diseases are chronic, which linger and hang about the body for many years. The Lord is pleased to exercise many of His precious ones with chronic affliction.

God tries His people with various afflictions--so that they have need of patient submission to His will. He who has many bullets shot at him, needs armor. Just so, when divers afflictions assault, we need patience as proof armor.

Use 1. For reproof. It reproves such as have not yet learned this part of the Lord's prayer: "May your will be done;" they have only *said* it—but not *learned* it. If things are not according to their mind, if the *wind of Providence* crosses the tide of their will, they are discontented and grumbling. Where is now submission of will to God? To be displeased with God if things do not please us, is this to lie at God's feet, and acquiesce in his will? It is a very bad temper of spirit, and God may justly punish us by letting us have our will. Rachel cried, "Give me children, or else I die." Gen 30:1. God let her have a child—but it cost her her life. Gen 35:18. Israel was not content with manna—but they must have quail, and God punished them by letting them have their will. "There went forth a wind from the Lord and brought quails; and while the flesh was yet between their teeth, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against them, and the

Lord smote the people with a very great plague." Numb 11:31, 33. They had better been without their quails than had such sour sauce with them. Many have importunately desired the life of a child, and could not bring their will to God's to be content to part with it; and the Lord has punished them by letting them have their will; for the child has lived and been a burden to them. Seeing their wills crossed God, their child shall cross them.

Use 2. For exhortation. Let us be exhorted, whatever troubles God exercises us with—to resign up our wills to him, and say, "May your will be done." Which is fittest—that God should bring his will to ours, or we bring our wills to his? Say as Eli, "It is the Lord's

will--let Him do what He thinks best," and as David, "Behold, here am I; let him do to me as seems good unto him." 1 Sam 3:18. 2 Samuel 15:26. It was the saying of Harpulas, "That pleases me—which pleases the king;" so should we say, "that which pleases—God pleases us." "May your will be done." Some have not yet learned this art of submission to God; and truly he who lacks patience in affliction is like a soldier in battle who lacks armor.

When do we not submit to God 's will in affliction as we ought?

(1) When we have hard thoughts of him, and our hearts begin to swell against him.

(2) When we are so troubled at our present affliction that we are unfit for duty. We can mourn as doves—but not pray or praise God. We are so discomposed that we are not fit to hearken to any good counsel. "They hearkened not unto Moses, for anguish of spirit." Exod 6:9. Israel was so full of grief under their burdens, that they

minded not what Moses said, though he came with a message from God to them; "They hearkened not unto Moses, for anguish of spirit."

(3) We do not submit as we ought to God's will when we labor to break loose from affliction by indirect means. Many, to rid themselves out of trouble, run themselves into sin. *When God has bound them with the cords of affliction—they go to the devil to loosen their bands!* Better it is to stay in affliction, than to sin ourselves out of it. O let us learn to stoop to God's will in all afflictive providence.

But how shall we bring ourselves, in all occurrences of providence, patiently to acquiesce in God's will, and say, "May your will be done"?

The MEANS for a quiet resignation to God's will in affliction are:

[1] Judicious consideration. "In the day of adversity *consider*." Eccl 7:14. When anything burdens us, or runs cross to our desires, did we but sit down and consider, and weigh things in the balance of judgment, it would much quiet our minds, and subject our wills to God. Consideration would be as David's harp, to charm down the evil spirit of frowardness and discontent.

But what should we consider?

That which should make us submit to God in affliction, and say, "May your will be done," is:

(1) Consider that the present state of life is subject to afflictions, as a seaman's life is subject to storms. [No one escapes bearing the lot which all suffer.] "Man is born to trouble as

surely as sparks fly upward;" he is heir apparent to it. Man comes into the world with a cry—and goes out with a groan! Job 5:7. The world is a place where much wormwood grows. "He has filled me with bitterness (Heb with bitternesses); he has made me drunken with wormwood." Lam 3:15. Troubles arise like sparks out of a furnace. Afflictions are some of the thorns which the earth after the curse brings forth. We may as well think to stop the chariot of the sun when it is in its swift motion, as put a stop to trouble. The consideration of a life exposed to troubles and sufferings, should make us say with patience, "May your will be done." Shall a mariner be angry that he meets with a storm at sea?

(2) Consider that God has a special hand in the disposal of all occurrences. Job eyed God in his affliction. "The Lord has taken away;" chap 1:21. He did not complain of the Sabeans, or the influences of the planets; he looked beyond all second causes; he saw God in the affliction, and that made him cheerfully submit; he said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Christ looked beyond Judas and Pilate to God's determinate counsel in delivering him up to be crucified, which made him say, "Father, not as *I* will—but as *you* will." Acts 4:27, 28, Matthew 26:39. It is vain to quarrel with instruments. *Wicked men are but a rod in God's hand!* "O Assyria, the rod of my anger." Isaiah 10:5. *Whoever* brings an affliction—*God* sends it! The consideration of this should make us say, "May your will be done;" for what God does he sees a reason for. We read of a wheel within a wheel. Ezek 1:16. The outward wheel, which turns all, is providence; the wheel within this wheel is God's decree; this believed, would rock the heart quiet. Shall we mutiny at that which God does? We may as well quarrel with the works of creation as with the works of providence.

(3) Consider that there is a NECESSITY for affliction. "If need be, you are in heaviness." 1 Peter 1:6. It is needful that some things are kept in *brine*. Afflictions are needful upon several accounts.

[1] To keep us humble. Often there is no other way to have the heart low—but by being brought low. When Manasseh "was in affliction, he humbled himself greatly." 2 Chron 33:12. Corrections are corrosives to eat out the proud flesh. "Remembering my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul is humbled in me." Lam 3:19, 20.

[2] It is necessary that there should be affliction; for if God did not sometimes bring us into affliction, how could his power be seen in bringing us out? Had not Israel been in the Egyptian furnace, God had lost his glory in their deliverance.

[3] If there were no affliction, then many parts of Scripture could not be fulfilled. God has promised to help us to bear affliction. Psalm 37:24, 39. How could we experience his supporting us in trouble—if we did not sometimes meet with it? God has promised to give us joy in affliction. John 16:20. How could we taste this honey of joy—if we were not sometimes in affliction? Again, he has promised to wipe away tears from our eyes. Isaiah 25:8. How could he wipe away our tears in heaven—if we never shed any? So that, in several respects, there is an absolute necessity that we should meet with affliction; and shall not we quietly submit, and say, "Lord, I see there is a necessity for it?" "May your will be done!"

(4) Consider that we have brought our troubles upon ourselves; we have put a rod into God's hand to chastise us. Christian, God lays your afflictive cross on you—but it is of your own making. If a man's field is full of tares, it is what he has sown in it. If

you reap a bitter crop of affliction, it is what you yourself have sown. The cords which pinch you are of your own twisting. If children will eat green fruit—they may blame themselves if they are sick; and if we eat the forbidden fruit, no wonder that we feel it gripe. **Sin is the Trojan horse which lands a multitude of afflictions upon us.** "Your own conduct and actions have brought this upon you. This is your punishment. How bitter it is! How it pierces to the heart!" Jeremiah 4:18. If we by sin run ourselves into arrears with God, no wonder if he sets affliction as a sergeant on our back, to arrest us. This should make us patiently submit to God in affliction, and say, "May your will be done." We have no cause to complain of God; it is nothing but what our sins have merited. "Have not you procured this unto yourself?" Jer 2:17. The afflictive cross, though it be of God's laying, is of our making. Say, then, as Micah (chap 7:9), "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." "Whatever a man sows he will also reap." Galatians 6:7.

(5) Consider that God is about to prove and TEST us. "For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs." Psalm 66:10, 11. If there were no affliction, how could God have an opportunity to try men? Hypocrites can serve in a *pleasure* boat: they can serve God in prosperity; but when we can keep close to him in times of danger, when we can trust him in darkness, and love him when we have no smile, and say, "May your will be done," that is the trial of sincerity! God is only trying us; and what hurt is there in that? What is gold the worse for being tried?

(6) Consider that in all our afflictions, God has kindness for us. As there was no night so dark, but Israel had a pillar of fire to give light—so there is no condition so cloudy, but we may see that which gives light of comfort. David could sing of *mercy* and

judgment. Psalm 101:1. It should make us cheerfully submit to God's will, to consider that in every afflictive path of providence, we may see his footstep of kindness.

There is kindness in affliction, when God seems most unkind.

[1] There is kindness in affliction—in that there is love in it. God's rod and his love may stand together. "Whom the Lord loves, he chastens." Heb 12:6. As when Abraham lifted up his hand to sacrifice, Isaac loved him. Just so, when God afflicts his people, and seems to sacrifice their outward comforts, he loves them. The farmer loves his vine when he cuts it and makes it bleed; and shall not we submit to God? Shall we quarrel with that which has kindness in it, which comes in love? The surgeon binds the patient, and lances him —but no wise man will quarrel with him, because it is in order to a cure.

[2] There is kindness in affliction—in that God deals with us as his children. "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons." Heb 12:7. *God has one Son without sin—but no son without stripes!* Affliction is a badge of adoption. Says Tertullian, "Affliction is God's seal by which he marks us for his own." When Munster, that holy man, lay sick, his friends asked him how he did? He pointed to his sores, saying, "these are the jewels with which God decks his children!" Shall not we then say, "Lord, there is kindness in the cross, you treat us as your children. The rod of discipline is to fit us for the inheritance. May your will be done."

[3] In kindness God in all our afflictions, has left us a promise. So that in the most cloudy providence, the promise appears as the rainbow in the cloud. Then we have God's promise to be with us. "I will be with him in trouble." Psalm 91:15. It cannot be ill with that man with whom God is; I will be with him, to *support*,

sanctify, and *sweeten* every affliction. I had rather be in prison and have God's presence, than be in a palace without it.

We have the promise that he will not lay more upon us than he will enable us to bear. 1 Cor 10:13. He will not try us beyond our strength; either he will make the yoke lighter—or our faith stronger. Should not this make us submit our wills to his, when afflictions have so much kindness in them? In all our trials he has left us promises, which are like manna in the wilderness.

[4] It is great kindness that all troubles that befall us shall be for our profit. "God disciplines us for our profit." Heb 12:10.

What profit is in affliction?

Afflictions are disciplinary, they teach us. They are *the school of the cross*. Many psalms have the inscription, Maschil, a psalm giving instruction. Just so, affliction has the inscription Maschil upon it, an affliction giving instruction. "*Pay attention to the rod* and the One who ordained it." Micah 6:9. Luther says he could never rightly understand some of the psalms until he was in affliction. Gideon "took thorns from the wilderness, and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth." Judges 8:16. God by the thorns and briers of affliction teaches us.

1. Affliction shows us more of our own hearts. Water in a glass looks clear; but set it on the fire, and the scum boils up. Just so, when God sets us upon the fire, corruption boils up which we did not discern before. Sharp afflictions are to the soul as a soaking rain to the houses; we do not know that there are holes in the roof until the shower comes—but then we see it drop down here and there. Just so, we do not know what unmortified lusts are in the soul, until the storm of affliction comes; then we find unbelief, impatience, carnal

fear, dropping down in many places. Affliction is a sacred eye-salve, it clears our eye-sight. The rod gives wisdom.

Affliction brings those sins to remembrance which we had buried in the grave of forgetfulness. Joseph's brethren, for twenty years, were not at all troubled for their sin in selling their brother; but when they came into Egypt, and began to be in straits, their sin came to their remembrance, and their hearts smote them. "They said one to another, we are truly guilty concerning our brother!" Gen 42:21. When a man is in distress, his sin comes fresh into his mind; conscience makes a rehearsal-sermon of all the evils which have passed in his life; his waste of precious time, his slighting of the Word, come to remembrance, and he goes out with Peter and weeps bitterly. Thus the rod gives wisdom, shows the hidden evil of the heart, and brings former sins to remembrance.

2. Affliction quickens the spirit of prayer. [the righteous are afflicted that in their affliction they may pray.] Jonah was asleep in the ship—but at prayer in the whale's belly. Perhaps in a time of health and prosperity we prayed in a cold and formal manner, we put no coals to the incense; we scarcely minded our own prayers, and how should God mind them? God sends some affliction or other to stir us up to take hold of him. When Jacob was in fear of his life by his brother, he wrestled with God, and wept in prayer, and would not leave him until he blessed him. Hos 12:4. It is with many of God's children as with those who formerly had the sweating sickness in this land, it was a sleepy disease, if they slept they died; therefore, to keep them waking, they were smitten with rosemary branches. Just so, the Lord uses affliction as a rosemary branch to keep us from sleeping, and to awaken a spirit of prayer. "They poured out a prayer, when your chastening was upon them;" now their prayer pierced the heavens. p 26:16. In times of trouble we pray feelingly, and we never

pray so fervently as when we pray feelingly; and is not this for our profit?

3. Affliction is a means to purge out our sins. "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged." Isaiah 27:9. Affliction is God's purgative to expel the noxious humor, it cures the pestilence of pride, the fever of lust; and is not this for our profit? Affliction is God's file—to scrub off our rust. Affliction is God's flail—to thresh off our husks. The water of affliction is not to drown us—but to wash off our spots.

4. To be under the black rod is profitable, in that hereby we grow more serious, and are more careful to clear our evidences for heaven. In times of prosperity, when the rock poured out rivers of oil, we were careless in getting, at least clearing, our title to glory. Job 29:6. But when an hour of trouble comes, we begin to look after our spiritual evidences, and see how things stand between God and our souls; and is it not for our profit to see our interest in Christ more clear than ever?

5. Affliction is a means to wean us the world. The world often proves not only a spider's web—but a cockatrice egg. Corrupting worldly things, are great enchantments. They hinder us in our passage to heaven. If a clock be overwound, it stands still; so, when the heart is wound up too much to the world, it stands still to heavenly things. Affliction sounds a retreat to call us off the immoderate pursuit of earthly things. When two things are frozen together, the only way to separate them is by fire; so, when the heart and the world are frozen together, God has no better way to separate them than by the fire of affliction.

6. Affliction is a means to purify us. It works us up to further degrees of sanctity. "God disciplines us for our good—that we may

share in his holiness." Heb 12:10. The vessels of mercy are the brighter for scouring. As you pour water on your linen when you would whiten it—so God pours the waters of affliction upon us to whiten our souls. Afflictions are in themselves bitter—but they bring forth the sweet fruits of righteousness. Heb 12:11. This should make us submit to God and say, "May your will be done."

[5] There is kindness in affliction, in that there is no condition so bad but it might be worse. When it is dusk, it might be darker. God does not make our cross so heavy as he might—he does not stir up all his anger. Psalm 78:38. He does not put so many *nails* in our yoke—so much *wormwood* in our cup—as he might. Does God chastise your body? He might torture your conscience. Does he cut you short? He might cut you off. The Lord might make our chains heavier. Is it a burning fever? It might have been the burning lake! Does God use the pruning *knife* to lop you? He might bring his *axe* to hew you down! "The waters were up to the ankles." Do the waters of affliction come up to the ankles? God might make them rise higher; nay, he might drown you in the waters! God uses the *rod* when he might use the *scorpion*!

[6] There is kindness in affliction, in that your case is not so bad as others, who are always upon the rack, and spend their years with sighing. Psalm 31:10. Have you a gentle illness? Others cry out of the severe pain of cancer. Do you bear the wrath of men? Others bear the wrath of God. You have but a single trial; others have several of them mingled together. God shoots but one arrow at you, he shoots a shower of arrows at others. Is there not kindness in all this? We are apt to say, "never any suffered like we do!" Was it not worse with Lazarus, who was so full of sores that the dogs took pity on him—and licked his sores! Nay, was it not worse with Christ, who lived poor—and died cursed! May not this cause us

to say, "May your will be done"? It is in kindness that God deals not so severely with us as with others.

[7] There is kindness in affliction, in that, if we belong to God, it is all the hell we shall have. Some have two hells. They suffer now in their body and conscience, which is one hell; and they will suffer eternally in another hell to come, in unquenchable fire! Judas had two hells—but a child of God has but one. Lazarus had all his hell here on earth; he was full of sores—but had a convoy of angels to carry him to heaven when he died. Say, then, "Lo! if this be the worst I shall have, if this be all my hell, I will patiently acquiesce. May your will be done."

[8] There is kindness in that God gives gracious supports in affliction. If he strikes with one hand, he supports with the other. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Deut 33:27. There is not the least trial—but if God would desert us, and not assist us with his grace—we would sink under it. Peter was frighted at the voice of a maid. Matthew 26:69. Oh, therefore, what mercy is it to have Christ strengthen us, and as it were, bear the heaviest part of the cross with us! One said, "I have no ravishing joys in my sickness—but I bless God I have sweet supports." Should not this cause submission to God's will, and make us say, "Lo! if you are so kind as to bear us up in affliction, that we do not faint. Put us into whatever wine press you please. May your will be done"?

[9] There is kindness in affliction in that it is preventive. God, by His afflictive stroke--would prevent some sin. Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was to prevent his being lifted up in pride. 2 Cor 12:7. Affliction is sometimes sent for the *punishing* of sin, at other times for the *prevention* of sin. Prosperity exposes to much evil. It is hard to carry a full cup without spilling—and a full estate without sinning.

God's people know not how much they are indebted to their afflictions. They might have fallen into some scandalous sin—had not God set a hedge of *thorns* in their way to stop them. What kindness is this! God lets us fall into sufferings--to prevent falling into sinful snares! Say then, "Lord, do as it seems good in your sight, may Your will be done."

God by affliction, would prevent damnation. We are *corrected* in the world, "that we should not be *condemned* with the world." 1 Cor 11:32. A man, by falling into briers, is saved from falling into the river. Just so, God lets us fall into the *briers of affliction*, that we may not be *drowned in perdition!* It is a great favor when a less punishment is inflicted—to prevent a greater punishment. Is it not mercy in the judge, when he lays some light penalty on the prisoner, and saves his life? So it is, when God lays upon us light affliction, and saves us from wrath to come. As Pilate said, "I will punish him—and let him go." Just so, God punishes his children and lets them go, frees them from eternal torment. What is the drop of sorrow which the godly taste, compared to that sea of wrath the wicked shall be drinking to all eternity? Oh! what kindness is here! Should it not make us say, "May your will be done"?

[10] There is kindness, in that God *mixes* his providence. In anger he remembers mercy. Hab 3:2. Not all pure gall—but some honey mixed with it. Asher's shoes were iron and brass—but his foot was dipped in oil. Deut 33:24, 25. Affliction is the shoe of brass—but God causes the foot to be dipped in oil. As the painter mixes with his dark shadows, bright colors—so the wise God mingles the dark and bright colors, crosses and blessings. The body is afflicted—but within is peace of conscience. Joseph was sold into Egypt, and put into prison; there was the dark side of the cloud. Job lost all that ever he had, his skin was clothed with boils and ulcers; here was a sad

providence. But God gave a testimony from heaven of Job's integrity, and afterwards doubled his estate. "The Lord gave Job twice as much;" here was the goodness of God towards Job. Job 42:10. God *chequers* his works of providence, and shall not we submit and say, "Lord, if you are so kind, *mixing* so many bright colors with my dark condition—may Your will be done."

[11] There is kindness in affliction in that God moderates his stroke. "I will correct you in measure." Jer 30:11. God will stay his *rough* wind. Isaiah 27:8. The physician who understands the crisis and temper of the patient, will not give too strong medicine for the body. Just so, God knows our frame, he will not over-afflict; he will not stretch the strings of the violin too hard, lest they break. And, is there no kindness in all this? Should not this work our hearts to submission? "Lord, if you uses so much gentleness, and correct in measure—may Your will be done."

[12] There is kindness in affliction in that God often sweetens it with divine consolation. "He comforts us in all our troubles." 2 Cor 1:4. After a bitter potion—he gives a lump of sugar.

(1) God comforts in affliction, partly by his **Word**. "This is my comfort in my affliction, for your Word has quickened me." Psalm 119:50. The promises of the Word are a *shop of cordials*.

(2) God comforts in affliction, by his **Spirit**. David had his pilgrimage-songs, and Paul his prison-songs. Psalm 119:54; Acts 16:25. Thus God *candies* our wormwood with sugar, and makes us gather grapes off thorns. Some of the saints have such ravishing joys in affliction, that they had rather endure their sufferings—than lack their comforts. Oh, how much kindness there is in the cross! In the belly of this lion, is a honeycomb. Should it not make us cheerfully

submit to God's will, when he lines the yoke with comfort, and gives us honey at the end of the rod?

[13] There is kindness in affliction in that God curtails and shortens it; he will not let it lie on too long. "I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry, for then the spirit of man would grow faint before me." Isaiah 57:16. God will give his people a writ of ease and proclaim a year of jubilee; the wicked may plough upon the backs of the saints—but God will cut them free from the cords of the wicked. Psalm 129:3, 4. The goldsmith will not let his gold lie any longer in the furnace than until it be purified. **The wicked must drink a sea of wrath—but the godly have only a cup of affliction**, and God will say, "Let this cup pass away." Isaiah 51:17. Affliction may be compared to frost, which will break, and spring-flowers will come on. "Sorrow and sighing shall *flee* away." Isaiah 35:10. Affliction has a *sting*—but with it, a *wing*: sorrow shall fly away. This land-flood shall be dried up. If there is so much kindness in the cross, and God will cause a cessation of trouble, say then, "May your will be done."

[14] There is kindness in affliction—in that it is a means to make us happy. "*Happy* is the man whom God corrects." Job 5:17. It seems strange to flesh and blood that affliction should make us happy. When Moses saw the bush burning and not consumed, he said "I will turn aside and see this strange sight." Exod 3:3. So here is a strange sight—a man afflicted, and yet happy. The world counts them happy who can escape affliction—but happy is the man whom God corrects.

How do afflictions contribute to our happiness?

Afflictions make us happy—as they are a means of bringing us nearer to God. The *loadstone of prosperity* does not draw us so near to God

—as the *cords of affliction*. When the prodigal was pinched with need, he said, "I will arise—and go to my father!" Luke 15:18. As the deluge brought the dove to the ark—the *floods of sorrow* make us hasten to Christ, our ark.

Afflictions make us happy—as they are safe guides to glory. The *storm* drives the ship into the harbor. Blessed storm—which drives the soul into the heavenly harbor! Is it not better to go through momentary affliction to eternal glory, than through momentary pleasure to eternal misery? Not that afflictions merit glory—but they prepare us for it. No cross ever merited—but that which Christ endured. Think, O Christian, what affliction leads to! it leads to paradise, where are rivers of pleasure always running. Should not this make us cheerfully submit to God's will, and say, "Lord, if there is so much kindness in affliction, if all you does is to make us happy, may Your will be done." "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 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." 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

(7) Consider that it is God's ordinary course to keep his people to a bitter drink, and exercise them with great trials. Affliction is the beaten road in which all the saints have gone. The living stones in the spiritual building have been all hewn and polished. Christ's lily has grown among the thorns. "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim 3:12. It is too much for a Christian to have *two heavens*: it is more than Christ had. It has been ever the lot of saints to encounter sore trials. It was of the *prophets*, "Take, my brethren, the prophets for an example of suffering affliction." James 5:10. It was of the *apostles*—for Peter was

crucified with his head downwards, James was beheaded by Herod, John was banished into the isle of Patmos, the apostle Thomas was thrust through with a spear, Matthias (who was chosen apostle in Judas's room) was stoned to death, and Luke, the evangelist, was hanged on an olive-tree. Those saints, of whom the world was not worthy, passed under the rod. Heb 11:38. Christ's kingdom is the *kingdom of the cross*. **Those whom God intends to save from hell—he does not save from the cross.** The consideration of this should quiet our minds in affliction, and make us say, "May your will be done." Do we think God will alter his course of providence for us? Why should we look for exemption from trouble, more than others? Why should we think to tread only upon roses and violets—when prophets and apostles have marched through briars to heaven?

(8) Consider that what God has already done for you, Christian, should make you content to suffer anything at his hand, and say, "May your will be done."

[1] He has adopted you for his child. David thought it no small honor to be the king's son-in-law. 1 Sam 18:18. What an honor is it to derive your pedigree from heaven—to be born of God! Why then are you troubled, and murmur at every slight cross? As Jonadab said to Amnon, "Why are you, the king’s son, so miserable every morning?" 2 Samuel 13:4. Why are you, who are son or daughter to the king of heaven, troubled at these petty things? What! the king's son, and miserable! Let it quiet your spirit and bring your will to God's, that he has dignified you with honor, he has made you his son and heir, and will entail a kingdom on you!

[2] God has given you Christ. Christ is a storehouse of all heavenly treasure! He is the pearl of great price to enrich you! He is a tree of life to quicken you! He is the quintessence of all blessings.

Why then are you discontented at your worldly crosses? They cannot be so bitter—as Christ is sweet. Is not Christ your friend? He can never be poor—who has a mine of gold; nor he be poor—who has the unsearchable riches of Christ. Say then, "Lord, may Your will be done; though I have my cross—yet I have Christ with it. The cross may make me weep—but Christ wipes off all tears!" Rev 7:17.

[3] God has given you grace. Grace is the rich embroidery and workmanship of the Holy Spirit; it is the sacred unction. 1 John 2:27. The graces are a chain of pearl to adorn, and beds of spices which make a sweet fragrance to God. Grace is a distinguishing blessing; Christ gave Judas his purse—but not his Spirit. May not this quiet the heart in affliction, and make it say, "May your will be done! Lord, you have given me that jewel which you bestow only on the elect; grace is the seal of your love, it is both food and cordial, it is a pledge of glory."

(9) Consider that when God intends the greatest mercy to any of his people, he brings them low in affliction. He seems to go quite contrary to sense and reason, for when he intends to raise us highest, he brings us lowest. As Moses' hand, before it wrought miracles, was leprous; and Sarah's womb, before it brought forth the son of promise, was barren. God brings us low before he raises us, as water is at the lowest ebb before there is a spring-tide.

This is true in a **temporal** sense. When God would bring Israel to Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, he first led them through a *sea,* and a *wilderness*. When he intended to advance Joseph to be the second man in the kingdom, he cast him first into prison, and the iron entered into his soul. Psalm 105:18. He usually lets it be darkest, before the morning-star of deliverance appears.

It is true in a **spiritual** sense. When God intends to raise a soul to spiritual comfort, he first lays it low in desertion. Isaiah 12:1. As the painter lays his dark color first, and then lays his gold color on it—so God first lays the soul in the dark of desertion, and afterwards his golden color of joy and consolation. Should not this make us cheerfully submit, and say, "May your will be done"? Perhaps now God afflicts me, he is about to raise me, he intends a greater mercy for me, than I am aware of.

(10) Consider the excellency of this frame of soul—to lie at God's feet and say, "May your will be done."

A soul that is melted into God's will, shows variety of grace. As the holy ointment was made up of several aromatic spices, myrrh, cinnamon, and cassia—so this sweet temper of soul, *submission to God's will in affliction,* has in it a mixture of several graces. Exod 30:23. In particular, it is compounded of three graces, faith, love, humility.

[1] Faith. Faith believes God does all in mercy—that affliction is to mortify some sin, or exercise some grace. Faith believes that God corrects in love and faithfulness. Psalm 119:75. The belief of this, causes submission of will to God.

[2] Love. Love thinks no evil. 1 Cor 13:5. It takes all that God does, in the best sense; it has good thoughts of God—which causes submission. "Let the righteous God smite me," says love, "it shall be a kindness; yes, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head!"

[3] Humility. The humble soul looks on its sins, and how much he has provoked God. He does not say that his *afflictions* are great—but his *sins* are great. He lies low at God's feet and says, "I will bear the

indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him." Micah 7:9.

Thus a submissive frame of heart is full of grace; it is compounded of several graces. God is pleased to see so many graces at once sweetly exercised; he says of such a Christian, as David of Goliath's sword, "There's none like it! Give it to me." 1 Sam 21:9.

He who submits to God's will, and says, "May your will be done," shows not only *variety* of grace—but *strength* of grace. It argues much strength in the body, to be able to endure hard weather—yet not to be altered by it. Just so, to endure hard trials—yet not faint or fret, shows more than ordinary strength of grace. You who can say that you have brought your wills into subjection to God's will—that God's will and yours agree, as the copy and the original—let me assure you, you have outstripped many Christians who perhaps shine in a higher sphere of knowledge than you. To be content to be at God's disposal, to be anything that God will have us, shows a noble, heroic soul.

It is reported of the eagle that it is not like other birds, which, when they are hungry, cry for food—but it is never heard to make a noise, though it lacks food, because of the nobleness and greatness of its spirit; it is above other birds, and has a spirit suitable to its nature. Just so, it is a proof of great magnitude of spirit, that whatever cross providence befall a Christian, he does not cry and whine as others—but is silent, and lies quietly at God's feet. There is *much* strength of grace in such a soul, nay—the *height* of grace! When grace is *crowning*, it is not so much to say, "Lord, your will be done;" but when grace is *conflicting*, and meets with crosses and trials, then to say, "May your will be done," is a glorious thing indeed, and prepares for the garland of honor.

(11) Consider that people are usually better in adversity than prosperity; therefore stoop to God's will. A prosperous condition is not always so safe. True it is more pleasing to the flesh—but it is not always best. In a prosperous state there is more burden. Many look at the *shining* and *glittering* of prosperity—but not at the *burdens* of prosperity.

[1] There is the burden of CARE. Therefore God calls riches "cares." Luke 8:14. A rose has its prickles—so have riches. We think them happy, who flourish in their silks and gold—but we do not see the troubles and cares which attend them. A shoe may have silver lace on it—yet pinch the foot. Many a man who goes to his day-labor, lives a more contented life than he who has millions. Disquieting care is the evil spirit which haunts the rich man. When his chests are full of gold, his heart is full of care how to *increase* them, or how to *secure* what he has gotten. He is sometimes full of care, as to whom he shall leave it. A large estate, like a long, trailing garment—is often more troublesome than useful.

[2] In a prosperous estate there is the burden of ACCOUNT. Such as are in high places, have a far greater account to give to God than others. "Unto whom much is given—of him shall be much required." Luke 12:48. The more golden talents any are entrusted with—the more they have to answer for. The more their revenues—the more their reckonings. God will say, "I gave you a great estate, what have you done with it? How have you employed it for my glory?" I have read of Philip, king of Spain, that when he was about to die, said, "O that I had never been a king! O that I had lived a private, solitary life! Here is all the fruit of my kingdom, it has made my accounts heavier!" So, then, may not this quiet our hearts in a low, adverse condition, and make us say, "Lord, may your will be

done! As you have given me a less portion of worldly things—so I have a less burden of care, and a less burden of account."

[3] A prosperous condition has more DANGER in it. Such as are on the top of the pinnacle of honor, are in more danger of falling. They are subject to many temptations. Their table is often a snare. Millions are drowned in the sweet waters of pleasure. A large sail overturns the vessel: how many, by having too large sails of prosperity, have had their souls overturned! It must be a strong head, which can bear heady wine. Likewise, he has need have much wisdom and grace, who knows how to wisely bear a high condition. It is hard to carry a full cup without spilling—and a full estate without sinning!

Augur feared if he were full, he would deny God, "Give me neither poverty nor riches! Give me just enough to satisfy my needs. For if I grow rich, I may deny you and say—Who is the Lord?" Proverbs 30:9. *Prosperity breeds pride.* The children of Korah were in a higher estate than the rest of the Levites: they were employed in the tabernacle about the most holy things of all. They had the first lot; but as they were lifted up above others of the Levites in honor—so in pride. Numb 4:4; Josh 21:10; Numb 16:3. When the tide rises higher in the river, the boat rises higher; so, when the tide of an estate rises higher, many men's hearts rise higher in pride. Prosperity breeds carnal security. Samson fell asleep in Delilah's lap—so do men in the lap of ease and plenty. The world's golden sands, are quicksands. "How hard it is for rich people to get into the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!" Luke 18:24-25. The consideration of this should make us submit to God in adversity, and say, "May your will be done." God sees what is best for us. If we have

less estate, we are in less danger; if we lack the honors of others—so we lack their temptations.

(12) Consider that, having our wills melted into God's is a good sign that the present affliction is sanctified. Affliction is sanctified when it attains the end for which it was sent. The end why God sends affliction, is to calm the spirit, to subdue the will, and bring it into subjection to God's will. When this is done, affliction has attained the end for which it came; it is sanctified, and it will not be long before it be removed. When the sore is healed, the smarting plaster is taken off.

(13) Consider how UNWORTHY it is of a Christian—to be froward and unsubmissive, and not bring his will into subjection to God's will.

[1] To be of a froward unsubmissive spirit, which cannot surrender its will unto God—is below the SPIRIT of a Christian. The spirit of a Christian is dovelike, meek, and sedate, willing to be at God's disposal. "Not my will—but may yours be done." Luke 22:42. A Christian spirit is not fretful—but humble; not craving—but contented. See the picture of a Christian spirit in Paul. "I know how to be abased, and how to abound." Phil 4:12. He could be either higher or lower—as *God* saw good; he could sail with any wind of providence, either a prosperous or boisterous gale; his will was melted into God's will. To be of a froward unsubmissive frame—is like the bird that, because it is pent up and cannot fly in the open air—beats itself against the cage.

[2] A froward unsubmissive frame, which cannot submit to God's will—is unworthy of a Christian's PROFESSION. He professes to live by faith—yet repines at his condition. Faith lives not by bread alone; it feeds on promises, it makes future glory present; it

sees all in God. When the fig-tree does not blossom, faith can rejoice in the God of its salvation. Hab 3:17, 18. To be troubled at our present estate, because low and poor, shows weak faith. Surely that is a weak faith, or no faith—which must have crutches to support it. Oh, be ashamed to call yourself believer—if you cannot trust God, and acquiesce in his will, in the deficiency of outward comforts.

[3] To be of a froward unsubmissive spirit, which cannot surrender its will unto God—is unworthy of the high DIGNITIES which God has put upon a Christian. He is a rich heir; he is exalted above all creatures that God ever made, except the angels; yes, in some sense, as his nature is joined in union to the divine nature, he is above the angels. Oh! then, how is he below his dignity—for lack of a few earthly comforts—to be froward, and ready to quarrel with the Deity! Is it not unworthy of a king's son, because he may not pluck such a *flower*—to be discontented and rebel against his royal father? A Christian is espoused to Jesus Christ. What! to be married to Christ—yet froward and unsubmissive! Have not you enough in him? as Elkanah said to Hannah, "Am not I better than ten sons?" 1 Sam 1:8. Is not Christ better than a thousand worldly comforts? It is a disparagement to Christ, that his spouse should be froward, when she is matched to the crown of heaven!

[4] To be of a froward unsubmissive spirit—is unsuitable to the PRAYERS of a Christian. He prays, "May your will be done." It is the will of God—that should he meet with such troubles, whether sickness, loss of estate, crosses in children—that God has decreed and ordered it; why then is there not submission? Why are we discontented at that for which we pray? We often forget our prayers, nay, contradict them, when we pray "May your will be done." Now, if unsubmissiveness to God is so unworthy of a Christian, should we

not labor to bring our wills to God's, and say, "Lord, let me not disparage religion, let me do nothing unworthy of a Christian?"

(14) Consider that frowardness or unsubmissiveness to God—is very SINFUL.

[1] Quarrelsomeness or unsubmissiveness to God's will—is sinful in its NATURE. To murmur when God crosses our will, shows much ungodliness. The apostle Jude speaks of ungodly ones; and that we may better know who these are, he sets a mark upon them: "These are *murmurers*;" ver 15, 16. Some think they are not so ungodly as others, because they do not swear, nor get drunk—but they may be ungodly in murmuring. There are not only ungodly *drunkards*—but ungodly *murmurers*. Nay, this is the height of ungodliness, it is rebellion. To be a murmurer, and a rebel, is, in God's account, all one. "This is the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel strove with the Lord." Num 20:13. How did they strive with God? They murmured at his providence; ver 3. What! will you be a rebel against God? It is a shame for a servant to strive with his *master*—but what is it for a creature to strive with its *Maker*.

[2] To quarrel with God's providence, and be unsubmissive to his will—is sinful in the spring and CAUSE; it arises from pride. It was Satan's temptation, "you shall be as gods." Gen 3:5. A proud person makes a god of himself, he disdains to have his will crossed; he thinks himself better than others, therefore he finds fault with God's wisdom, that he is not above others.

[3] Quarrelsomeness or unsubmissiveness to God's will—is sinful in the ATTENDANTS of it. It is joined with sinful risings of the heart. Evil thoughts arise. We think hard thoughts of God, as if he had done us wrong, or, as if we had deserved better at his hands. Passions begin to rise; the heart secretly frets against God. Jonah

was crossed in his will, and passion began to boil in him. "He was very angry." Jonah 4:1. Jonah's spirit, as well as the sea, was tempestuous. Unsubmissiveness of will, is joined with unthankfulness. Because in some one thing we are afflicted—we forget all the mercies we have. We deal with God just as the widow of Sarepta did with the prophet; the prophet Elijah had been a means to keep her alive in the famine—but as soon as her child died, she quarreled with the prophet, "O you man of God, have you come to kill my son?" 1 Kings 17:18. So, we can be content to receive *blessings* at the hand of God; but as soon as in the least thing he crosses us in our will, we grow touchy, and are ready in a passion to fly out against him.

[4] Frowardness and unsubmissiveness to God's will—is evil in the EFFECTS. It unfits for *duty*. It is bad sailing in a *storm*, and it is bad *praying* when the heart is stormy and unquiet; it is well if such prayers do not suffer shipwreck. Unsubmissiveness of spirit, sometimes unfits for the use of *reason*. Jonah was discontented because he had not his will; God withered the gourd, and his heart fretted against him; and in the midst of his passion, he spoke no better than nonsense and blasphemy. "I do well to be angry, even unto death!" Jonah 4:9. Surely he did not know well what he said! What! to be angry with God—and die for anger! He speaks as if he had lost the use of his reason! Thus unsubmissiveness of will is sinful in its nature, causes, attendants, and effects. Should not this martyr our wills, and bring them to God in everything, making us say, "May your will be done!"

(15) Consider that unsubmissiveness to God's will, is very IMPRUDENT. We get nothing by it, it does not ease us of our burden—but rather makes it heavier. The more the child struggles with the parent—the more it is beaten; so, when we struggle with

God, and will not submit to his will—we get nothing but more blows. Instead of having the cords of affliction loosened, we make God tie them tighter. Let us then submit, and say, "Lord, may your will be done." Why should I lengthen out my own trouble by impatience, and make my cross heavier? What did Israel get by their frowardness? They were within eleven days' journey of Canaan, and fell into murmuring, and God led them a march of forty years longer in the wilderness!

(16) Consider that being unsubmissive to God's will in affliction, lays a man open to many TEMPTATIONS. Where the heart frets against God by discontent—there is good fishing for Satan in those troubled waters. He usually puts discontented people upon indirect means. Job's wife fretted (so far was she from holy submission) and she tempted her husband to curse God. "Curse God, and die." Job 2:9. What is the reason why some have given themselves to the devil—but out of envy and discontent, because they have not had their will! Others being under a temptation of poverty, and not having their wills in living at such a high rate as others, have laid violent hands upon themselves. Oh, the temptations that men of discontented spirits are exposed to! "Here," says Satan, "is good fishing for me!"

(17) Consider how far unsubmissiveness of spirit is, from that temper of soul which God requires in affliction! He would have us in patience possess our souls. Luke 21:19, The Greek word for *patience* signifies to bear up under a burden without fainting or fretting. But is frowardness in affliction, and quarreling with God's will, Christian patience? God would have us rejoice in affliction. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds;" that is, count it joy, be as birds that sing in winter. James 1:2. "Having received the Word in much affliction,

with joy." 1 Thess 1:6. Paul could leap in his fetters, and sing in the stocks. Acts 16:25. How far is a discontented soul from this frame! He is far from rejoicing in affliction—who has not learned to submit to God in affliction.

(18) Consider what it is, which makes the difference between a godly man and an ungodly man in affliction. The godly man submits to God's will, the ungodly man will not submit. A wicked man frets and fumes, and is like a wild bull in a net. In affliction he blasphemes God. "Men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God." Rev 16:9. Put a stone in the fire, and it flies in your face. Just so, stony hearts fly in God's face. The more a rotten substance is rubbed, the more it frets and tears. When God afflicts the sinner, he tears himself in anger. But a godly man is sweetly submissive to his will. His language is, "Shall not I drink the cup which my Father has given me?" *Spices* when bruised, send out a sweet fragrant smell; so, when God bruises his saints, they send out the sweet perfume of patience. Servulus, a holy man, was long afflicted with the palsy—yet his ordinary speech was "let God be praised!" Oh, let us say, "May your will be done;" let us bear that patiently, which God inflicts justly—or how do we show our grace? What difference is there between us and the wicked in affliction?

(19) Consider that not to submit to God's providential will—is highly PROVOKING to him. Can we anger God more—than by quarreling with him? Kings dislike to have their wills opposed, though they may be unjust. How ill does God take it, when we will be disputing against his righteous will? It is a sin which he cannot bear! "How long must I endure this evil community that keeps complaining about Me?" Numb 14:27. May not God justly say, "How long shall I bear with this wicked person, who, when anything falls out cross, murmurs against me?" "As surely as I live, you will all die

here in this wilderness! Because you complained against me!" ver 28-29. You see how provoking a discontented quarrelsome spirit is to God; it may cost men their lives, nay, their souls. God sent fiery serpents among the people for their murmuring. 1 Cor 10:10. He may send worse than fiery serpents, he may send hell fire!

(20) Consider how much God bears at our hand—and shall not we be content to bear something at his hand? It would tire the patience of angels—to bear with us for one day! "The Lord is patient with you." 2 Peter 3:9. How often we offend in our *eye* by envious impure glances, and in our *tongues* by rash censuring—but God passes by many injuries, and bears with us! Should the Lord punish us every time we offend, he would draw his sword every day. Shall he bear so much at our hands—and can we bear with nothing at his hand? Shall he be patient with us—and we impatient with him? Shall he be meek—and we murmur? Shall he endure our *sins*—and shall not we endure his *strokes*? Oh, let us say, "May your will be done. Lord, you have been the greatest sufferer—you have borne more from me, than I have from you."

(21) Consider that submitting our wills to God in affliction disappoints Satan of his hope, and quite spoils his design. The devil's end in all our afflictions—is to make us sin. The reason why Satan smote Job in his body and estate—was to perplex his mind, and put him into a passion; he hoped that Job would have been discontented, and in a fit of anger, not only have cursed his birthday—but cursed his God. But Job, lying at God's feet, and blessing him in affliction, disappointed Satan of his hope, and quite spoiled his plot. Had Job murmured, he had pleased Satan; had he fallen into a heat, and sparks of his anger had flown about—the devil would have warmed himself at the fire of Job's passion; but Job quietly submitted, and blessed God. Thus Satan's design was

frustrated, and he missed his design. The devil has often deceived us; the best way to deceive him is by quiet submission to God in all things, saying, "May your will be done."

(22) Consider that to the godly, the nature of affliction is quite changed. To a wicked man, affliction is a curse, the rod is turned into a serpent; affliction to him is but a sign of God's displeasure, the beginning of sorrow. But the nature of affliction is quite changed to a believer; it is by divine chemistry turned into a blessing! It is like poison corrected, which becomes a medicine; it is a love token, a badge of adoption, a preparation for glory. Should not this make us say, "May your will be done"? The poison of the affliction is gone; it is not hurtful—but healing. This has made the saints not only patient in affliction—but send forth thankfulness. When *bells* have been cast into the fire, they afterwards make a sweeter sound. Just so, the godly, after they have been cast into the fire of affliction, sound forth God's praise. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Psalm 119:71. "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1:21.

(23) Consider how many good things we receive from God, and shall we not be content to receive some bad things? "Shall we receive good at the hand of God—and shall we not receive evil?" Job 2:10. This may make us say, "May your will be done." How many blessings have we received at the hand of God's bounty? We have been bemiracled with mercy. What sparing, preventing, delivering mercies have we had! The honeycomb of mercy has continually dropped upon us. His mercies "are new every morning." Lam 3:23. Mercy comes in as constantly as the tide; nay, how many *tides* of mercies do we see in one day. We never *feed*—but mercy carves every bite to us! We never *drink*—but in the golden cup of mercy! We never go abroad—but mercy sets a guard of angels about

us! We never lie down in bed—but mercy draws the curtains of protection close around us! Shall we receive so many good things at the hand of God—and shall we not receive evil? Our mercies far outweigh our afflictions—for one affliction we have a thousand mercies. O then, let us submit to God, and say, "May your will be done." The *sea* of God's mercy, should swallow up a few *drops* of affliction.

(24) Consider that the conformity of our wills to God in affliction, brings much honor to the gospel. An unsubmissive professor reproaches religion, as if it were not able to subdue an unruly spirit. It is weak medicine, which cannot purge out ill humours; and surely it is a weak gospel, if it cannot master our discontent, and martyr our wills. Unsubmissiveness is a reproach to the gospel—but a cheerful resignation of our will to God, sets a crown of honor upon the head of religion; it shows the power of the gospel —which can charm down the passions, and melt the will into God's will; therefore in Scripture, submissive patience is brought in as an adorning grace. "Here is the patience of the saints." Rev 14:12.

(25) Consider the example of our Lord Jesus—how submissive and acquiescent was he to his Father! He who taught us this prayer, "May your will be done," had learned it himself. Christ's will was perfectly tuned to his Father's will; it was the will of his Father that he should die for our sins, and he "endured the cross." Heb 12:2. It was a painful, shameful, cursed death; he suffered the very pains of hell equivalently—yet he willingly submitted. "He opened not his mouth;" he opened his *side* when the blood ran out—but he opened not his *mouth* in repining; his will was resolved into the will of his Father. Isaiah 53:7. "The cup which my Father has given me—shall I not drink it?" John 18:11. Now, the more our wills are subject to God's will in affliction—the nearer we

come to Christ our pattern. Is it not our prayer that we may be like Christ? By holy submission we imitate him; his will was melted into his Father's will.

(26) Consider that to submit our wills to God—is the way to have our own will. Everyone would be glad to have his will. The way to have our will—is to resign it to God. God deals with us as we do with froward children, while we fret and quarrel, he will give us nothing. But when we are submissive, and say, "May your will be done," he carves out mercy to us. The way to have our will is to submit to his. David brought his will to God's. "Here am I—let him do to me as seems good unto him." 2 Samuel 15:26. After he resigned his will, he had his will. God brought him back to the ark and settled him again on his throne. 2 Samuel 19. Many a parent who has had a dear child sick—when he could bring his will to part with it, has had his child restored. Nothing is lost by referring our will to God; the Lord takes it kindly from us, and it is the only way to have our will.

(27) Consider that we may the more cheerfully surrender our souls to God when we die—when we have surrendered our will to God while we live. Our blessed Savior had all along submitted his will to God. There was but one will between God the Father and Christ. Christ in his lifetime having given up his will to his Father, at death cheerfully gave up his soul to him. "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Luke 23:46. You who resign up your *wills* to God—may at the hour of death comfortably bequeath your *souls* to him.

[2] The second means to bring our will to God in affliction —is to study his WILL.

(1) God's will is SOVEREIGN. He has a supreme right and dominion over his creatures—to dispose of them as he pleases. A man may do with his own as he desires. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?" Matthew 20:15. A man may cut his own timber as he will. God's sovereignty may cause submission; he may do with us as he sees good. He is not accountable to any creature for what he does. "He gives not account of any of his matters." Job 33:13. Who shall call God to account? Who is higher than the highest? Eccl 5:8. What man or angel dare summon God to his bar? "He gives no account of any of his matters." God will take an account of our conduct towards him—but he will give no account of his conduct towards us. He has an absolute jurisdiction over us, as a sovereign—to do with us whatever he pleases. This may silence all discontents, and charm down all unruly passions. We are not to *dispute* with God—but to *submit* to God.

(2) God's will is WISE. He knows what is conducive to the good of his people, therefore submit. "The Lord is a God of judgment," that is, he is able to judge what is best for us; therefore rest in his wisdom and acquiesce in his will. Isaiah 30:18. We rest in the wisdom of a physician; we are content to follow his counsel, because he knows what is most conducive to our health. If the pilot is skillful, the passenger says, "Let him alone; he knows best how to steer the ship." Shall we not rest in God's wisdom? Did we but study how wisely he steers all occurrences, and how he often brings us to heaven by a cross wind, it would much quiet our spirits, and make us say, "May your will be done." God's will is guided by wisdom. Should he sometimes let us have our will—we would undo ourselves! Did he let us carve for ourselves—we would choose the worst piece. Lot chose Sodom because it was well watered—but God rained fire upon it. Gen 13:10; Gen 19:24.

(3) God's will is JUST. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Gen 18:25. God's will is the rule and measure of justice. The wills of men are corrupt, therefore unfit to give law; but God's will is a holy and unerring will, which may cause submission. Psalm 97:2. God may cross us—but he cannot wrong us. He may bbe severe with us—but never unjust. Therefore we must strike sail, and say, "May your will be done."

(4) God's will is GOOD and GRACIOUS. It promotes our interest: if it is his will to afflict us, he shall make us say at last, "it was good for us, that we were afflicted." His flail shall only thresh off our husks. That which is against our will, shall not be against our profit. Let us study what a good will God's is, and we shall say, "May your will be done."

(5) God's will is IRRESISTIBLE. We may oppose it—but we cannot hinder it. The rising up of our will against God—cannot stop the execution of his will. "Who has resisted his will?" Romans 9:19. Who can stop the sun in its movements? Who can hinder the progress of God's will? Therefore it is in vain to contest with God. His will shall take place! There is no way to overcome him, but by lying at his feet.

[3] Another means to submission to God in affliction—is to get a gracious heart. All the rules and helps in the world will do but little good—until grace is infused. Until God puts a new bias of grace into the soul, which inclines the will—it never submits to him. Grace renews the will, and it must be *renewed* before it be *subdued*. Grace teaches self-denial, and we can never submit our will until we deny it.

[4] A fourth means to submission to God in affliction—is to labor to have our covenant interest cleared—to know that

God is our God. "This God is our God." Psalm 48:14. He whose faith flourishes in assurance, who can say that God is his, will say, "May your will be done." A wicked man may say, "God has laid this affliction upon me—and I cannot help it!" But a believer says, "My God has done it—and I will submit!" He who can call God his, knows God loves him as he loves Christ, and designs his salvation; therefore he will, with Paul, take pleasure in reproaches. 2 Cor 12:10. In every adverse providence, yield to God, as the wax to the impression of the seal.

[5] Another means to submission to God in affliction—is to get a humble spirit. A proud man will never stoop to God; he will rather break than bend; but when the heart is humble, the will is pliable. What a vast difference was there between Pharaoh and Eli! Pharaoh cried out, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" Exod 5:2. But Eli said, "It is the Lord, let him do what seems him good to him." 1 Sam 3:18. See the difference between a heart that is swelled with pride—and that which is ballasted with humility! Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord?" Eli, "It is the Lord." A humble soul has a deep sense of sin, he sees how he has provoked God, he wonders that he is not in hell; therefore, whatever God inflicts—he knows it is less than his iniquities deserve, which makes him say, "Lord, may your will be done." O, get into a humble posture. The *will* is never flexible—until the *heart* is humble.

[6] Another means to submission to God in affliction—is to get your hearts loosened from things below. Be crucified to the world. Children are very froward—when you take away their playthings. When we love the things of the world, and God takes them away from us, we grow froward and unsubmissive to his will. Jonah was exceedingly glad for the gourd; but when God smote it, he grew froward, and because God had killed his gourd. He said, "Kill

me too!" Jonah 4:8. He who is a lover of the world, can never pray this prayer heartily: "May your will be done;" his heart boils with anger against God; and when the world is gone, his patience is gone too. Get mortified affections to these sublunary things.

[7] Another means to submission to God in affliction—is to get some good persuasion that your sin is pardoned. "Lord, smite where you will," said Luther, "because my sins are pardoned." *Pardon of sin* is a crowning blessing. Has God forgiven my sin? Then I will bear anything! I will not murmur but admire! I will not complain of the burden of affliction—but bless God for removing the burden of sin. The pardoned soul says this prayer heartily, "May your will be done." Lord, use your pruning-knife—so long as you do not come with your bloody axe to hew me down to hell!

[8] Another means to submission to God in affliction—is to look more on the light side of the cloud. That is, let us not look so much on the *smart* of affliction—as the *good* of affliction. It is bad to pore all on the smart, as it is bad for sore eyes to look too much on the fire; but we should look on the *good* of affliction. Samson not only looked on the lion's carcass—but on the *honeycomb* within it. "He turned aside to see the carcass of the lion, and behold, there was honey in the carcass!" Judges 14:8. Affliction is the frightful lion—but see what honey there is in it! It humbles, purifies, fills us with the consolations of God—there is honey in the belly of the lion! Could we but look upon the benefit of affliction, stubbornness would be turned into submissiveness, and we would say, "May your will be done."

[9] Another means to submission to God in affliction—is to pray to God that he would calm our spirits and conquer our wills. It is no easy thing to submit to God in affliction. There will be risings of the heart; therefore let us pray that what God inflicts

righteously, we may bear patiently. Prayer is the best *charm* against impatience. It does to the heart what Christ did to the sea when it was tempestuous; he rebuked the wind, and there was a great calm. So, when passions are up, and the will is apt to mutiny against God, prayer makes a gracious calm in the soul. Prayer cools the soul—when it is hot in passion.

[10] Another means to submission to God in affliction—is to put a good interpretation upon God's dealings, and take all he does in the best sense. We are apt to misconstrue God's dealings, and put a bad interpretation upon them, as Israel did. "Why have you brought the Lord's assembly into this wilderness for us and our livestock to die here?" Numb 20:4. When God has brought affliction upon us, we say, "It is because he hates us, and intends to destroy us!" And such hard thoughts of God cause sullenness and stubbornness. Oh, let us make a fair and honest interpretation of providence. Does God afflict us? Say, "Perhaps it is because he intends us mercy in this. Perhaps it is because he will try us whether we will love him in afflictions. Perhaps it is because he is about to mortify some sin, or exercise some grace. Perhaps he smites the body, that he may save the soul." Could we put such a good meaning upon God's dealings, we would say, "May your will be done."

[11] The last means, if you would submit to God in affliction—is to believe that the present condition is best for you. We are not competent judges. We imagine that it is best to have ease and plenty, and have the rock pour out rivers of oil; but God sees affliction to be best. He sees our souls thrive best upon the scanty fare. The fall of the leaf, is the spring of our grace. Could we believe that condition to be best which God carves out to us—the quarrel

would soon be at an end—and we would sit down satisfied with what he does, and say, "May your will be done!"

The Fourth Petition in the Lord's Prayer

"Give us this day our daily bread." Matthew 6:11

In this petition there are two things observable—the **order**, and the **matter**.

I. The ORDER of the prayer. First, we pray, "Hallowed be your name, may your kingdom come, may your will be done," before we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." God's glory ought to weigh down all before it; it must be preferred before our dearest concerns. Christ preferred his Father's glory before his own as he was man. "I honor my Father, I seek not my own glory." John 8:49, 50. God's glory is that which is most dear to him; it is the apple of his eye; all his riches lie here. As Micah said, "What more have I" (Judges 18:24)—so I may say of God's glory, what more has he? His glory is the most orient pearl of his crown—which he will not part with. "My glory I will not give to another." Isaiah 42:8. God's glory is more worth than heaven, more worth than the salvation of all men's souls. It is better that kingdoms be demolished, better men and angels be annihilated—than God lose any part of his glory!

We are to prefer God's glory before our nearest concerns. But before we prefer God's glory to our private concerns—we must be born again. The natural man seeks his own personal interest before God's

glory. He is "of the earth, earthly." John 3:31. Let him have peace and trading, let the rock pour out rivers of oil—and let God's glory go which way it will, he minds it not. A worm cannot fly and sing as a lark. Just so, a natural man, whose heart creeps upon the earth, cannot admire God, or advance his glory, as a man elevated by grace does.

Use. For trial. Do we prefer God's glory before our private concerns?

(1) We must prefer God's glory before our own REPUTATION. Reputation is a highly valued jewel; like precious ointment, it casts a fragrant smell. But God's glory must be dearer than credit or applause. We must be willing to have our reputation trampled upon, that God's glory may be raised higher. The apostles rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name;" that they were graced, so far as to be disgraced for Christ. Acts 5:41.

(2) We must prefer God's glory before our RELATIONS. Relations are dear, they are of our own flesh and bones; but God's glory must be dearer. "If any man comes to me, and hates not his father and mother—he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:26. Here hatred towards one's own kin is devotion towards God. "If my friends," says Jerome, "should persuade me to deny Christ, if my wife should hang about my neck, I would trample upon all and flee to Christ."

(3) We must prefer God's glory before ESTATE. Gold is but *shining dust*. God's glory must weigh heavier. If it comes to this—I cannot keep my place of profit, but God's glory will be eclipsed—I must rather suffer in my estate than God's glory should suffer. Heb 10:34.

(4) We must prefer God's glory before our LIFE. "They loved not their lives unto the death." Rev 12:2. Ignatius called his fetters his *spiritual jewels*; he wore them as a chain of pearl. Gordius the martyr, said, "It is to my loss, if you bate me anything of my sufferings." This argues grace to be growing and elevated in a high degree. Who but a soul inflamed with love to God—can set God highest on the throne, and prefer him above all private concerns?

II. The MATTER of the petition. "Give us this day our daily bread." The sum of this petition is, that God would give us such a competency in outward things, as he sees most excellent for us. It is much like that prayer of Augur, "Feed me with necessary food;" give me enough until I come to heaven, and it suffices. Proverbs 30:8.

Let me explain the words.

[1] "**Give** us this day our daily bread." The good things of this life are the gifts of God; he is the donor of all our blessings. "Give us." Not *faith* only—but *food* is the gift of God; not daily *grace* only is from God—but "daily *bread*." Every good thing comes from God. "Every good gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights." James 1:17. *Wisdom* is the gift of God. "His God instructs him to discretion." Isaiah 28:26. *Riches* are the gift of God. "I will give you riches." 2 Chron 1:12. *Peace* is the gift of God. "He makes peace in your borders." Psalm 147:14. *Health*, which is the cream of life, is the gift of God. "I will restore health unto you." Jer 30:17. *Rain* is the gift of God. "Who gives rain upon the earth." Job 5:10. All comes from God; he makes the grain to grow, and the herbs to flourish.

(1) See our own poverty and indigence. We all live upon alms and upon free gifts—"Give us this day our daily bread." All we have is from the hand of God's royal bounty; we have nothing but what he gives us out of his storehouse. We cannot have one bit of bread but

from God. The devil persuaded our first parents, that by disobeying God, they should "be as gods;" but we may now see what goodly gods we are, that we have not a bit of bread to put in our mouths unless God give it us. Gen 3:5. That is a humbling consideration.

(2) Is all a gift? Then we are to seek every mercy from God by prayer. "Give us this day." The tree of mercy will not drop its fruit unless shaken by the hand of prayer. Whatever we have, if it does not come in the way of prayer, it does not come in the way of love; it is given, as Israel's quails, in anger. If everything is a *gift*, we do not deserve it, we are not fit for this alms. And must we go to God for every mercy? How wicked are they, who, instead of going to God for food when they want, go to the devil, and make a compact with him; and if he will help them to a livelihood, they will give him their souls! Better starve than go to the devil for provision.

(3) If all be a gift, then it is not a debt, and we cannot say to God as that creditor who said, "Pay me what you owe." Matthew 18:28. Who can make God a debtor, or do any act that is obliging and meritorious? Whatever we receive from God is a gift; we can give nothing to him but what he has given to us. "All things come of you, and of your own have we given you." 1 Chron 29:14. David and his people offered to the building of God's house gold and silver—but they offered nothing but what God had given them. "Of your own have we given you." If we love God, it is he who has given us a heart to love him; if we praise him, he both gives us the organ of tongue, and puts it in tune; if we give alms to others, he has given alms to us first—so that we may say, "We offer, O Lord, of your own to you." Is all of gift, how absurd, then, is the doctrine of salvation by merit? That was a proud speech of the friar, who said, "give me, Lord eternal life, which you owe me." We cannot deserve a bit of bread, much less

a crown of glory. If all is a gift, then merit is exploded, and shut out of doors.

(4) If all is a gift—then take notice of God's goodness. There is nothing in us that can deserve or requite God's kindness; yet such is the sweetness of his nature, that he gives us rich provision, and feeds us with the finest of the wheat. Pindar says it was an opinion of the people of Rhodes that Jupiter rained down gold upon the city. God has rained down golden mercies upon us; he is upon the giving hand. Observe three things in his giving:

[1] He is never weary of giving. The springs of his mercy are ever running. He not only dispensed blessings in former ages—but he gives gifts to us; as the sun not only enriches the world with its morning light—but keeps light for the meridian. The honeycomb of God's bounty is still dropping.

[2] He delights in giving. "He delights in mercy." Mic 7:18. As the mother delights to give the child the breast, God loves that we should have the breast of mercy in our mouth.

[3] God gives to his very enemies. Who will send in provisions to his enemies? Men spread *nets* for their enemies, God spreads a *table*. The dew drops on the thistle, as well as the rose; the dew of God's bounty drops upon the worst. God puts bread in the mouths that are opened against him. Oh, the royal bounty of God! "The goodness of God endures continually." Psalm 52:1. He puts jewels upon swinish sinners, and feeds them every day.

(5) If all is a gift, see the odious ingratitude of men who sin against their giver! God *feeds* them, and they *fight* against him; he gives them *bread*, and they give him *affronts*. How vile is this! Should we not cry shame on him who had a friend always feeding

him with money, and yet he should betray and injure him? Thus ungratefully do sinners deal with God; they not only *forget* his mercies—but *abuse* them. "When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery." Jer 5:7. Oh, how horrid is it to sin against a bountiful God—to bite the hand that feeds us! How many make a dart of God's mercies—and shoot at him! He gives them wit, and they serve the devil with it; he gives them strength, and they waste it among harlots; he gives them bread to eat, and they lift up the heel against him. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." Deut 32:15. They are like Absalom, who, as soon as David his father kissed him, plotted treason against him. 2 Samuel 15:10. They are like the mule who kicks the mother after she has given it milk. Those who sin against their giver, and abuse God's royal favors—the mercies of God will come in as witnesses against them. What smoother than oil? But if it is heated, what more scalding? What sweeter than mercy? But if it is abused, what more dreadful? It turns to fury!

(6) If God gives us all, let his giving excite us to thanksgiving. He is the founder and donor of all our blessings, and should have all our acknowledgements. "Unto the place from whence the rivers come, there they return again." Eccl 1:7. All our gifts come from God, and to him must all our praises return. We are apt to burn incense to our own net, to attribute all we have to our own second causes. Hab 1:16.

[1] Our own skill and industry. God is the giver; he gives daily bread. Psalm 136:25; he gives riches. "It is he who gives you power to get wealth." Deut 8:18. Or,

[2] We often ascribe the praise to second causes and forget God. If friends have bestowed an estate, we look at them and admire them—but not God who is the great giver. This is as if one should be

thankful to the servant, and never take notice of the master of the family who provides all. Oh, if God gives all, our eye-sight, our food, our clothing, let us sacrifice the chief praise to him; let not God be a loser by his mercies. Praise is the more illustrious part of God's worship. Our needs may send us to prayer, nature may make us beg daily bread; but it shows a heart full of sincerity and grace, to be rendering praises to God. In *petition* we act like men, in *praise* we act like angels.

Does God sow seeds of mercy? Let thankfulness be the crop we bring forth. We are called the temples of God, and where should God's praises be sounded forth, but in his temples? 1 Cor 3:16; "While I live will I praise the Lord, I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being." Psalm 146:2. God gives us daily bread, let us give him daily praise. Thankfulness to our donor is the best policy; there is nothing lost by it. To be thankful for one mercy is the way to have more. Musicians love to sound their trumpets where there is the best echo, and God loves to bestow his mercies where there is the best echo of praise.

Offering the calves of our lips is not enough—but we must show our thankfulness by improving the gifts which God gives us, and as it were putting them out to use. God gives us an estate, and we honor the Lord with our substance. Proverbs 3:9. He gives us the staff of bread, and we lay out the strength we receive by it in his service; this is to be thankful; and that we may be thankful, let us be humble. *Pride* stops the current of gratitude. A proud man will never be thankful; he looks upon all he has either to be of his own procuring or deserving. Let us see that all that we have is God's gift, and how unworthy we are to receive the least favor; and this will make us much in doxology and gratitude; we shall be silver trumpets sounding forth God's praise.

[1] Thus we argue from the word "Give", that the good things of this life are the gifts of God. He is the founder and donor of all good things. We also learn, that it is lawful to pray for temporal things. We may pray for daily *bread*. "Feed me with the food I need." Proverbs 30:8. We may pray for *health*. "O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed." Psalm 6:2. As these are in themselves good things—so they are useful for us; they are as needful for preserving the comfort of life, as oil is needful for preserving the lamp from going out. Only let me insert two things:

(1) There is a great difference between praying for temporal things and spiritual things. In praying for spiritual things we must be absolute. When we pray for pardon of sin, and the favor of God, and the sanctifying graces of the Spirit, which are indispensably necessary to salvation, we must take no denial; but when we pray for temporal things, our prayers must be limited; we must pray conditionally—so far as God sees them good for us. He sometimes sees cause to withhold temporal things from us—when they would be snares, and draw our hearts from him; therefore we should pray for these things with submission to God's will. It was Israel's sin that they would be peremptory and absolute in their desire for temporal things; God's provisions did not please them, they must have dainties. "Who shall give us flesh to eat?" Numb 11:18. God has given them manna, he fed them with a miracle from heaven—but their wanton palates craved more—they must have quail. God let them have their desire—but they had *sour sauce* with their quail. "While their food was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them and slew them!" Psalm 78:31. Rachel was importunate in her desires for a child. "Give me children, or I die;" God let her have a child—but it was a *Ben-oni*, a son of my sorrow; it cost her her life in bringing forth. Gen 30:1; Gen 35:18. We must pray

for outward things with submission to God's will, else they come in anger.

(2) When we pray for things pertaining to this life, we must desire temporal things for spiritual ends; we must desire these things to be as helps in our journey to heaven. If we pray for *health*—it must be that we may improve this talent of health for God's glory, and may be fitter for his service. If we pray for a competency of estate—it must be for a holy end, that we may be kept from the temptations which poverty usually exposes to, and that we may be in a better capacity to sow the golden seeds of charity, and relieve such as are in need. Temporal things must be prayed for for spiritual ends. Hannah prayed for a child—but it was for this end—that her child might be devoted to God. "O Lord, if you will remember me, and will give unto your handmaid a child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life." 1 Sam 1:11. Many pray for outward things only to gratify their sensual appetites, as the ravens cry for food. Psalm 147:9. To pray for outward things only to satisfy nature, is to cry rather like ravens than Christians. We must have a higher end in our prayers, we must aim at heaven, while we are praying for earth.

Must we pray for temporal things for spiritual ends, that we may be fitter to serve God? Then how wicked are those who beg temporal mercies that they may be more enabled to sin against God! "You ask that you may consume it upon your lusts!" James 4:3. One man is sick, and he prays for health that he may be among his cups and harlots! Another prays for an estate; he would not only have his belly filled—but his barns; and he would be rich that he may raise his name, or that, having more power in his hand, he may now take a fuller revenge on his enemies. It is *impiety* joined with *impudence,* to

pray to God to give us temporal things, that we may be the better enabled to serve the devil.

If we are to pray for *temporal* things, how much more for *spiritual* things? If we are to pray for bread, how much more for the bread of life? If for oil, how much more for the oil of gladness? If to have our hunger satisfied, much more should we pray to have our souls saved. Alas! what if God should hear our prayers, and grant us these temporal things and no more—how would we be the better? What is it to have *food*—and lack *grace*? What is it to have the back clothed—and the soul naked? To have a rich land—and lack the living springs in Christ's blood—what comfort could that be? O therefore let us be earnest for spiritual mercies! Lord, not only *feed* me—but *sanctify* me! Give me rather a heart full of *grace*—than a house full of *gold*. If we are to pray for daily bread, the things of this life—much more should we pray for the things of the life that is to come.

Some may say we have an estate already, and what need we pray, "Give us daily bread"?

Supposing we have a plentiful estate—yet we need make the petition, "Give us daily bread;" and that upon a double account.

(1) That we may have a *blessing* upon our food, and all that we enjoy. "I will bless her provision." Psalm 132:15. "Man shall not live by bread alone—but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4. What is that but a word of blessing? Though the *bread* is in our hand—yet the *blessing* is in God's hand—and it must be fetched out of his hand by prayer! Well, therefore, may rich men pray, "Give us our bread," let it be seasoned with a blessing. If God should withhold a blessing, nothing we have would do us good; our clothes would not warm us, our food would not nourish us. "He gave them their request—but sent leanness into their soul;" that is, they

pined away, and their food did not nourish them. Psalm 106:15. If God should withhold a blessing, what we eat would turn to bad effect, and hasten death. If God does not bless our riches, they will do us more hurt than good. "Riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." Eccl 5:13. So that, granting we have plentiful estates—yet we had need pray, "Give us our bread;" let us have a blessing of what we have.

(2) Though we have estates—yet we had need pray—that we may hereby engage God to continue these comforts to us. How many casualties may fall out! How many have had grain in their barn, and a fire has come on suddenly, and consumed all! How many have had losses at sea, and great estates boiled away to nothing! "I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty." Ruth 1:21. Therefore, though we have estates—yet we had need pray, "Give us;" Lord, give us a continuance of these comforts, that they may not, before we are aware, take wings and fly from us. So much for the first word in the petition, Give.

[2] Secondly, **"Give us."**

Why do we pray in the plural, "Give us"? Why is it not said, give me?

To show that we are to have a public spirit in prayer. We must not only pray for ourselves—but others. Both the law of God and the law of love bind us to this, we must love our neighbor as ourselves; therefore we must pray for them as well as ourselves. Every good Christian has a fellow-feeling of the needs and miseries of others, and he prays God would extend his bounty to them; especially he prays for the saints. "Praying always for all saints." Eph 6:18. These are children of the family.

Use 1. Should we have a public spirit in prayer? It reproves narrow spirited men who move within their own sphere only; who look only at themselves, and mind not the case of others; who leave others out of their prayers. If they have daily bread, they care not though others starve; if they are clothed, they care not though others go naked. Christ taught us to pray for others, to say, "Give us;" but selfish people are shut up within themselves, as the snail in the shell, and never speak a word in prayer for others. These have no commiseration or pity.

Use 2. Let us pray for others as well as for ourselves. [A godly man benefits others as much as himself.] Spiders work only for themselves—but bees for the good of others. The more excellent anything is, the more it operates for the good of others. Springs refresh others with their crystal streams; the sun enlightens others with its golden beams. Likewise, the more a Christian is ennobled with grace, the more he besieges heaven with his prayers for others. If we are members of the body of Christ, we cannot but have a sympathy with others in their needs; and this sympathy would lead us to pray for them. David had a public spirit in prayer. "Do good, O Lord, unto those that are good." Psalm 125:4. Though he begins the Psalm with prayer for himself, "Have mercy upon me, O God," yet he ends the Psalm with prayer for others. "Do good in your good pleasure unto Zion." Psalm 51:1, 18.

Use 3. It is matter of comfort to the godly, who are but low in the world, that they have the prayers of God's people for them; who pray not only for the increase of their faith—but their food, that God will give them "daily bread." He is likely to be rich, who has several stocks going. Just so, they are in a likely way to thrive, who have the prayers of the saints going for them in several parts of the world.

[3] The third word in the petition is **"This day."** We pray not give us bread for a month or a year—but a day. "Give us this day."

Is it not lawful to lay up for the future? Does not the apostle say, that he who provides not for his family, "is worse than an infidel"? 1 Tim 5:8.

True, it is lawful to lay up for posterity; but our Savior has taught us to pray, "Give us this day our bread," for two reasons:

(1) That we should not have anxious care for the future. We should torment ourselves how to lay up great estates; if we have but enough to supply for the present—it should suffice. "Give us this day." "Don't worry about tomorrow." Matthew 6:34. God fed Israel with manna in the wilderness, and he fed them from hand to mouth. Sometimes all their manna was spent; and if anyone had asked them where they would have their breakfast next morning, they would have said, "Our care is only for the day: God will rain down whatever manna we need. If we have bread today, let us not distrust God's providence for the future."

(2) Our Savior will have us pray, "Give us bread this day," to teach us to live every day as if it were our last. We are not to pray, Give us bread tomorrow, because we do not know whether we shall live until tomorrow; but, "Lord, give us *this* day;" it may be the last day we shall live, and then we shall need no more.

If we pray for bread for a day only, then you who have *great estates* have cause to be thankful. You have more than you pray for; you pray but for bread for one day, and God has given you enough to suffice all your life. What a bountiful God do you serve! Two things should make rich men thankful. (1) God gives them more than they deserve. (2) He gives them more than they pray for.

[4] The fourth thing in the petition is, **"Our bread."**

Why is it called "Our bread," when it is not ours—but God's?

(1) We must understand it in a qualified sense; it is our bread, being gotten by honest industry. There are two sorts of bread that cannot properly be called our bread: the bread of *idleness* and the bread of *violence*.

The bread of **idleness**. "She eats not the bread of idleness." Proverbs 31:27, An idle person lives at the cost of others. "His hands refuse to labor." Proverbs 21:25. We must not be as the drones, which eat the honey that other bees have brought into the hive. If we eat the bread of idleness, it is not our own bread. "There are some who walk disorderly, working not at all; such we command that they work, and eat their own bread." 2 Thess 3:11, 12. The apostle gives this hint, that such as live idly do not eat their own bread.

The bread of **violence**. We cannot call that "our bread" which is taken away from others; that which is gotten by stealth or fraud, or any manner of extortion, is not "our bread," it belongs to another. He who is a bird of prey, who takes away the bread of the widow and fatherless, eats the bread which is not his, nor can he pray for a blessing upon it. Can he pray God to bless that which he has gotten unjustly?

(2) It is called our bread by virtue of our title to it. There is a twofold title to bread. [1] A spiritual title. In and by Christ we have a right to the creature, and may call it "our bread." As we are believers we have the best title to earthly things. "All things are yours;" by what title? "you are Christ's." 1 Cor 3:23. [2] A civil title, which the law confers on us. To deny men a civil right to their possessions, and make all common, opens the door to anarchy and confusion.

See the privilege of believers. They have both a spiritual and a civil right to what they possess. Those who can say, "our Father," can say "our bread." Wicked men that have a *legal* right to what they possess—but not a *covenant* right; they have it by *providence*, not by *promise*; with God's *permission*, not with his *love*. Wicked men are in God's eye no better than usurpers; all they have, their money and land, is like cloth taken up at the draper's, which is not paid for; but the sweet privilege of believers is, that they can say, "our bread." Christ being theirs—all is theirs. Oh, how sweet is every bit of bread dipped in Christ's blood! How well does that food relish, which is a pledge of more! The meal in the barrel is a pledge of our angels' food in paradise. It is the privilege of saints to have a right to earth and heaven.

[5] The fifth and last thing in this petition is, the thing we pray for, **"daily bread."**

What is meant by bread?

Bread here, by a synecdoche, [the particular for the whole class], is put for all the temporal blessings of this life, food, fuel, clothing, etc. [Whatever serves for our well-being.] Augustine. Whatever may serve for necessity or sober delight.

Learn to be contented with the allowance which God gives. If we have the necessities of life-let us rest satisfied. We pray but for bread, "Give us our daily bread;" we do not pray for superfluities, nor for quails or venison—but for bread which may support life. Though we have not so much as others—so full a crop—so rich an estate—yet if we have the staff of bread to keep us from falling, let us be content. "If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that." 1 Timothy 6:8. Most people are herein faulty. Though they pray that God would give them bread, as much as he sees expedient for them—

yet they are not content with his allowance—but greedily covet more, and with the daughters of the horse-leech, cry, "Give, give." Proverbs 30:15. This is a vice naturally engrafted in us.

Many pray Agur's first prayer, "Give me not poverty," but few pray his last prayer, "Give me not riches." Proverbs 30:8. They are not content with "daily bread," but have the cancer of covetousness; they are still craving for more. "Who enlarges his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied." Hab 2:5. There are, says Agur, four things which are never satisfied: the grave, the barren womb, the thirsty desert, the blazing fire. And I may add a fifth thing—the heart of a covetous man. Proverbs 30:15.

Such as are not content with daily bread—but thirst insatiably after more, will break over the hedge of God's command; and to get riches will stick at no sin. Therefore *covetousness* is called a radical vice. "The root of all evil." 1 Tim 6:10. [Oh cursed hunger for gold, to what do you not drive the hearts of men?] The Greek word for covetousness, signifies an inordinate desire of getting. Covetousness is not only in getting riches unjustly—but in loving them inordinately, which is a key that opens the door to all sin. It causes:

(1) Covetousness causes **theft**. Achan's covetous heart made him steal the wedge of gold—which cleft asunder his soul from God. Josh 7:21.

(2) Covetousness causes **treason**. What made Judas betray Christ? It was the thirty pieces of silver! Matthew 26:15.

(3) Covetousness causes **murder**. It was the inordinate love of the vineyard that made Ahab conspire Naboth's death. 1 Kings 21:13.

(4) It is the root of **perjury**. Men shall be covetous; and it follows, truce-breakers. 2 Tim 3:23. Love of silver will make men take a false oath, and break a just oath.

(5) Covetousness is the spring of **apostasy**. "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." 2 Tim 4:10. He not only forsook Paul's company—but his doctrine. Demas afterwards became a priest in an idol-temple, according to Dorotheus.

(6) Covetousness will make men **idolaters**. "Covetousness which is idolatry." Col 3:5. Though the covetous man will not worship graven images in the church—yet he will worship the graven image in his coin.

(7) Covetousness makes men give themselves to the devil. Pope Sylvester II sold his soul to the devil for a popedom. Covetous people forget the prayer, "Give us daily bread." They are not content with that which may satisfy nature—but are insatiable in their desire. O let us take heed of this cancer of covetousness! Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have." Heb 13:5.

Use. That we may be content with "daily bread," that which God in his providence carves out to us, and not covet or murmur—take the following considerations:

(1) God can bless a little. "He shall bless your *bread* and your *water*." Exod. 23:25. A blessing puts sweetness into the least morsel of bread, it is like sugar in wine. "I will bless her provision." Psalm 132:15. Daniel, and the three Hebrew children, ate a diet of vegetables and water—and yet they looked fairer than those who ate of the king's food. Dan 1:12, 15. Whence was this? God infused a more than ordinary blessing into the vegetables and water. His

blessing was better than the king's venison. A piece of bread with God's love—is angels' food.

(2) God, who gives us our allowance, knows what quantity of outward things is fittest for us. A smaller provision may be fitter for some; bread may be better than dainties. Everyone cannot bear a high condition, any more than a weak brain can bear heavy wine. Has any one a larger proportion of worldly things? God sees he can better manage such a condition; he can order his affairs with discretion, which perhaps another cannot. As he has a large estate—so he has a large heart to do good, which perhaps another has not. This should make us content with a shorter bill of fare. God's wisdom is what we must acquiesce in; he sees what is best for everyone. That which is good for one, may be bad for another.

(3) In being content with daily bread, though less than others have, much grace is seen. All the graces act their part in a contented soul. As the holy ointment was made up of several spices, myrrh, cinnamon, and cassia—so contentment has in it a mixture of several graces. Exod 30:23. There is *faith*. A Christian believes that God does all for the best. There is *love*, which thinks no evil—but takes all God does in good part. There is *patience*, submitting cheerfully to what God orders wisely. God is much pleased to see so many graces at once sweetly exercised, like so many bright stars shining in a constellation.

(4) To be content with daily bread, though but sparing, keeps us from many temptations which discontented people fall into. When the devil sees a person discontented with daily bread, he says, "Here is good fishing for me!" Satan often tempts discontented ones to murmuring, and to unlawful means, cozening and defrauding; and he who increases an estate by indirect

means, stuffs his pillow with thorns—so that his head will lie very uneasy when he comes to die. If you would be freed from the temptations which discontent exposes to, be content with such things as you have—thank God for "daily bread."

(5) What a rare and admirable thing is it to be content with "daily bread," though it be coarse, and though there be but little of it! Though a Christian has but a little meal in the barrel—yet he has that which gives him contentment. What he has not in the cupboard, he has in the promise. That bit of bread he has, is with the love of God, and that sauce makes it taste sweet. The little oil in the cruse is a pledge of the dainties he shall have in the kingdom of God, and this makes him content. What a rare and wonderful thing is this! It is no wonder to be content in heaven, when we are at the fountain-head, and have all things we can desire; but to be content when God keeps us to short fare, and we have scarcely "daily bread," is a wonder indeed. When grace is *crowning*, it is no wonder to be content; but when grace is *conflicting* with straits, to be content is a glorious thing, and deserves the garland of praise.

(6) To make us content with "daily bread," though God straitens us in our allowance, think seriously of the danger there is in a high, prosperous condition. Some are not content with "daily bread," but desire to have their barns filled, and heap up silver as dust; which proves a snare to them. "Those who will be rich fall into a snare." 1 Tim 6:9. **Pride, idleness, and lust—are three worms which usually breed in prosperity.** Prosperity often deafens the ear against God. "I spoke unto you in your prosperity—but you said, I will not hear." Jer 22:21. Soft pleasures harden the heart. In the body, the more fat—the less vitality. Just so, the more outward plenty—often the less piety. Prosperity has its honey—and also its sting; like the full of the moon—it makes many lunatic. The

pastures of prosperity are idleness and excess. *Anxious care* is the evil spirit which haunts the rich man, and will not let him rest. When his chests are full of money, his heart is full of care, either how to *manage* or how to *increase*, or how to *secure* what he has gotten. Sunshine is pleasant—but sometimes it scorches.

Should it not make us content with that allowance which God gives—if we have *daily bread*, though not *dainties*? Think of the danger of prosperity! The spreading of a full table may be the spreading of a snare! Many have been sunk to hell with golden weights. The ferry-man takes in all passengers, that he may increase his fare, and sometimes to the sinking of his boat. "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction." 1 Tim 6:9. The world's *golden* sands are quicksands, which should make us take our daily bread, though it be but coarse, contentedly. What if we have less prosperity—we have less snare. As we lack the rich provisions of the world—so we lack their temptations.

(7) If God keeps us to a spare diet—if he gives us less temporal things—he has made it up in spiritual things. He has given us the Pearl of great price, and the holy anointing of the Spirit. The pearl of great price, the Lord Jesus—is the quintessence of all good things. To give us Christ, is more than if God had given us all the world. He can make more worlds—but he has no more Christs to bestow. Christ is such a golden mine, that the angels cannot dig to the bottom! His riches are unsearchable! Eph 3:8. From Christ we may have justification, adoption, and glorification. "The sea of God's mercy in giving us Christ," says Luther, "should swallow up all our needs!"

God has anointed us with the graces, the holy unction of his Spirit. Grace is a seed of God, a blossom of eternity. The graces are the impressions of the divine nature, stars to enlighten us, spices to perfume us, diamonds to enrich us! And if God has adorned the hidden man of the heart with these sacred jewels, it may well make us content, though we have but short fare, and that coarse too. God has given his people better things than corn and wine; he has given those who which he cannot give in anger, and which cannot stand with reprobation, and they may say as David, "The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage." Psalm 16:6. Didimus was a blind man—but very holy; Anthony asked him, if he was not troubled for the lack of his eyes, and he told him he was; Anthony replied, "Why are you troubled? You lack that which flies and birds have—but you have that which angels have." So I say to Christians, if God has not given you the purse, he has given you his Spirit. If you lack that which rich men have, God has given you that which angels have, and are you not content?

(8) If you have but daily bread enough to suffice nature, be content. Consider that it is not having an abundance, which makes

us content. It is not a fancy cage which will make the bird sing. Having only the necessities of life may bring contentment, when having more may make one less contentment. A staff may help the traveler—but a bundle of staffs will be a burden to him. A great estate may be like a long trailing garment, more burdensome than useful. Many that have great incomes and revenues, have not so much comfort and contentment in their lives, as some that go to hard labor. "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrews 13:5

(9) If you have less daily bread, you will have less account to give. The riches and honors of this world, make a great show, and with their glistening, dazzle men's eyes. But they do not consider the *great account* they must give to God. "Give an account of your stewardship!" Luke 16:2. What good have you done with your estate? Have you, as a good steward, traded your golden talents for God's glory? Have you honored the Lord with your substance? The greater the revenues—the greater the reckonings. Let it quiet and content us, that if we have but little daily bread—that our account will be less.

(10) You who have but a small competence in outward things, may be content to consider how much you look for hereafter. God keeps the best wine until *last*. What though now you have a small pittance, and are fed from hand to mouth? You look for an eternal reward, white robes, sparkling crowns, rivers of pleasure. A son is content though his father gives him a little money but now and then, as long as he expects his father should settle all his wealthy estate upon him at last. Just so, if God gives you but little at present —yet you look for that glory which eye has not seen. The world is but a great inn. If God gives you sufficient to pay for your charges in your inn, you may be content, you shall have enough when you come to your own country.

How may we be content, though God cut us short in these externals; though we have but little daily bread, and coarse?

(1) Realize that some have been much lower than you, who have been better than you. *Jacob*, a holy patriarch, went over Jordan with his staff, and lived in a poor condition a long time; he had the clouds for his canopy, and a stone for his pillow. *Moses*, who might have been rich, as some historians say, that Pharaoh's daughter adopted him for her son, because king Pharaoh had no

heir, and so Moses was likely to have come to the crown—yet leaving the honors of the court, in what a low, poor condition did he live in, when he went to Jethro, his father-in-law! *Musculus*, famous for learning and piety, was put to great straits, even to dig in a town ditch, and had scarcely daily bread, and yet was content! Nay, *Christ*, who was heir of all, for our sakes became poor! 2 Cor 8:9. Let all these examples make us content.

(2) Let us labor to have the interest cleared between God and our souls. He who can say, "My God," has enough to rock his heart quiet in the lowest condition. What can he lack who has El-Shaddai, the all-sufficient God for his portion? Though the *nether* springs fail—yet he has the upper *springs*. Though the bill of fare grows short—yet an interest in God is a pillar of support to us, and we may, with David, encourage ourselves in the Lord our God!

The Fifth Petition in the Lord's Prayer

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Matthew 6:12

Before I speak strictly to the words, I shall notice:

[1] That in this prayer there is but one petition for the body, "Give us our daily bread," but two petitions for the soul, "Forgive us our trespasses, lead us not into temptation—but deliver us from evil." Observe hence, that we are to be more careful for our souls than for our bodies, more careful for grace than for daily bread; and more desirous to have our souls saved than our bodies fed. In

the law, the weight of the sanctuary was twice as big as the common weight, to typify that spiritual things must be of far greater weight with us than earthly. The excellency of the soul may challenge our chief care about it.

(1) The soul is an immaterial substance; it is a heavenly spark, lighted by the breath of God. It is the more refined and spiritual part of man; it is of an angelic nature; it has some faint resemblance to God. The body is the more humble part, it is the cabinet only, though curiously wrought—but the soul is the jewel; it is near akin to angels; it is capable of communion with God in glory.

(2) The soul is immortal; it never expires. It can act without the body. Though the body dissolve into dust, the soul lives. Luke 12:4. The essence of the soul is eternal; it has a beginning but no end. Surely, then, if the soul is so ennobled and dignified, more care should be taken about it than the body. Hence, we make but one petition for the body—but two petitions for the soul.

Use 1. They are reproved who take more care for their bodies than their souls. The body is but the brutish part—yet they take more care, (1) About **dressing** their bodies than their souls. They put on the best clothes, are dressed in the richest garb; but care not how naked or undressed their souls are. They do not get the jewels of grace to adorn the inner man. (2) About **feeding** their bodies than their souls. They are caterers for the flesh, they make provision for the flesh, they have the best diet—but let their souls starve; as if one should feed his dog—but let his child starve. The body must sit in the chair of state—but the soul, that princely thing, is made a lackey to run on the devil's errands!

Use 2. Let us be more careful for our souls. If it is well with the soul, it shall be well with the body. If the soul is gracious, the body shall be

glorious, for it shall shine like Christ's body. Therefore, it is wisdom to look chiefly to the soul, because in saving the soul we secure the happiness of the body. And we cannot show our care for our souls more than by improving all seasons for their good; as reading, praying, hearing, and meditating. Oh, look to the main thing; let the soul be chiefly tended! The loss of the soul would be fatal. Other losses may be made up again. If one loses his health, he may recover it again; if he loses his estate, he may make it up again; but if he loses his soul, the loss is irreparable. The merchant who ventures all he has in one ship, if that be lost, is quite ruined.

[2] As soon as Christ had said, "Give us daily bread," he adds, "and forgive us." He joins the petition of forgiveness of sin immediately to the other of daily bread, to show us that though we have daily bread—yet all is nothing without forgiveness. If our sins are not pardoned, we can take but little comfort in our food. As a man who is condemned takes little comfort from the food you bring him in prison; so, though we have daily bread—yet it will do us no good unless sin is forgiven. What though we should have manna, which was called angels' food, though the rock should pour out rivers of oil—all is nothing unless sin is taken away. When Christ had said, "Give us our daily bread," he presently added, and "forgive us our trespasses." Daily bread may satisfy the appetite—but forgiveness of sin satisfies the conscience.

Use 1. It condemns the folly of most people, who, if they have daily bread, the delicious things of this life, look no further; they are not solicitous for the pardon of sin. If they have that which *feeds* them, they look not after that which should *crown* them. Alas! you may have daily bread, and yet perish. The rich man in the gospel had daily bread, nay, he had dainties, he fared 'sumptuously every day;" but "in hell he lift up his eyes." Luke 16:19, 23.

Use 2. Let us pray that God would not give us our portion in this life, that he would not put us off with daily bread—but that he would give forgiveness. This is the sauce that would make our bread relish the sweeter. Do not be content with that which is common to the brute creatures, the dog or rat—to have your hunger satisfied; but, besides daily bread, get pardon of sin. A drop of Christ's blood, or a grain of forgiving mercy, is infinitely more valuable than all the delights under the sun. Daily bread may make us live comfortably—but forgiveness of sins will make us die comfortably. I come now to the words of the petition, "Forgive us our debts," etc.

Here is a term given to sin, it is a debt; the confession of the debt, "our debts;" a prayer, "forgive us;" and a condition on which we desire forgiveness, "as we forgive our debtors."

1. The first thing is the term given to sin—it is a debt. That which is here called a debt is called sin. "Forgive us our sins." Luke 11:4. So, then, sin is a debt, and every sinner is a debtor. Sin is compared to a debt of ten thousand talents. Matthew 18:24.

Why is sin called a debt?

Because it fitly resembles it. (1) A debt arises upon non-payment of money, or the not paying that which is one's due. We owe to God exact obedience, and not paying what is due, we are in debt. (2) In case of non-payment, the debtor goes to prison; so, by our sin, we become guilty, and are exposed to God's curse of damnation. Though he grants a sinner a reprieve for a time—yet he remains bound to eternal death if the debt is not forgiven.

In what sense is sin the worst debt?

(1) Because we have nothing to pay. If we could pay the debt, what need to pray, "forgive us"? We cannot say, as he in the gospel, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all;" we can pay neither principal nor interest. Adam made us all bankrupts. In innocence Adam had a stock of original righteousness to begin the world with, he could give God personal and perfect obedience; but, by his sin, he was quite broken, and beggared all his posterity. We have nothing to pay; all our duties are mixed with sin, and so we cannot pay God in current coin.

(2) Sin is the worst debt, because it is against an infinite majesty. An offence against the person of a king, is the crime of high treason, it enhances and aggravates the crime. Sin wrongs God, and so is an infinite offence. The schoolmen say, "every sin strikes at the Godhead." The sinner would not only unthrone God—but ungod him, which makes the debt infinite.

(3) Sin is the worst debt, because it is not a single—but a multiplied debt. Forgive us "our debts;" we have debt upon debt. "Innumerable evils have compassed me about." Psalm 40:12. We may as well reckon all the drops in the sea, as reckon all our spiritual debts; we cannot fathom how much we owe. A man may know his other debts—but he cannot number his spiritual debts. Every vain thought is a sin. "The thought of foolishness is sin." Proverbs 24:9. And what swarms of vain thoughts have we! The first rising of corruption, though it never blossom into outward act, is a sin; then, "who can understand his errors?" We do not know how much we owe to God.

(4) Sin is the worst debt; because it is an inexcusable debt in two respects:

[1] There is no denying the debt. Other debts men may deny. If the money be not paid before witnesses, or if the creditor lose the bond, the debtor may say he owes him nothing; but there is no denying the debt of sin. If we say we have no sin, God can prove the debt. "I will set your sins in order before your eyes." Psalm 50:21. God writes down our debts in his book of remembrance, and his book, and the book of conscience exactly agree: so that the debt cannot be denied.

[2] There is no shifting off the debt. Other debts may be shifted off. We may get friends to pay them—but neither man nor angel can pay this debt for us. If all the angels in heaven should make a purse, they cannot pay one of our debts. In other debts men may get a protection —so that none can touch their persons, or sue them for it; but who shall give us a protection from God's justice? "There is none that can deliver out of your hand." Job 10:7. Indeed, the Pope pretends that his pardon shall be men's protection, and God's justice shall not sue them: but that is a forgery, and cannot be pleaded at God's tribunal.

Other debts, if the debtor dies in prison, cannot be recovered: death frees him from debt; but if we die in debt to God, he knows how to recover it. As long as we have souls to seize upon, God will not lose his debt. Not the death of the debtor—but the death of the Surety, pays a sinner's debt. In other debts men may flee from their creditor, leave their country, and go into foreign parts, and the creditor cannot find them; but we cannot flee from God. He knows where to find all his debtors. "Where shall I flee from your presence? If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your right hand shall hold me." Psalm 139:7, 9, 10.

(5) Sin is the worst debt, because it carries men, in case of non-payment, to a worse prison than any upon earth, even

to a fiery prison; and the sinner is laid in worse chains, chains of darkness, where he is bound under wrath forever.

Wherein have we the character of bad debtors?

(1) A bad debtor does not love to be called to account. There is a day coming when God will call his debtors to account. "So then, everyone shall give an account of himself to God." Romans 14:12. But we play away the time, and do not love to hear of the day of judgment; we do not like that ministers should put us in mind of our debts, or speak of the day of reckoning. What a confounding word will that be to a self-secure sinner, "give an account of your stewardship!"

(2) A bad debtor is unwilling to confess his debt, he will put it off, or make less of it. Just so, we are more willing to excuse sin than confess it. How hardly was Saul brought to confession. "I have obeyed the voice of the Lord—but the people took of the spoil." 1 Sam 15:20, 21. He rather *excuses* his sin than *confesses* it.

(3) A bad debtor is apt to hate his creditor. Debtors wish their creditors dead. Just so, wicked men naturally hate God, because they think he is a just judge, and will call them to account. They are called God-haters. A debtor does not love to see his creditor.

Use 1. They are reproved who are reluctant to be in debt—but make no reckoning of sin, which is the greatest debt; they use no means to get out of it—but run further in debt to God. We would think it strange, if writs or warrants were out against a man, or a judgment granted to seize his body and estate, and yet he was wholly regardless and unconcerned. God has a writ out against a sinner, nay, many writs, for swearing, drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, and yet the

sinner eats and drinks, and is quiet, as if he were not in debt! **What an opiate has Satan given men!**

Use 2. If sin is a debt, let us be humbled. "Debt," says Ambrose, "is grievous." Men in debt are full of shame, they lie hid, and do not care to be seen. A debtor is ever in fear of arrest. A dog barks—and his heart pounds. Oh! let us blush and tremble, who are so deeply indebted to God. A Roman dying in debt, Augustus the emperor sent to buy his pillow, because, said he, I hope that will have some virtue to make me sleep, on which a man so much in debt could take his ease. We that have so many spiritual debts lying upon us, how can we be at rest until we have some hope that they are discharged?

II. The second thing in this petition is confession. Let us confess our debt. Let us acknowledge that we are in arrears with God, and deserve that he should enforce the law upon us, and throw us into hell-prison. By confession we give glory to God. "My son, give glory to the God of Israel, and make confession unto him." Josh 7:19. If we confess the debt, God will forgive it. "If we confess our sins, he is just to forgive." 1 John 1:9. Do but confess the debt, and God will cross it out from the book. "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin." Psalm 32:5.

Let us not confess merely—but labor to get our spiritual debts paid, by Christ the Surety. Say, "Lord, have patience with me, and Christ shall pay you all. He has laid down an infinite price." The covenant of works would not admit of a surety; it demanded personal obedience: but this privilege we have by the gospel. If we have nothing to pay, God will accept a surety. Believe in Christ's blood, and the debt is paid.

We have next to consider in these words the petition, "Forgive us our sins," and the condition, "For we also forgive everyone that is

indebted to us." *Our forgiving others is not a **cause** of God's forgiving us—but it is a **condition** without which he will not forgive us.*

III. We shall now consider the petition, "Forgive us our sins." This is a blessed petition. The ignorant would say, "Who will show us any good?" (Psalm 4:6) meaning a good purchase; but the Savior teaches us to pray for that which is more noble, and will stand us in more stead, which is the pardon of sin. Forgiveness of sins is a primary blessing, it is one of the first mercies God bestows. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you;" that is, forgiveness. Ezek 36:25. When God pardons, there is nothing he will stick at, to do for the soul; he will adopt, sanctify, crown.

What is forgiveness of sin?

It is God's passing by sin, wiping off the score and giving us a discharge. Micah 7:18.

[1] The nature of forgiveness will more clearly appear, by opening some Scripture phrases; and by laying down some propositions.

(1) To forgive sin, is for God to take away iniquity. "Why do you not take away my iniquity?" Job 7:21. Hebrew, lift off. It is a metaphor taken from a man who carries a heavy burden which is ready to sink him, and another comes, and lifts it off—so when the heavy burden of sin is on us, God in pardoning, lifts it off from the conscience, and lays it upon Christ. "He has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:6.

(2) To forgive sin, is for God to cover it. "You have covered all their sin." Psalm 85:2. This was typified by the mercy-seat covering

the ark, to show God's covering of sin through Christ. God does not cover sin in the Antinomian sense—so as he sees it not—but he so covers it, that he will not impute it.

(3) To forgive sin, is for God to blot it out. "I am he who blots out your transgressions." Isaiah 43:25. The Hebrew word, to blot out, alludes to a creditor who, when his debtor has paid him, blots out the debt, and gives him an acquittance. Just so, when God forgives sin, he blots out the debt, he draws the red lines of Christ's blood over it, and so crosses the debt-book.

(4) To forgive sin is for God to scatter our sins as a cloud. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions." Isaiah 44:22. Sin is the cloud, an interposing cloud, which disperses, that the light of his countenance may break forth.

(5) To forgive sin, is for God to cast our sins into the depths of the sea, which implies burying them out of sight, that they shall not rise up in judgment against us. "You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Micah 7:19. God will throw them in, not as cork which rises again—but as lead which sinks to the bottom.

[2] The nature of forgiveness will further appear by laying down some propositions respecting it.

(1) Every sin deserves death, and therefore needs forgiveness. The Papists distinguish between *mortal* sins and *venial* sins. Some creep unawares into the mind, as vain thoughts, sudden motions of anger and revenge, which Bellarmine says, are in their own nature venial. It is true that the greatest sins are in one sense venial, that is, God is able to forgive them; but the least sin is not in its own nature venial—but deserves damnation. We read of the lusts of the flesh, and the works of the flesh. Romans 13:14; Gal 5:19.

The lusts of the flesh are sinful, as well as the works of the flesh. That which is a transgression of the law merits damnation; but the first stirrings of corruption are a breach of the royal law, and therefore merit damnation. Romans 7:7, Proverbs 24:9. So that the least sin is mortal, and needs forgiveness.

(2) It is God alone, who forgives sin. To pardon sin is one of the royal prerogatives; one of the flowers of God's crown. "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" Mark 2:7. It is most proper for God to pardon sin; only the creditor can remit the debt. Sin is an infinite offence, and no finite power can discharge an infinite offence. No man can take away sin, unless he is able to infuse grace; for, as Aquinas says, with forgiveness is always infusion of grace; but no man can infuse grace, therefore no man can forgive sin. He alone can forgive sin, who can remit the penalty—but it is God's prerogative only to forgive sin.

But a Christian is charged to forgive his brother. "Forgiving one another." Col 3:13.

In all second-table sins, there are two distinct things; disobedience against God, and injury to man. That which man is required to forgive, is the wrong done to himself—but the wrong done to God, he cannot forgive. Man may remit a trespass against himself—but not a transgression against God.

The Scripture speaks of a power committed to ministers to forgive sin: "Whose sins you remit, they are remitted unto them." John 20:23.

Ministers cannot remit sin authoritatively and *effectually*—but only *declaratively*. They have a special office and authority to apply the promises of pardon to broken hearts. When a minister sees one

humbled for sin—but afraid God has not pardoned him, and is ready to be swallowed up of sorrow—for the easing of this man's conscience, he may, in the name of Christ, declare to him, that he is pardoned. He does not forgive sin by his own authority—but as a herald, in Christ's name, *pronounces* a man's pardon. As under the law, God cleansed the leper, and the priest pronounced him clean—so God, by his prerogative, forgives sin, and the minister pronounces forgiveness to the penitent sinner. Power to forgive sin authoritatively in his own name, was never granted to any mortal man. A king may spare a man's life—but cannot pardon his sin. Popes' pardons are insignificant, like blanks in a lottery, good for nothing but to be torn.

(3) Forgiveness of sin is purely an act of God's free grace. There are some acts of God which declare his **power**, as making and governing the world; others that declare his **justice**, as punishing the guilty; others that declare his free-grace, as **pardoning** sinners. "I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake." Isaiah 43:25. He forgives as when a creditor freely forgives a debtor. "I obtained mercy." 1 Tim 1:16. I was all over besprinkled with mercy. When God pardons a sin, he does not pay a debt—but gives a legacy. Forgiveness is spun out of the affections of God's mercy; there is nothing we can do, that can deserve it; not our prayers, or tears, or good deeds can purchase pardon. When Simon Magus would have bought the gift of the Holy Spirit with money, "May your money," said Peter, "perish with you." Acts 8:20. So if men think they can buy pardon of sin with their duties and alms, let their money perish with them. Forgiveness is an act of God's free grace, in which he displays the banner of love. This will raise trophies of God's glory, and cause the saints' triumph in heaven, that when there was no worthiness in them, when they lay in their blood—God took pity on them, and held

forth the golden scepter of love in forgiving. *Forgiveness is a golden thread spun out of the affections of free-grace!*

(4) Forgiveness is through the blood of Christ. Free grace is the inward moving cause. Christ's blood is the outward cause of meriting pardon. "In whom we have redemption through his blood." Eph 1:7. All pardons are sealed in Christ's blood. The guilt of sin was infinite—and nothing but that blood which was of infinite value, could procure forgiveness.

But if Christ laid down his blood as the price of our pardon, how can we say God freely forgives sin? If it is by purchase, how is it by grace?

It was God's free grace that found out a way of redemption through a Mediator. Nay, God's love appeared more in letting Christ die for us, than if he had forgiven us without exacting any satisfaction. It was free grace which moved God to accept of the price paid for our sins. That God should accept a surety; that one should sin, and another suffer, was free grace. So that forgiveness of sin, though purchased by Christ's blood, is by free grace.

(5) In forgiveness of sin, God remits the guilt and penalty. On remission of guilt, the punishment is also remitted. Guilt is an obligation to punishment, it cries for justice. God in forgiving, indulges the sinner as to the penalty. He seems to say to him, "Though you have fallen into the hands of my justice, and deserve to die—yet I will take off the penalty; whatever is charged upon you shall be discharged." When God pardons a soul, he will not reckon with him in a purely vindictive way; he stops the execution of justice.

(6) By virtue of this pardon, God will no more call sin to remembrance. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Heb 8:12. He will pass an act of oblivion, he will not upbraid

with former unkindnesses. When you fear that God will call your sins again to remembrance after pardon, look into this act of indemnity, "Their iniquities will I remember no more." God is said therefore to "blot out our sin." A man does not call for a debt when he has crossed it out of the book. When God pardons a man, his former displeasure ceases. "My anger is turned away." Hos 14:4.

But is God angry with his pardoned ones?

Though a child of God, after pardon, may incur his *fatherly* displeasure yet his *judicial* wrath is removed. Though he may lay on the *rod*—yet he has taken away the *curse*. *Correction* may befall the saints—but not *destruction*. "My loving-kindness will I not take from him." Psalm 89:33.

(7) Sin is not forgiven until it be repented of. Therefore they are put together: "Repentance and remission." Luke 24:47. [Grant repentance, Lord, and afterwards pardon.] Fulgentius. In **REPENTANCE** there are three main ingredients, all which must be, before forgiveness. They are contrition, confession, and conversion.

CONTRITION, or brokenness of heart. "They shall be like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, everyone for his iniquity." Ezek 7:16. This contrition or rending of the heart, is expressed sometimes by smiting on the breast; Luke 18:13; sometimes by plucking off the hair; Ezra 9:3; and sometimes by watering the couch; Psalm 6:6.

But all humiliation is not contrition; some have only pretended sorrow for sin, and so have missed forgiveness; as Ahab humbled himself, whose *garments* were rent—but not his *heart*. What is that remorse and sorrow which goes before forgiveness of sin?

It is a holy sorrow; it is a grieving for sin, as it is sin, and as it is dishonoring God, and defiling the soul. Though there were no sufferings to follow—yet the true penitent would grieve for sin. "My sin is ever before me." Psalm 51:3. This contrition goes before remission. "I repented; I smote upon my thigh. Is Ephraim my dear son? my affections are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him." Jer 31:19, 20. Ephraim was troubled for sinning, and God's affections were troubled for Ephraim. The woman in the gospel stood at Jesus' feet weeping, and a pardon followed. "Therefore, I say, her sins which are many, are forgiven." Luke 7:47. The seal is set upon the wax when it melts; God seals his pardon upon melting hearts.

The second ingredient in repentance is CONFESSION. "Against you, you only, have I sinned." Psalm 51:4. This is not *auricular confession*; which the Papists make a sacrament, and affirm that without confession of all sins in the ears of the priest, no man can receive forgiveness. The Scripture is ignorant of this, nor do we read that any general Council, until the Lateran Council, which was about twelve hundred years after Christ, ever decreed auricular confession.

But does not the Scripture say, "Confess your sins one to another"? James 5:16. This is absurdly brought for auricular confession; for, by this reasoning, the priest must confess to the people, as well as the people to the priest. The sense of that verse, is that in case of public scandals, or private wrongs, confession is to be made to others; but chiefly, confession is to be made to God, who is the party offended. "Against you, you only, have I sinned."

Confession gives vent to sorrow; it must be *free* without compulsion, *sincere* without reserve, *cordial* without hypocrisy; the heart must go along with it. This makes way for forgiveness. "I said I will confess

my transgressions, and you forgave." Psalm 32:5. When the publican and thief confessed, they had pardon. The publican smote upon his breast with contrition, and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner," there was confession; he went away justified, there was forgiveness. The thief said, "We indeed suffer justly," there was confession; and Christ absolved him before he died, "Today shall you be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43. These words of Christ may have occasioned that saying of Augustine: "Confession shuts the mouth of hell, and opens the gate of paradise!"

The third ingredient in repentance is CONVERSION, or **turning from sin**. "We have sinned;" there was confession. "They put away the strange gods;" there was conversion. Judges 10:15, 16. It must be a universal turning from sin. "Cast away from you, *all* your transgressions." Ezek 18:31. You would be reluctant that God should forgive *some* of your sins only. Would you have him *forgive* all, and will you not *forsake* all? He who hides one rebel, is a traitor to the crown; he who lives in one known sin, is a traitorous hypocrite.

There must not only be a turning from sin—but a **turning to God**. Therefore it is called "Repentance toward God." Acts 20:21. The heart points towards God as the needle to the north pole. The prodigal not only left his harlots—but arose and went to his father. Luke 15:18. This repentance is the ready way to pardon. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and return unto the Lord, and he will abundantly pardon." Isaiah 55:7. A king will not pardon a rebel, while he continues in open hostility. Thus repentance goes before remission of sin. Those who never repented, have no ground to hope that their sins are pardoned.

Not that repentance *merits* the forgiveness of sin. To make repentance to satisfy God's justice—is Popish. By repentance we

please God—but we do not *satisfy* him. "Christ's blood must wash our tears." Repentance is a condition, not a cause. God will not pardon *for* repentance—nor yet *without* it. He seals his pardons on *melting* hearts. Repentance makes us prize pardon the more. He who cries out of his broken bones, will the more prize the mercy of having them set again; so, when there is nothing in the soul but clouds of sorrow, and God brings pardon, which is setting a rainbow in the cloud to tell the soul the flood of God's wrath shall not overflow, Oh! what joy is there at the sight of this rainbow! The soul burns in love to God.

(8) The greatest sins come within the compass of forgiveness. Sins of the first magnitude, such as incest, sodomy, adultery, theft, murder—are are pardonable. Paul was a blasphemer, and so sinned against the first table; a persecutor, and so sinned against the second table; and yet he obtained mercy. 1 Tim 1:13. Zaccheus, was an extortioner; Mary Magdalene, was an unchaste woman, out of whom seven devils were cast; Manasseh, who made the streets run with blood, had pardon. Some of the Jews, who had a hand in crucifying Christ, were forgiven. God blots out not only the cloud—but the *thick* cloud; *enormities* as well as *infirmities*. Isaiah 44:22. The king, in the parable, forgave his debtor who owed him ten thousand talents. Matthew 28:27. A talent weighed three thousand shekels, ten thousand talents contained almost twelve tons of gold. This was an emblem of God's forgiving great sins.

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Isaiah 1:18. Scarlet, in the Greek, is called twice dipped, and the art of man cannot wash out the dye again. Though your sins are of a scarlet dye, God's mercy can wash them way, as the sea covers *great rocks* as well as *little sands*. This I mention that sinners may not despair. God counts it a glory to him to forgive great sins: in which

mercy and love ride in triumph. "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant," it was exuberant, it overflowed, as the Nile River. 1 Tim 1:14. We must not measure God by ourselves. His mercy excels our sins as much as heaven does the earth. Isaiah 55:9. If great sins could not be forgiven, great sinners should not be preached to; but the gospel is to be preached to all. If they could not be forgiven, it were a dishonor to Christ's blood; as if the wound were broader than the plaster.

God has first made great sinners "*broken* vessels;" he has broken their hearts for sin, and then he has made them "*golden* vessels;" he has filled them with the golden oil of pardoning mercy. This may encourage great sinners to come in and repent. The *sin against the Holy Spirit* is unpardonable, not but that there is mercy enough in God to forgive it—but because he who has committed it will not have pardon. He despises God, scorns his mercy, spills the cordial of Christ's blood, and tramples it under foot; he puts away salvation from him.

But when a poor sinner looks upon himself and sees his guilt, and then looks on God's justice and holiness, he falls down confounded; but here is that which may be as a cork to the net, to keep him from despair—if he will leave his sins and come to Christ, mercy can seal his pardon.

(9) When God pardons a sinner, he forgives all sins. "I will pardon all their iniquities." Jer 33:8. "Having forgiven you all trespasses." Col 2:13. The mercy-seat, which was a type of forgiveness, covered the whole ark, to show that God covers all our transgressions. He does not leave one sin upon the score; he does not take his pen and for fourscore sins write down fifty—but blots out all sin. "Who forgives all your iniquities." Psalm 103:3. When I say, God

forgives all sins, I understand it of sins *past*, for sins to come are not forgiven until they are repented of. Indeed God has decreed to pardon them; and when he forgives one sin, he will in time forgive all; but sins *future* are not actually pardoned until they are repented of. It is absurd to think sin should be forgiven before it is committed.

If all sins past and to come are at once forgiven, then what need to pray for the pardon of sin? It is a vain thing to pray for the pardon of that which is already forgiven. The opinion that sins to come, as well as past, are forgiven, takes away and makes void Christ's intercession. He is an advocate to intercede for daily sins. 1 John 2:1. But if sin is forgiven before it be committed, what need is there of his daily intercession? What need have I of an advocate, if sin be pardoned before it be committed? So that, though God forgives all sins past to a believer—yet sins to come are not forgiven until repentance be renewed.

(10) Faith necessarily precedes forgiveness. There must be believing on our part, before there is forgiving on God's part. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins." Acts 10:43. So that faith is a necessary antecedent to forgiveness. There are two acts of faith, to accept Christ and to trust in Christ; to accept of his terms, to trust in his merits; and he who does neither of these, can have no forgiveness. He who does not accept Christ, cannot have his person; he who does not trust in him, cannot have benefit by his blood. So that, without faith, there is no remission of sin.

(11) Though justification and sanctification are not the same—yet God never pardons a sinner without sanctifying him. Justification and sanctification are not the same. Justification is without us, sanctification is within us. The one is by righteousness

imputed, the other is by righteousness imparted. Justification is once and for all, sanctification is gradual. One person is sanctified more than another—but one cannot be more justified than another. One has more grace than another—but he is not more justified than another. The matter of our justification is perfect, namely, Christ's righteousness; but our sanctification is imperfect, there are the spots of God's children. Deut 32:5. Our *graces* are mixed, our *duties* are defiled.

Thus justification and sanctification are not the *same*. Yet, for all that, they are never *separated*. God never pardons and justifies a sinner—but he also sanctifies him. "You were sanctified, you were justified." 1 Cor 6:11. "This is he who came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ." 1 John 5:6. Christ comes to the soul by *blood*, which denotes remission; and by *water*, which denotes sanctification. Let no man say he is pardoned, who is not made holy. This I urge against the Antinomians, who talk of their sin being forgiven, and having a part in Christ—and yet remain unconverted, and live in the grossest sins! Pardon and healing go together. "I create the fruit of the lips, peace." Isaiah 57:19. Peace is the fruit of pardon, and then it follows, "I will heal him." Where God pardons, he purifies. "I will place My Spirit within you and cause you to follow My statutes and carefully observe My ordinances." Ezekiel 36:27. As in the inauguration of kings, with the *crown*, there is the oil to *anoint*. Just so, when God crowns a man with forgiveness, he gives the anointing oil of grace to sanctify. "I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name." Rev 2:17. A "white stone," that is absolution; and a "new name" in the stone, that is sanctification.

If God should pardon a man, and not sanctify him, it would be a reproach to him. He would love and be well pleased with men in their sins, which is diametrically contrary to his holy nature.

If God should pardon and not sanctify, he could have no glory from us. God's people are formed to show forth his praise; but if he should pardon and not sanctify us, how could we show forth his praise? Isaiah 43:21. How could we glorify him? What glory can God have from a proud, ignorant, profane heart?

If God should pardon and not sanctify, there would enter heaven, that which defiles; but nothing shall enter that defiles. Rev 21:27. God would then settle the inheritance upon men before they were fit for it. "Which has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance." Col 1:12. How is that but by the divine unction? So that whoever God forgives, he transforms. Let no man say his sins are forgiven who does not find an inherent work of holiness in his heart.

(12) Where God remits sin, he imputes righteousness. This righteousness of Christ imputed is a fulfillment of God's law, and makes full satisfaction for breaches of it. This righteousness procures God's favor. God cannot but love us—when he sees us in his Son's robe, which both covers and adorns us. In this spotless robe of Christ, we outshine the angels. Theirs is but the righteousness of *creatures*, this is the righteousness of *God* himself "That we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor 5:21. How great a blessing then is forgiveness? With *remission of sin* is joined *imputation of righteousness*.

(13) Those whose sins are forgiven must not omit praying for forgiveness. "Forgive us our trespasses." Believers who are pardoned must be continual suitors for pardon. When Nathan told David, "The Lord has put away your sin," David composed a penitential psalm for the pardon of his sin. 2 Samuel 12:13. Sin, after pardon, rebels. Like Samson's hair, though it be cut, it will grow again. We sin daily, and must ask for daily pardon, as well as for

daily bread. Besides, a Christian's pardon is not so sure, but he may desire to have a clearer evidence of it.

(14) A full absolution from all sin is not pronounced until the day of judgment. The day of judgment is called a time of refreshing, when sin shall be completely blotted out. Acts 3:19. Now God blots out sin *truly*—but then it shall be done in a more *public* way. God will openly pronounce the saints' absolution before men and angels. Their happiness is not completed until the day of judgment, because their pardon shall be solemnly pronounced, and there shall be the triumphs of the heavenly multitude. At that day it will be true indeed that God sees no sin in his children; they shall be as pure as the angels; then the church shall be presented without wrinkle. Eph 5:27. She shall be as free from stain as guilt, Satan shall no more accuse. Christ will show the debt-book, crossed in his blood. Therefore the church prays for Christ's coming to judgment. The bride says, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Use 1. For information.

(1) From this word, "Forgive," we learn that if the debt of sin is no other way discharged but by being forgiven, we cannot satisfy for it. Among other damnable opinions of the church of Rome, one is—man's power to satisfy God for his sin. The Council of Trent holds that God is satisfied by our undergoing the penalty imposed by the censure of priests; and again, that we have works of our own by which we may satisfy for our wrongs done to God. By these opinions we judge what the Popish religion is. They intend to pay the debt they owe to God of *themselves*, to pay it in part, and do not look to have it all forgiven. But why did Christ teach us to pray, "Forgive us our sins," if we can of ourselves satisfy God for the wrong we have done him? This false doctrine robs God of his

glory—Christ of his merit—and the soul of salvation! Alas! is not the lock cut where the strength lay? Are not all our best works fly-blown with sin—and can our sinful works satisfy for sin? This doctrine makes men their own saviors, which is most absurd to hold, for can the obedience of a finite creature satisfy for an infinite offence? Sin being forgiven, clearly implies *we* cannot satisfy for it!

(2) From this word "us", "Forgive US," we learn that pardon is chiefly to be sought for ourselves; for though we are to pray for the pardon of others, "Pray one for another," yet in the first place, we are to beg pardon for ourselves. James 5:16. What! will another's pardon do us good? Everyone is to endeavor to have his own name in the pardon. A son cannot be pardoned by his father's pardon—he must have a pardon for himself. In this sense *selfishness* is lawful, everyone must be for himself and get a pardon for his own sins. "Forgive *us."*

(3) From this word "our", "our sins," we learn how just God is in punishing us. The text says "our sins;" we are not punished for other men's sins—but our own. "No one has anything of his own, except his sin." Augustine. There is nothing we can call so properly ours, as sin. Our *daily* bread we have from God; our daily *sins* we have from ourselves. Sin is our own act, a web of our own spinning. How righteous therefore is God in punishing us! We sow the seed, and God makes us reap what we sow. "I give every man according to the fruit of his doings." Jer 17:10. When we are punished, we but taste the fruit of our own grafting.

(4) From this word "sins", see from hence the multitude of sin we stand guilty of. We pray not, forgive us our *sin*, as if it were only a single debt—but *sins*, in the plural. So vast is the catalogue of our sins that David cries out, "Who can understand his errors?"

Psalm 19:12. Our sins are like the drops of the sea, like the atoms in the sun—they exceed all arithmetic. The debts we owe to God we can no more number, than we can satisfy God's justice for; which, as it should humble us to consider how full of black spots our souls are—so it should put us upon seeking after the pardon of our sins.

Use 2. For exhortation.

Let us labor for the forgiveness of sin, which is a main branch of the charter or covenant of grace. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Heb 8:12. It is mercy to *feed* us—but it is rich *mercy* to pardon us. Earthly things are no signs of God's love—he may give the *venison*—but not the *blessing*; but when he seals up *forgiveness*, he gives his *love* and *heaven* with it. "You set a crown of pure gold on his head." Psalm 21:3. A crown of gold was a mercy; but if you look into Psalm 103 you shall find a greater mercy: "Who forgives all shine iniquities, who crowns you with loving-kindness;" ver 3, 4. To be crowned with forgiveness and loving-kindness is afar greater mercy than be have a crown of pure gold set upon the head. It was a mercy when Christ cured the palsied man; but when Christ said to him, "Your sins are forgiven," it was more than to have his palsy healed. Mark 2:5. Forgiveness of sin is the chief thing to be sought after; and surely, if conscience is once touched with a sense of sin, there is nothing a man will thirst after more than forgiveness. "My sin is ever before me." Psalm 51:3. This made David so earnest for pardon. "Have mercy upon me, O God; blot out my transgressions." Psalm 51:1. If anyone should have come to David and asked him, "Where is your pain? What is it troubles you? Is it the fear of shame which shall come upon you? Is it the fear of the sword which God has threatened shall not depart from your house?" He would have said, "No, it is only my sin which pains me. My sin is ever before me."

Were this removed by forgiveness, though the sword rode in circuit in my family, I would be well enough content. When the *arrow of guilt* sticks in the conscience, nothing is so desirable as to have it plucked out by forgiveness.

O therefore seek after forgiveness of sin. You may make a shift to *live* without it; but how will you *die* without it? Will not death have a sting to an unpardoned sinner? How do you think to get to heaven without forgiveness? As at some festivals there is no being admitted unless you bring a ticket. Just so, unless you have this ticket to show, "Forgiveness of sin", there is no being admitted into the holy place of heaven. Will God ever *crown* those that he will not *forgive*? O be ambitious of pardoning grace.

When God had made Abraham great and large promises, Abraham replied, "Lord, what will you give me, seeing I go childless!" Gen 15:2. So, when God has given you riches, and all your heart can wish, say to him, Lord, what is all this, seeing I lack forgiveness? Let my pardon be sealed in Christ's blood. A prisoner in the jail is in an ill case, notwithstanding his brave diet, great attendance, soft bed to lie on, because, being impeached, he looks every day for his arraignment, and is afraid of the sentence of death. In such a case and worse—is he who swims in the pleasures of the world—but his sins are not forgiven. A guilty conscience impeaches him, and he is in fear of being arraigned and condemned at God's judgment-seat. Give not then sleep to your eyes, or slumber to your eyelids, until you have gotten some well-grounded hope that your sins are blotted out. Before I come to press the exhortation to seek after forgiveness of sin, I shall propound one question.

If pardon of sin is so absolutely necessary, what is the reason why so few in the world seek after it? If they lack

health, they go to the physician; but if they lack forgiveness of sin, they seem to be unconcerned, and do not seek after it. Why is this?

Men do not seek after forgiveness of sin, for **lack of consideration**. They do not look into their spiritual estate, or cast up their accounts to see how matters stand between God and their souls. "My people do not consider;" they do not consider they are indebted to God in a debt of ten thousand talents, and that God will, before long, call them to account. "So, then, everyone of us shall give account of himself to God." Isaiah 1:3; Romans 14:12. But people shun serious thoughts: "My people do not consider." Hence it is they do not look after pardon.

Men do not seek after forgiveness of sin, **for lack of conviction**. Few are convinced what a deadly evil sin is--that it is distillation of all evil, that it brings all plagues on the body, and curses on the soul. Unless a man's sins are forgiven, there is not the vilest creature alive--the rat, serpent, or toad—which is in a worse condition than the sinner! For when they die they go but to the earth; but he, dying without pardon, goes into hell torments forever. Men are not convinced of this—but play with the viper of sin.

Men do not seek earnestly after forgiveness, **because they are seeking other things**. They seek the world immoderately. When Saul was seeking after the donkeys, he did not think of a kingdom. The world is a golden snare. "The riches of the world are the snares of the devil," Bernard. The wedge of gold hinders many from seeking after pardon. Ministers cry to the people, "Get your pardon sealed;" but if you call to a man who is in a mill, the noise of the mill drowns the voice, that he cannot hear. Just so, when the mill of a trade is going, it makes such a noise, that the people cannot hear the minister when he lifts up his voice like a trumpet and cries to them to look

after the sealing of their pardon. He who spends all his time about the world and does not mind forgiveness, will accuse himself of folly at last. You would judge that prisoner very unwise that should spend all his time with the cook to get his dinner ready, and should never mind getting a pardon.

Men seek not after forgiveness of sin, **through a bold presumption of mercy**. They conceive God to be made up all of mercy; and that he will indulge them, though they take little or no pains to sue for their pardon. True, God is merciful—but he is also just, he will not wrong his justice by showing mercy. Read the proclamation: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious; and who will by no means clear the guilty." Exod 34:6, 7. Such as go on in sin, and are so slothful or willful that they will not seek after forgiveness, though there be a whole ocean of mercy in the Lord, not one drop shall fall to their share. He "will by no means clear the guilty."

Men seek not earnestly after forgiveness, **out of hope of impunity**. They flatter themselves in sin, and because they have been spared so long, therefore think God never intends to reckon with them. "He has said in his heart—God has forgotten; He hides His face and will never see it." Psalm 10:11. They think that God is either blind or forgetful. But let sinners know--that long forbearance is not forgiveness. God bore with Sodom a long time—but at last rained down fire and brimstone upon them. The adjourning of the trial does not acquit the prisoner. The longer God is taking the blow, the heavier it will be at last, if sinners repent not.

Men do not seek earnestly after forgiveness, **through mistake**. They think getting a pardon is easy, it is but repenting at the last hour, a sigh, or a "Lord, have mercy," and a pardon will drop into

their mouths. But is it so easy to repent, and have a pardon? Tell me, O sinner, is regeneration easy? Are there no pangs in the new birth? Is mortification of sin easy? Is it nothing to pluck out the right eye? Is it easy to leap out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom? This is the draw-net by which the devil drags millions to hell!

Men do not look after forgiveness, **through despair**. Oh, says the desponding soul, it is a vain thing for *me* to expect pardon; my sins are so many and heinous that surely God will not forgive me. "And they said, There is no hope." Jer 38:12. My sins are huge mountains, and can they ever be cast into the sea? Despair cuts the sinews of endeavor. Who will use means that despairs of success? The devil shows some men their sins at the little end of the telescope, and they seem little or none at all; but he shows others their sins at the great end of the telescope, and they fright them into despair. This is a soul-damning sin. Judas's despair was worse than his treason. *Despair spills the cordial of Christ's blood.* The voice of despair is, "Christ's blood cannot pardon me." Thus you see whence it is that men seek no more earnestly after the forgiveness of sin.

Having answered this question, I shall now come to press the exhortation upon everyone of us, to seek earnestly after the forgiveness of our sins.

(1) Our very life lies in getting pardon. It is called the "justification of life." Romans 5:18. Now, if our life lies in our pardon, and we are dead and damned without it, does it not concern us above all things to labor after forgiveness of sin? "For it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life." Deut 32:47. If a man is under a sentence of death, he will set his wits to work, and make use of all his friends to get the king to grant his pardon, because his life lies upon it. Just so, we by reason of sin are under a sentence of damnation.

There is one friend at court we may make use of to procure our pardon, namely, the Lord Jesus. How earnest then should we be with him to be our Advocate to the Father for us, that he would present the merit of his blood to the Father, as the price of our pardon!

(2) There is that in sin which should make us desire forgiveness. Sin is the only thing that disquiets the soul. It is a burden, it burdens the creation, it burdens the conscience. Romans 8:22; Psalm 38:4. A wicked man is not sensible of sin, he is dead in sin; and if you lay a thousand pound weight upon a dead man he feels it not. But to an awakened conscience sin is a burden. When a man seriously weighs with himself the glory and purity of that Majesty which sin has offended, the preciousness of that soul which sin has polluted, the loss of that happiness which sin has endangered, the greatness of that torment which sin has deserved, to lay all this together, surely must make sin burdensome! And should not we labor to have this burden removed by pardoning mercy?

Sin is a debt, "Forgive us our debts." Matthew 6:12. Every debt we owe, God has written down in his book. "Behold, it is written before me," and one day God's debt-book will be opened. "The books were opened." Isaiah 65:6; Rev 20:12. And should not this make us look after forgiveness? Sin being such a debt as we must eternally lie in the prison of hell for, if it is not discharged, should we not be earnest with God to cross out the debt-book with the blood of his Son? There is no way to look God in the face with comfort—but by having our debts either paid or pardoned.

(3) Nothing but forgiveness can give ease to a troubled conscience. There is a great difference between having the fancy pleased, and having the conscience eased. Worldly things may please the fancy—but not ease the conscience. Nothing but pardon, can

relieve a troubled soul. It is strange what shifts men will make for ease when conscience is pained, and how many false medicines they will use before they will take the right way for a cure. When conscience is troubled, they will try if merry company will help. They may perhaps drink away trouble of conscience; perhaps they may play it away at cards; perhaps multitude of business will so take up their time, that they shall have no leisure to hear the clamors and accusations of conscience; but how vain are all these attempts! Still the wound bleeds inwardly, their heart trembles, their conscience roars, and they can have no peace. Why is it? The reason is, they go not to the mercy of God, and the blood of Christ, for the pardon of their sins; and hence they have no ease.

Suppose a man has a thorn in his foot, which puts him to pain; let him anoint it, or wrap it up, and keep it warm; but until the thorn is plucked out—it aches and swells, and he has no ease. Just so, when the thorn of sin is in a man's conscience, there is no ease until it be pulled out. When God removes iniquity, the thorn is plucked out. How was David's heart finely quieted, when Nathan the prophet told him, "The Lord has put away your sin!" 2 Samuel 12:13. How should we therefore labor for forgiveness! Until then we can have no ease in the mind. *Nothing but pardon, sealed with the blood of the Redeemer, can ease a wounded spirit.*

(4) Forgiveness of sin is feasible, and may be obtained. Impossibility destroys endeavor; but, "There is hope in Israel concerning this." Ezra 10:2. The devils are past hope; a sentence of death is upon them, which is irrevocable; but there is hope for *us* of obtaining pardon. "There is forgiveness with you." Psalm 130:4. If pardon of sin were not possible, it were not to be prayed for; but it has been prayed for. "I beseech you, O Lord, take away the iniquity of your servant." 2 Samuel 24:10. And Christ bids us pray for it "Forgive

us our trespasses." That is possible which God has promised—but God has promised pardon upon repentance. "Let the wicked forsake his way and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isaiah 55:7. Hebrew, "He will multiply pardon." That is possible, which others have obtained; but others have arrived at forgiveness, therefore it is obtainable. Psalm 32:5. "You have cast all my sins behind your back." Isaiah 38:17.

(5) Forgiveness of sin is a choice and eminent blessing. To have the book cancelled, and God appeased, is worth obtaining, which may whet our endeavor after it. That it is a rare transcendent blessing, appears by three demonstrations:

First, if we **consider how this blessing is purchased**, namely, by the Lord Jesus. There are three things in reference to Christ which set forth the choiceness and preciousness of forgiveness:

[1] No mere created power in heaven or earth could expiate one sin, or procure a pardon—but Jesus Christ alone. "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins." 1 John 2:2. No creature merit can buy a pardon of sin. Paul had as much to boast of as any man—his high birth, his learning, his legal righteousness; but he disclaims all in point of justification, and lays them under Christ's feet to tread upon. No angel, with all his holiness, could lay down a price for the pardon of one sin. "If a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" 1 Sam 2:25. What angel dared be so bold as to open his mouth to God for a delinquent sinner? Only Jesus Christ, who is God-man, could deal with God's justice, and purchase forgiveness.

[2] Christ himself could not procure a pardon without dying. Every pardon is the price of Christ's blood. Christ's life was a rule of holiness, and a pattern of obedience. He fulfilled all

righteousness. Matthew 3:15. Certainly his active obedience was of great value and merit; but that which raises the worth of forgiveness, is that his active obedience would not have fully procured a pardon for us, without the shedding of his blood. Our justification therefore is ascribed to his blood. "Being justified by his blood." Romans 5:9. Christ bled out our pardon. There is much ascribed to his intercession—but his intercession would not have prevailed with God for the forgiveness of one sin, had he not shed his blood. It is worthy of notice, that when Christ is described to John as an intercessor for his church, he is represented in the likeness of a *slain Lamb*, to show that Christ must die and be slain before he can be an intercessor. Rev 5:6.

[3] Christ, by dying, had not purchased forgiveness for us if he had not died an accursed death. He endured the curse. Gal 3:13. All the agonies Christ endured in his soul, all the torments in his body, could not purchase a pardon—unless he had been made a curse for us. He must be cursed before we could be blessed with a pardon.

Secondly, forgiveness of sin is a choice blessing, if we **consider what glorious attributes God puts forth in it.** He puts forth infinite power. When Moses was pleading with God for the pardon of Israel's sin, he spoke thus: "Let the power of my Lord be great." Numb 14:17. For God, forgiving sin is a work of as great power as to make heaven and earth—nay, a greater work! When he made the world, he met with no opposition; but, when he pardons, Satan opposes, and the heart opposes. A sinner is desperate, and slights, yes, defies pardon—until God, by his mighty power, convinces him of his sin and danger, and makes him willing to accept of pardon. God, in forgiving sins, puts forth infinite mercy. "Pardon, I beseech you, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of your

mercy." Numb 14:19. It is mercy to have a reprieve; and if there is mercy in *sparing* a sinner, what mercy is there in *pardoning* him! This is the the *cream of mercy*. For God to put up with so many injuries, to wipe so many debts off the score, is infinite grace!

Thirdly, forgiveness of sin is a choice blessing, as **it lays a foundation for other mercies**. It is a leading mercy. It makes way for temporal good things. It brings *health*. When Christ said to the palsied man, "Your sins are forgiven," he made way for a bodily cure. "Arise, take up your bed and walk." Matthew 9:6. The pardon of his sin made way for the healing of his palsy. It brings *prosperity*. Jer 33:8, 9. It makes way for spiritual good things. Forgiveness of sin never comes alone—but has other spiritual blessings attending it. *Those whom God pardons—he sanctifies, adopts, and crowns!* It is a voluminous mercy, it draws the *silver link of grace*, and the *golden link of glory* after it. God seals the sinner's pardon with a kiss. And should not we, above all things, seek after so great a blessing as forgiveness? "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him!" Psalm 32:1-2

(6) That which may make us seek after forgiveness of sin is God's inclinableness to pardon. "You are a God ready to pardon." Neh 9:17. In the Hebrew it is, "A God of pardons." We are apt to entertain wrong conceits of God, that he is inexorable, and will not forgive. "I knew you that you are an hard man!" Matthew 25:24. But God is a sin-pardoning God. "The Lord merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." Exod 34:6, 7. Here is my name, says God, if you would know how I am called, I tell you my name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful, forgiving iniquity." A pirate or rebel, that knows there is a proclamation out against him, will never come in; but, if he hears that the prince is full of clemency

and there is a proclamation of pardon if he submits—it will be a great incentive to him to lay down his weapons and become loyal to his prince. See God's proclamation to repenting sinners, in Jer 3:12: "Go and proclaim these words, and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful." God's mercy is a *tender* mercy. The Hebrew word for mercy signifies *affections*. God's mercy is full of sympathy, he is of a most sweet, indulgent nature. "You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive." Psalm 86:1. *The bee does not more naturally give honey, than God shows mercy.*

But does not God seem to delight in punitive acts, or acts of severity? "I will laugh at your calamity." Proverbs 1:26.

To whom does God say this? See verse 24, 25. "Since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke." God delights in the destruction of those who despise his instruction; but a humble penitent breaking off sin, and suing for pardon, he delights in. "He delights in mercy." Mic 7:18.

"But though God is so full of mercy, and ready to forgive—yet his mercy reaches not to all; he forgives such only as are elected, and I question my election."

No man can say he is not elected. God has not revealed to any particular man, that he is a reprobate, excepting him only, who has sinned the sin against the Holy Spirit; which you are far enough from —who mourn for sin, and seek after forgiveness.

The thought that we are not elected, and that there is no pardon for us, comes from Satan, and is the poisoned arrow he shoots. He is the accuser: he accuses us to God that we are great sinners; and he

accuses God to us as if he were a tyrant, one that watches to destroy his creatures. These are diabolical suggestions; say, "Get you behind me, Satan."

It is sinful for any to hold that he is not elected. It would take him off from the use of means, from praying and repenting; it would harden him, and make him desperate. Therefore, do not pry into the secrets of heaven. Remember what befell the men of Bethshemesh, for looking into the ark. 1 Sam 6:19. Know that we are not to go by God's *secret* will—but by his *revealed* will. Let us look into God's revealed will, and there we shall find enough to nourish hope, and encourage us to go to God for the pardon of our sins. He has said in his Word, that he is "rich in mercy," and that he does not delight in the destruction of a sinner. Eph 2:4; Ezek 18:32. He swears by his essence. "As I live, says the Lord God I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Ezek 33:11. Hence he waits long, and puts off the judgement from time to time, to see if sinners will repent and seek to him for pardon. Therefore, let God's tender mercies and precious promises encourage us to seek him for the forgiveness of our sins.

(7) Not to seek earnestly for pardon, is unspeakable misery to such as need forgiveness. It must needs be ill with that malefactor, who has not pardon.

The unpardoned sinner, who lives and dies such, is under the **greatest loss and privation**. Is there any happiness like the enjoyment of God in glory? This is the joy of angels, the crown of glorified saints—but the unforgiven sinner shall not behold God's smiling face; he shall see God as an enemy, not as a friend; he shall have an affrighting sight of God, not the beatific vision; he shall see the black rod of vengeance, not the mercy-seat of forgiveness. Sins unpardoned, are like the angel with a flaming sword, who stopped

the passage to paradise. They stop the way to the heavenly paradise. How doleful is the condition of that soul, which is banished from the place of bliss, where the King of Glory keeps his court!

The unpardoned sinner has nothing to do with any **promise**. *The promises are the breasts which hold the sincere milk of the Word, which fill the soul with precious sweetness.* They are the royal charter: but what has a stranger to do to meddle with the charter? It was the dove which plucked the olive branch; it is only the believer who plucks the tree of the promise. Until the condition of the promise is performed, no man can have right to the comfort of it; and how sad is it not to have one promise to show for heaven!

An unpardoned sinner is continually in danger of the outcry of an **accusing conscience**. An accusing conscience is a little hell. We tremble to hear a lion roar: how terrible are the roarings of conscience! Judas hanged himself to quiet his conscience. A sinner's conscience at present is either *asleep* or *seared*; but when God shall awaken it, either by affliction or at death, how will the unpardoned sinner be affrighted! When a man shall have all his sins set before his eyes, and drawn out in their bloody colors, and the worm of conscience begins to gnaw, oh, what a trembling at heart will the sinner have!

All the **curses** of God stand in full force against an unpardoned sinner. His very blessings are cursed. "I will curse your blessings." Mal 2:2. His table is a snare; he eats and drinks a curse. What comfort could Dionysius have at his feast, when he imagined he saw a naked sword hanging by a thread over his head? It is enough to spoil a sinner's banquet, that a curse like a naked sword, hangs over his head. Caesar wondered to see one of his soldiers who was in debt so merry. It is astonishing, that an unpardoned man could be merry,

who is heir to all God's curses! He does not see these curses—but is blinder than Balaam's donkey, who saw the angel's drawn sword.

The unpardoned sinner is in a **dreadful case at death**. Luther professed there were three things which he dared not think of without Christ—of his sins, of death, and of the day of judgment. Death to a Christless soul is the "king of terrors." As the prophet Ahijah said to Jeroboam's wife, "I am sent to you with heavy tidings" (1 Kings 14:6). Just so, death is sent to the unpardoned soul with heavy tidings. Death is *God's jailer* to arrest him. Death is a prologue to damnation. It takes away all earthly comforts, it takes away sugared morsels; no more drinking wine in bowls, no more mirth or music. "The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again." Rev 18:22. The sinner shall never more taste of luscious delights, for all eternity; his honey shall be turned into the "gall of asps." Job 20:14.

At death, an end shall be put to all reprieves. Now God reprieves a sinner, he spares him such a fit of sickness; he respites him many years. The sinner should have died at such a drinking bout—but God granted him a reprieve; he lengthened out the silver thread of patience to a miracle; but when the sinner dies without repentance, and unpardoned, the lease of God's patience is run out, and he must appear in person before the righteous God to receive his sentence; after which, there shall be none to bail him, nor shall he hear of a reprieve any more.

(6) The sinner dying unpardoned, must go into damnation! This is the second death—an undying death. The unpardoned soul must forever bear the anger of a sin-revenging God. As long as God is God—so long the vial of his wrath shall be dropping upon the damned soul. This is a helpless condition. There is a time when a

sinner will not be helped; Christ and salvation are offered to him—but he slights them, he will not be helped; and there is a time shortly coming when he cannot be helped; he calls out for mercy, "Oh! a pardon, a pardon! but it is too late, the date of mercy is expired!" Oh! how sad, then, is it to live and die unpardoned! You may lay a grave-stone upon that man, and write this epitaph upon it, "It would have been good for that man--if he had never been born!" Now, if the misery of an unpardoned state is so inexpressible, how should we labor for forgiveness, that we may not be engulfed in so dreadful a labyrinth of fire and brimstone to all eternity!

(7) Such as are unpardoned, must needs lead uncomfortable lives. "Your life shall hang in doubt before you, and you shall fear day and night." Deut 28:66. Thus the unpardoned sinner must needs have a palpitation and trembling at the heart. "Fear has torment." 1 John 4:18. The Greek word for torment, kolasis, is used sometimes for hell; fear has hell in it. A man in debt fears, every step he goes, lest he should be arrested. Just so, the unpardoned sinner fears, what if this night death, death which is God's sergeant, should arrest him! "Why do you not pardon my transgression? For now shall I sleep in the dust;" as if Job had said, "Lord, I shall shortly die, I shall sleep in the dust; and what shall I do if my sins be not pardoned?" Job 7:21. What comfort can an unpardoned soul take in anything? Surely no more than a prisoner can take in food or music—who lacks his pardon. Therefore, by all these powerful motives, let us labor for the forgiveness of sins.

But I am discouraged from going to God for pardon, for I am unworthy of forgiveness; what am I, that God should show such a favor to me?

God forgives—not because *we are worthy*—but because *he is gracious*. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious." Exod 34:6. He forgives out of his mercy; acts of *pardon* are acts of *grace*. What worthiness was there in Paul before conversion? He was a blasphemer, and so he sinned against the first table of the law; he was a persecutor, and so he sinned against the second table of the law; but free grace sealed his pardon. "I obtained mercy;" I was all bestrewed with mercy. 1 Tim 1:13. What worthiness was in the woman of Samaria? She was ignorant. John 4:22. She was immoral; ver 18. She was morose and churlish, she would not give Christ so much as a cup of cold water; ver 9. "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" What worthiness was here? Yet Christ overlooked all, and pardoned her ingratitude; and though she denied him water out of the well—yet he gave her the water of life. Free grace does not **find** us worthy—but **makes** us worthy! Therefore, notwithstanding unworthiness, seek to God, that your sins may be pardoned.

"But I hare been a great sinner—and surely God will not pardon me"

David brings it as an argument for pardon. "Pardon my iniquity, for it is *great*." Psalm 25:11. When God forgives *great* sins, he does a work like himself. The greater the desperateness of the wound—the more it sets forth the virtue of Christ's blood in curing it. Mary Magdalene, out of whom seven devils were cast, was a great sinner—yet she had her pardon! When some of the Jews, who had a hand in crucifying Christ, repented—the very blood they shed sealed their pardon! Consider sins either for their number as the sands of the sea, or for their weight as the rocks of the sea—yet there is mercy enough in God to forgive them! "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Isaiah 1:18. *Scarlet* signifies *twice dipped*, which no art of man can get out—yet God can wash out this scarlet dye!

There is no sin exempted from pardon—but that sin which despises pardon, the sin against the Holy Spirit. Matthew 12:31. Therefore, O sinner, do not cast away your anchor of hope—but go to God for forgiveness. The vast *ocean* has bounds set to it—but *God's pardoning mercy* is boundless! He can as easily forgive great sins as little sins; as the sea can cover great rocks and little sands. Nothing hinders pardon—but the sinner's not asking it!

That a great sinner should not despair of forgiveness, we may learn from this Scripture: "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions." If you look on the foregoing words, you would wonder how this verse comes in. "You have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your offenses;" and then it follows, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions." Isaiah 43:24, 25. One would have *thought* it should have run thus, "You have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your offenses; I, even I, am he who will *punish* your iniquities;" but God comes in a mild loving strain, "You have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your offenses; I am he who blots out your iniquities."

So that the greatness of our sins should not discourage us from going to God for forgiveness. Though you have committed acts of impiety—yet God can come with an act of forgiveness, and say, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions." God counts it his glory to display *free grace* in its most brilliant colors. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20. When sin becomes exceeding sinful, free grace becomes exceeding glorious! God's pardoning love can conquer the *sinner*, and triumph over the *sin!* Consider, you almost despairing soul, there is not so much *sin* in man—as there is *mercy* in God. Man's sin in comparison to God's mercy—is but as a spark in the ocean; and who would doubt whether a spark could be quenched in an ocean?

"But I have relapsed into the same sins, and how can I have the face to come to God for pardon of those sins into which I have more than once fallen?"

Abraham twice equivocated; Lot committed incest twice; Peter sinned thrice by carnal fear; but they repented, and they had absolution.

There is a twofold relapse:

(1) There is a **willful** relapse, when, after a man has solemnly vowed himself to God, he falls into a league with sin, and returns back to it. "I have loved strangers, and after them *will* I go" (Jer 2:25); and

(2) There is a relapse through **infirmity**, when the bent and resolution of a man's heart is against sin—but, through the violence of temptation, and withdrawing of God's grace—he is carried down the stream against his will. Now, though willful and continued relapses are desperate, and tend to waste the conscience, and run men upon the precipice of damnation—yet if they are through infirmity, and we mourn for them, we may obtain forgiveness. A godly man does not march after sin as his general—but is led *captive* by it; and the Lord will pity a captive prisoner. Christ commands us to forgive a trespassing brother seventy times seven. Matthew 18:22. If he bids *us* do it, much more will *he* forgive a relapsing sinner in case he repent. "Return, O backsliding Israel, for I am merciful, says the Lord." Jer 3:12. It is not falling once or twice into the mire which drowns—but lying there. Just so, it is not once relapsing into sin—but *lying in sin impenitently* which damns.

"But God requires so much sorrow and humiliation before remission, that I fear I shall never arrive at it!"

He requires no more humiliation than may fit a soul for mercy. Many a Christian thinks, because he has not filled God's bottle so full of tears as others, he is not humbled enough to receive pardon. But God's dealings are various; all have not the like pangs in the new birth. Some are won with love; the sense of God's mercy abused causes ingenuous tears to flow. Others are more flagitious and hardened, and God deals with them more roughly. That soul is humbled enough to receive a pardon which is brought to a thorough sense of sin, and sees the need of a Savior, and loves him as the fairest of ten thousand. Therefore be not discouraged, for if your heart is bruised from sin and broken off from it, your sin shall be blotted out. No sooner did Ephraim weep, than God's affections were working. "My affections are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him." Jer 31:20.

Having answered these objections, let me beseech you, above all things—labor for the forgiveness of sin! Think with yourselves how great a mercy it is: it is one of the richest jewels in the cabinet of the new covenant. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven." Psalm 32:1: In the Hebrew it is "blessednesses". And *think of the unparalleled misery of those whose sins are not forgiven!* Such as did not have the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled upon their door-posts, were destroyed by the angel. Exod 12. Just so, those who do not have Christ's blood sprinkled on them, to wash away the guilt of sin, will fall into the gulf of perdition! If you resolve to seek after forgiveness, do not delay!

Many say they will get their pardon—but they procrastinate and put it off so long that it is too late. When the shadows of the evening are stretched forth, and the night of death approaches, they begin to look after their pardon. This has been the undoing of millions. They purpose to look after their souls—but they wait so long, until the

lease of mercy has run out. Oh, therefore, hasten to get pardon! Think of the *uncertainty of life*. What security have you, that you shall live another day? [The fleeting hour flies on fickle wings.] Our life is a candle, which is soon blown out; it is made up of a few *flying* minutes. O you dust and ashes! You may fear every hour, to be blown into your grave! And what if death comes to arrest you before your pardon is sealed?

Plutarch reports of one Archias, who being among his cups when a letter was delivered to him, and he was requested to read it, as it was about serious business, he said, "I will mind serious things *tomorrow*." But that night he was slain! You who say, "Tomorrow I will repent, I will get my pardon," you may suddenly be slain; therefore today, while it is called today, look after the forgiveness of sin. After awhile, all the fountains of mercy will be stopped, there will not be one drop of Christ's blood to be had! There are no pardons after death!

Use 3. Let us labor to have the evidence that our sins are forgiven. A man may have his sins forgiven and not know it; he may have a pardon in the court of *heaven* when he has it not in the court of *conscience*. David's sin was forgiven as soon as he repented. God sent Nathan the prophet to tell him so. 2 Samuel 12:13. But David did not feel the comfort of it at once, as appears by the penitential Psalm composed afterwards. "Make me to hear joy;" and "Cast me not away from your presence." Psalm 51:8, 11. It is one thing to be *pardoned*; and another to *feel* it. The evidence of pardon may not appear for a time, and this may be:

(1) From the **weakness of faith**. Forgiveness of sin is so strange and infinite a blessing, that a Christian can hardly persuade himself that God will extend such a favor to him. As it is said of the apostles

when Christ first appeared to them, "They did not believe it because of joy and amazement," (Luke 24:41)—so the soul may be so stricken with admiration, that the *wonder of pardon* staggers its faith.

(2) A man may be pardoned and not know it from the **strength of temptation**. Satan accuses the godly of sin, and tells them, that God does not love them; and should such sinners think of pardon? Believers are compared to bruised reeds; and temptations to winds. Matthew 12:20; chap 7:25. Now, a reed is easily shaken with the wind. Temptations shake the godly; and though they are pardoned—yet they know it not. Job in a temptation thought God was his enemy, and yet he was then in a pardoned condition. Job 16:9.

"Why does God sometimes conceal the evidence of pardon?"

(1) Though he pardons, he may withhold the sense of it for a time, because he would lay us lower in contrition. He would have us see what an evil and bitter thing it is to offend him. Therefore we must lie longer in the *briny tears of repentance* before we have the sense of pardon. It was long before David's broken bones were set, and his pardon sealed—that his heart might be more contrite; and this was a sacrifice which God delighted in.

(2) Though God has forgiven sin, he may deny the manifestation of it for a time, to make us prize pardon, and make it sweeter to us when it comes. The *difficulty* of obtaining a mercy enhances its value. When we have been a long time tugging at prayer for a pardon of sin, and still God withholds—but at last, after many sighs and tears, it comes—we esteem it the more, and it is sweeter. [The longer the delay—the sweeter the rejoicing.] The longer mercy is in the birth—the more welcome will the deliverance be.

Let us not be content however, without the evidence and sense of pardon. He who is pardoned and knows it not, is like one who has a wealthy estate bequeathed to him—but knows it not. Our *comfort* consists in the knowledge of forgiveness. "Make me to hear joy." Psalm 51:8. There is a jubilee in the soul when we are able to read our pardon. To the witness of conscience, God adds the witness of his Spirit; and in the mouth of these two witnesses our joy is confirmed. O labor for the evidence of forgiveness!

"How shall we know that our sins are forgiven?"

We must not be our own judges in this case. "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." Proverbs 28:26. "The heart is deceitful." Jer 17:9. It is folly to trust a deceiver. The Lord only by his Word must judge whether we are pardoned or not. As under the law no leper might judge himself to be clean—but the priest was to pronounce him clean, (Lev 13:37). Just so, we are not to judge ourselves to be clean from the guilt of sin—until we are such as the Word of God pronounces to be clean.

"How shall we know by the Word that our sins are pardoned?"

(1) The pardoned sinner is a great weeper. The pardoned sinner is a great weeper. The sense of God's love melts his heart. "That free grace should ever look upon *me*--that such crimson sins as mine should be washed away in Christ's blood--makes my heart melt and my eyes drop with tears!" Never did any man read his pardon with dry eyes. "She stood at his feet weeping." Luke 7:38. Mary's tears were more precious to Christ than her ointment; her eyes, which before sparkled with lust, now became a fountain, and washed Christ's feet with her tears. She was a true penitent, and had her pardon. "Therefore, I say, her sins, which are many, are forgiven;"

ver 47. Pardon of sin, will make the hardest heart soften, and cause the stony heart to bleed. Is it thus with us? Have we been dissolved into tears for sin? God seals his pardons upon *melting* hearts.

(2) We may know our sins are forgiven by having the grace of faith. "To him give all the prophets witness, that whoever *believes* in him shall receive remission of sins." Acts 10:43. In saving faith there are two things—renunciation and recumbency:

[1] Renunciation. A man renounces all opinion of himself; and he is quite taken off from himself. Phil 3:9. He sees all his duties are but broken reeds; though he could weep a sea of tears; though he had all the grace of men and angels, it could not purchase his pardon.

[2] Recumbency. The soul gets hold of Christ as Adonijah did of the horns of the altar. 1 Kings 1:51. *Faith casts itself into the stream of Christ's blood*, and says, "If I perish, I perish!" If we have but the least grain of this precious faith, we have something to show for pardon. This faith is *acceptable to God*—it pleases him more than offering up ten thousand rivers of oil, than working miracles, than martyrdom, or the highest acts of obedience. This faith is *profitable to us*; it is our best certificate to show for pardon. No sooner does faith reach forth its hand to receive Christ, than Christ sets his hand to our pardon.

(3) The pardoned soul is an admirer of God. "Who is a God like unto you—who pardons iniquity!" Micah 7:18. "Oh, that God should ever look upon me! I was a sinner, and nothing but a sinner—yet I obtained mercy! Who is a God like unto you! Mercy has been despised, and yet that mercy saves me! Christ has been crucified by me—yet his cross crowns me! God has displayed the ensigns of free grace, he has set up his mercy above my sin, nay, in spite of it. This causes admiration. Who is a God like you!"

A man who goes over a narrow bridge in the night, and next morning sees the danger he was in, how miraculously he escaped, is filled with admiration. Just so, when God shows a man how near he was falling into hell, how that gulf is passed, and all his sins are pardoned, he is amazed, and cries out, "Who is a God like unto you, who pardons my iniquity! That God should pardon me and pass by others—that I should be taken and others left—fills my soul with wonder and astonishment!"

(4) Wherever God pardons sin—he subdues it. "He will have compassion on us, he will subdue our iniquities." Mic 7:19. Where men's persons are justified, their lusts are mortified. There is in sin, a *commanding* and a *condemning* power. The *condemning* power of sin is taken away, when its *commanding* power is taken away. We know our sins are forgiven, when they are subdued. If a malefactor is in prison, how shall he know that his prince has pardoned him? If the jailor comes and knocks off his chains and fetters, and lets him out of prison; then he knows he is pardoned. Just so, we know God has pardoned us, when the fetters of sin are broken off, and we walk at liberty in the ways of God. "I will walk at liberty;" this is a blessed sign that we are pardoned. Psalm 119:45. Such as are washed in Christ's blood from guilt, are made kings to God. Rev 1:6. As kings, they rule over their sins.

(5) He whose sins are forgiven—is full of love to God. Mary Magdalene's heart was fired with love. "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much." Luke 7:47. Her love was not the *cause* of her remission—but a *sign* of it. A pardoned soul is a monument of mercy, and he thinks he can never love God enough. He wishes he had a coal from God's altar to inflame his heart in love, he wishes he could borrow the wings of the cherubim that he might fly swifter in obedience; a pardoned soul is sick with love. He whose

heart is like marble, locked up in impenitence, which does not melt in love, gives evidence that his pardon is yet unsealed.

(6) Where sin is pardoned—the nature is purified. "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them." Hos 14:4. Every man, by nature, is both *guilty* and *diseased*. When God remits the guilt, he cures the disease. "Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases." Psalm 103:3. Herein God's pardon goes beyond the king's pardon; the king may forgive a malefactor—but he cannot change his heart, which may be a thievish heart still; but when God pardons, he changes the heart. "A new heart also will I give you." Ezek 36:26. A pardoned soul is adorned and embellished with holiness. "This is he who came by water and blood." 1 John 5:6. When Christ comes with *blood* to justify, he comes with *water* to cleanse. "I have caused your iniquity to pass from you, and I will clothe you with change of raiment." Zech 3:4. I will cause your iniquity to pass from you—there is pardoning grace; and I will clothe you with change of raiment—there is sanctifying grace. Let no one say he has *pardon*, who has not *grace*. Many tell us they hope they are pardoned, who were never sanctified. They believe in Christ; but what faith is it? A swearing faith, a whoring faith; the faith of devils is as good!

(7) Such as are in the number of God's people have forgiveness of sin. "Comfort my people, cry unto her, that her iniquity is pardoned." Isaiah 40:1, 2.

How shall we know that we are God's elect people?

By three characters.

God's people are a **HUMBLE** people. The clothing which all Christ's people wear, is humility. "Be clothed with humility." 1 Peter 5:5. A

sight of *God's* glory humbles. Elijah wrapped his face in a mantle when God's glory passed by. "Now my eye sees you, therefore I abhor myself." Job 13:5, 6. The *stars* vanish when the *sun* appears. A sight of *sin* humbles. In the glass of the Word the godly see their spots, and they are humbling spots. "Lo," says the soul, "I can call nothing my own but sins and needs!" A humble sinner is in a better condition than a proud angel.

God's people are a **WILLING** people. "A people of willingness;" love constrains them; they serve God freely, and out of choice. Psalm 110:3. They stick at no service; they will run through a sea, and a wilderness; they will follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes.

God's people are a **HEAVENLY** people. "They are not of the world." John 17:16. God's people have a heavenly motion of the soul, contrary to the men of the world. They use the world as their *servant*—but do not follow the world as their *master*. "Our citizenship is in heaven." Phil 3:20. Such as have these three characters of God's people, have a good certificate to show that they are pardoned. Forgiveness of sin belongs to them. "Comfort my people," tell them their iniquity is forgiven.

(8) We are pardoned, if, after many storms, we have a sweet calm and peace within. "Being justified, we have peace." Romans 5:1. After many a bitter tear shed, and heart-breaking, the mind has been more sedate, and a sweet serenity or still music has followed; which brings the tidings that God is appeased. Before conscience accused, now it secretly whispers comforts, which is a blessed evidence that a man's sins are pardoned. If the bailiffs do not trouble and arrest the debtor—it is a sign his debt is forgiven. Just so, if conscience does not vex or accuse—but upon good grounds

whispers consolation—it is a sign that the debt is discharged, and the sin is forgiven.

(9) Sin is forgiven when we have hearts sincere. "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is *no deceit*." Psalm 32:1-2.

What is it to be sincere?

He who is sincere, has plainness of heart. He is without collusion, he has not a double heart; his heart is right with God. A man may do a right action—but not with a right heart. "Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord—but not with a perfect heart." 2 Chron 25:2. To have the heart right with God, is to serve him from a right *principle*—which is love; by a right *rule*—the Word; to a right *end*—the glory of God.

He who has a sincere heart—dares not allow itself in the least sin; it avoids **secret** sins. The man dares not hide any sin, as Rachel did her father's idols, under her. Gen 31:34. He knows God sees him, which is more than if men and angels beheld him. He avoids **besetting** sins. "I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from *my* iniquity." Psalm 18:23. As in the hive there is a master-bee —so in the heart there is a master-sin. *A sincere heart sincere takes the sacrificing knife of mortification, and runs it through its beloved sin!*

He who has a sincere heart—desires to know the whole mind and will of God. An unsound heart is afraid of the light, it is not willing to know its duty. A sincere soul says (as Job 34:32), "That which I see not, teach me." "Lord, show me what is my duty, and wherein I offend; let me not sin for lack of light; what I know not, teach me."

He who has a sincere heart—is uniform in religion. The man has an equal eye to all God's commands. He makes conscience of private duties; he worships God in his closet as well as in the temple. When Jacob was alone, he wrestled with the angel. Gen 32:23, 24. So a Christian, when alone, wrestles with God in prayer, and will not let him go until he has blessed him. He performs difficult duties, wherein the heart and spirit of religion lie, and which cross flesh and blood; he is much in self-humbling and self-examining. He rather uses the looking-glass of the Word to look into his own heart—than the broad spectacles of censure to spy the faults of others.

He who has a sincere heart—is true to God's interest. He grieves to see it go ill with the church. Nehemiah, though the king's cupbearer, and wine so near, was sad when Zion's glory was eclipsed. Neh 2:3. Like the tree of which I have read, if any of the leaves of which are cut, the rest shrink up of themselves, and for a time hang down. Just so, when God's church suffers, a sincere soul feels himself touched in his own person. He rejoices to see the cause of God get ground—to see truth triumph, piety lift up her head, and the flowers of Christ's crown flourish. This is a sincere heart—it is loyal and true to God's interest.

He who has a sincere heart—is just in his dealings. As he is upright in his words—so he is in his weights. He makes conscience of the second table of the law, as well as the first table; he is for *equity* as well as *piety*. "See that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter." 1 Thess 4:6. A sincere person thinks he may as well rob as defraud; his rule is to do to others what he would have them do to him. Matthew 7:12.

He who has a sincere heart—is true in his promises; his word is as good as his bond. If he has made a promise, though it be to his harm,

and entrenches upon his profit, he will not go back. The hypocrite plays fast and loose, flees from his word; there is no more binding him with oaths and promises, than Samson could be bound with green withs. Judges 16:7. A sincere soul says as Jephthah, "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord—and I cannot go back." Judges 11:35.

He who has a sincere heart—is faithful in his friendship; he is what he appears; his heart goes along with his tongue, as a well-made dial goes with the sun. He cannot flatter and hate, commend and censure. Counterfeiting of love is hypocrisy. It is too usual to betray with a kiss. Joab took Abner by the beard to kiss him, and smote him in the fifth rib that he died. 2 Samuel 20:9, 10. Many deceive with sugar words. Physicians judge of the health of the body by the tongue; if that looks well, the body is in health; but we cannot judge of friendship by the tongue. The words may be full of honey, when the heart has the gall of malice! His heart is not true to God, who is treacherous to his friend. Thus you see what a sincere heart is; and that to have such a heart is a sign that sin is pardoned. "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is *no deceit*." Psalm 32:2. What a blessed thing is it not to have sin imputed! If our sins are not imputed, it is as if we had no sin; sins *remitted* are as if they had not been *committed*. This blessing belongs to a sincere soul. God imputes not iniquity to him a sincere soul.

(10) He whose sins are forgiven is willing to forgive others who have offended him. "Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." Eph 4:32. A hypocrite will read, come to church, give alms, build hospitals—but cannot forgive wrongs; he will rather lack forgiveness from God than he will forgive his enemies. A pardoned soul argues thus: "Has God been so good to me

to forgive me my sins—and shall I not imitate him in this? Has he forgiven me *pounds*, and shall I not forgive *pence*?" It is noted of Cranmer, that he was of a forgiving spirit, and would do deeds of love to all who had injured him. The Christian is like the sun, which having drawn up black vapors from the earth, returns them back in sweet showers.

By this touchstone, we may try whether our sins are pardoned. We need not climb up to heaven to see whether our sins are forgiven—but only look into our hearts. Are we of forgiving spirits? Can we bury injuries, requite good for evil? This would be a good sign that we are forgiven of God. If we can find all these things wrought in our souls, they are happy signs that our sins are pardoned, and are good letters testimonial to show for heaven.

Use 4. For consolation. I shall open a box of cordials, and show you some of the glorious privileges of a pardoned condition. This is a peculiar favor, it is a spring shut up, and unsealed for none but the elect. The wicked may have *forbearing* mercy—but only an elect person has *forgiving* mercy. Forgiveness of sin makes way for solid joy. "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak comfortably to Jerusalem;" or, as in the Hebrew, "speak to her heart." Isaiah 40:1, 2. What was to cheer her heart? "Cry unto her, that her iniquity is pardoned!" If anything would comfort her, the Lord knew it was this. When Christ would cheer the palsied man, he said, "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven." Matthew 9:2. It was a greater comfort to have his sins forgiven than to have his palsy healed. This made David put on his best clothes, and anoint himself 2 Samuel 12:20. His child had just died, and God had told him "the sword shall never depart from your house;" yet now he spruces up himself, puts on his best clothes, and anoints himself; why was this? He had heard good news, God sent him pardon by Nathan the prophet. "The Lord has

put away your sin." 2 Samuel 12:13. This could not but revive his heart, and, in token of joy, he anointed himself. Surely he who is pardoned has such a divine melody in his soul as replenishes him with infinite delight. When Christ said to Mary Magdalene, "Your sins are forgiven," he soon added, "go in peace." Luke 7:50. More particularly:

(1) God looks upon a pardoned soul as if he had never sinned. As cancelling a bond nulls the bond, and makes it as if the money had never been owing—so forgiving sin makes it not to be. Where sin is remitted, it is as if it had not been committed. So that, as Rachel wept because her children were not—so a child of God may rejoice because his sins are not. Jer 50:20. God looks upon him as if he had never offended. Though sin remains in him after pardon—yet God does not look upon him as a sinner—but as a just man.

(2) God having pardoned sin, will pass an act of oblivion. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Jer 31:34. When a creditor has crossed off the book, he does not call for the debt again. God will not reckon with the sinner in a judicial way. When our sins are laid upon the head of Christ, our scapegoat, they are carried into a land of forgetfulness.

(3) The pardoned soul is forever secured from the wrath of God. How terrible is God's wrath! "Who knows the power of your anger?" Psalm 90:11. If a spark of God's wrath lighting upon a man's conscience fills it with horror, what is it to be always scorched in that torrid zone, to lie upon beds of flames! Now, from this avenging wrath of God every pardoned soul is freed. Though he may taste the bitter cup of affliction, he shall never drink of the sea of God's wrath. "Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Romans 5:9. **Christ's blood quenches the flames of hell.**

(4) Sin being pardoned, conscience has no more authority to accuse. Conscience roars against the unpardoned sinner—but it cannot terrify or accuse him who is pardoned. God has discharged the sinner, and if the creditor discharges the debtor, what right has the sergeant to arrest him? The truth is, if God absolves, conscience if rightly informed, absolves. If once God says, "Your sins are pardoned," conscience says, "Go in peace." If the sky is clear, and no storms blow there, the sea is calm; so, if all is clear above, and God shines with pardoning mercy upon the soul, conscience is calm and serene.

(5) Nothing which befalls a pardoned soul shall hurt him. "There shall no evil befall you;" that is, no destructive evil. Psalm 91:10. Everything to a **wicked** man is hurtful. Good things are for his hurt. His very blessings are turned into a curse. "I will curse your blessings." Mal 2:2. Riches and prosperity do him hurt. They are not favors—but snares. "Gold snares." "Riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." Eccl 5:13. Like Haman's banquet, which ushered in his funeral. Ordinances do a sinner hurt; they are a "savor of death." 2 Cor 2:16. Cordials themselves kill. The best things hurt the wicked.

But the worst things which befall a pardoned soul shall do him no hurt. The sting, the poison, the curse is gone. His soul is no more hurt, than David hurt Saul, when he cut off the lap of his garment.

(6) To a pardoned soul, everything has a commission to do him good. Afflictions do him good; as do poverty, reproach, and persecution. "You thought evil against me—but God meant it for good." Gen 50:20. As the elements, though of contrary qualities, are so tempered that they work for the good of the universe—so the most cross providences work for good to a pardoned soul. Correction as a

corrosive eats out sin; it cures the swelling of pride, the fever of lust, and the cancer of avarice. It is a refining fire to purify grace, and make it sparkle as gold. Every cross providence, to a pardoned soul, is like Paul's storm, which, though it broke the ship—yet Paul was brought to shore upon the broken pieces. Acts 27.

(7) A pardoned soul is not only exempted from wrath—but invested with dignity; as Joseph was not only freed from prison—but advanced to be second man in the kingdom.

(8) A pardoned soul is made a favorite of heaven. A king may pardon a traitor—but will not make him one of his privy council; but those whom God pardons, he receives into favor. I may say to him as the angel to the virgin Mary, "You have found favor with God." Luke 1:30. Hence, such as are forgiven, are said to be crowned with loving-kindness. Psalm 103:3, 4. Those whom God *pardons*—he *crowns*. Those whom God absolves—he marries to himself. "I am merciful, and I will not keep anger forever;" Jer 3:12; there is forgiveness; and in the fourteenth verse, "I am married to you;" and he who is matched into the crown of heaven, is as rich as the angels, as rich as heaven can make him!

(9) Sin being pardoned, we may come with humble boldness to God in prayer. Guilt makes us afraid to go to God. Adam having sinned, "was afraid, and hid" himself. Gen 3:10. Guilt clips the wings of prayer, it fills the face with blushing; but forgiveness breeds confidence. We may look upon God as a Father of mercy, holding forth a golden scepter. He who has his pardon, can look upon his prince with comfort.

(10) Forgiveness of sin makes our services acceptable. God takes all we do in good part. A guilty person does nothing that is pleasing to God. Even his prayers are "turned into sin." But when sin

is pardoned, God accepts his offering. We read of Joshua standing before the angel of the Lord: "Joshua was clothed with filthy garments," that is, he was guilty of divers sins; now, says the Lord, "Take away the filthy garments, I have caused your iniquity to pass from you;" and then he stood and ministered before the Lord, and his services were accepted. Zech 3:3, 4.

(11) Forgiveness of sin is the sauce which sweetens all the comforts of this life. As *guilt* embitters our comforts, and puts wormwood into our cup—so *pardon* sweetens all, and is like sugar to wine. Health and pardon, estate and pardon, relish well. Pardon of sin gives a sanctified title and a delicious taste to every comfort. As Naaman said to Gehazi, "Take two talents," so says God to the pardoned soul, "Take two talents; take the venison, and take a blessing with it; take the oil in the cruse, and take my love with it. Take two talents." 2 Kings 5:23. It is observable that Christ joins these two together, "Give us our daily bread, forgive us our trespasses," as if Christ would teach us there is little comfort in daily bread, unless sin be forgiven. Forgiveness of sin, perfumes and drops sweetness into every earthly enjoyment.

(12) If sin be forgiven, God will never upbraid us with former sins. When the prodigal came home to his father, the father received him into his loving embraces, and never mentioned his former ingratitude, or spending his estate among harlots. Just so, God will not upbraid us with former sins—nay, he will entirely love us; we shall be his jewels, and he will put us in his bosom. After Christ arose, he first appeared to Mary Magdalene, a pardoned penitent. Mark 16:9. So far was he from upbraiding her, that he brought her the first news of his resurrection.

(13) Pardoned sin is a pillar of support in the loss of friends. God has taken away your child, your husband; but he has also taken away your sins. He has given you more than he has taken away; he has taken away a *flower*, and given you a *jewel*. He has given you Christ and the Spirit, and the pledge of glory. He has given you more than he has taken away.

(14) Where God pardons sins, he bestows righteousness. With remission of sin, goes imputation of righteousness. "He has covered me with the robe of righteousness." Isaiah 61:10. If a Christian can take any comfort in his *inherent* righteousness, which is so stained and mixed with sin, oh, what comfort may he take in Christ's righteousness, which is a better righteousness than that of Adam! Adam's righteousness was mutable; but suppose it had been unchangeable, it was but the righteousness of a man; but that which is imputed is the righteousness of him who is God. "That we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor 5:21. Oh, blessed privilege, to be reputed in the sight of God—as righteous as Christ, having his embroidered robe put upon the soul! This is the comfort of everyone who is pardoned, he has a perfect righteousness; and now God says of him, "You are all fair, my love; there is no spot in you!" Canticles 4:7.

(15) A pardoned soul needs not fear death. He may look on death with joy—who can look on forgiveness with faith! To a pardoned soul, death has lost his sting. Death, to a pardoned sinner, is like arresting a man after the debt is paid; it may arrest—but Christ will show the debt-book crossed out in his blood! A pardoned soul may triumph over death, "O death! where is your sting? O grave! where is your victory?" He who is pardoned need not fear death—it is not to him a destruction—but a deliverance! Death is a day of jubilee or release—it releases him from all his sins. Death comes to a

pardoned soul as the angel did to Peter—and beat off his chains, and carried him out of prison. Death smites his body—and the chains of sin fall off. Death gives a pardoned soul a rest, it frees from all his labors. Rev 14:13. "Happy is the passage from toil to rest," Bernard. As death will wipe off our *tears*—so it will wipe off our *sweat*. It will do a pardoned Christian a good turn, therefore it is made a part of the inventory in 1 Cor 3:22; even *death* is yours.

Death is like the wagon which was sent for old Jacob, that came rattling with its wheels—but it was to carry Jacob to his son Joseph. Just so, the wheels of death's chariot may rattle and make a noise—but they are to carry a believer to Christ. While a believer is here, he is absent from the Lord. 2 Cor 5:6. He lives far from court, and cannot see him whom his soul loves; but death gives him a sight of the King of Glory, in whose presence is fullness of joy! To a pardoned soul, death is a passage to the heavenly kingdom; it brings him to the place of bliss, where he shall hear the triumphs and anthems of praise sung in the choir of angels.

No cause has a pardoned soul to fear death; what needs he fear to have his body buried in the earth—who has his sins buried in Christ's wounds? What hurt can death do to him? It is but his ferryman to ferry him over to the land of promise! The day of death to a pardoned soul is his ascension-day to heaven, his coronation-day, when he shall be crowned with those delights of paradise which are unspeakable and full of glory! These are the rich consolations which belong to a pardoned sinner. Well might David proclaim him blessed. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven;" in the Hebrew it is in the plural, blessednesses. Psalm 32:1. Here is a plurality of blessings. Forgiveness of sin is like the first link of a chain which draws all the links after it; it draws these fifteen privileges after it; it crowns with *grace* and *glory*. Who then would

not labor to have his sins forgiven? "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

Use 5. Now follow the DUTIES of those who have their sins forgiven.

(1) Be much in praise and doxology for God's pardoning love. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgives all your iniquities." Has God crowned you with pardoning mercy? Set the crown of your praise upon the head of free grace! Pardon of sin is a sovereign mercy, a jewel hung only upon the elect, which calls for acclamations of praise. You give thanks for "daily bread," and will you not much more for pardon? You give thanks for deliverance from sickness—and will you not for deliverance from hell? God has done more for you in forgiving your sin—than if he had given you a kingdom! That you may be more thankful, do but set the *unpardoned* condition before your eyes. How sad is it to lack a pardon! All the curses of the law stand in full force against such a one. *When the unpardoned sinner dies—he drops into the grave and hell at the same time!* He must life among the damned! Will it not make you thankful that this is not your condition—but that you are "delivered from the wrath to come"?

(2) Let God's pardoning love to you, inflame your hearts with love to God. For God to pardon freely without any desert of yours; to pardon so many offences; to pardon you and pass by others; to take you out of the ruins of mankind, of a clod of dust and sin, and make you a jewel sparkling with heavenly glory—will not this make you love God much? If of three prisoners that deserve to die, the king pardons one, and leaves the other two to the severity of the law, will not he who is pardoned love the prince who has been so full of mercy to him? How should your hearts be endeared in love to

God! The schoolmen distinguish a twofold love, *amor gratuitus*, a love of bounty—that is, God's love to us in forgiving; and *amor debitus*, a love of duty—that is, our love to God by way of return. We should show our love by admiring God, by sweetly solacing ourselves in him, and binding ourselves to him in a perpetual covenant.

(3) Let the sense of God's love in forgiving you, make you more cautious and fearful of sin for the future. "There is forgiveness with you—that you may be feared." Psalm 130:4. Oh, fear to offend the God who has been so forgiving to you. If a friend has done us a kindness, we shall not trouble him or abuse his love. After Nathan had told David, "The Lord has put away your sin," how tender was his conscience! When men commit gross sins after pardon, God changes his demeanor towards them, he turns his smile into a frown; they lie, as Jonah, in the "belly of hell;" God's wrath falls into their conscience as a drop of scalding lead into the eye; the promises are as a fountain sealed, not a drop of comfort comes from them. O Christians, do you not remember what it cost before you got your pardon? how long it was before your "broken bones" were set? And will you again venture to sin? You may be in such a condition that you may question whether you belong to God or not. Though God does not damn you—he may give you a taste of hell in this life.

(4) If God has given you good hope that you are pardoned, walk cheerfully. "We rejoice in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Romans 5:11. Who should rejoice, if not he who has his pardon? God rejoices when he shows us mercy; and should not we rejoice when we receive mercy? In the saddest times, a pardoned soul may rejoice. Afflictions have a commission to do him good; every cross wind of providence shall blow him nearer to the haven of glory. Christian, God has pulled off your prison-fetters, and clothed you with the robe of

righteousness, and crowned you with loving-kindness, and yet are you sad? "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Romans 5:2. Can the wicked rejoice, who have only a short reprieve from hell, and not those who have a full pardon sealed?

(5) Has God pardoned you? Do all the service you can for God. "Always abounding in the work of the Lord." 1 Cor 15:58. Let your *head* study for God; let your *hands* work for him; let your *tongue* be the organ of his praise. When Paul got his pardon, and could say, "I obtained mercy," it was as oil to the wheels, it made him move faster in obedience. 1 Tim 1:16. "I labored more abundantly than they all." 1 Cor 15:10. The pardoned soul thinks he can never *love* God enough—or *serve* him enough.

Use 6. Some RULES or directions, how we may obtain forgiveness of sin.

(1) We must take heed of mistakes about pardon of sin; as the mistake that our sins are pardoned when they are not.

Whence is this mistake? From two grounds.

[1] Many think that their sins are pardoned—merely because God is merciful. God's being merciful shows that man's sins are pardonable. But there is a great deal of difference between sins *pardonable* and sins *pardoned*. Your sins may be pardonable—yet not pardoned. Though God be merciful—yet whom is God's mercy for? Not for the *presuming* sinner—but the *repenting* sinner. Such as go on in sin, cannot lay claim to it. God's mercy is like the ark, which none but the priests might touch; none but such as are spiritual priests, sacrificing their sins, may touch the ark of God's mercy.

[2] Many think that their sins are pardoned—merely because Christ died for sins. That Christ died for remission of sin is true; but that all have remission is false, for then Judas would be forgiven. Remission of sin, is limited to believers. "By him all who believe are justified;" but all do not believe; some slight and trample Christ's blood under foot. Acts 13:39; Heb 10:29. Notwithstanding Christ's death, all are not pardoned. Take heed of this dangerous mistake. Who will seek after pardon—that thinks he has it already?

Another mistake is, that pardon is easy to be had; it is but a sigh, or, "Lord, have mercy." But how dearly has pardon cost those who have obtained it? How long was it before David's broken bones were set! Happy are we if we have the pardon of sin sealed, though at the very last hour; but why do men think pardon of sin so easy to be obtained? They assume that their sins are but small, therefore venial. The devil holds the small end of the telescope before their eyes. But there is no small sin against Deity. Why is he punished with death, who clips the king's coin or defaces his statue—but because it is an abuse offered to the person of the king?

Little sins, when multiplied, become great, as a little sum when multiplied, comes to millions. What is less than a grain of sand—but when the sand is multiplied, what heavier? Your sins cost no small price. View them in the glass of Christ's sufferings, who veiled his glory, lost his joy, and poured out his soul as an offering for the least sin. Little sins, unrepented of, will damn you, as well as greater. Not only great rivers fall into the sea—but little brooks; not only greater sins carry men to hell—but lesser sins; therefore do not think pardon easy, because sin is small. Beware of mistakes.

(2) The second means for pardon of sin is to see yourselves guilty. Come to God as condemned men. "They put ropes on their

heads and came to the king of Israel." 1 Kings 20:32. Let us come to God in profound humility. Do not say, "Lord, my heart is good, and my life blameless." God hates this. Lie in the dust, be covered with sackcloth, and say as the centurion, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof! I deserve not the least smile from heaven!" Matthew 8:8. This is the way for pardon.

(3) The third means for pardon is, hearty confession of sin. "I said, I will confess my transgressions, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin." Psalm 32:5. Would we have God *cover* our sins? We must *uncover* them. "He who covers his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." Proverbs 28:13. "If we confess our sins, he is just to forgive us our sins." 1 John 1:9. One would have thought it should have run thus, "If we confess our sins, he is merciful to forgive them." Nay—but he is *just* to forgive them. Why just? Because he has bound himself by a promise to forgive humble confessors of sin. When we *accuse* ourselves, God *absolves* us. We are apt to *hide* our sins, which is as great a folly as for one to hide his disease from the physician; but when we open our sins to God by *confessing*, he opens his mercy to us by *forgiving*.

(4) Another means for pardon is sound repentance. *Repentance* and *remission of sin* are put together. Luke 24:47. There is a promise of a fountain opened for washing away the guilt of sin. Zech 13:1. But see what goes before: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced—and they shall mourn for him." Zech 12:10. "Wash, make you clean;" that is, wash in the waters of repentance; and then follows a promise of forgiveness, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Isaiah 1:16, 18. It is easy to turn white into scarlet—but not so easy to turn scarlet into white; yet, upon repentance, God has promised to make the scarlet sinner of a milk-like whiteness!

Think not, however, that repentance *merits* pardon—but it prepares for it. We set our seal on the wax when it melts. Just so, God seals his pardons on *melting* hearts.

(5) The next means for pardon is faith in the blood of Christ. It is Christ's blood alone, which washes away sin. Rev 1:5. But this blood will not wash away sin, unless it be applied by faith. The apostle speaks of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. 1 Peter 1:2. Many are not pardoned, though Christ's blood be shed, because it is not sprinkled; now it is faith which sprinkles Christ's blood on the soul, for the remission of sin. As Thomas put his hands into Christ's sides—so faith puts its hands into Christ's wounds, and takes of the blood and sprinkles it upon the conscience, for the washing away of guilt. John 20:27. Hence in Scripture, we are said to obtain pardon through faith. "By him all who believe are justified." Acts 13:39. "Your sins are forgiven." Luke 7:48. Whence was this? "Your faith has saved you." 7:50. O let us labor for faith. Christ is an atonement to take away sin; but how? "Through faith in his blood." Romans 3:25.

(6) The last means is to pray much for pardon. "Take away all iniquity." Hos 14:2. "The publican smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." Luke 18:13. And the text says that he went away justified. Many pray for health, riches, children; but Christ has taught us to pray, "Forgive us our sins." Be earnest suitors for pardon; consider what guilt of sin is; it binds one over to the wrath of God. Better your house were haunted with devils—than your soul with guilt! He who is in the bond of iniquity, must needs be in the gall of bitterness. Acts 8:23. A guilty soul wears Cain's mark, which was a trembling at the heart, and a shaking in his flesh. Guilt makes the sinner afraid—lest every trouble he meets with should arrest him and bring him to judgment! If guilt is so dismal, and

breeds such convulsion fits in the conscience, how earnest should we be in prayer, that God would remove it, and so earnest as to resolve to take no denial! Plead hard with God for pardon, as a man would plead with a judge for his life. Fall upon your knees, say, "Lord, hear one word!" God may say, "What can you say for yourself, that you should not die?" "Lord, I can say but little—but I put in my Surety, Christ shall answer for me; O look upon that blood which speaks better things than that of Abel; Christ is my priest, his blood is my sacrifice, his divine nature is my altar!"

As Rahab was to show the scarlet thread in the window, that when Joshua saw it he might not destroy her—so show the Lord *the scarlet thread of Christ's blood*—for that is the way to have mercy. Josh 2:18, 21; 6:22, 23. God may say, "Why should I pardon you? You have never served me." "But, Lord, pardon me, because you have promised it; I urge your covenant!" When a man is about to die by the law, he calls for his book. Just so, say, "Lord, let me have the benefit of my book, your Word says, 'Let the wicked forsake his way and our God will abundantly pardon.' Isaiah 55:7. Lord, I have forsaken my sins, let me therefore have mercy; I plead the benefit of the book!" "But, for whose sake should I pardon? You can not deserve it." "Lord, for your own name's sake; you have said, you will blot out sin, for your own name's sake. Isaiah 43:25. It will not eclipse your crown; your mercy will shine forth, and all your other attributes ride in triumph, if you shall pardon me!"

Thus plead with God in prayer, and resolve not to give over until your pardon is sealed. God cannot deny importunity; he delights in mercy. As the mother, says Chrysostom, delights to have her breasts milked—so God delights to milk out the breast of mercy to the sinner. These means being used will procure this great blessedness, the forgiveness of sin.

IV. The last part of this petition is the CONDITION. "As we forgive those who trespass against us." This word, *AS*, is not a note of equality—but similitude; not that we *equal* God in forgiving—but must *imitate* him in forgiving. The great duty of forgiving others, is contrary to flesh and blood. Men forget *kindnesses*—but remember *injuries*. But it is an indispensable duty to forgive; we are not bound to *trust* an enemy; but we are bound to *forgive* him. We are naturally prone to revenge. "Revenge," says Homer, "is sweet as dropping honey." The heathen philosophers held revenge to be lawful. But we learn better things from the oracles of Scripture. "When you stand praying, forgive." Mark 11:25. "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Col 3:13.

How can we forgive others, when God only can forgive sin?

In every breach of the second table, there are two things: an offence against God, and a trespass against man. So far as it is an offence against God, he only can forgive; but so far as it is a trespass against man, we may forgive.

When do we forgive others?

When we strive against all thoughts of revenge; when we will not do our enemies harm—but wish well to them, grieve at their calamities, pray for them, seek reconciliation with them, and show ourselves ready on all occasions to relieve them. This is gospel-forgiving.

But I have been much injured and abused, and to put up with it will be a stain to my reputation.

(1) To pass by an injury without revenge, is not eclipsing our honor. The Scripture says of a man, "It is his glory to pass over a transgression." Proverbs 19:11. It is more honor to *bury* an injury, than to *revenge* it. Anger and revenge denote weakness; a noble heroic spirit overlooks a petty offence.

(2) Suppose a man's credit should be impaired with those whose censure is not to be regarded; consider the folly of challenging another to a *duel*. It is little wisdom for a man to redeem his credit by losing his life, and to run to hell to be counted valorous.

But the wrong he has done me is great.

But your not forgiving him is a greater wrong. In injuring you he has offended against man—but in not forgiving him you offend against God.

But if I forgive vile injury, I shall occasion more.

If the more injuries you forgive, the more you meet with--it will only increase your grace the more. Often forgiving will add more to the weight of your glory. If any say, "I strive to excel in other graces—but as for this forgiving, I cannot do it." The graces are inter-linked and chained together; when there is one, there is all. He who cannot forgive, his *grace* is counterfeit, his *faith* is false, his *devotion* is hypocrisy.

But suppose another has wronged me in my estate, may I not go to law for my debt?

Yes, else of what use were law courts? God has set judges to decide cases in law, and to give everyone his right. It is with going to law, as it is with going to war; when the just rights of a nation are invaded, it is lawful to go to war. Just so, when a man's estate is trespassed upon by another, he may go to law to recover it. But the law must be used in the last place; when no entreaties or arbitrations will prevail, then the courts must decide it. Yet this is no revenge, it is not so much to injure another, as to right one's self; which may be, and yet we may live in charity.

Use 1. Here is a bill of indictment against such as study revenge, and cannot put up with the least discourtesy. They would have God forgive them—but they will not forgive others. They will pray, come to church, give alms—but, as Christ said, "One thing you lack." Mark 10:21. They lack a forgiving spirit, they will rather lack forgiveness from God--than they will forgive their brother. How sad is it, that, for every slight wrong, or disgraceful word--men should let malice boil in their hearts! would there be so many duels, arrests, and murders--if men had the art of forgiving?

Revenge is the proper sin of the devil; he is no drunkard or adulterer —but this old serpent is full of the poison of malice. What shall we say to those who make a profession of religion—but instead of forgiving, pursue others malevolently? It was prophesied, the "wolf shall dwell with the lamb." Isaiah 11:6. But what shall we say, when such as profess to be lambs--become wolves! They open the mouths of the profane against religion who will say these are as full of bitterness as any. O where has love and mercy fled? If the son of man comes--will he find charity on the earth? I fear but little. How can those who nourish anger and malice in their hearts, and will not forgive, pray, "Forgive us, as we forgive others"? Either they must

omit this petition, as Chrysostom says some did in his time, or they pray against themselves!

Use 2. Let us all be persuaded, if ever we hope for salvation, to pass by petty injuries and discourtesies, and labor to be of forgiving spirits. "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Col 3:13.

(1) Herein we resemble God. He is ready to forgive. Psalm 86:5. He befriends his enemies; he opens his hands to relieve those who open their mouths against him. It was Adam's pride to resemble God in omniscience; but it is lawful to resemble God in forgiving enemies; this is a God-like disposition; and what is godliness—but God-likeness?

(2) To forgive is one of the highest evidences of grace. When grace comes into the heart, it makes a man, as Caleb, of another spirit. Numb 14:24. It makes a great metamorphosis, it sweetens the heart, and fills it with love and sincerity. As a scion grafted into a stock, partakes of the nature and sap of the tree, and brings forth the same fruit—so he who was once of a sour crabby disposition, given to revenge, when ingrafted into Christ, partakes of the sap of the heavenly olive tree, and bears sweet and generous fruit; he is full of love to his enemies, and requites good for evil. As the sun draws up many thick noxious vapors from the earth, and returns them in sweet showers—so a gracious heart returns the unkindnesses of others with the sweet influences of love and mercifulness. "They repay me with evil for the good I do. Yet when they were ill, I grieved for them. I even fasted and prayed for them." Psalm 35:12, 13. This is a good certificate to show for heaven.

(3) The blessed example of our Lord Jesus teaches this. He was of a forgiving spirit; his enemies *reviled* him—but he *pitied* them; their words were more bitter than the gall and vinegar which they gave him—but his words were smoother than oil. They spat upon him, pierced him with the spear and nails—but he prayed for them, "Father, forgive them." He wept over his enemies, he shed *tears* for those that shed his *blood*. Never was there such a pattern of amazing kindness. Christ bids us learn of him. Matthew 11:29. He does not bid us learn of him to work miracles—but he would have us learn of him to forgive our enemies. If we do not imitate Christ's *life*--we cannot be saved by his *death*.

(4) The danger of an implacable unforgiving spirit. It hinders the efficacy of ordinances; it is like an obstruction in the body, which keeps it from thriving. A revengeful spirit poisons our sacrifice; our prayers are turned into sin. Will God receive prayer mingled with this strange fire? Our coming to the sacrament is sin--if we come not in charity—so that ordinances are turned into sin. It were sad if all the food we eat should turn to poison; but malice poisons the sacramental cup, men eat and drink their own damnation. Judas came to the Passover in malice, and after the sop, Satan entered into him. John 13:27.

(5) God has tied his mercy to the condition, that if we do not forgive, neither will he forgive us. "If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matthew 6:15. A man may as well go to hell for not *forgiving*--as for not *believing*. How can they expect mercy from God, whose affections are shut up and are merciless to their trespassing brethren? "He shall have judgment without mercy--who has showed no mercy." James 2:13. "I cannot forgive," said one, "though I go to hell."

(6) The examples of the saints who have been of forgiving spirits. *Joseph* forgave his brethren, though they put him into a pit and sold him. "Fear not; I will nourish you and your little ones." Gen 50:21. *Stephen* prayed for his persecutors. *Moses* was of a forgiving spirit. How many injuries and affronts did he put up with! The people of Israel dealt unkindly with him; they *murmured* against him at the waters of Marah—but he *prayed* for them. Exod 15:25. "He cried unto the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." When they lacked water, they chided with him. "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to kill us with thirst?" Exod 17:3. As if they had said, "If we die, we will lay our death to your charge." This was enough to have made Moses call for fire from heaven upon them; but he passes by this injury, and, to show he forgave them, he became an intercessor for them, and drew water from the rock for them; ver 4, 5, 6.

The prophet *Elisha* feasted his enemies: he prepared a table for those who would have prepared his grave. 2 Kings 6:23. Cranmer was famous for forgiving injuries. When Luther had reviled Calvin, Calvin said, "Though he calls me a devil a thousand times—yet I will love and honor him as a precious servant of Christ." When one who had abused and wronged a Christian asked him what wonders his Master Christ had wrought, he said, "He has wrought this wonder, that though you have so injured me, I can forgive you and pray for you."

(7) Forgiving and requiting good for evil is the best way to conquer and melt the heart of an enemy. When Saul had pursued David with malice and hunted him as a partridge upon the mountains, David would not do him harm when it was in his power. David's kindness melted Saul's heart. "Saul lifted up his voice and wept, and said--You are a better man than I am, for you have repaid

me good for evil." 1 Sam 24:16, 17. Such forgiving is heaping coals which melt the enemy's heart. Romans 12:20. *It is the most noble victory to overcome an enemy without striking a blow, to conquer him with love.* When Philip of Macedon was told that one Nicanor openly railed against him, instead of putting him to death, he sent him a rich present, which so overcame the man, and made his heart relent, that he went up and down to recant what he had said against the king, and highly extolled the king's mercy.

(8) Forgiving others is the way to have forgiveness from God, and is a sign of that forgiveness.

[1] It is the way to have forgiveness. "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." Matthew 6:14. But one would think other things would sooner procure forgiveness from God, than our forgiving others. No, surely nothing like this to procure forgiveness; for all other acts of religion may have leaven in them. God forbade leaven in the sacrifice. Exod 34:25. One may give alms, and there may be the leaven of vainglory in it. The Pharisees sounded a trumpet, when they gave alms, to gain applause. Matthew 6:2. One may give his body to be burned—yet there may be the leaven of false zeal in this; but to forgive others who have offended us can have no leaven in it, no sinister aim. It is a duty wholly spiritual, and is done purely out of love to God; hence God annexes forgiveness to this, rather than to the highest and most renowned works of charity which are cried up in the world.

[2] It is a *sign* of God's forgiving us. It is not a *cause* of God's forgiving us—but a *sign*. We need not climb up into heaven to see whether our sins are forgiven. Let us look into our hearts, and see if we can forgive others. If we can, we need not doubt but God has forgiven us. Our loving others, is the reflection of God's love to us.

Oh, therefore, by all these arguments, let us be persuaded to forgive others. Christians, how many offences has God passed by in us! Our sins are innumerable and heinous. Is God willing to forgive us so many offences--and cannot we forgive a few? No man can do so much wrong to us all our life--as we do to God in one day!

But HOW must we forgive? As God forgives us.

(1) God forgives SINCERELY. God not only makes a show of forgiveness--but he really forgives, he passes our sins into oblivion. Jer 31:34. So we must not only *say* we forgive—but do it with the heart. "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you, unless you forgive your brother *from your heart*." Matthew 18:35.

(2) God forgives FULLY. He forgives all our sins. "Who forgives all your iniquities." Psalm 103:3. Hypocrites pass by some offences—but retain others. Would we have God so deal with us as to remit only some trespasses, and call us to account for the rest?

(3) God forgives OFTEN. God multiplies pardon. Isaiah 55:7. Peter asks the question, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." Matthew 18:21, 22. If he say, "I repent," you must say, "I remit."

But this is one of the highest acts of religion; flesh and blood cannot do it. **HOW shall I attain to it?**

(1) Let us consider how many wrongs and injuries we have done against God. What volume can hold our errata? Our sins are more than the sparks in a furnace.

(2) If we would forgive, let us see God's hand in all that men do or say against us. Did we look higher than *instruments*, our hearts would grow calm, and we would not meditate revenge. Shimei reproached David and cursed; but David looked higher. "Let him alone, and let him curse, for the *Lord* has bidden him." 2 Samuel 16:11. What made Christ, when he was reviled, revile not again? He looked beyond Judas and Pilate, he saw his Father putting the bitter cup into his hand. As we must see God's hand in all the affronts and incivilities we receive from men—so we must believe God will do us good by all, if we belong to him. "It may be the Lord will requite me good, for his cursing this day." 2 Samuel 16:12. He who injures me shall add to my reward; he who clips my name to make it weigh lighter, shall make my crown weigh heavier. Well might Stephen pray for his enemies, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Acts 7:60. He knew they did but increase his glory in heaven; every stone his enemies threw at him, added a pearl to his crown!

(3) Lay up a stock of faith. "If your brother sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him." Luke 17:3, 4. The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith," as if they had said, "We can never do this without a great deal of faith; Lord, increase our faith." Believe God has pardoned you--and you will pardon others! Only faith can throw dust upon injuries--and bury them in the grave of forgetfulness!

(4) Think how you have often wronged others; and may it not be just with God that the same measure you mete to others, should be measured to you again? Have you not wronged others, if not in their goods—yet in their name? If you have not borne false witness against them—yet perhaps you have spoken falsely of them; the consideration of which may make Christians bury injuries in silence.

(5) Get humble hearts. A proud man thinks it a disgrace to forgive an injury. What causes so many fights and murders, but pride? "Be clothed with humility." 1 Peter 5:5. He who is low in his own eyes--will not be much troubled, though others lay him low; he knows there is a day coming when there shall be a resurrection of names, as well as bodies, and God will avenge him of his adversaries. "And shall not God avenge his own elect?" Luke 18:7. The humble soul leaves all his wrongs to God to requite. "Vengeance belongs to Me--I will repay, says the Lord." Romans 12:19.

Use 3. For comfort. Such as forgive, God will forgive them. You have a good argument to plead with God for forgiveness. "Lo, I am willing to forgive him who harms me. Will not God forgive me, who has received forgiveness in Christ my surety?"

The Sixth Petition in the Lord's Prayer

"Lead us not into temptation—but deliver us from evil." Matthew 6:13

This petition consists of two parts:
First, *"Lead us not into temptation."*
Secondly, *"But deliver us from evil."*

I. "Lead us not into temptation." Does God lead into temptation? God tempts no man to sin. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither does he tempt he any man." James 1:13. He *permits* sin—but does not *promote* it. He who is an encourager of holiness cannot be a pattern of sin. God does not tempt to that to which he has an

antipathy. What king will tempt his subjects to break laws which he himself has established?

But is it not said, God tempted Abraham? Gen 22:1. *Tempting* there was no more than *testing*. He *tried* Abraham's faith, as a goldsmith tries gold in the fire; but there is a great deal of difference between *testing* his people's grace—and exciting their corruption. God tries their grace—but does not excite their corruption. Man's sin cannot be justly fathered on God. God tempts no man to sin.

What then is the meaning of "Lead us not into temptation"?

The meaning is, that God would not allow us to be overcome by temptation; that we may not be given up to the power of temptation, and be drawn into sin.

Where do temptations come from?

(1) Temptations come from within—from ourselves. The heart is the breeder of all evil. Our own hearts are the greatest tempters. Everyone is a *Satan* to himself. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust." The heart is a perfect bait to temptation. James 1:14.

(a) Temptations come from without—from Satan. He is called the Tempter. Matthew 4:3. He lies in ambush to do us harm. The devil stands girded for battle—he lays a plot of temptation to blow up the fort of our grace. He is not yet fully cast into prison—but is like a prisoner under bail. The world is his diocese, where he is sure to be tempting, whatever we are doing—reading, praying, or meditating. We find him within—but how he came there we know not; we are sure of his company, though uncertain how we came by it. "A saint's whole life," says Augustine, "is temptation." Elijah, who

could shut heaven by prayer, could not shut temptation out of his heart. This is a great molestation to a child of God; as it is a trouble to a virgin to have her chastity daily assaulted. The more we are tempted to evil, the more we are hindered from good. We are in great danger of the "Prince of the air;" and we need often pray, "Lead us not into temptation." That we may see in what danger we are from Satan's temptations:

[1] Consider Satan's malice in tempting. This hellish serpent is swelled with the poison of malice. Satan envies man's happiness. To see a *clod of dust* so near to God; and himself, once a glorious angel, cast out of the heavenly paradise—makes him pursue mankind with inveterate hatred. "The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath." Rev 12:12. If there is anything this infernal spirit can delight in, it is to ruin souls, and to bring them into the same damnation as himself. This malice of Satan in tempting must needs be great, if we consider three things:

(1) That Satan, though full of torment, should tempt others. One would think that he would scarcely have a thought but of his own misery; and yet such is his rage and malice that, while God is punishing him, he is tempting others!

(2) His malice is great, because he will tempt where he knows he cannot prevail; he will put forth his sting, though he cannot hurt. He tempted Christ. "If you be the Son of God." Matthew 4:3. He knew well enough Christ was God as well as man—yet he would tempt him. Such was his malice against him that he would put an affront on him, though he knew he should be conquered by him. He tempts the elect to blasphemy; he knows he cannot prevail against them; and yet such is his malice, that though

he cannot storm the garrison of their hearts—yet he will shoot his artillery against them.

(3) His malice is great, because though knowing his tempting men to sin will increase his own torment in hell, he will not leave it off. Every temptation makes his chain heavier and his fire hotter—and yet he will tempt! Therefore being such a malicious revengeful spirit, we need pray that God will not allow him to prevail by his temptation. "Lead us not into temptation."

[2] Consider Satan's DILIGENCE in tempting. "Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He *prowls* around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour!" 1 Peter 5:8. He neglects no time; he who would have us idle—is always busy himself. This lion of hell, is ever hunting after his prey, he compasses sea and land to make a proselyte. He *prowls* around—as a spy; he watches where he may throw in the fireball of temptation. He is a restless spirit; if we repulse him, he will not desist—but come again with a new temptation. Like Marcellus, a Roman captain Hannibal speaks of, whether he conquered or was conquered, was never quiet. More particularly, Satan's diligence in tempting is seen in this:

(1) If he gets the least advantage by temptation, he pursues it to the utmost. If his temptation to sin begins to take, he follows it closely and presses to the *act* of sin. When he tempted Judas to betray Christ, and found him inclinable, and beginning to bite at the bait of thirty pieces of silver, he hurried hum on, and never left him until he had foully betrayed his Lord and Master. When he tempted Spira to renounce his religion, and saw him begin to yield, he followed the temptation closely, and never left off until he had made him abjure his faith in Christ.

(2) Satan's diligence in tempting is seen in the variety of temptations he uses. He does not confine himself to one sort of temptation; he has more plots than one. If he finds one temptation does not prevail, he will utilise another. If he cannot tempt to lust, he will tempt to pride. If temptation to covetousness does not prevail, he will tempt to extravagance. If he cannot frighten men to despair, he will see if he cannot draw them to presumption. If he cannot make them profane, he will see if he cannot make them formalists. If he cannot make them wicked, he will tempt them to be erroneous. He will tempt them to leave off ordinances; he will pretend revelations. Error damns as well as vice. Vice pistols, error poisons. Thus Satan's diligence in tempting is great—he will turn every stone; he has several tools to work with; if one temptation will not do he will make use of another. Had we not need then to pray, "Lead us not into temptation"?

[3] Consider Satan's POWER in tempting. He is called "the prince of this world" (John 14:30), and the "strong man, fully armed" (Luke 11:21), and the "great red dragon," who with his tail cast down the third part of the stars. Rev 12:3, 4. He is full of power, being an angel. Though he has lost his holiness—yet not his strength. His power in tempting is seen several ways:

(1) As a spirit he can convey himself into the IMAGINATION, and poison it with bad thoughts. As the Holy Spirit casts in good motions—so the devil does bad. He put it into Judas' heart to betray Christ. John 13:2.

(2) Though Satan cannot compel the WILL, he can present pleasing objects to the senses, which have great force in them. He set a "wedge of gold" before Achan, and so enticed him with that golden bait.

(3) He can excite and stir up the corruption within, and work some inclinableness in the heart to embrace the temptation. Thus he stirred up corruption in David's heart, and provoked him to number the people. 1 Chron 21:1. He can blow a *spark of lust* into a flame.

(4) Being a spirit, he can convey his temptations into our MINDS—so that we cannot easily discern whether they come from him or from ourselves. One bird may hatch the egg of another, thinking it to be her own. Just so, we often hatch the devil's eggs, thinking they come from our own hearts. When Peter dissuaded Christ from suffering, he thought it came from the love which he bore to his Master, little thinking that Satan had a hand in it. Matthew 16:22. Now, if the devil has such power to instill his temptations, that we hardly know whether they are his or ours, we are in great danger, and had need pray not to be led into temptation. Here, some are desirous to move the question: **How shall we perceive when a motion comes from our own hearts, arid when from Satan?**

"It is hard," as Bernard says, "to distinguish between the *bite of the serpent* and the *disease of the mind*;" between those suggestions which come from Satan, and which breed out of our own hearts. But I conceive there is this threefold difference:

First, such motions to evil as come from our own hearts spring up more leisurely, and by degrees. Sin is long concocted in the thoughts, before consent is given; but usually we may know a motion comes from Satan by its suddenness. Temptation is compared to a *dart*, because it is shot suddenly. Eph 6:16. David's numbering the people was a motion which the devil injected suddenly.

Secondly, the motions to evil which come from our own hearts are not so terrible. Few are frightened at the sight of their own children; but motions coming from Satan are more ghastly and frightful, as motions to blasphemy and self-murder. Hence it is that temptations are compared to fiery darts, because, as flashes of fire, they startle and affright the soul. Eph 6:16.

Thirdly, when evil thoughts are thrown into the mind, when we loathe and have reluctance to them; when we strive against them, and flee from them, as Moses did from the serpent, it shows they are not the natural birth of our own heart—but the hand of *Joab* is in this! 2 Samuel 14:19. Satan has injected these impure motions.

(5) Satan's power in tempting appears by the long EXPERIENCE he has acquired in the art. He has been a tempter for as long as he has been a devil. Who are fitter for action than men of experience? Who is fitter to steer a ship than an old, experienced pilot? Satan has gained much experience by being so long versed in the trade of tempting. Having such experience, he knows what are the temptations which have foiled others, and are most likely to prevail; as the fowler lays those snares which have caught other birds. Satan having such power in tempting, increases our danger, and we had need pray, "Lead us not into temptation.

[4] Consider Satan's SUBTLETY in tempting. The Greek word to *tempt*, signifies to *deceive*. Satan, in tempting, uses many subtle plots to deceive. We read of the "depths of Satan" (Rev 2:24), of his "devices and stratagems" (2 Cor 2:11), of his "snares and darts". He is called a *lion* for his cruelty, and an *old serpent* for his subtlety. He has several sorts of subtlety in tempting.

1st subtlety. He observes the natural **temper** and constitution of men. He does not know the hearts of men—but he may feel their

pulse, know their temper, and can apply himself accordingly. As the farmer knows what seed is proper to sow in such a soil—so Satan, finding out the temper of a man, knows what temptations are proper to sow in his heart. The same way the tide of a man's constitution runs, the *wind of temptation* blows. Satan tempts the ambitious man with a crown, the lustfull man with beauty, the covetous man with a wedge of gold. He provides savory food, such as the sinner loves.

2nd subtlety. He chooses the **fittest season** to tempt in. As a cunning angler casts in his bait when the fish will bite best—so the devil knows the best time when temptation is likeliest to prevail. There are several seasons he tempts in.

1st season. He tempts us in our first initiation and **entrance** into true religion, when we have newly given up our names to Christ. He will never disturb his vassals; but when we have broken out his prison in conversion, he will pursue us with violent temptations. When Israel were gotten a little out of Egypt, Pharaoh pursued them. As soon as Christ was born, Herod sent to destroy him so when the child of grace is newly born, the devil labors to strangle it with temptation. When the first buddings and blossoms of grace begin to appear, the devil would nip the tender buds with the sharp blasts of temptation. At first conversion, grace is so weak, and temptation so strong, that one wonders how the young convert escapes with his life. Satan has a spite against the new creature.

2nd season. The devil tempts when he finds us **idle**. We do not sow seed in fallow ground; but Satan sows most of his seed in a person that lies fallow. When the fowler sees a bird sit still and perch upon the tree, he shoots it. Just so, when Satan observes us sitting still, he shoots his fiery darts of temptation at us. "While men slept, his enemy sowed tares;" so, while men sleep in sloth, Satan sows his

tares. Matthew 13:25. When David was idly walking on the housetop, the devil set a tempting object before him, and it prevailed. 2 Samuel 11:2, 3.

3rd season. When a person is reduced to outward **needs** and straits, the devil tempts him. When Christ has fasted forty days, and is hungry, the devil comes and tempts him with the glory of the world. Matthew 4:8. When provisions grow short, Satan sets in with a temptation. "What, will you starve rather than steal? reach forth your hand, and pluck the forbidden fruit!" How often does this temptation prevail? How many do we see, who, instead of living by faith, live by their shifts, and will steal the venison—though they lose the blessing.

4th season. Satan tempts after an **ordinance**. When we have been hearing the Word, or at prayer, or sacrament, Satan casts in the hook of temptation. When Christ had been fasting and praying, then came the tempter. Matthew 4:2, 3.

Why does Satan choose time after an ordinance to tempt? We should think it to be the most disadvantageous time, when the soul is raised to a heavenly frame!

(1) Malice puts Satan upon it. The ordinances, which cause fervor in a saint, cause fury in Satan. He knows in every duty we have a design against him; in every prayer we put up a suit in heaven against him; in the Lord's Supper, we take an oath to fight under Christ's banner against him; therefore he is more enraged, and lays his snares and shoots his darts against us!

(2) Satan tempts after an ordinance, because he thinks he will find us more secure. After we have been at the solemn worship of God, we are apt to grow remiss, and leave off former strictness; like a soldier, who, after the battle, leaves off his armor. Satan watches his time. He

does as David did to the Amalekites, who, when they had taken the spoil, and were secure, and they did eat and drink, and dance—David fell upon them, and smote them. 1 Sam 30:17. When we grow remiss after an ordinance, and indulge ourselves too much in carnal delights, Satan falls upon us by temptation, and often foils us. After a full meal, men are apt to grow drowsy; so, after we have had a full meal at an ordinance, we are apt to slumber and grow secure, and then Satan shoots his arrow of temptation, and hits us between the joints of our armor!

5th season. Satan tempts after some **discoveries of God's love**. The pirate will attack the richly laden ship. Just so, when a soul has been laden with spiritual comforts, the devil shoots at him to rob him of all. He envies a soul feasted with spiritual joy. Joseph's many-colored coat made his brethren envy him and plot against him. After David had the good news of the pardon of his sin, which filled him with consolation, Satan tempted him to a new sin in numbering the people; and so all his comfort leaked out and was spilt.

6th season. Satan tempts when he sees us **weakest**. He breaks over the hedge where it is lowest; as the sons of Jacob came upon the Shechemites when they were lame, and could make no resistance. Gen 34:25. On two occasions Satan comes upon us in our weakness:

(1) When we are **alone**; as he came to Eve when her husband was away, and she the less able to resist his temptation. He has the policy to give his poison privately—when no one is by to reveal the treachery. He is like a cunning suitor who woos the daughter when the parents are from home. When we are alone—the devil comes wooing with a temptation, and hopes to have the match struck!

(2) When the hour of **death** approaches. As the crows peck at the poor sheep, when sick and weak, and can hardly help itself—so, when

a saint is weak on his deathbed, the devil pecks at him with a temptation. He reserves his most furious assaults until the last. The people of Israel were never so fiercely assaulted as when they were going to take possession of the promised land; then all the kings of Canaan combined their forces against them; so, when the saints are leaving the world and going to set their foot on the heavenly Canaan, Satan sets upon them by temptation; he tells them they are hypocrites, and all their evidences are counterfeit. Like a coward, he strikes the saints when they are down; when death is striking at the body, he is striking at the soul.

3rd subtlety. Satan, in tempting, baits his hook with **religion**. He can tempt to sin under pretenses of piety. Sometimes he is the white devil, and transforms himself into an angel of light. Celsus wrote a book full of error, and he entitled it, "The Book of Truth." So Satan can write the title of religion upon his worst temptation. He comes to Christ with Scripture in his mouth, "It is written," etc. So he comes to many and tempts them to sin, under the pretense of religion. He tempts to evil, that good may come of it; he tempts men to such unwarrantable actions, that they may be put into a capacity of honoring God the more. He tempts them to accept of preferment against conscience that they may be in a condition of doing more good. He put Herod upon killing John the Baptist, that he might be kept from the violation of his oath. He tempts many to oppression and extortion, telling them they are bound to provide for their families. He tempts many to make away with themselves, that they may live no longer to sin against God. Thus he wraps his poisonous pills in sugar. Who would suspect him when he comes as a minister, and quotes Scripture? "And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness." 2 Corinthians 11:14-15

4th subtlety. Satan tempts to sin **gradually**. The old serpent *winds* himself in by degrees. He tempts first to less sins, that so he may bring on greater. A small offence may occasion a great crime; as a little prick of a pin may occasion a mortal gangrene. Satan first tempted David to an impure glance of the eye to look upon Bathsheba, and that unclean look occasioned adultery and murder. First he tempts to go into the company of the wicked, then to twist into a cord of friendship, and so, by degrees, to be brought into the same condemnation with them. It is a great subtlety of Satan to tempt to less sins first, for these harden the heart, and fit men for committing more horrid and tremendous sins.

5th subtlety. Satan's policy is to hand over temptations to us by those whom we least suspect.

(1) By near friends. He tempts us by those who are near in blood. He handed over a temptation to Job by his wife. "Do you still retain your integrity?" Job 2:9. As if he had said, Job, you see how, for all your piety, God deals with you, his hand is gone out sore against you; what, and still pray and weep! Cast off all religion, turn atheist! "Curse God, and die!" Thus Satan made use of Job's wife to do his work. The woman was made of the rib, and Satan made a bow of this rib, out of which to shoot the arrow of his temptation. [He aims at the heart through the rib.] The devil often stands behind the curtain —he will not be seen in the business—but puts others to do his work. As a man makes use of a sergeant to arrest another—so Satan makes use of a proxy to tempt; as he crept into a serpent—so he can creep into a near relation.

(2) He tempts sometimes by religious friends. He keeps out of sight, that his cloven foot may not be seen. Who would have thought to have found the devil in Peter? When he would have dissuaded Christ

from suffering, saying, "Master, spare yourself," Christ spied Satan in the temptation. "Get behind me, Satan!" When our religious friends would dissuade us from doing our duty, Satan is a lying spirit in their mouths, and would by them entice us to evil.

6th subtlety. Satan tempts some people more than others. Some are like wet tinder, who will not so soon take the fire of temptation as others. Satan tempts most where he thinks his policies will most easily prevail. Some are fitter to receive the impression of temptations, as soft wax is fitter to take the stamp of the seal. The apostle speaks of "vessels fitted to destruction," so there are vessels fitted for temptation. Romans 9:22. Some, like the sponge, suck in Satan's temptations. There are five sorts of people that Satan most broods upon by his temptations.

(1) **Ignorant** people. The devil can lead these into any snare. You may lead a blind man anywhere. God made a law that the Jews should not put a stumbling-block in the way of the blind. Lev 19:14. Satan knows it is easy to put a temptation in the way of the blind, at which they shall stumble into hell. When the Syrians were smitten with blindness, the prophet Elisha could lead them wherever he desired. 2 Kings 6:20. The bird that is blind is soon shot by the fowler. Satan, the god of this world, blinds men and then shoots them. An ignorant man cannot see the devil's snares. Satan tells him such a thing is no sin, or but a little one, and he will do well enough; it is but repent.

(2) Satan tempts **unbelievers**. He who, with Diagoras, doubts a Deity, or with the Photinians, denies hell—what sin may he not be drawn into! He is like metal that Satan can cast into any mold; he can dye him of any color. An unbeliever will stick at no sin, be it luxury, perjury, or injustice. Paul was afraid of none so much as

those who did not believe. "That I may be delivered from those who do not believe in Judea." Romans 15:31.

(3) Satan tempts **proud** people: over these he has more power. None is in greater danger of falling by temptation, than he who stands high in his own conceit. When David's heart was lifted up in pride, the devil stirred him up to number the people. 2 Samuel 24:2. [Lofty towers crash with a heavier fall; and lightning strikes the tops of mountains.] Horace. Satan made use of Haman's pride to be his shame.

(4) **Melancholy** people. Melancholy is a *black humor*, seated chiefly in the brain. It clothes the mind in sable, and disturbs reason. Satan works much upon this humor. There are three things in melancholy which give the devil greet advantage:

[1] Melancholy unfits for duty, it pulls off the chariot-wheels; it dispirits a man. Lute strings which are wet, will not sound. Just so, when the spirit is sad and melancholy, a Christian is out of tune for spiritual actions.

[2] Melancholy sides often with Satan against God. The devil tells such a person God does not love him, there is no mercy for him; and the melancholy soul is apt to think so, and sets his hand to the devil's lies.

[3] Melancholy breeds discontent, and discontent is the cause of many sins, as unthankfulness, impatience, and often it ends in self-murder. Judge, then, what an advantage Satan has against a melancholy person, and how easily he may prevail with him by his temptation! A melancholy person tempts the devil to tempt him!

(5) **Idle** people. The devil will find work for the idle to do. Jerome gave his friend this counsel, "To be ever well employed, that when the tempter came, he might find him working in the vineyard." If the hands are not working good, the head will be plotting evil. Mic 2:1.

7th subtlety. Satan gives some little respite, and seems to leave off tempting awhile, that he may come on after with more advantage; as Israel made as if they were beaten before the men of Al, and fled; but it was a plot to draw them out of their fenced cities, and ensnare them by an ambush. Josh 8:15. The devil sometimes raises the siege, and feigns a flight, that he may the better obtain the victory. He goes away for a time, that he may return when he sees a better season. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest: and finding none, he says, I will return unto my house, whence I came out." Luke 11:24. Satan, by feigning a flight, and leaving off tempting awhile, causes security in people; they think they are safe, and are become victors, when, but suddenly, Satan falls on them and wounds them. As one that is going to leap, runs back a little, that he may take the greater jump—so Satan seems to retire and run back a little, that he may come on with a temptation more furiously and successfully. We need, therefore, always to watch, and have on our spiritual armor.

8th subtlety. The old serpent either takes men off from the use of means, or makes them miscarry in the use of them.

(1) He labors to take men off from duty, from praying and hearing, in order to discourage them; and, to do that, he has two artifices:

He discourages them from duty by suggesting to them their unworthiness; that they are not worthy to approach to God, or have any signs of his love and favor. They are sinful, and God is holy—how dare they presume to bring their impure offering to God? That we

should see ourselves unworthy, is good, and argues humility; but to think we should not approach God because of unworthiness, is a conclusion of the devil's making. God says, "Come, though unworthy." By this temptation, the devil takes many off from coming to the Lord's table. "Oh," says he, "this is a solemn ordinance, and requires much holiness. How dare you come so unworthily? You will eat and drink unworthily." Thus, as Saul kept the people from eating honey—so the devil by this temptation, scares many from this ordinance, which is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

Satan endeavors to discourage from duty by objecting lack of success. When men have waited upon God in the use of ordinances, and find not the comfort they desire, Satan disheartens them, and puts them upon resolves of declining all religion; they begin to say as a wicked king, "Should I wait for the Lord any longer?" 2 Kings 6:33. When Saul saw God answered him not by dreams and visions, Satan tempted him to leave his worship, and seek to the witch of Endor. 1 Sam 28:6. No answer to prayer comes; therefore, says Satan, leave off praying; who will sow seed where no crop comes up? Thus the devil by his subtle logic would dispute a poor soul out of duty. But if he sees he cannot prevail this way, to take men off from the use of means, then he labors:

(2) To make them miscarry in the use of means. By this artifice he prevails over multitudes of professors. The devil stands, as he did at Joshua's right hand, to resist men. Zech 3:1. If he cannot hinder them from duty, he will be sure to hinder them in duty, two ways:

By causing *distraction* in the service of God; and this he does by proposing objects of vanity, or by whispering in men's ears, that they can scarcely know what they are doing.

He hinders, by putting men upon doing duties in a wrong manner.

[1] In a dead formal manner, that so they may fail of the success. Satan knows that *duties done superficially, were as good as left undone*. That prayer which does not pierce the heart, will never pierce heaven.

[2] He puts them upon doing duties for wrong ends. [The end governs the action]; he will make them look asquint, and have by-ends in duty. "You shall not be as the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." Matthew 6:5. Prayer is good—but to pray to be seen of men, was a dead fly in the box of ointment. The *oil of vainglory* feeds the lamp; sinister aims corrupt and destroy our holy things. Here is Satan's policy, either to *prevent* duty, or *pervert* it; either to take men off from the use of means, or make them miscarry in the use of them.

9th subtlety. Satan can color over sin with the name and pretense of virtue. Alcibiades hung a beautifully embroidered curtain over a foul picture of satyrs. Just so, Satan can put the curtain of virtue over the foul picture of sin. He can cheat men with false wares; he can make them believe that *presumption* is faith, that *intemperate passion* is zeal, *revenge* is prudence, *covetousness* is frugality, and *prodigality* is good hospitality. "Come, see my zeal for the Lord," says Jehu. Satan persuaded him it was a fire from heaven, when it was nothing but the wildfire of his own ambition. This is a subtle art of Satan, to deceive by tempting, and put men off with the dead child, instead of the live child; to make men believe that is a grace, which is a sin; as if one should write balm-water upon a glass of poison. If Satan has all these subtle artifices in tempting, are we not in great danger from this prince of the air? Have we not often need to pray, "Lord, allow us not to be led into temptation"? As the serpent beguiled Eve with his subtlety, let us not be beguiled by his hellish snares and plots. 2 Cor 11:3.

He has a dexterity in subtle contrivances. He hurts more as a *fox* than a *lion*. His *snares* are worse than his *darts*. "So that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are very familiar with his evil schemes." 2 Corinthians 2:11

10th subtlety. He labors to ensnare us by lawful things. More are hurt by lawful things than unlawful, as more are killed with wine than poison. Gross sins affright us—but how many enticed and harmed, in using lawful things inordinately. Recreation is lawful, eating and drinking are lawful—but many offend by excess, and their table is a snare. Relations are lawful—but how often does Satan tempt to over-love! How often is the wife and child put in God's place! Excess makes things lawful become sinful.

11th subtlety. He makes the duties of our general and particular calling hinder and jostle out one another. Our general calling is serving God, our particular calling is minding our employments in the world. It is wisdom to be regular in both these, when the particular calling does not eat out the time for God's service, nor the service of God hinder diligence in a calling. The devil's art is to make Christians defective in one of these two. Some spend all their time in hearing and reading the Word, and under a pretense of living by faith, do not live in a vocation. Others Satan takes off from duties of religion; under a pretense that they must provide for their families, he makes them so careful for their bodies, that they quite neglect their souls. The subtlety of the old serpent is to make men negligent in the duties either of the first table or the second.

12th subtlety. He misrepresents true holiness, that he may make others despise it. He paints the face of religion full of scars, and with blemishes, that he may create in the minds of men prejudice against it. He represents religion as the most melancholy thing, and that he

who embraces it must banish all joy, though the apostle speaks of "joy in believing." Romans 15:13. Satan suggests that religion exposes men to danger: he shows them the *cross*—but hides the *crown* from them; he labors to put all the disgrace he can, upon holiness, that he may tempt them to renounce it. He abuses the good Christian, and gives him a wrong name. The truly *zealous* man he calls hot-headed and factious; the *patient* man who bears injuries without revenge, he represents as a coward; the *humble* man as low-spirited; the *heavenly* man he calls a fool. He presents things that are seen, as more important than things that are not seen; and thus misrepresents religion to the world. As John Huss, that holy man, was painted with red devils—so Satan paints holiness with as deformed and misshapen a face as he can, that he may, by this temptation, draw men off from solid piety, and make them rather scorn than embrace it. The hand of Joab is in this. Satan is tempting people to atheism, to cast off all religion.

13th subtlety. Satan draws men off from the love of the truth, to embrace error. "That they should believe a lie." 2 Thess 2:11. He is called in Scripture not only an *unclean* spirit—but a *lying* spirit. As an unclean spirit he labors to defile the soul with lust, and as a lying spirit he labors to corrupt the mind with error. All this is dangerous, because many errors look so like the truth, as gilt represents true gold. Satan thus beguiles souls. Though the Scripture blames heretics for being promoters of error—yet it charges Satan with being the chief contriver of it. They spread the error—but the devil is a lying spirit in their mouths. Satan's great temptation is to make men believe dangerous impostures, to be glorious truths. He thus transforms himself into an angel of light. What is the meaning of Satan's sowing tares in the parable but sowing error instead of truth? Matthew 13:25. How quickly had the devil broached false doctrine in the apostles' times? That it was necessary to be circumcised, that

angel worship was lawful, and that Christ was not come in the flesh. Acts 15:1; Col 2:18; 1 John 4:3. The devil tempts by drawing men to error, because he knows how deadly the snare is, and the great mischief it will do.

(1) Error is of a spreading nature; it is compared to *leaven* because it permeates, and to a *gangrene* because it spreads. Matthew 16:11; 2 Tim 2:17. One error spreads into more, like a circle in the water that multiplies into more circles; one error seldom goes alone. Error spreads from one person to another. It is like the plague, which infects all round about it. Satan by infecting one person with error infects more! The error of Pelagius spread suddenly to Palestine, Africa, and Italy. The Arian error was at first but a single spark—but at last it set almost the whole world on fire.

(2) The devil lays the snare of error, because it brings divisions into the church; and these bring opprobrium and scandal upon the ways of God. *The devil dances at discord.* Division destroys peace, which was Christ's legacy; and love, which is the bond of perfection. Not only has Christ's coat been rent—but his body, by the divisions which error has caused. In churches and families where error creeps in, what animosities and factions it makes! It sets the father against the son, and the son against the father. What slaughters and bloodshed have been occasioned by errors in the church!

(3) The devil's policy in raising errors, is to hinder reformation. He was never a friend to reformation. In the primitive times, after the apostles' days, the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, which was a deluge of heresies, that so he might hinder the progress of the gospel. Rev 12:15.

(4) Satan tempts to error, because error devours godliness. The Gnostics were not only corrupted in their judgments—but in their

morals; they were loose in their lives. "Ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness." Jude 4. The Familists afterwards turned Ranters, and gave themselves over to vices and immoralities; and this they did while boasting of the Spirit and of perfection.

(5) The devil's design in seducing by error is, that he knows it is pernicious to souls. *Error damns as well as vice; poison kills as well as a pistol.* "Who privily shall bring in damnable heresies." 2 Peter 2:1. If Satan is thus subtle in laying snares of error to deceive, had we not need to pray that God would not allow us to be led into temptation; that he would make us wise to keep out of the snare of error; or, if we have fallen into it, that he would enable us to recover out of the snare by repentance?

14th subtlety. Satan bewitches and ensnares men, by setting pleasing baits before them; as the riches, pleasures, and honors of the world. "All these things will I give you." Matthew 4:9. How many does he tempt with this golden apple? Pride, idleness, luxury—are the three worms which are bred by prosperity. "Those who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare." 1 Tim 6:9. Satan kills with these silver darts. Satan kills with these *silver* darts! How many are ensnared by his luscious delights! The pleasures of the world are the great engine by which Satan batters down men's souls. His policy is to tickle them to death—to damn them with delights! The flesh would gladly be pleased, and Satan prevails by this temptation; he drowns them in the sweet waters of pleasure. Such as have abundance of the world, walk in the midst of golden snares. We had need watch our hearts in prosperity, and pray not to be led into temptation. We have as much need to be careful that we are not endangered by prosperity, as a man has to be careful at a feast where there are some poisoned dishes of food.

15th subtlety. Satan in tempting pleads *necessity*. He knows that necessity may in some cases seem to palliate and excuse a sin. It may seem to make a less evil good, to avoid a greater evil, as Lot offered to expose his daughters to the Sodomites, and was willing that they should be defiled, that he might preserve the angel strangers who were come into his house. Gen 19:8. Doubtless Satan had a hand in this temptation, and made Lot believe that the necessity of the action would excuse the sin. The tradesman pleads the necessity of unlawful gain, or he cannot live; another pleads a necessity of revenge, or his credit would be impaired. Thus Satan tempts men to sin by the plea of the necessity. He will quote Scripture to prove that in some extraordinary cases there may be a necessity of doing that which is not at other times justifiable. Did not David, in case of necessity, "eat the showbread, which was not lawful for him—but only the priests"? Matthew 12:4. We do not read that he was blamed; then says Satan, Why may not you in cases extraordinary trespass a little and take the forbidden fruit? O beware of this temptation! Satan's cloven foot is in it. Nothing can warrant a thing, which in its own, sinful. *Necessity* will not justify *impiety*.

16th subtlety. Satan draws men to presumption. Presumption is a confidence without sufficient ground. It is made up of two ingredients—audacity and security. This temptation is common. There is a twofold presumption:

(1) When men presume that they are better than they are; that they have grace when they have none. They will not take *gold* on trust—but they will take *grace* upon trust. The foolish virgins *presumed* that they had oil in their vessels—when they had none. Here that rule of Epicharmus is good, "Distrust a fallacious heart."

(2) When men presume on God's mercy. Though they are not so holy as they should be—yet they presume that God will be merciful to them. They look upon God's mercy with the broad spectacles of presumption. Satan soothes men in their sins; he preaches to them, "All hope, no fear;" and deludes them with golden dreams. "How many with vain hope, go down to hell." Augustine. Presumption is Satan's drag-net, by which he drags millions to hell.

By this temptation he often draws the godly to sin. They presume upon their privileges or graces, and so venture on occasions of sin. Jehoshaphat joined in a league of amity with king Ahab, presuming that his grace would be an antidote strong enough against the infection. 2 Chron 18:3. Satan tempted Peter to presume upon his own strength; and when it came to the trial he was foiled, and came off with shame. We had therefore need pray, that we may not be led into this temptation; and say with David, "Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins." Psalm 19:13.

17th subtlety. Satan carries on his evil designs against us under the highest pretenses of friendship. He puts silver upon his bait, and dips his poisoned pills in sugar, as some courtiers who make the greatest pretenses of love, where they have the most deadly hatred. Satan takes off his lion's skin and comes in sheep's clothing; he pretends kindness and friendship, and pleads what might be for our good. Thus he came to *Christ*, "Command that these stones be made bread." Matthew 4:3. As if he had said, "I see you are hungry, and there is no table spread for you in the wilderness; I, therefore, pitying your condition, wish you to get something to eat; turn stones to bread, that your hunger may be satisfied." But Christ spied the temptation, and with the sword of the Spirit, wounded the old serpent!

Thus Satan came to *Eve*, and tempted her under the notion of a friend. "Eat," said he, "of the forbidden fruit; for the Lord knows, that in the day you eat thereof, you shall be as gods." As if he had said, "I persuade you only to that which will put you into a better condition than you now are in; eat of this tree, and it will make you omniscient, you shall be as gods." What a kind deceitful devil was here! But it was a subtle temptation. She greedily swallowed the bait, and ruined herself and all her posterity! Let us fear his fallacious flatteries.

18th subtlety. Satan tempts men to sin by persuading them to keep his counsel. They are like those that have some foul disease, and will rather die than tell the physician. It were wisdom, in case of sore temptation, to open one's mind to some experienced Christian, whose counsel might be an antidote against it. There is danger in concealing it, as in concealing a distemper that may prove mortal. How had we need renew the petition, "Lead us not into temptation!"

19th subtlety. Satan makes use of fit tools for carrying on his work —that is, he makes use of such people as may be the most likely means to promote his designs. He lays the plot of a temptation, cuts out the work, and employs others to finish it.

(1) He makes use of such as are in places of *dignity*, men of renown. He knows, if he can get these on his side—that they may draw others into snares. When the princes and heads of the tribes joined with Korah, they presently drew a multitude into the conspiracy. Numb 16:2, 10.

(2) He carries on his designs by men of *wit* and *abilities*, such as, if it were possible, would deceive the very elect. He must have a great deal of cunning that persuades a man to be out of love with his food; but the devil can make use of heretical spirits to persuade men to be

out of love with the ordinances of God, in which they profess to have found comfort. Many who once seemed to be strict frequenters of the house of God are persuaded, by Satan's cunning instruments, to leave it off and to follow *the light within them*. One great subtlety of the devil is to make use of such cunning, subtle men as may be fit to carry on his tempting designs.

(3) He makes use of *bad company* to be instruments of tempting, especially to draw youth into sin. First they persuade them to come into their company, then to twist into a cord of friendship, then to drink with them, and, by degrees, debauch them. These are *the devil's decoys* to tempt others.

20th subtlety. Satan strikes at some *grace*, more than others. He aims at some people more than others; or at some grace more than others; and if he can prevail in this, he knows that it will be an advantage to him. If you ask what grace it is that Satan most strikes at, I answer, it is the grace of *faith*. He lays the plot of his temptation to blow up the fort of our faith. Why did Christ pray more for Peter's *faith* than any other grace? Luke 22:32. Because he saw that his faith was most in danger; the devil was striking at this grace. Satan, in tempting Eve, labored to weaken her faith. "Yes, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Gen 3:1. The devil would persuade her that God had not spoken truth; and when he had once brought her to distrust, she took of the tree. It is "the *shield* of faith." Eph 6:16. Satan, in tempting, strikes most at our shield, he assaults our faith. Though true faith cannot be wholly lost, it may suffer a great eclipse. Though the devil cannot by temptation take away the *life* of faith—yet he may hinder its *growth*. He cannot *destroy* grace —but he may *weaken* it.

Why does Satan in tempting chiefly assault our *faith?*

"Fight neither with small nor great—but only with the king." 1 Kings 22:31. Faith is the king of the graces; it is a royal, princely grace, and puts forth the most majestic and noble acts; therefore Satan fights chiefly with this grace. I shall show you the devil's policy in assaulting faith most.

(1) Faith is the grace which does Satan most harm; it makes the most resistance against him. "Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour! Resist him, standing firm in the **faith**." 1 Peter 5:8-9. No grace more bruises the serpent's head—than faith. It is both a shield and a sword, defensive and offensive. It is a shield to guard the head and defend the vitals. The shield of faith prevents the fiery darts of temptation from piercing us through. Faith is a sword which wounds the red dragon.

How does faith come to be so strong, that it can resist Satan and put him to flight?

Because it brings the strength of Christ into the soul. Samson's strength lay in his hair—ours lies in Christ. If a child is assaulted, it runs and calls to its father for help. Just so, when faith is assaulted, it runs and calls Christ, and in his strength overcomes. "In every situation take the shield of faith, and with it you will be able to extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one." Ephesians 6:16

Faith furnishes itself with a store of promises. The promises are faith's weapons to fight with. As David, by five stones in his sling, wounded Goliath—so faith puts the promises, as stones, into its sling. 1 Sam 17:40. "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Heb 13:5. "A bruised reed shall he not break." Matthew 12:20. "Who will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able." 1 Cor 10:13. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Romans 16:20. "No

man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." John 10:29. Here are five promises, like five stones, put into the sling of faith, and with these a believer may wound the red dragon. Faith being such a grace to resist and wound Satan, he watches his opportunity to batter our shield, though he cannot break it.

(2) Satan strikes most at our faith, and would weaken and destroy it, because it has a great influence upon all the other graces, and sets them to work. Like some rich clothier, that gives out a stock of wool to the poor, and sets them spinning—so faith gives out a stock to all the other graces, and sets them to work. It sets *love* to work. "Faith which works by love." Gal 5:6. When once the soul believes God's love, its love is kindled to God. The believing martyrs burned hotter in love than in fire. Faith sets *repentance* to work. When the soul believes there is mercy to be had, it sets the eyes weeping. "Oh," says the soul, "that ever I should offend such a gracious God!" *Repenting tears drop from the eye of faith.* "The father of the child cried out with tears, Lord, I believe." Mark 9:24. If the devil cannot destroy our faith—yet if he can disturb it, if he can hinder and stop its actings, he knows all the other graces will be lame and inactive. If the spring in a watch is stopped, the motion of the wheels will be hindered. Just so, if faith is hindered, all the other graces will be at a stand-still.

21st subtlety. Satan encourages those doctrines that are flesh-pleasing. He knows the flesh loves to be gratified, that it cries out for ease and liberty, and that it will not endure any yoke, unless it is lined and made soft. He will be sure, therefore, to lay his bait of temptation, so as to please and humor the flesh. The Word says, "Strive as in an agony to enter into glory; crucify the flesh; take the kingdom of heaven by holy violence!" Satan, to enervate and weaken these Scriptures, flatters the flesh; tells man there needs no such

strictness; nor so much zeal and violence; a softer pace will serve; sure there is an easier way to heaven; there needs no breaking the heart for sin. Do but confess to a priest, or count over a few rosary beads, or say some *Ave Marias*—and that will procure you a pardon, and give you admission into paradise. Or he goes another way to work: if he sees men startle at Popery—he stirs up flattering Antinomianism, and says, "What is the need of all this cost? What is the need of repenting tears? These are legal. What is the need to be so strict in your obedience? Christ has done all for you; you should make use of your Christian liberty." This temptation draws many away; it takes them off from strictness of life. He who sells *cheapest* shall have most customers, the devil knows that it *is a cheap and easy doctrine* which pleases the flesh, and therefore he has the most customers.

22nd subtlety. Satan has his temptations in reference to holy duties. His policy is either to hinder from duty, or discourage in duty, or put men too far in duty.

(1) To *hinder* from duty, as (1 Thess 2:18), "We would have come once and again—but Satan hindered us." So many duties of religion would have been performed—but Satan hindered. The hand of *Joab* is in this. There are three duties which the devil is an enemy to, and labors to keep us from.

Meditation. He will let men profess, or pray and hear in a formal manner, which does him no hurt and them no good. But he opposes meditation, as being a means to compose the heart and make it serious. He can stand your small shot, if you do not put in this bullet of meditation. He cares not how much you hear—but how much you meditate. Meditation is chewing the cud, it makes the Word digest and turn to nourishment; it is the bellows of the affections. The devil

is an enemy to this. When Christ is alone in the wilderness, giving himself to divine contemplations, the devil comes and tempts him, to hinder him. He will thrust in worldly business, something or other to keep men off from holy meditation.

Mortification. This is as needful as heaven. "Mortify your members which are upon the earth, uncleanness, inordinate affection." Col 3:5. Satan will let men be angry with sin, exchange sin, or restrain sin, which keeps it a prisoner, that cannot break out; but when it comes to taking away the life of sin, he labors to stop the warrant and hinder the execution! When sin is being mortified, Satan is being crucified.

Self-examination. "Examine yourselves;" is a metaphor from metal which is pierced through, to see if there is gold within. 2 Cor 13:5. Self-examination is a spiritual inquisition set up in the soul. Man must search his heart for sin, as one would search a house for a traitor; or, as Israel sought for leaven to burn it. Satan, if it is possible, will, by his temptations, keep men from this duty. He tells them that their estate is good, and what need they put themselves to the trouble of examination? Though men will not take their *money* on trust—yet Satan persuades them to take their *grace* on trust. He persuaded the foolish virgins that they had oil in their lamps. He has another policy, which is to show men the faults of others, in order to keep them from searching their own. He will allow them *spectacles* to see what is amiss in others—but a *microscope* to behold their own faces and see what is amiss in themselves.

(2) His policy is to *discourage* in duty. When anyone has been performing holy duties, Satan tells him that he has played the hypocrite; that he has served God for money; that he has had sinister ends; that his duties have been full of distraction and pride; that he

has offered the blind and the lame—so how can he expect a reward from God? He tells a Christian he has increased his sin by prayer, and endeavors to make him disparage his duties—so he knows not whether he should pray or not.

(3) If this plot will not work, he labors to put a Christian on too far in duty. If he cannot keep him from duty, he will run him on too far in it. Humiliation, or mourning for sin, is a duty—but Satan will push it too far; he will say, "You are not humbled enough!" Indeed, he never thinks a man is humbled enough, until he despairs. He would make a Christian wade so deep in the *waters of repentance*, that he would get beyond his depth, and be drowned in the *gulf of despair*.

He comes thus to the soul, "Your sins have been great, and your sorrows should be proportionate to your sins. But is it so? Can you say you have been as great a mourner as you have been a sinner? You did for many years drive no other trade but sin—and is a *drop of sorrow* enough for a sea of sin? No! Your soul must be more humbled, and lie steeping longer in the brinish waters of repentance!" He would have a Christian weep himself blind, and in a desperate mood, to throw away the *anchor of hope!*

Now, lest any be troubled with this temptation, let me say that this is a mere fallacy of Satan; for sorrow proportionable to sin is not attainable in this life, nor does God expect it. It is sufficient for you, Christian, if you have a gospel-sorrow; if you grieve so far as to see sin hateful, and Christ precious; if you grieve so as to break off iniquity; if your remorse ends in divorce. This is to be humbled enough. The gold has lain long enough in the fire when the dross is purged out. Just so, a Christian has lain long enough in humiliation when the love of sin is purged out. This is to be humbled enough for

divine acceptance. God, for Christ's sake, will accept of this sorrow for sin; therefore let not Satan's temptations drive you to despair.

You see how subtle an enemy he is, to *hinder* from duty, or *discourage* in duty, or put men on *too far* in duty, that he may run them upon the *rock of despair!* Had we not need, then, who have such a subtle enemy, to pray, "Lord, lead us not into temptation"? As the serpent beguiled Eve, let us not be beguiled by this hellish deceiver.

23rd subtlety. Satan tempts to sin, by the hope of returning out of it by speedy repentance. It is easy for the bird to fly into the snare—but it is not so easy to get out of it. Is it so easy a thing to repent? Are there no pangs in the new birth? Is it easy to leap out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom? How many has Satan flattered into hell by the policy, that if they sin, they may recover themselves by repentance! Alas! is repentance in our power? A lock can be easily shut—but it cannot open without a key. Just so, we can shut ourselves out from God—but we cannot open to him by repentance, until he who has the key of David in his hand, opens our heart.

24th subtlety. Satan puts us upon doing that which is good, unseasonably.

To mourn for sin is a duty; the sacrifices of God are a broken heart. But there is a time when it may not be so seasonable. Psalm 51:17. After some eminent deliverance, which calls for rejoicing, to have the spirit dyed of a sad color, and to sit weeping, is not seasonable. There was a special time at the feast of tabernacles, when God called his people to cheerfulness. "Seven days shall you keep a solemn feast unto the Lord your God, you shall surely rejoice." Deut 16:15. Now, if at this time the Israelites had hung their harps upon the willows, and been disconsolate, it would have been very unseasonable, like

mourning at a wedding. When God, by his providence, calls us to thanksgiving, and we sit drooping, and, with Rachel, refuse to be comforted—it is very evil, and savors of ingratitude. It is Satan's temptation; the hand of *Joab* is in this!

To rejoice is a duty. "Praise is lovely for the upright." Psalm 33:1. But when God, by his judgements, calls us to weeping—joy and mirth is unseasonable. "In that day did the Lord call to weeping, and behold joy and gladness." Isaiah 22:12, 13. Learned writers think that this was in the time of King Ahaz, when the signs of God's anger, like a blazing star, appeared. To be given to mirth at that time, was very unseasonable.

To read the Word is a duty—but Satan sometimes puts men upon it when it is unseasonable. To read it at home when God's Word is being preached, or the sacrament administered, is unseasonable, yes, sinful; as Hushai said, "The counsel is not good at this time." 2 Samuel 17:7. There was a set time enjoined for the Passover, when the Jews were to bring their offering to the Lord. Numb 9:2. Had the people been reading the law at home in the time of the Passover, it had not been in season, and God would have punished it for a contempt. It is the devil's subtle temptation, either to keep us from duty, or to put us upon it when it is least in season. Duties of religion, not well timed, and done in season, are dangerous. Snow and hail are good for the ground when they come in their season; but in the harvest, when the corn is ripe, a storm of hail would do hurt.

25th subtlety. Satan persuades men to delay repenting and turning to God. He says (as Hag 1:2), "The time is not come." Now youth is budding; or you are but in the flower of your age, it is too soon to repent: "The time is not come." *This temptation is the devil's draw-net by which he draws millions to hell;* it is a dangerous temptation.

"Sin is a sweet poison," Bernard. The longer poison lies in the body—the more deadly it is. Just so, by *delay of repentance*, sin strengthens, and the heart hardens. The longer ice freezes, the harder it is to be broken. Just so, the longer a man freezes in impenitency, the more difficult it will be to have his heart broken. When sin has *settled* in the heart—it is not easily driven away. Besides, the danger of delaying repentance appears in this, that life is hazardous, and may suddenly expire. What security have you, that you shall live another day? Life is made up of a few flying minutes; it is a candle, which is soon blown out. "What is your life? It is even a vapor." James 4:14. The body is like a vessel, filled with a little breath; sickness broaches it, death draws it out. How dangerous therefore is it to procrastinate and put off turning to God by repentance! *Many now in hell purposed to repent—but death surprised them!*

26th subtlety. Satan, in tempting, assaults and weakens the saints' peace. If he cannot destroy their *grace*, he will disturb their *peace*. He envies the Christian; and if he cannot keep him from a heaven hereafter, he will keep him from a heaven upon earth. There is nothing, next to holiness, which a Christian prizes more than peace and tranquility of mind. It is the cream of life, a bunch of grapes by the way. Now, Satan's great policy is to shake a Christian's peace; that, if he will go to heaven, he shall go there through frights, and plenty of tears. He throws in his fire-balls of temptation, to set the saints' peace on fire. Of such great concern is spiritual peace, that no wonder if Satan would, by his intricate subtleties, rob us of that jewel. Spiritual peace is a token of God's favor. As Joseph had a special testimony of his father's kindness in the many-colored coat—so have the saints a special token of God's good will to them, when he gives them the many-colored coat of inward peace. No wonder then, if Satan rages so much against the saints' peace, and would tear off

this comfortable robe from them. The devil troubles the waters of the saints' peace because hereby he hopes to have the more advantage of them.

(1) By perplexing their spirits, he takes off their chariot wheels; unfits them for the service of God; and puts body and mind out of temper, as an instrument out of tune. Sadness of spirit prevailing, a Christian can think of nothing but his troubles; his mind is full of doubts, fears, surmises—so that he is like a person distracted, and is scarcely himself; either he neglects the duties of religion, or his mind is taken off from them while he is doing them. There is one duty especially that melancholy and sadness of spirit unfits for, and that is thankfulness. Thankfulness is a tribute due to God. "Let the saints be joyful, let the high praises of God be in their mouth." Psalm 149:5, 6. But when Satan has disturbed a Christian's spirit and filled his mind full of black, and almost despairing thoughts, how can he be thankful? It rejoices Satan to see how his plot succeeds. By making God's children unquiet, he makes them unthankful.

(2) By troubling the saints' peace, Satan lays a stumbling block in the way of others. By this he gets occasion to render the ways of God unlovely to those who are looking heavenward. He sets before new beginners—the perplexing thoughts, the tears, the groans of those who are wounded in spirit, to scare them from all seriousness in religion. He will object to new beginners: "Do you not see how these sad souls torture themselves with melancholy thoughts—and will you change the comforts and pleasures of this life to sit always in the house of mourning? Will you espouse that religion which makes you a terror to yourselves, and a burden to others? Can you be in love with a religion that is ready to frighten you out of your wits?" Thus the devil, by troubling the saints' peace, would discourage others who are looking towards heaven; he would beat them off from prayer, and

hearing all soul-awakening sermons, by the fear lest they should fall into this black humor of melancholy, and end their days in despair.

(3) By this subtle policy of Satan, in disturbing the saints' peace, and making them believe God does not love them, he sometimes so far prevails as to make them begin to entertain hard thoughts of God. Through the *black spectacles of melancholy*, God's dealings look sad and ghastly. Satan tempts the godly to have strange thoughts of God; to think he has cast off all pity, and has forgotten to he gracious, and to make sad conclusions. Psalm 78:7, 8, 9. "He will break all my bones like a lion; You make an end of me day and night." Isaiah 38:13. The devil, by melancholy, causes a sad eclipse in the soul—so that it begins to think that God has shut up the springs of mercy, and there is no hope. Hereupon Satan gets further advantage of a troubled spirit. Sometimes he puts it upon sinful wishes and execrations against itself; as Job, who in distemper of mind, cursed the day of his birth. Job 3:3. Though he did not curse his God—yet he cursed the day of his birth.

Thus you see what advantages the devil gets by raising storms and troubling the saints' peace. If the devil is capable of any *delight*, it is to see the saints' *disquiets*. Their groans are his music. It is a sport to him to see them torture themselves upon the rack of melancholy, and almost drown themselves in tears. When the godly have unjust surmises of God, question his love, deny the work of grace, and fall to wishing they had never been born—Satan is ready to clap his hands, and shout for a victory.

By what arts and methods does Satan, in tempting, disturb the saints' peace?

He slyly conveys evil thoughts, and makes a Christian believe they come from his own heart. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack—

but it was of Joseph's putting there. Just so, a child of God often finds atheistical and blasphemous thoughts in his mind—but Satan has put them there. As some lay their children at another's door—so Satan lays his temptations at our door, and fathers them upon us. We then trouble ourselves about them, and nurse them, as if they were our own.

Satan disturbs the saints' peace by drawing forth their sins in the black colors to affright them, and make them ready to give up the spirit. He is called the accuser of the brethren; not only because he accuses them to God—but accuses them to themselves. He tells them they are guilty of certain sins and they are hypocrites; whereas the sins of a believer only show that his grace is not perfect—but not that he has no grace. When Satan comes with this temptation, show him that Scripture, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:7.

27th subtlety. Satan, by plausible arguments, tempts men to commit suicide—to make away with themselves. This temptation not only crosses the current of Scripture—but it is abhorrent to nature to be *one's own executioner*. Yet such are the cunning artifices of Satan, that he persuades many to lay violent hands upon themselves, as the obituaries witness. He tempts some to do this in terror of conscience, telling them, "All the hell they shall have is in their conscience, and death will give them present ease." He tempts others to make away with themselves that they may live no longer to sin against God. Others he tempts to make away with themselves, that they may presently arrive at happiness. He tells them, the best of the saints desire heaven, and the sooner they are there the better.

Augustine speaks of Cleombrotus, who hearing Plato read a lecture on the immortality of the soul, and the joys of the other world—threw

himself down a steep precipice and killed himself. This is Satan's plot; but we must not break prison by laying violent hands upon ourselves—but wait until God sends and opens the door. Let us pray "Lead us not into temptation." Still bear in mind that Scripture, "You shall not kill." Exod 20:13. If we may not kill another—much less ourselves! And take heed of discontent, which often opens the door to self-murder.

Thus I have shown you twenty-seven subtleties of Satan in tempting, that you may the better know them, and avoid them. There is a story of a Jew who would have poisoned Luther—but a friend sent to Luther the picture of the Jew, warning him to take heed of such a man when he saw him; by which means Luther recognized knew the murderer, and escaped his hands. I have told you the subtle devices of Satan in tempting; I have shown you the picture of him who would murder you. Being forewarned, I beseech you to take heed of the murderer!

From the subtlety of Satan in tempting, let me draw three inferences.

(1) It may administer matter of wonder to us, how any are saved. How amazing that Satan, this Abaddon, or angel of the bottomless pit (Rev 9:11) this Apollyon, this soul-devourer—does not deceive all mankind! What a wonder that some are preserved, that neither Satan's hidden snares prevail nor his fiery darts! What a wonder that neither the head of the serpent, nor the paw of the lion destroys them! Surely it will be matter of admiration to the saints, when they come to heaven, to think how astonishing it is, that notwithstanding all the force and fraud, the power and policy of hell, they should arrive safe at the heavenly port! This is owing to the safe

conduct of Christ, the Captain of our salvation. *Michael* is too hard for the *dragon!*

(2) Is Satan subtle? See what need we have to pray to God for wisdom to discern the snares of Satan, and strength to resist them. We cannot of ourselves stand against temptation; if we could, the prayer were needless, "Lead us not into temptation." Let us not think that we in ourselves, can be too cunning for the devil, or escape his wiles and darts. If David and Peter, who were pillars in God's temple, fell by temptation—how soon would such weak reeds as we are, be blown down—if God would leave us! Take Christ's advice, "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation." Matthew 26:41.

(3) See how the end of all Satan's subtleties in tempting is, that he may be an accuser. He lays the plot, entices men to sin, and then brings in the indictment; as if one should make another drunk, and then complain of him to the magistrate for being drunk. The devil is first a tempter—and then an informer. He is first a liar—and then a murderer!

Having shown the subtleties of Satan in tempting, I shall answer two questions:

Why does God allow his people to be buffeted by Satan's temptations?

He does it for many wise and holy ends.

(1) He lets them be tempted to try them. The Hebrew word signifies both to *tempt* and to try. Temptation is a touchstone to try what is in the heart. The devil tempts, that he may deceive—but God

lets us be tempted, to try us. [He who is not tempted is not tested.] Augustine.

Hereby God tries our **sincerity**. Job's sincerity was tried by temptation; the devil told God that Job was a hypocrite, and served him only because God had blessed him. But, said he, "Touch all that he has (that is, let me tempt him) and he will curse you to your face!" Job 1:11. Well, God did let the devil touch him by temptation, and yet Job remained holy, he worshiped God, and blessed God; ver 20, 21. Here Job's sincerity was proved; he had fiery temptations—but he came out of the fire a *golden Christian*. Temptation is a touchstone of sincerity.

By temptation. God tries our **love**. The wife of Tigranes never showed her chastity and love to her husband, as when she was tempted by Cyrus—but did not yield. Just so, our love to God is seen when we can look a temptation in the face, and turn our back upon it. Though the devil come as a serpent subtly, and offers a golden apple —yet the one who loves God will not touch the forbidden fruit. When the devil offered Christ all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, such was Christ's love to his Father, that he abhorred the temptation. True love will not be bribed. When the devil's darts are most fiery—a saint's love to God is most fervent! "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." John 14:15

By temptation God tries our **courage**. "Ephraim is a silly dove without heart." Hos 7:11. So it may be said of many, they are *without a heart*; they have no heart to resist a temptation. No sooner does Satan come with his solicitations—but they yield. They are like a coward, who as soon as the thief approaches, delivers his purse. He is a valorous Christian, who brandishes the sword of the Spirit against Satan, and will rather die than yield. The courage of the Romans was

never more seen, than when they were assaulted by the Carthaginians. Just so, the heroic spirit of a saint is never more seen than in a battle-field, when he is fighting with the red dragon, and by the power of faith puts the devil to flight. [The strength of faith can be shaken, not destroyed.] Tertullian. One reason why God lets his people be tempted is, that their metal may be tried—their sincerity, love, and magnanimity. When grace is proved, the gospel is honored.

(2) God allows his children to be tempted, that they may be kept from pride. Pride crept once into the angels, and into the apostles, when they disputed which of them should be greatest; and in Peter, when he said, "Though all men forsake you—yet I will not," as if he had had more grace than all the apostles. Pride keeps grace low, that it cannot thrive. As the head swells—the other parts of the body waste away. Just so, as pride swells—grace wastes away. God resists pride; and, that he may keep his children humble, he allows them sometimes to fall into temptation. "To keep me from getting puffed up, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from getting proud." 2 Cor 12:7. When Paul was lifted up by revelations, he was in danger of being lifted up with pride; then came the messenger of Satan to buffet him: that was some sore temptation to humble him. The thorn in the flesh was to burst the bubble of pride. Better is the temptation which humbles me —than the duty which makes me proud. Rather than a Christian should be proud, God lets him fall into the devil's hands awhile—that he may be cured of his swelling pride.

(3) God lets his people be tempted, that they may be fitter to comfort others who are in the same distress, and speak a word in due season to such as are weary. Paul was trained up in the fencing-school of temptation, and was able to acquaint others with Satan's wiles and stratagems, 2 Cor 2:11. A man who has ridden over

a place where there are quicksands, is the fittest to guide others through that dangerous way. Just so, he who has been buffeted by Satan, and has felt the claws of the roaring lion, is the fittest man to deal with one who is tempted.

(4) God lets his children be tempted, to make them long more for heaven, where they shall be out of gunshot, and freed from the hissing of the old serpent. Satan is not yet fully cast into prison—but like a prisoner who is under bail, he vexes and molests the saints. He lays his snares, and throws his fireballs! But this only makes the children of God long to be gone from hence, and pray that they had the wings of a dove, to fly away and be at rest! God allowed Israel to be vexed with the Egyptians, that they might long the more to be in Canaan. Heaven is the place of rest—no bullets of temptation fly there! The eagle that soars aloft in the air, and sits perching upon the tops of high trees, is not troubled with the stinging of serpents below. Just so, when believers have got into the heaven above, they shall not be stung with the old serpent! The devil is cast out of the heavenly paradise. Heaven is compared to an exceeding high mountain. Rev 21:10. It is so high, that Satan's fiery darts cannot reach up to it. "There is no fear of enemies there, no snares of devils." Bernard.

The temptations here are to make the saints long until death sounds a retreat, and calls them off the field where the bullets of temptation fly so thick, that they may receive a victorious crown!

What rocks of support are there, or what comfort is there for tempted souls?

(1) That it is not our case alone—but has been the case of God's most eminent saints. "There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man," yes, to the holiest men. 1 Cor 10:13.

Christ's lambs, which have had the mark of election upon them, have been set upon by the world. *Elijah*, who could shut heaven by prayer, could not shut his heart from temptation. 1 Kings 19:4. *Job* was tempted to curse God, *Peter* to deny Christ; and hardly ever any saint has got to heaven—but has met with a lion by the way! [No one escapes the lot which all the saints suffer.] Nay, *Jesus Christ* himself, though free from sin—yet was not free from temptation. We read of his baptism; then he was "led into the wilderness—to be tempted by the devil." Matthew 4:1. No sooner was Christ out of the water of baptism—but he was in the fire of temptation! And if the devil would set upon Christ, no wonder if he set upon us! There was no sin in Christ—no powder for the devil's fire. Temptation to him was like a pebble on a crystal glass, which glides off; or like a spark of fire on a marble pillar, which will not stick—and yet Satan was bold to tempt him! It is some comfort that those who have been our *betters*, have wrestled with temptations.

(2) Another rock of support that may comfort a tempted soul, is, that temptations (where they are *burdens*) evidence grace. Satan does not tempt God's children because they have *sin* in them—but because they have *grace* in them. Had they no grace he would not disturb them, for where he keeps possession all is in peace. Luke 11:21. His temptations are to rob the saints of their grace. A thief will not assault an *empty* house—but only where he thinks there is treasure. A pirate will not set upon an *empty* ship—but only one which is full of spices and jewels. Just so, the devil assaults most the people of God, because he thinks they have a rich treasure of grace in their hearts, and he would rob them of it. Why are so many cudgels thrown up into a tree—but because there is much fruit upon it? The devil throws his temptations at you, because he sees you have much fruit of grace growing upon you. Though to be

tempted is a *trouble*—yet to think *why* you are tempted—is a *comfort*.

(3) Another rock of support or comfort is, that Jesus Christ is near at hand, and stands by us in all our temptations. Here take notice of two things:

[1] Christ's SYMPATHY in our temptations. "We do not have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Heb 4:15. Jesus Christ sympathizes with us; he is so sensible of our temptations as if he himself lay under them—and felt them in his own soul. As in music, when one string is touched, all the rest sound—so when *we* suffer Christ's affections sound; we cannot be tempted but he is touched. If you saw a wolf worry your child, would you not pity your child? You cannot pity your child—as Christ pities his tempted ones. He had a fellow feeling when he was upon earth—but much more now that he is in glory.

But how can it compatible with Christ's glory now in heaven, to have a fellow feeling with our sufferings?

This fellow feeling in Christ arises not from an infirmity or passion—but from the *mystic union* between him and his members. "He who touches you, touches the apple of his eye." Zech 2:8. Every injury done to a *saint*—he takes as done to *him* in heaven. Every temptation strikes at him, and he is touched with the feeling of them.

[2] Christ's SUPPORT in temptation. The good Samaritan first had compassion on the wounded man—there was sympathy. Then he poured in wine and oil—there was support (Luke 10:34). Just so, when we are wounded by the red dragon, Christ is first touched with compassion, and then pours in wine and oil. "In that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to support those who are

tempted." Heb 2:18. The Greek word for *support*, signifies to run speedily to one's help. So *fierce* is Satan—so *frail* is man, that Christ runs speedily to his help. When Peter was ready to sink, and said, "Lord, save me!" Christ immediately stretched forth his hand, and caught him! Just so, when a poor soul is tempted, and cries to heaven for help, "Lord, save me!" Christ comes in with his auxiliary forces.

Our Lord Jesus knows what it is to be tempted, therefore he is ready to support those who are tempted. It has been observed that *mothers* are more pitiful to other women in their pregnancies, than those women who are barren. Just so, the Lord Jesus having been in travail by temptations and sufferings—is more ready to pity and support those who are tempted.

Concerning Christ's supporting the tempted, consider two things: his **ability** to support, and his **agility** to support. "He is *able* to support those who are tempted." Heb 2:18. He is called *Michael*, which signifies, *"Who is like God."* Rev 12:7. Though the tempted soul is weak—yet he fights under a good Captain—the Lion of the tribe of Judah! When a tempted soul fights, Christ comes into the field as his support. Our *Michael* will be too hard for the dragon. When the devil lays the siege of a temptation, Christ can quench it when he pleases; he can beat through the enemy's quarters, and so rout Satan that he shall never be able to rally his forces any more. Jesus Christ is on the saint's side, and who would desire a better *defense* than *omnipotence!*

As Christ is *able* to support the tempted—so he will *certainly* support them. His power enables him, his love inclines him, his faithfulness engages him—to support his tempted people. It is a great comfort to a soul in temptation, to have a supporting Savior. God supported

Israel in the wilderness, when they were among fiery serpents. The *rock* sending forth water, the *manna*, the pillar of cloud, the *brazen serpent*—what were these but types of God's supporting poor souls in the wilderness of temptation, stung by the devil, that fiery serpent? Alexander being asked how he could sleep so securely, when his enemies were about him, said, "Antipater is awake, who is always vigilant." So when our tempting enemy is near us—Jesus Christ is awake, who is a wall of fire around us.

There is a great deal of support to the tempted in the **names** given to Christ. As *Satan's* names may terrify—so *Christ's* names may support. The devil is called *Apollyon*, the devourer. Rev 9:11. Christ is called a *Savior*. The devil is called the *"strong man."* Matthew 12:29. Christ is called *El Gibbor—the mighty God*. Isaiah 9:6. The devil is called the *accuser*. Rev 12:10. Christ is called the *Advocate*. 1 John 2:1. The devil is called the *tempter*. Matthew 4:3. Christ is called the *Comforter*. Luke 2:25. The devil is called the *prince of darkness*. Christ is called the *Sun of Righteousness*. The devil is called the *old serpent*. Christ is called the *Brazen Serpent* who heals. John 3:14. Thus the very names of Christ have some support in them for tempted souls.

How and in what manner does Christ support those who are tempted?

1. He supports them by sending his *Spirit*—whose work it is to bring those *promises* to their mind, which are fortifying. "He shall bring all things to your remembrance." John 14:26. The Spirit furnishes us with promises—as so many weapons to fight against the old serpent. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Romans 16:20. "God will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able." 1 Cor 10:13. "The seed of the

woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Gen 3:15. We are often in times of temptation, like a man who has his house attacked, and cannot find his weapons, his sword and gun; in which case Christ sends his Spirit, and brings things to our remembrance, which help us in our combat. The Spirit of Christ does for the tempted, what Aaron and Hur did for Moses, when they put a stone under him and held up his hands, and then Israel prevailed. The Spirit puts the promises under the hands of faith, and then the Christian overcomes the devil, that spiritual Amalek. The *promise* is to the soul—as the *anchor* to the ship, which keeps it steady in a storm.

2. Christ supports those who are tempted by "interceding for them." When the devil is *tempting*, Christ is *praying*. The prayer which Christ put up for Peter when he was tempted, extends to all his saints. "Father," says Christ, "it is my child who is tempted! Father, pity him!" Luke 22:32. When a poor soul lies bleeding of the wounds which the devil has given him, Christ presents his wounds to his Father, and, in the virtue of those, pleads for mercy. How powerful must his prayer be! He is heaven's favorite. John 11:42. He is both High Priest and a Son. If God could forget that Christ were a *Priest*, he cannot forget that he is a *Son*. Besides, Christ prays for nothing but what is agreeable to his Father's will. If a king's son petitions only for that which his father has a mind to grant—his suit will not be denied.

3. Christ supports his people, by taking off the tempter. When the *sheep* begin to straggle, the shepherd sets the *dog* on them to bring them back to the fold, and then calls off the dog. Just so, God takes off the tempter. He "will with the temptation make a way to escape;" he will make an outlet. 1 Cor 10:13. He will rebuke the tempter. "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan!" Zech 3:2. It is no small support, that Christ supports the tempted. The mother supports the

child most, when it is sick; she sits by its bedside, and brings it cordials. Just so, when a soul is most assaulted, it shall be most assisted by Jesus.

"But I have dealt unkindly with Christ and sinned against his love. Surely he will not support me! He will let me perish in the battle!"

Christ is a merciful High Priest, and will support you notwithstanding your failings. Joseph was a type of Christ; his brethren sold him away, and the "iron entered into his soul;" yet afterwards, when his brethren were ready to die in the famine—he forgot their injuries, and supported them with money and grain. "I am," said he, "Joseph your brother!" So Christ will say to a tempted soul, "I know your unkindnesses, how you have distrusted my love, grieved my Spirit; but I am *Joseph*—I am *Jesus*—therefore I will support you when you are tempted."

(4) Another rock of support—is that the holiest man may be most tempted. A rich ship may be violently attacked by pirates. Just so, he who is rich in faith may have the devil upon him with his battering-pieces. Job, an eminent saint, was fiercely assaulted. Satan smote his body that he might tempt him either to question God's providence, or quarrel with it. Paul was a chosen vessel—but how was this vessel battered with temptation! 2 Cor 12:7.

Is it not said, "He who is begotten of God, that the wicked one touches him not"? 1 John 5:18.

It is not meant that the devil does not tempt him—but he touches him not, that is, with a *deadly* touch. "There is a sin unto death." 1 John 5:16. Now, Satan with all his temptations does not make a child of God sin "a sin unto death." Thus he touches him not.

(5) Another rock of support—is that Satan can go no further in tempting than God gives him permission. The power of the tempter is limited. A whole legion of devils could not touch one swine—until Christ gave them permission. Satan would have sifted Peter until he sifted out all his grace—but Christ would not allow him. "I have prayed for you," etc. Christ binds the devil with a chain. Rev 20:1. If Satan's *power* were according to his *malice* —not one soul would be saved; but he is a *chained* enemy. It is a comfort that Satan cannot go a hair's breadth beyond God's permission. If an enemy could not touch a child further than the father appointed, he would do the child no great harm.

(6) Another rock of support—is that it is not *having* a temptation which makes guilty, but giving *consent* to it. We cannot hinder a temptation. If we abhor the temptation, it is our *burden*—and not our *sin*. We read in the old law, that if one forced a virgin, and she cried out, she was reputed innocent. Just so, if Satan by temptation would commit a rape upon a Christian, and he cries out, and does not consent, the Lord will charge it upon the devil's score. It is not laying the bait which hurts the fish—if the fish do not *bite*.

(7) Another rock of support is—that our being tempted is no sign of God's hating us. A child of God often thinks God does not love him because he lets him be haunted by the devil. This is a wrong conclusion. Was not Christ himself tempted, and yet by a voice from heaven proclaimed, "This is my *beloved* Son!" Matthew 3:17. Satan's tempting, and God's loving—may stand together. The goldsmith loves his gold in the fire. Just so, God loves a saint, though shot at by fiery darts.

(8) Another rock of support is—that Christ's temptation was for our consolation. Jesus Christ is to be looked upon as a public person, as our head and representative; and what he did, he did for us. His *prayer* was for us, his *suffering* was for us; and when he was *tempted*, and overcame the temptation, he overcame for us. Christ's conquering Satan was to show that elect people shall at last be conquerors over Satan. When Christ overcame Satan's temptation, it was not only to give us an example of courage—but an assurance of our conquest. We have overcome Satan already in our covenant head, and we shall at last perfectly overcome.

(9) Another rock of support is—that the saints' temptation shall not be above their strength. The harpist will not stretch the strings of his harp too hard, lest they break. "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able." 1 Cor 10:13. He will proportion our strength to the stroke. "My grace is sufficient for you." 2 Cor 12:9. The torch-light of faith shall be kept burning, though all the winds of temptation are blowing.

(10) Another rock of support—is that these temptations shall produce much good. They quicken a spirit of prayer in the saints. They pray more and better. Temptation is the exciter of prayer. Perhaps before, the saints came to God as cold suitors in prayer—they prayed as if they prayed not. Temptation is a medicine for security. When Paul had a messenger of Satan to buffet him, he was more earnest in prayer. "For this thing I besought the Lord *three* times." 2 Cor 12:8. The thorn in his flesh was a spur in his sides to quicken him in prayer. The deer when shot with the dart, runs faster to the water. Just so, a soul that is shot with the fiery darts of temptation, runs the faster to the throne of grace; and is earnest with God, either to take off the tempter, or to support him when he is tempted.

God makes the temptation to sin—a means to prevent sin. The more a Christian is tempted, the more he fights against the temptation. The more a chaste woman is assaulted, the more she abhors the attempt. The stronger Joseph's temptation was, the stronger was his opposition. The more the enemy attempts to storm a castle, the more is he repelled and beat back.

A godly man's temptations cause the increase of grace. "One tempted Christian," says Luther, "is worth a thousand." He grows more in grace. As the bellows increase the flame—so temptation increases the flame of grace.

By these temptations God makes way for **comfort**. After Christ was tempted, the angels came and ministered unto him. Matthew 4:2. When Abraham had been warring, Melchizedek brought him bread and wine to revive his spirits. Gen 14:18. So after the saints have been warring with Satan, God sends his Spirit to comfort them. Luther said that *temptations* were *Christ's embraces*, because he then manifests himself most sweetly to the soul.

That I may further comfort such as are tempted, let me speak to two particular cases.

"I have horrid temptations to blasphemy!" say some.

Did not the devil tempt Christ after this manner: "All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me"? Matthew 4:9. What greater blasphemy can be imagined than that the God of heaven and earth, should worship the devil! Yet Christ was tempted to this. If when blasphemous thoughts are injected, you *tremble* at them, and are in a cold sweat—they are not yours—Satan shall answer for them. Let him that plots the treason suffer.

"But my case is yet worse," say others; *"I have been tempted to such sins, and have yielded! The tempter has overcome me!"*

I grant that, through the withdrawing of God's grace, and the force of temptation—a child of God may be overcome. David was overcome by temptation in the case of Bathsheba, and in numbering the people. There is a principle of grace in the heart true to Christ; but sometimes it may be overcome by corruption, and then a Christian yields. It is sad thus to yield to the tempter. But yet let not a child of God be wholly discouraged, and say there is no hope. Let me pour in some *balm of Gilead* into this wounded soul.

(1) Though a Christian may fall by a temptation—yet the seed of God is in him. "His seed remains in him." 1 John 3:9. [Grace can be shaken—but not destroyed.] Augustine. A man may be *bruised* by a fall—yet there is life in him. A Christian foiled by Satan may be like the man going to Jericho, who fell among thieves, and was left "wounded and half dead;" but still there is a vital principle of grace; his seed remains in him. Luke 10:30.

(2) Though a child of God may be overcome in a *skirmish*—yet not in the *war*. As an army may be worsted in a skirmish—but conquer at last. Though Satan may foil a child of God in a skirmish by a temptation, the believer shall overcome at last. A saint may be *foiled*—yet not *conquered*. He may lose *ground*—and not lose the *victory*.

(3) God does not judge his children by one action—but by the frame of the heart. As he does not judge a wicked man by one good action—so neither does God judge a holy man by one bad action. A holy person may be worsted by a temptation; but God does not measure him by that. Who measures milk when it seethes and boils up? God does not take the measure of a saint when the devil has

boiled him up in a passion—but he judges of him by the pulse and temper of his heart. The Christian would fear God; and when he fails he weeps. God looks which way the bias of his heart stands; if that is set against sin—God will pardon.

(4) God will make a saint's fall by temptation turn to his spiritual advantage. He may let a regenerate person fall by a temptation, to make him more watchful. Perhaps he walked loosely, and was decoyed into sin; but for the future he will grow more careful and cautious in his walking. The *foiled* Christian is a *vigilant* Christian. He will take care not to come within the *lion's chain* any more! He will be shy and fearful of the *occasions* of sin. He will not go abroad without his spiritual armor, and will gird on his armor by prayer. When a wild beast gets over the hedge and damages the corn —the farmer will make his fence stronger. Just so, when the devil gets over the fence by temptation, and foils a Christian—he will be sure to mend his fence, and be more vigilant against temptation afterwards.

God sometimes lets his children be foiled by temptation, that they may see their continual dependence on God, and may go to him for strength. We need not only habitual grace to stand against temptation—but auxiliary grace; as the boat needs not only the oars —but wind, to carry it against a strong tide. God lets his children sometimes fall by temptation, that, seeing their own weakness—they may rest more on Christ and free grace. Canticles 8:5.

By allowing his children to be foiled by a temptation, God *settles* them the more in grace. They get *strength* by their falls. The poets feign that Antaeus the giant, in wrestling with Hercules, got strength by every fall to the ground. Just so, a saint, when foiled in wrestling with Satan, gets more spiritual strength. *Peter* had never such

strength of faith, as after being foiled in the high priest's hall. How was he fired with zeal, and steeled with courage! He who before played the coward before a maid—now dares openly confess Christ before rulers and the councils. Acts 2:14. As the shaking of the tree settles it the more, God lets his children be shaken with the wind of temptation, that they may be more settled in grace afterwards. So let not those Christians whom God has allowed to be foiled by temptation, cast away their anchor, or give way to despairing thoughts.

May it not make Christians careless whether they fall into temptation or not, if God can make the temptation advantageous to them?

We must distinguish between being foiled through *weakness*, and foiled through *willfulness*. If a soldier fights—but is foiled for lack of strength, the general of the army will pity him, and bind up his wounds; but if he is willfully foiled, and plays the traitor—he must expect no favor. Just so, if a Christian fights it out with Satan—but is foiled for lack of strength, as it was with Peter, God will pity him and do him good by his being foiled. But if he is foiled willfully, and *runs* into temptation, as it was with Judas, God will show him no favor—but will execute martial law upon him!

The *uses* remain.

Use 1. See what continual DANGER we are in! Satan is an exquisite strategist, he lies in ambush to ensnare! He is the tempter, it is his delight to make the saints sin! He is subtle in tempting—he has methods and tools to deceive.

(1) He brings a saint into sin, by making him confide in his graces. He makes him believe he has such a stock of grace as will

secure him against all temptations. Thus he deceived Peter, he made him trust in his grace. Peter thought that he had such a cable of faith and strong tacklings, that though the winds of temptation blew ever so fierce, he could weather the storm. "Though all men forsake you—yet will not I;" as if he had more grace than all the apostles. Thus he was led into temptation, and *fell* in the battle. Men may make an idol of their grace. But their grace is not sufficient without auxiliary. The boat needs not only oars—but a gale of wind, to carry it against the tide. Just so, we need not only our grace—but the gale of the Spirit, to carry us against a strong temptation.

(2) Satan tempts to sin by the baits and allurements of the world. "The gain of money—is the ruin of the soul." One of Christ's own apostles was caught with a *silver* bait. Those whom the devil cannot debauch with vice—he will corrupt with money. "All these things will I give you," was his last temptation. Matthew 4:9. Achan was deluded by a wedge of gold. Sylvester II sold his soul to the devil for a popedom.

(3) Satan tempts to sin, under a mask and show of good; his temptations seem to be gracious motions.

[1] He tempts men to duties of religion. You might think it strange that Satan should tempt to duty; but it is so. He tempts men to duty—out of selfish or sinister ends. Thus he tempted the Pharisees to pray and give alms—*that they might be seen by men.* Matthew 6:5. Prayer is a duty—but to pray out of vainglory, turns prayer into sin. He tempts to duty when it is not in season. "My offering and my bread for my sacrifices, shall you offer unto me in their due season." Numb 28:2. Satan tempts to duty when it is out of season; he tempts to read the Word at home—when we should be hearing the Word. He tempts to one duty, that he may hinder

another. He tempts some to duty, that it may be a cloak for sin. He tempts them to frequency in duty, that they may sin and be less suspected. He tempted the Pharisees to make long prayers that, under this pretense, they might devour widows' houses. Matthew 23:14. Who would suspect him of false weights—who so often holds a Bible in his hand?

[2] He tempts men to sin out of a show of love to Christ. You might think this strange—but there is truth in it. Many a good heart may think what he does is in love to Christ—and all the while he may be under temptation. When Christ told Peter he must suffer at Jerusalem, Peter took him and rebuked him. "Be it far from you, Lord!" as if he had said, "Lord, you have deserved no such shameful death, and this shall not be unto you!" Matthew 16:22. Peter did this, as he thought, out of love to Christ—but he was under temptation. What had become of us if Christ had hearkened to Peter, and had not suffered! So when Christ washed his disciples' feet, Peter was so mannerly that he said, "You shall never wash my feet!" John 13:8. This he did, as he thought, out of love and respect to Christ. He thought Christ was too good to wash his feet, and therefore would have put him off—but it was a temptation; the devil put Peter upon this sinful modesty; he struck at Peter's salvation, insomuch that Christ said, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." So when the Samaritans would not receive Christ, the disciples James and John said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" Luke 9:54. They did this, as they thought, out of love to Christ; they wished for fire to consume his enemies—but they were under temptation; it was not zeal—but the wild fire of their own passion.

(4) Satan tempts to the sin to which a man's heart is naturally most inclinable. He will not tempt a civil man to a

gross sin, which is abhorrent to the light of nature. Satan never sets a dish before men, which they do not love. He will tempt a civil man to pride, and to trust in his own righteousness, and to make a savior of his civility. As the spider weaves a web out of her own bowels, the civil man would weave a web of salvation out of his own righteousness.

See, then, in what danger we are—when Satan is continually lying in ambush with his temptations!

See man's **inability** of himself to resist a temptation! Could he stand of himself against a temptation, the prayer would be needless, "Lead us not into temptation." No man has power of himself to resist temptation, any further than God gives him strength. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself." Jer 10:23. If *Peter*, who had true grace, and *Adam*, who had perfect grace—could not stand against temptation, much less can any stand by the power of nature. This confutes the doctrine of free will. What freedom of will has man, when he cannot resist the least temptation?

Here is matter for **humiliation**, that there is in us such an aptitude and proneness to yield to temptation. We are as ready to swallow a temptation—as the fish to swallow the bait! If the devil tempts to pride, lust, envy, revenge—how eagerly do we run into the snares of Satan! Like a woman who has a suitor, and does not need much wooing—but readily gives her consent—Satan comes wooing by temptation, and we soon yield. The devil strikes fire, and we are as dry tinder, which catches fire on the first spark. He knocks by temptation, and it is sad to think how soon we open the door to him, which is as if one should open the door to a thief!

See hence that a Christian's life is no easy life. It is a warfare! He has a *Goliath* in the field to encounter with, one who is armed with

power and subtlety, and has his wiles and darts! A Christian must be continually watching and fighting. Satan's designs our destruction! "Seeking whom he may *devour*." 1 Peter 5:8. Therefore we had need always have our weapons in our hand. How few think their life a warfare! Though they have an enemy in the field, always laying snares, or shooting darts—yet they do not stand sentinel or get their spiritual artillery ready; they put on their *jewelry*—but not their *armor*. "They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ," as if they were rather in a festival, rather than in battle. Job 21:12. Many are asleep in sloth, when they should be fighting against Satan—and no wonder that the devil shoots them when he finds them asleep!

Use 2. They are reproved who pray, "Lead us not into temptation," and yet run of themselves into temptation. Such are those who go to plays and theaters, and hunt after strange flesh. Some go at a slower pace to hell—but such as run themselves into temptation go galloping to hell! We have too many of these in this debauched age, who, as if they thought they could not sin fast enough—tempt the devil to tempt them!

Use 3. Let us labor that we be not overcome by temptation. What **means** should be used, that Satan's temptations may not prevail against us?

(1) Avoid solitariness. It is no wisdom, in fighting with an enemy, to give him the advantage of the ground. We give Satan advantage of the ground—when we are alone. Eve was foiled in the absence of her husband. A virgin is not so soon set upon in company. "Two are better than one." Eccl 4:9. Get into the communion of saints, for that is a good remedy against temptation.

(2) If you would not be overcome by temptation—beware of the predominance of melancholy, which is *a black humor seated chiefly in the brain*. Melancholy disturbs reason and exposes to temptation. One calls melancholy, *the devil's bath*; he bathes himself with delight in such a person. Melancholy clothes the mind in sable; it fills it with such dismal apprehensions as often end in self-murder.

(3) If you would not be overcome by temptation—study sobriety. "Be **sober**, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8. *Sober-mindedness consists in the moderate use of earthly things*. An immoderate desire of these things often brings men into the snare of the devil. "Those who will be rich fall into a snare." 1 Tim 6:9. He who loves riches inordinately, will purchase them unjustly. Ahab would swim to Naboth's vineyard in blood. He who is drunk with the love of the world, is never free from temptation. He will pull down his soul to build up an estate. [Oh cursed hunger for gold, to what do you not drive the hearts of men?] Virgil. Be sober, take heed of being drunk with the love of the world, lest you fall into temptation.

(4) If you would not be overcome by temptation—be always upon your guard, watch against Satan's wiles and subtleties. "Be sober, be **vigilant**; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8. A Christian must keep watch and ward; he must see where Satan labors to make a breach, see what grace he most strikes at, or what sin he most tempts to. "I say unto all—Watch!" Mark 13:37. Watch all the senses, the eye, the ear, the touch; for Satan can creep in by these. Oh, how needful is the spiritual watch! Shall *Satan* be watchful—and *we* drowsy? Does he watch to devour us—and shall

not we watch to save ourselves? Let us see what sin our heart most naturally inclines to—and watch against it.

(5) If you would not be overcome by temptation—beware of idleness. Satan sows most of his seed in *fallow* ground. It was Jerome's counsel to his friend to be ever busied, that if the devil did come, he might find him working in the vineyard. Idleness tempts the devil to tempt us. The bird which sits still, is shot. He who lacks employment, never lacks temptation. When a man has nothing to do, Satan will bring grist to the mill, and find him work enough.

(6) If you would not be overcome by temptation—make known your case to some godly friend. Hiding a serpent in the bosom is not the way to be safe; when the old serpent has got into your bosom by temptation, do not hide him there by keeping his counsel. If a spark has gotten into the thatch, it is not wisdom to conceal it, it may set the house on fire. Conceal not temptation. Keeping secrets is for familiar friends—be not so great a friend to Satan as to keep his secrets. Reveal your temptations, which is the way to procure others' prayers and advice; let all see that you are not true to Satan's party, because you tell all his plots and reveal his treasons. Besides, telling your case to some experienced Christian, will give ease to the soul, and temptation will not so much inflame.

(7) If you would not be overcome by temptation—make use of the Word. This the apostle calls the "sword of the Spirit," a fit weapon with which to fight against the tempter. Eph 6:17. This "sword of the Spirit" is a two-edged sword—it wounds carnal lust and it wounds Satan. He who travels a road where there is robbing, will be sure to ride with his sword; we are traveling to heaven, and in this road there is a thief who always besets us in every place where we go. He meets us at church—he does not miss a sermon! He will be

tempting us there; sometimes to drowsiness; when any sleep at sermon, the devil rocks them. Sometimes he tempts by distracting the mind in hearing. Sometimes he tempts by questioning the truth of what is heard. He tempts in the shop to use connivance and deceit. "The balances of deceit are in his hand." Hos 12:7. Thus we meet with the tempter everywhere; therefore, this thief being in the road, we had need ride with a sword; we must have the "sword of the Spirit" with us.

We must have *skill* to use this sword, and have a *heart* to draw it out —and it will put the devil to flight. Thus when Satan tempted our blessed Savior to distrust and blasphemy, he used a Scripture weapon, "It is written!" Three times he wounded the old serpent with this sword! Christ, with his power and authority, could have rebuked the prince of the air, as he did the winds; but he stopped the devil's mouth with Scripture, "It is written!" It is not our vows and resolutions which will do it, it is not the Papist's holy water or charms which will drive away the devil. Let us bring the Word of God against him—this is an argument that he cannot answer.

It was a saying of Luther, "I have had great troubles of mind; but as soon as I laid hold on any place of Scripture, and stayed myself upon it as upon my chief anchor, straightway my temptations vanished away." There is no temptation, but we have fit Scripture to answer it. If Satan tempts to immorality, answer him, "It is written, whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." If he tempts to carnal fear, say, "It is written, Fear not those who kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do." There is no greater way to confute temptation, as by Scripture; the arrows we shoot against Satan must be fetched out of this quiver. Many people lack this sword of the Spirit, they have not a Bible; others seldom make use of it—but let it rust; they seldom look into it—no wonder, therefore,

they are overcome by temptations. He who is well skilled in the Word is like one who has a plaster ready to lay upon the wound as soon as it is made, and so the danger is prevented. O study the Scripture, and you will be too hard for the devil; he cannot stand against this.

(8) If we would not be overcome by temptation—let us be careful of our own hearts, that they do not decoy us into sin. The apostle says, "A man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." James 1:14. [Everyone is a *Satan* to himself.] Bernard. Every man has a tempter in his own bosom. A traitor *within* the castle is dangerous. The *heart* can bring forth a temptation, though *Satan* does not midwife it into the world; if Satan were dead and buried, the heart could draw us to evil. As the ground of all diseases lies in the humours of the body—so the seed of all sin lies in the original lust. Look to your hearts!

(9) If you would not be overcome by temptation—flee the "occasions of sin." Occasions of sin have great force to awaken lust within. He who would keep himself free from infection, will not come near an infected house. Just so, if you would be sober, avoid drunken company. When Joseph was enticed by his mistress, he shunned the occasion; the text says, "He refused to be with her." Gen 39:10. If you would not be ensnared with Popery, do not hear the mass. The Nazarite, who was forbidden *wine*, might not eat *grapes*, which might occasion intemperance. Do not come near the *borders* of temptation! Suppose any one had a body made of gunpowder, he would not come near the least spark of fire, lest he should be blown up. Many pray, "Lead us not into temptation," and yet run themselves into temptation!

(10) If you would not be overcome by temptation—make use of faith. "Above all, taking the shield of faith." Eph 6:19. Faith

wards off Satan's fiery darts, that they do not hurt us. "Whom resist, steadfast in the faith." 1 Peter 5:9. Mariners in a storm flee to their anchor; flee to your anchor of faith. Faith brings Christ with with them into the field—and then the devil cannot hurt us. The chick is safe from the birds of prey, under the wings of the hen; and we are secure from the tempter, under the wings of the Lord Jesus. Though other graces are of use to resist the impulses of Satan—yet faith is the conquering grace. It takes hold of Christ's merits, value and virtue—and so the Christian becomes too hard for the devil. As the stars vanish when the sun appears—so Satan vanishes when faith appears.

(11) If you would not be overcome by temptation—be much in prayer. Such as walk in infectious places, carry antidotes with them: prayer is the best antidote against temptation. When the apostle had exhorted, to "put on the whole armor of God," he adds, "Praying with all prayer." Eph 6:11, 18. Without prayer, all other weapons will do little good. Christ prescribes this remedy, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." Mark 14:38. A Christian fetches down strength from heaven by prayer. Let us cry to God for help against the tempter, as Samson cried to heaven for help. "Sovereign Lord, remember me again. O God, please strengthen me one more time so that I may pay back the Philistines for the loss of my eyes." Judges 16:28. "And the temple crashed down on the Philistine leaders and all the people;" ver 30.

Prayer is *flagellum diaboli*—it whips and torments the devil. The apostle bids us "pray without ceasing." 1 Thess 5:17. It was Luther's advice to a lady, when temptation came, to fall upon her knees in prayer. Prayer assuages the force of temptation. Prayer is the best charm we can use against the devil. Temptation may bruise our heel—but by prayer we wound the serpent's head. When Paul had a messenger of Satan to buffet him; what remedy did he use? He

betook himself to prayer. "For this thing I besought the Lord three tiimes, that it might depart from me." 2 Cor 12:8. When Satan assaults furiously, let us pray fervently.

(12) If you would not be overcome by temptation—be humble in your own eyes. They are nearest falling, who presume on their own strength. When men grow into self-admiration, God lets them fall, to prick their bubble of pride. O be humble! They are likely to hold out best in temptation, who have most grace—and God gives more grace to the humble. James 4:6. Beware of pride! An abscess is not more dangerous in the body than pride in the soul. The doves, says Pliny, take pride in their feathers, and in their flying high, until at last they fly so high, that they become a prey to the hawk. Just so, when men fly high in pride and self-confidence, they become a prey to the tempter.

(13) If you would not be foiled by temptation—do not enter into a dispute with Satan. When Eve began to argue the case with the serpent, the serpent was too hard for her. The devil, by his logic, disputed her out of paradise. Satan can mince sin, make it small, and garnish it over, and make it look like virtue. He is too subtle for us to win an argument with him. Dispute not—but fight! If you enter into a parley with him, you give him half the victory.

(14) If we would not be overcome by Satan—we must put on Christian fortitude. We must expect an enemy who is either shooting darts, or laying snares; therefore let us be armed with courage. "Act with *courage*, and may the Lord be with those who do well." 2 Chron 19:11. The coward never won a victory. To animate us in our combat with Satan, let us think,

[1] We have a good Captain who marches before us. Christ is called the Captain of our salvation. Heb 2:10.

[2] We have good armor. Grace is armor of God's making. Eph 6:11.

[3] Satan is beaten already. Christ has given him his death-wound upon the cross. Col 2:15.

[4] Satan is a chained enemy, his power is limited! he cannot force the will. Eve complained that the serpent *deceived* her, not constrained her. Gen 3:13. Satan has guile to persuade, not power to compel.

[5] He is a cursed enemy, and God's curse will blast him: therefore put on holy gallantry of spirit and magnanimity. Do not fear Satan. Greater is he who is in you—than he who is against you.

(15) If we would not be overcome by temptation—let us call in the help of others. If a house is on fire, would you not call in help? Satan tempts, that he may rob you of your soul; acquaint some friends with your case, and beg for their counsel and prayers. Who knows but Satan may be cast out, by the joint prayers of others? In case of temptation, how exceeding helpful is the communion of saints!

(16) If we would not be overcome by temptation—let us make use of all the encouragements we can. If Satan is a roaring lion—Christ is the lion of the tribe of Judah. If Satan tempts —Christ prays. If Satan is a serpent to sting—Christ is a brazen serpent to heal. If the conflict is hard, look to the crown. James 1:12. While we are fighting—Christ will support us. When we overcome—he will crown us. What makes the soldier endure a bloody fight, but the hope of a golden reward? Think that shortly God will call us out of the field where the bullets of temptation fly so fast, and he will set a garland of glory upon our head. How will the case be altered then! Instead of fighting—singing! Instead of a helmet—a diadem! Instead

of a sword—a palm branch of victory! Instead of armor—white robes! Instead of Satan's skirmishes—the kisses and embraces of a Savior! These eternal recompenses should keep us from yielding to temptation. Who, to gratify a lust—would forfeit a crown!

Use 4. Let such as are tempted, be wise to make good use of their temptations. As we should labor to improve our *afflictions*—so to improve our *temptations*. We should pick some good out of temptation, as Samson got honey out of the lion.

What good comes from temptation? Can there be any good in being set upon by an enemy? Can it be good to have fiery darts shot at us?

Yes! God can make his people get much good by their temptations. Hereby a Christian sees that corruption in his heart, which he never saw before. Water in a glass looks pure—but set it on the fire, and the scum boils up. Just so, in temptation a Christian sees the scum of sin boil up—which he thought had not been in his heart. Hereby a Christian sees more of the wiles of Satan, and is better able to withstand them. Paul had been in the fencing-school of temptation, and grew expert in finding out Satan's stratagems. "We are not ignorant of his devices." 2 Cor 2:11. Hereby a Christian grows more humble. God would rather let his children fall into the devil's hands —than be proud. Temptation strips off the plumes of pride. "To keep me from getting puffed up, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from getting proud." 2 Cor 12:7. Better is that temptation that humbles—than that duty which makes us proud! Thus a Christian may get much good by temptation, which made Luther say three things make a good Christian—prayer, meditation, and temptation.

Use 5. Some have been under sore temptations and buffetings of Satan—but God has stood by them, and given

them strength to overcome the tempter.

(1) Let them be very thankful to God. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory." 1 Cor 15:57. Be much in praise. Why were *we* kept more than *others*—from falling into sin? Was it because temptation was not so strong to us? No, Satan shoots his darts with all his force. Was it because we are so strong in ourself? No, such a broken reed could never have conquered Satan's temptations. Know that it was *free grace* which beat back the tempter, and brought us off with trophies of victory! O be thankful to God! Had you been overcome by temptation, you might have put black spots in the face of religion, and given occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme. 2 Samuel 12:14. Had you been overcome, you might have lain sick of a "wounded spirit" and cried out, with David, of "broken bones." After David yielded to temptation, he lay for three quarters of a year in horror of mind; and some think that he never recovered his full joy to the day of his death. Oh therefore, what cause have they to stand upon mount Gerizim blessing God, who, in a field of battle have gotten the better of Satan, and been more than conquerors! Say as the Psalmist, "Blessed be the Lord, who did not let their teeth tear us apart!" Psalm 124:6. Blessed be God, who has not given us as a prey to Satan, that roaring lion!

(2) You who have been tempted, and come off victors, be full of sympathy. Pity tempted souls; show your piety in your pity. Do you see Satan's darts sticking in their sides? Do what you can to pull them out. Communicate your experiences to them; tell them how you broke the devil's snare, and your Savior was your deliverer. The apostle speaks of restoring others "in the spirit of meekness." Gal 6:1. The Greek word for *restore* alludes to surgeons, who set bones which were out of joint. Just so, when we see such as are tempted, and Satan has, as it were, put their bones out of joint—labor

to put them in again, with all love, meekness, and compassion. A word spoken in season may relieve a soul fainting in temptation; and you may, as the good Samaritan, drop oil and wine into the wound. Luke 10:34.

(3) You who have got the conquest over Satan, do not be carnally secure. Think not, that you shall never more be troubled with the tempter. He is not like the Syrians, of whom it is said, "The bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel" 2 Kings 6:23. Satan is a restless enemy; if you have beaten him back, he will make a fresh onset.

When Satan was worsted by Christ, he went away—but only for a season, as if he meant to come again. Luke 4:13. When we have got the better of Satan, we are apt to grow secure, to lay aside our armor, and leave off our watch; which, when he perceives this, he comes upon us with a new temptation and wounds us. He deals with us as David did with the Amalekites, who, when they had taken the spoil and were secure, "They were eating and drinking and dancing with joy because of the vast amount of plunder they had taken." (1 Sam 30:16); then "David and his men rushed in among them and slaughtered them." ver 17. Therefore, after we have got the better of the tempter, we must do as the mariners in a calm—mend our tackling, not knowing how soon another storm may come. Satan for a time may retreat, that he may afterwards come on more fiercely; he may go away awhile, and bring other seven spirits with him. Luke 11:26.

Therefore, do not be carnally secure—but stand upon your watch-tower. Rest with your armor on; always expect a fight. Watch every day if the tempter shall come. Put yourself into a warlike posture. When Satan is beaten out of the field, he is not beaten out of the

heart; he will come again. He had little hope to prevail against Christ. Christ gave him three deadly wounds, and made him retreat; yet he departed "only for a season." If the devil cannot *conquer* us—he knows he can *molest* us. If he cannot *destroy* us—he will surely *disturb* us. If the tempter does not come as soon as we expect, by putting ourselves in a defensive posture, we shall have the advantage of being always prepared. "Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil." Ephesians 6:11.

To conclude all: let us often make this prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." If Satan woos us by a temptation, let us not give consent. In case a Christian has through weakness, and not out of a design, yielded to temptation, let him not "cast away his anchor;" but take heed of despair, which is worse than the fall itself.

Christian, steep your soul in the brinish waters of repentance, and God will be appeased. *Repentance gives the soul a vomit.* Christ loved Peter after his denial of him, and sent the first news of his resurrection to him—"Go tell the disciples *and Peter*." It is an error to think that one act of sin, can destroy the habit of grace. It is a wrong to God's mercy, and to a Christian's comfort—to make the despairing conclusion, that after one has fallen by temptation, his estate is irrecoverable. Therefore, Christian, if you have *fallen* with Peter, *repent* with Peter—and God will be ready to seal your pardon.

II. The second branch of the sixth petition is, "Deliver us from evil." There is more in this petition than is expressed. The thing **expressed** is—that we may be kept from evil. The thing further **intended** is—that we may make progress in piety. "Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts;" there is being delivered from evil;

"we should live soberly, righteously, and godly;" there is progress in piety. Titus 2:12.

[1] In general, when we pray, "Deliver us from evil," we pray to be delivered from the evil of SIN. Not that we pray to be delivered immediately from the presence and indwelling of sin, for that cannot be in this life—we cannot shake off this viper. But we pray that God would deliver us more and more from the power and practice, from the scandalous acts of sin which cast a sad reflection upon the gospel. Sin is the deadly evil which we pray against. With what pencil shall I be able to draw the deformed face of sin? The devil would baptize sin with the name of virtue. It is easy to lay fair colors on a black face. I shall endeavor to show you what a vile monster sin is, and that there is great reason we should pray, "Deliver us from evil."

Sin, as the apostle says, is *exceeding sinful*. Romans 7:13. Sin is the very distillation of evil; it is called the "accursed thing." Josh 7:13. That sin is the most execrable evil, appears several ways:

(1) Look upon sin in its *origin*.

(2) Look upon sin in its *nature*.

(3) Look upon sin in the judgment and *opinion of the godly*.

(4) Look upon sin by *comparison*.

(5) Look upon sin in the manner of its *cure*.

(6) Look upon sin in its direful *effects*.

When you have seen all these, you will apprehend what a horrid evil sin is, and what great reason we have to pray, "Deliver us from evil."

(1) Look upon sin in its ORIGIN. It fetches its pedigree from hell. It is of the devil. John 8:44. It calls the devil "father". Sin is the poison which the old serpent has spit into our virgin nature.

(2) Look upon sin in its NATURE, and it is evil. See what the Scripture compares it to. It has got a bad name. It is compared to the *vomit of dogs* (2 Peter 2:22); to a *menstruous cloth* (Isaiah 30:22); which, as Jerome says, was the most unclean thing under the law; it is compared to the *plague* (1 Kings 8:38); and to a *gangrene* (2 Tim 2:17). People with these diseases, we would be averse to eat and drink with.

Sin is evil in its nature, because it is transgression against God. It is a breach of his royal law. "Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4. It is high treason against heaven. What greater injury can be offered to a prince, than to trample upon his royal edicts? "They cast your law behind their backs." Neh 9:26. Sin is an affront to God, as it is walking contrary to him. Lev 26:40. The Hebrew word for sin signifies rebellion. It flies in the face of God. "He stretches out his hand against God." Job 15:25. We ought not to lift up a *thought* against God, much less to lift up a *hand* against him; but the sinner does both. Sin is the killing of God. Sin would not only *unthrone* God —but ungod him! If sin could help it, God would no longer be God!

Sin is an act of high INGRATITUDE to God. He feeds a sinner, screens off many evils from him; and yet he not only forgets his mercies—but abuses them. "It was I who gave her everything she has —the grain, the wine, the olive oil. Even the gold and silver she used in worshiping the god Baal were gifts from me!" Hos 2:8. God may say, I gave you wit, health, riches, which you have employed against me. A sinner makes an arrow of God's mercies—and shoots at him! "Is this your kindness to your friend?" 2 Samuel 16:17. Did God give

you *life*—to sin? Did he give you *wages*—to serve the devil? Oh, what an ungrateful thing is sin! Ingratitude forfeits mercy, as the merchant forfeits his goods by not paying custom.

Sin is a FOOLISH thing. "You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you." Luke 12:20. Is it not foolish to prefer a short lust—before an eternal inheritance? A sinner prefers the pleasures of sin for a season—before those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. Is it not folly to gratify an enemy? Sin gratifies Satan. Men's sins feast the devil. Is it not folly for a man to be guilty of his own destruction, to give himself poison? A sinner has a hand in his own death. "They lay wait for their own blood." Proverbs 1:18. No creature did ever willingly kill itself, but man.

Sin is a POLLUTING thing. It is not only a defection—but a pollution; it is as rust to gold, as a stain to beauty. It is called "filthiness of flesh and spirit." 2 Cor 7:1. It makes the soul red with guilt—and black with filth! This filth of sin is inward. A spot in the face may easily be wiped off—but to have the liver and lungs tainted, is far worse. Sin has got into the conscience. Titus 1:15. It defiles all the faculties—the mind, memory, affections, as if the whole mass of blood were corrupted. Sin pollutes our holy things. If the leper under the law had touched the altar, the altar would not cleanse him—but he would pollute the altar, which is an emblem of sin's leprosy spotting our holy things.

Sin is a DEBASING thing. It degrades us of our honor. "In his estate shall stand up a vile person." Dan 11:21. This was spoken of Antiochus Epiphanes, who was a king, and whose name signifies illustrious; but sin made him vile. Sin blots a man's name. Nothing so turns a man's glory into shame, as sin. It makes a man like a beast. Psalm 49:20. It is worse to be *like* a beast than to be a beast; it is no

shame to be a beast—but it is a shame for a man to be *like* a beast. Lust makes a man brutish, and anger makes him devilish.

Sin is an ENSLAVING thing. A sinner is a slave when he sins most freely. [Heavy is the yoke of slavery.] Cicero. Sin makes men the devil's servants. Satan bids them sin, and they do it. He bid Judas betray Christ, and he did it; he bid Ananias tell a lie, and he did it. Acts 5:3. When a man commits sin, he is the devil's lackey, and runs on his errand. Those who serve Satan have such a bad master, that they will be afraid to receive their wages.

Sin is an OFFENSIVE thing. "They are all together become filthy;" in the Hebrew, they have become *stinking*. Psalm 14:3. Sin is very offensive to God. If he who worships in God's house lives in the sin of uncleanness, though he is perfumed with all the spices of Arabia, his prayers are unsavory. "Their incense is an abomination to me" (Isaiah 1:13); therefore "the proud he knows afar off." Psalm 138:6. He will not come near the *dunghill sinner,* who has such a foul stench coming from him.

Sin is a PAINFUL thing. It costs men much labor and pains to accomplish their wicked designs. "They weary themselves to commit iniquity." Jer 9:5. "Sin is its own punishment." How they tire themselves out in sin's drudgery! Chrysostom says that *virtue* is easier than *vice*. It is easier to be sober than intemperate; it is easier to serve God than to follow sin. A wicked man sweats at the devil's plough—and is at great pains to damn himself!

Sin is a DISTURBING thing. Whatever defiles, disturbs. Sin breaks the peace of the soul. "There is no peace for the wicked." Isaiah 57:21. When a man sins presumptuously, he stuffs his pillow with thorns, and his head will lie very uneasy when he comes to die. Sin causes a trembling at the heart. When Spira had sinned, he had a

hell in his conscience; he was in such horror that he confessed he envied Cain and Judas. Charles IX, who was guilty of a massacre in Paris, was afterwards a terror to himself; he was frightened at every noise, and could not endure to be awaked out of his sleep without music. Sin breaks the peace of the soul. Cain in killing Abel stabbed half the world at a blow—but could not kill the worm of his own conscience. Thus you see what an evil sin is in the nature of it, and what need we have to pray, "Deliver us from evil."

(3) Look upon sin in the judgment and opinion of the godly, and it will appear to be the most prodigious evil.

It is so great an evil that the godly will rather do anything than sin. Moses chose "rather to suffer with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin." Heb 11:24. The primitive Christians chose rather to be devoured by lions without, than lusts within. Irenaeus was carried to a place where a cross was on one side and an idol on the other, and he was put to his choice either to bow to the idol or suffer on the cross, and he chose the latter. A wise man will choose rather to have a rent in his coat than in his flesh; and the godly will rather endure outward sufferings than a rent in their conscience. So great an evil is sin, that the godly will not sin for the greatest gain; they will not sin though they might purchase an estate by it—nay, though they were sure to promote God's glory by it.

The godly testify sin to be a great evil, in that they desire to die upon no account more than this, that they may be rid of sin. They are desirous to put off the clothing of the flesh, that they may be unclothed of sin. It is their greatest grief that they are troubled with such inhabitants as the stirrings of pride, lust, and envy. It was a cruel torment of Mezentius who tied a dead man to a living man. Thus a child of God has corruption joined with grace—a dead man

tied to a living man. So hateful is sin, that a believer desires to die for no reason more than this—that death shall free him from sin. Sin brought death into the world, and death shall carry sin out of the world.

(4) Judge of sin by comparison, and it will appear to be the most deadly evil. Compare what you will with it—afflictions, death, or hell, and still sin is worse.

First, sin is worse than affliction. There is more evil in a *drop of sin*—than in a *sea of affliction*.

[1] Sin is the cause of affliction, and the cause is more than the effect. Sin brings all harmful things: it has death and hell in its womb. It rots the name, consumes the estate, and wastes the body. As the poets feigned of Pandora's box, that when opened it filled the world full of diseases—so when Adam broke the box of original righteousness, it caused all the evils in the world. Sin is the evil which sets the world on fire. Sin turned the angels out of heaven, and Adam out of paradise. It causes mutinies, divisions, and massacres. The *sword of God's justice* lies quietly in the scabbard, until sin draws it out and sharpens it. So that sin is worse than affliction, being the cause of it: and the cause is more than the effect.

[2] God is the author of affliction. "When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?" Amos 3:6. God has a hand in affliction—but no hand in sin. He is the cause of every action—so far as it is *natural*—but not as it is *sinful*. He who makes an instrument of iron, is not the cause of the rust and canker which corrupts it. Just so, God made the instrument of our souls—but not the rust and canker of sin which corrupts them. [God is not the author of sin.] Augustine. God can no more act evil than the sun can darken. In this

sense sin is worse than affliction. God has a hand in affliction—but disclaims having any hand in sin.

[3] Affliction reaches the body only, and makes that miserable—but sin makes the soul miserable. The soul is the most noble part. It is a diamond set in a ring of clay. It is excellent in its essence, a spiritual, immortal substance. It is excellent in the price paid for it, redeemed with the blood of God. Acts 20:28. It is of more worth than a world. The world is of a coarser make, the soul of a finer spinning. It the world we see the *finger* of God, in the soul the *image* of God. To have the precious *soul* endangered is far worse than to have the *body* endangered. Sin wrongs the soul. Proverbs 8:36. It casts the jewel of the soul overboard.

Affliction is but skin-deep, it can but take away the life—but sin takes away the soul. Luke 12:20. The loss of the soul is an unparalleled loss, it can never be made up again. "God," says Chrysostom, "has given you two eyes, if you lose one, you have another; but you have but one soul, and if that be lost, it can never be repaired." Thus sin is worse than affliction; the one can reach the body only, the other ruins the soul. Is there not great reason, then, that we should often put up this petition, "Deliver us from evil"?

[4] Afflictions are good for us. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Psalm 119:71. Many can bless God for affliction. Affliction humbles. "I remember my affliction—and my soul is *humbled* within me." Lamentations 3:19-20. Afflictions are compared to thorns; these thorns are to prick the bubble of pride. Hos 2:6. Affliction is the school of repentance. "You have chastised me, and I was chastised; I repented." Jer 31:18, 19. The fire being put under the distillery, makes the water drop from the roses. Just so,

the *fire of affliction* makes the water of repentance drop from the eyes.

Affliction brings us nearer to God. The *loadstone of mercy* does not draw us so near to God as the *cords of affliction*. When the prodigal was pinched with need, he said, "I will arise, and go to my Father." Luke 15:18. Afflictions prepare for glory. "Light affliction works for us an eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor 4:17. The painter lays his gold upon dark colors. Just so, God lays first the dark colors of affliction, and then the golden color of glory. Thus affliction is for our good; but sin is not for our good; it keeps good things from us. "Your sins have withheld good things from you." Jer 5:25. Sin stops the current of God's mercy; it precipitates men to eternal ruin. Manasseh's affliction brought him to humiliation; but that of Judas brought him to desperation.

[5] A man may be afflicted—and his conscience be quiet. Paul's feet were in the stocks—yet he had the witness of his conscience. 2 Cor 1:12. The head may ache—yet the heart may be well; the outward man may be afflicted—yet the soul may dwell at ease. Psalm 25:13. The hail may beat upon the tiles of the house—when there is music within. In the midst of outward pain—there may be inward peace. Thus, in affliction, conscience may be quiet; but when a man commits a presumptuous, scandalous sin, conscience is troubled. By defiling the *purity* of conscience we lose the *peace* of conscience. When Spira had sinned and abjured the faith, he was a terror to himself; he had a hell within. Tiberius the emperor felt such a sting in his conscience, that he told the senate, he suffered death daily.

[6] In affliction we may have the love of God. Afflictions are love tokens. "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline." Rev 3:19.

Afflictions are sharp arrows—but shot from the hand of a loving Father. If a man should throw a bag of money at another, and it should bruise him a little, he would not be offended—but take it as a fruit of love; so, when God bruises us with affliction, it is to enrich us with the golden graces of his Spirit, and all is in love! But when we commit sin God withdraws his love; it is the sun overcast with a cloud; nothing appears but anger and displeasure. When David had sinned in the matter of Uriah, "the thing that David had done displeased the Lord." 2 Samuel 11:27.

[7] There are many encouragements to suffer affliction. God himself suffers with us. "In all their affliction, he was afflicted." Isaiah 63:9. God will strengthen us in our sufferings. "He is their strength in the time of trouble." Psalm 37:39. Either God makes our *burden* lighter—or our *faith* stronger. He will compensate and recompense our sufferings. "Everyone who has forsaken houses or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and inherit everlasting life." Matthew 19:29. Here are encouragements to suffer affliction—but there is no encouragement to sin. God has brandished a flaming sword of threatenings, to deter us from sin. "Surely God will crush the heads of his enemies, the hairy crowns of those who go on in their sins." Psalm 68:21. A flying-roll of curses enters into the house of a sinner. Zech 5:4. If a man sins—it is at his peril. "I will make my arrows drunk with blood." Deut 32:42. God will make men weary of their sins, or he will make them weary of their lives. Thus sin is worse than affliction. There are encouragements to suffer affliction—but no encouragement to sin.

[8] When a person is afflicted, he suffers alone; but by sinning openly he hurts others. He does hurt to the *unconverted*. One man's sin may lay a stone in another man's way—at which he may stumble and fall into hell. Oh, the evil of scandalous

sin! Some are discouraged, others hardened. Your *sinning* may be the cause of another's *damning*. The priests going wrong, caused others to stumble. Mal 2:7, 8. He does hurt to the *converted*. By an open scandalous sin, he offends weak believers, and so sins against Christ. 1 Cor 8:12. Thus sin is worse than affliction, because it does hurt to others.

[9] In affliction the saints may rejoice. "You received the Word in much affliction, with joy." 1 Thess 1:6. "You took joyfully the confiscation of your goods." Heb 10:34. Aristotle speaks of a bird that lives among thorns, and yet sings sweetly. Just so, a child of God can rejoice in afflictions. Paul had his prison songs. "We glory in tribulations." Romans 5:3. The Greek word signifies an exuberancy of joy, a joy with boasting and triumph. God often pours in those divine consolations, which cause the saints to rejoice in afflictions—so that they had rather have their afflictions—than be without their comforts. God candies their wormwood with sugar. Romans 5:5. You have seen the sunshine when it rains: the saints have had the shinings of God's face, when afflictions have rained and dropped upon them. Thus we may rejoice in affliction—but we cannot rejoice in sin. "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people, for you have gone a whoring from your God." Hos 9:1. Sin is matter of shame and grief, not of joy. David having sinned in numbering the people, his "heart smote him." 2 Samuel 24:10. As pricking a vein lets out the blood, so, when sin has pricked the conscience, it lets out the joy.

[10] Affliction magnifies a person. "What is man, that you should magnify him, and visit him every morning?" Job 7:17, 18. That is, visit him with affliction.

How do afflictions magnify us?

(1) As they are signs of sonship. "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons." Heb 12:7. Every imprint of the rod—is a badge of honor.

(2) As the sufferings of the godly have raised their fame and renown in the world. The zeal and constancy of the martyrs in their sufferings have eternalized their name. Oh, how eminent was Job for his patience! "You have heard of the patience of Job." James 5:2: Job the sufferer, was more renowned than Alexander the conqueror. Thus afflictions magnify a person; but sin does not magnify—but vilifies him. When Eli's sons had sinned and profaned their priesthood, they turned their glory into shame; the text says they "made themselves vile." 1 Sam 3:13. Sin casts an indelible blot on a man's name. "The man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys his own soul. Wounds and constant disgrace are his lot. His shame will never be erased." Proverbs 6:32, 33.

[11] A man by suffering affliction may bring honor to religion. Paul's iron chain made the gospel wear a gold chain. Suffering credits and propagates the gospel; but committing sin brings dishonor and scandal upon the ways of God. Cyprian says, when in the primitive times a virgin, who vowed herself to religion, had defiled her chastity, —shame and grief filled the face of the whole congregation. When scandalous sins are committed by a few, they bring a reproach upon many; as three or four brass shillings in a sum of money make all the rest suspected.

[12] When a man's afflictions are upon a good account, when he suffers for Christ, he has the prayers of God's people. It is no small privilege to have a stock of prayer going; suffering saints have a large share in the prayers of others. "Peter was in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church

unto God for him." Acts 12:5. What greater happiness than to have God's promises and the saints' prayers! But when a man sins presumptuously and scandalously, he has the saints' bitter tears and just censures; he is a burden to all that know him, as David speaks in another case, "Those who saw me without fled from me." Psalm 31:2. So the people of God flee from a scandalous sinner; he is like an infected person, everyone shuns and avoids him!

[13] Affliction can hurt a man only while he is living—but sin hurts him when he is dead. As a man's virtues and alms may do good when he is dead—so his sins may do him mischief when he is dead. When a *spider* is killed, the poison of it may hurt. Just so, the poison of an evil example may do much hurt when a man is in his grave. Affliction at most can but last a man's life—but sin lives and hurts when he is gone. Thus sin is far worse than affliction.

Secondly. Sin is worse than death. Aristotle calls death *the terrible of terribles*, and Job calls it *"the king of terrors,"* but sin is more deadly than death itself. Job 18:14. 1. Death, though painful, would not hurt, but for sin; it is sin which embitters death, and makes it sting. "The sting of death is sin." 1 Cor 15:26. Were it not for sin, though death might *kill*, it could not *curse* us. Sin poisons death's arrow—so that it is worse than death, because it puts a sting into death. 2. Death does but separate between the body and the soul; but sin, without repentance, separates between God and the soul. "You have taken away my gods, and what more have I?" Judges 18:24. Death does but take away our life—but sin takes away our God from us. Just so, that it is worse than death.

Thirdly. Sin is worse than hell. In hell there is the worm and the fire—but sin is worse.

1. Hell is of God's making—but sin is none of his making; it is a monster of the devil's creating.

2. The torments of hell are a burden only to the sinner—but sin is a burden to God. In hell torments there is something that is good—there is the execution of God's justice—there is justice in hell. But sin is the most unjust thing; it would rob God of his glory, Christ of his purchase, and the soul of its happiness. So, sin is worse than hell.

(5) Look upon sin—in the manner of its cure. It cost much to be done away; the guilt of sin could not be removed but by the blood of Christ; he who was God must die and be made a curse for us before sin could be remitted.

How horrid is sin, that no angel or archangel, nor all the powers of heaven, could procure its pardon—but the blood of God alone! If a man should commit an offence, and no pardon could be had, unless the king's son be arraigned and suffer death for him—all would conceive it to be a horrible thing that was the cause of this. Such is the case here, the Son of God must die to satisfy God's justice for our sins. Oh, the agonies and sufferings of Christ! In his **body**—his head crowned with thorns, his face spit upon, his side pierced with the spear, his hands and feet nailed. His whole body as one wound. He suffered in his **soul**. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Matthew 26:38. He drank a bitter cup, mingled with curses, which made him, though sanctified by the Spirit, supported by the Deity, and comforted by angels—sweat drops of blood, and cry out upon the cross, "My God, why have you forsaken me!" All this was to do away with our sin. *View sin in Christ's blood—and it will appear of a crimson color!*

(6) Look upon sin in its dismal effects—and it will appear the most horrid evil. "The wages of sin is death," that is, "the

second death." Romans 6:23. Rev 21:8. Sin has *shame* for its companion, and *death* for its wages! A wicked man knows what sin is in the pleasure of it—but does not know what sin is in the punishment of it. Sin is a stinging scorpion, it draws hell at its heels. This hellish torment consists of two parts:

Poena damni, the punishment of **loss**. "*Depart from me*." Matthew 7:23. It was a great trouble to Absalom that he might not see the king's face. But to lose God's smiles, to be banished from his presence, in whose presence is fullness of joy—how sad and dreadful! That word, "Depart," said Chrysostom, is worse than the fire. Surely sin must be the greatest evil—which separates us from the greatest good.

Poena senses, the punishment of **sense**. "Depart from me, you who are cursed, *into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*." Matthew 25:41. Why, sinners might plead, "Lord, if we must depart from you, let us have your blessing." "No! Depart—you who are cursed." "If we must depart from you, let it be into some place of ease and rest." "No! Depart into fire!" "If we must go into fire, let it be for a little time—let the fire be quickly put out." "No! Go into everlasting fire!" "If it is so, that we must be there, let us be with good company." "No! Go with the devil and his angels!"

Oh, what an evil is sin! All the torments of this life are but a sport, compared to hell torments. What is a burning fever, compared to the burning in hell! It is called, the "wrath of Almighty God." Rev 19:15. The Almighty God inflicts the punishment, therefore it will be heavy. A child cannot strike very hard—but if a giant strikes—he kills with a blow. To have the almighty God lay on the stroke, will be intolerable! *Hell is the epitome of misery!* The body and soul, which have sinned together, shall suffer together; and those torments shall have no

period put to them. They "shall seek death, and shall not find it." Rev 9:6. "The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever." Rev 14:11. Here the wicked thought a prayer long, a Sabbath long; but how long will it be to lie upon beds of flames forever! That word, "forever!" breaks the heart!

Surely, then, sin is the most deadly and execrable evil. Look upon it in its original, in its nature, in the judgment and estimate of the wise; look upon it comparatively—it is worse than affliction, death, and hell; look upon it in the manner of cure, and in the dismal effect, it brings eternal damnation. Is there not, then, great reason that we should make this prayer, "Deliver us from evil"?

Use 1. For INSTRUCTION.

(1) Is sin such a deadly, pernicious evil, the evil of evils? See what we are to pray most to be delivered from, and that it is in reference to sin our Savior has taught us to pray, "Deliver us from evil." Hypocrites pray more against temporal evils than spiritual. Pharaoh prayed more to have the plague of hail and thunder removed, than his hard heart to be removed. Exod 9:28. The Israelites prayed, "take away the serpents from us," more than to have their sin taken away. Numb 21:7. The hypocrite's prayer is carnal: he prays more to be cured of his lameness than of his unbelief; more that God would take away his pain than take away his sin. But our prayer should be, "Deliver us from evil." Spiritual prayers are best. Have you a diseased body? Pray more that the disease of your soul may be removed than of your body. "Heal my soul, for I have sinned." Psalm 41:4. The plague of the heart is worse than a cancer in the breast. Have you a child that is lame? Pray more to have its unholiness removed than its lameness. Spiritual prayers

are more pleasing to God, and are as music in his ears. Christ has here taught us to pray against sin, "Deliver us from evil."

(2) If sin is so great an evil, then admire the wonderful patience of God, who bears with sinners. Sin is a breach of God's royal law, it strikes at his glory; for God to bear with sinners who provoke him—shows astonishing patience. Well may he be called "the God of patience." Romans 15:5. It would tire the patience of the angels—to bear with men's sins one day; but what does God bear! How many affronts and injuries he puts up with! He sees all the intrigues and horrid impieties committed in a nation. "They have committed villainy in Israel, and have committed adultery; even I know, and am a witness, says the Lord." Jer 29:23. God could strike men dead in their sins; but he forbears, and respites them. Methinks I see the *justice* of God with a flaming sword in his hand, ready to strike the stroke; and *patience* steps in for the sinner and says, Lord, spare him awhile longer. Methinks I hear the angel saying to God, as the king of Israel to the prophet, "Shall I smite them? Shall I smite them?" 2 Kings 6:21. Lord, here is such a sinner: shall I smite him? Shall I take off the head of such a drunkard, swearer, Sabbath-breaker? And God's patience says, as the dresser of the vineyard, "Let him alone this year." Luke 13:8. Oh, the infinite patience of God, that he should bear with sinners so long! "When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed?" 1 Sam 24:19. God finds his enemies—yet he lets them go, he is not presently avenged on them. Every sin has a voice to cry to God for vengeance; as Sodom's sin cried. Gen 18:20. God spares men; but let not sinners presume upon his patience. Long *forbearance* is not *forgiveness*; God's patience abused, leaves men more inexcusable.

(3) If sin is so great an evil, there is no little sin. There is no little treason: every sin strikes at God's crown and dignity; and in this

sense it may be said, Are not "your iniquities infinite?" Job 22:5. The least sin, as the schoolmen say, is infinite objective, because it is committed against an infinite Majesty. Nothing can do away with sin but that which has infinity in it; for though the sufferings of Christ, as man, were not infinite—yet the divine nature shed forth an infinite value and merit upon his sufferings. No sin is little, and there is no little hell for sin. As we are not to think any of God's mercies little, because they are more than we can deserve—so neither are we to think any of our sins little, because they are more than we can answer for. The sin we esteem lightest, without Christ's blood, will be heavy enough to sink us into perdition.

(4) If sin is so great an evil, see whence all personal or national troubles come from. They come from the evil of sin. Sin grows high, which makes divisions grow wide. Sin is the Achan which troubles us; it is the cockatrice egg, out of which comes a fiery, flying serpent. It is like Phaeton, who, as the poets feign, driving the chariot of the sun, set the world on fire. Sin has a malignant influence—it brings us into straits. All our evils are from the evil of sin. The cords that pinch us are of our own twisting. [Punishment follows wickedness as the thread the needle.] Sin raises all the storms in conscience. The sword of God's justice lies quiet—until sin draws it out of the scabbard, and makes God whet it against a nation.

(5) If sin is so great an evil, how little reason has anyone to be in love with it! Some are so infatuated with it, that they delight in it. The devil can so cook and dress sin, that it pleases the sinner's palate. "Though wickedness is sweet in his mouth." Job 20:12. Sin is as delightful to the wicked, as food to the taste. It is a feast on which men feed their lusts; but there is little cause to be in love with it. "Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, it is the gall of asps within him." Job 20:12, 14. To love sin is to hug an enemy. **Sin puts**

a worm into conscience, a sting into death, a fire into hell. It is like those locusts in Rev 9:7: "On their heads were as it were crowns like gold and they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions, and they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails." After the woman's hair—comes in the scorpion's sting!

(6) If sin is so great an evil, what shall we say of them who make light of sin, as if there were no danger in it; as if God were not in earnest when he threatens punishment for sin; or as if ministers were about a needless work, when they preach against it? Some people make nothing of breaking a commandment; they make nothing of telling a lie, of deceiving or slandering; nothing of living in the sin of immorality. If you weigh sin in the balance of some men's judgments, it is very light; but who are those that make light of sin? Solomon has described them. "Fools make a mock at sin." Proverbs 14:9. [The fool falls quickly into vices.] Isidore. Who but fools would make light of that which grieves the Spirit of God! Who but fools would put a viper in their bosom! Who but fools would laugh at their own calamity, and make sport while they give themselves poison!

(7) If sin is so great an evil, I infer that there is no good to be gotten by it. We cannot gather grapes from this thorn. If sin is a deadly evil, we cannot get any profit by it; no man ever could thrive upon this trade. Atheists said, "It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it?" Mal 3:14. But we may say more truly, what profit is there in sin? "What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!" Romans 6:21. Where are your earnings? What have you gotten by sin? It has *shame* for its companion, and *death* for its wages! What profit did Achan have, from his wedge of gold? That wedge cleaved asunder his soul from God. What profit did Ahab have, from the vineyard he got

unjustly? The dogs licked his blood. 1 Kings 21:19. What profit did Judas have, from his treason? For thirty pieces he sold his Savior—and bought his own damnation! All the gain men get by their sins, they may put in their eye; nay, they must put it there and weep it out again.

(8) If sin is so great an evil, see the folly of those who venture upon it, because of the pleasure they have in it. "Who had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thess 2:12. As for the pleasure of sin, it is but a pleasant phantasy; a golden dream. And besides, it is a *mixed* pleasure, it has bitterness intermingled with it. "I have, says the harlot, perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon." Proverbs 7:17. For one sweet, here are two bitters; cinnamon is sweet—but myrrh and aloes are bitter; the harlot's pleasure is mixed. There are those inward fears and lashes of conscience which embitter the pleasure. If there is any pleasure in sin, it is only to the body, the brutish part; the soul is not at all gratified by it. "Soul, take your ease;" he might have more properly said, "Body, take your ease;" the soul cannot feed on sensual objects. Luke 12:19.

In short, the pleasure men talk of in sin, is their disease. Some take pleasure in eating chalk or coals, which is from disease. Just so, when men talk of pleasure in eating the forbidden fruit, it is from the sickness and disease of their souls. They "put bitter for sweet." Isaiah 5:20. *Oh, what folly is it, for a cup of pleasure, to drink a sea of wrath!* Sin will be bitter in the end! "Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it gives his color in the cup; at the last it bites like a serpent!" Proverbs 23:31, 32. Sin will prove like Ezekiel's sroll, sweet in the mouth—but bitter in the belly! Ask Cain now, how he likes his murder! Ask Achan how he likes his golden wedge? O remember the

saying of Augustine, *"The pleasure is momentary, the torture eternal!"* The *pleasure* of sin is soon gone—but the *sting* remains!

(9) If sin is so great an evil, what wisdom is it to depart from it! "To depart from evil is understanding." Job 28:28. To sin is to do foolishly; therefore to depart from sin is to do wisely. Solomon says, "In the transgression of an evil man, there is a snare." Proverbs 29:6. Is it not wisdom to avoid a snare? Sin is a deceiver, it cheated our first parents. Instead of being as gods, they became as the beasts which perish! Psalm 49:20. Sin has cheated all that have meddled with it; and is it not wisdom to shun such a cheater? Sin has many fair pleas, and tells how it will gratify all the senses with pleasure; "but," says a gracious soul, "Christ's love is sweeter; peace of conscience is sweeter; what are the pleasures of sin, compared to the pleasures of paradise? Well may the saints be called *wise* virgins, because they spy the deceits that are in sin, and avoid the snares. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

(10) If sin is so great an evil, how justifiable and commendable are all those means which are used to keep men from sin! How justifiable are a minister's admonitions and reproofs! "Rebuke them sharply" (Titus 1:13); cuttingly; a metaphor from a surgeon who probes a wound, and cuts out the proud flesh that the patient may be sound. Just so, God's minister comes with a cutting reproof—but it is to keep from sin, and to save the soul. Esteem them your best friends—who would keep you from sinning against God. If a man were going to poison or drown himself, would he not be his friend, who would hinder hint from doing it? All a minister's reproofs are but to keep you from sin, and hinder from self-murder; all is in love. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." 2 Cor 5:11. It is the passion of most to be angry with

those who would reclaim them from sin. "You hate the one who reproves in court and despise him who tells the truth." Amos 5:10. Who is angry with the physician for prescribing a bitter potion, seeing it is to purge out the mortal disease? It is mercy to men's souls to tell them of their sins. And surely those are *priests of the devil,* who see men go on in sin, and ready to drop into hell—and never pull them back by a reproof; nay, perhaps even flatter them in their sins. God never made ministers to be false mirrors—to make bad faces look fair; such make themselves guilty of other men's sins.

(11) If sin is so great an evil, the evil of evils, see what a bad choice they make who choose sin to avoid affliction! It is as if to save the coat from being torn, one should suffer his flesh to be torn. It was a false charge that Elihu brought against Job: "This iniquity have you chosen rather than affliction." Job 36:21. This is a bad choice. Affliction has a promise made to it—but sin has no promise made to it. 2 Samuel 22:28. Affliction is for our good—but sin is not for our good; it would bring hell and damnation upon us. Spira chose iniquity rather than affliction—but it cost him dear; at last he repented of his choice. *He who commits sin to avoid suffering, is like one that runs into a lion's den to avoid the stinging of a gnat!*

(12) If sin is so great an evil, it should be a Christian's great care in this life to keep from it. "Deliver us from evil." Some make it all their care to keep out of trouble; they had rather keep their skin whole than their conscience pure. But our care should be chiefly to keep from sin. How careful are we to forbear such a dish as the physicians tell us is hurtful to us: it will bring the stone or gout! Much more should we be careful that we eat not the forbidden fruit, which will bring divine vengeance. "Keep yourself pure." 1 Tim 5:22. It has always been the study of the saints to keep aloof from sin.

"How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen 39:9. "Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins." Psalm 19:13. It was a saying of Anselm, "If sin were on one side, and hell on the other, I would rather leap into hell than willingly sin against my God." Oh, what a mercy it is, to be kept from sin! We count it a great mercy to be kept from the plague and fire; but what is it to be kept from sin!

(13) Is sin so great an evil? It should make us long for heaven, where we shall be perfectly freed from sin, not only from its outward acts—but from the indwelling of sin. In heaven we shall not need to pray this prayer, "Deliver us from evil." What a blessed time will it be, when we shall never more have a vain thought! Then Christ's spouse shall be without spot or wrinkle. Eph 5:27. Now there is a dead man tied to the living man; we cannot do any holy duty—but we mix sin with it; we cannot pray without wandering; we cannot believe without doubting. But then our virgin souls shall not be capable of the least tincture of sin—but we shall all be as the angels of God.

In heaven we shall have no temptation to sin. The old serpent is cast out of paradise, and his fiery darts shall never come near to touch us!

Use 2. For EXHORTATION.

First to all in general. If sin is so great and dreadful an evil, as you love your souls, take heed of sin. If you taste the forbidden fruit, it will cost you dear, it will cost you bitter tears, it may cost you lying in hell! O therefore flee from sin!

(1) Take heed of sins of OMISSION. Matthew 23:23. It is as really dangerous not to do things commanded, as to do things forbidden. Some think it no great matter to omit reading Scripture.

The Bible lies by like rusty armor, which they never use. They think it no great matter to omit family or closet-prayer; they go several months, and God never hears from them. They have nothing sanctified to them; they feed upon a curse; "for every creature is sanctified by prayer." 1 Tim 4:4, 5. The *bird* never takes a drop but its eye is lifted up towards heaven—this may shame many. O take heed of living in the neglect of any known duty. It was the prayer of a holy man on his death-bed, "Lord, forgive my sins of omission."

(2) Take heed of SECRET sins. Some are more modest than to sin openly in a balcony; but they will carry their sins under a canopy, they will sin in secret. Rachel would not let her father's idols be seen —but she "sat upon them." Gen 31:34. Many will be drunk and unclean, if they may do it when nobody sees them; they are like one who shuts up his shop windows—but follows his trade within doors. If sin is so great an evil, let me warn you this day not to sin in secret; know that you can never sin so privately but that the two witnesses, God and conscience, are always present.

(3) Take heed of your BESETTING sin, that which your nature and constitution most incline to. As in the hive there is a master bee —so in the heart there is a master sin. "I kept myself from *my* iniquity." Psalm 18:23. There is some sin that is a special favorite, the darling sin which lies in the bosom—and this bewitches and draws away the heart. O beware of this!

[1] That sin which a man most nourishes, and to which all other sins are subservient—is the sin which is most tended and waited upon. The Pharisees' darling sin was vainglory, all they did was to feed the sin of pride. When they gave alms they sounded a trumpet, that they might admired by others. Matthew 6:2. If a stranger had asked why this trumpet sounded? The answer was, the

Pharisees are going to give alms to the poor. Their *lamp of charity* was filled with the *oil of vainglory*. Matthew 23:5. All their works they did to be seen by men. Pride was their bosom sin. Oftentimes covetousness is the darling sin; all other sins are committed to maintain this. Why do men equivocate, oppress, defraud, take bribes —but to uphold covetousness?

[2] The sin which a man hates to be reproved—is the darling sin. Herod could not endure to have his incest spoken against; if John the Baptist meddles with that sin, it shall cost him his head.

[3] That sin which has most power over a man, and most easily leads him captive—is the beloved of the soul. There are some sins which a man can better put off and repulse; but there is one sin which he cannot deny—but is overcome by it: this is the bosom sin. The young man in the gospel had a besetting sin which he could not resist, and that was the love of the world; his silver was dearer to him than his Savior. It is a sad thing a man should be so bewitched by a lust—that he will part with the kingdom of heaven to gratify it!

[4] The sin which men use arguments to defend—is the darling sin. To plead for sin, is to be the devil's attorney. If the sin is covetousness, and we vindicate it; if it is rash anger, and we justify it, saying (as Jonah 4:9), "I do well to be angry," this is the besetting sin.

[5] That sin which most troubles a man, and flies in his face in an hour of sickness and distress—is the beloved sin. When Joseph's brethren were distressed, their sin in selling their brother came to remembrance. Gen 45:3. So, when a man is upon his sick-bed, conscience says, "Do not you remember how you have lived

in such a sin, though you have been often warned—yet you would not leave it?" Conscience reads a secret lecture upon the darling sin.

[6] The sin which a man is most unwilling to part with—is the darling sin. Jacob could of all his sons, most hardly part with Benjamin. "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take *Benjamin* away." Gen 13:36. So says the sinner, "this and that sin have I parted with; but must Benjamin go? Must I part with this delightful sin? That pierces my heart!" It is the Delilah, the beloved sin. Oh, if sin is such a deadly evil, dare not to indulge any bosom sin, which is the most dangerous of all; and, like a cancer striking to the heart, which is mortal. One darling sin lived in, sets open a gap for Satan to enter.

(4) Take heed of the sins which attend your particular vocations. A vocation you must have. Adam in paradise tilled the ground. God never sealed warrants to idleness. But every vocation has its snare; as some sin in living without a vocation—so others sin in a vocation. Remember how deadly an evil sin is. Avoid those sins which you are exposed to in your trade. Take heed of all fraud and collusion in your dealings. "Do for others what you would like them to do for you." Matthew 7:12.

Take heed of a sinful tongue in selling. The Scripture says of one that goes to heaven, "He speaks the truth in his heart." Psalm 15:2. It is the custom of many to say the commodity costs them more, and yet they take less. This is hardly creditable.

Beware of a deceitful balance. "The balances of deceit are in his hand." Hos 12:7. Men by making their weights lighter, make their accounts heavier.

Beware of mingling and debasing commodities. "We sell the refuse of the wheat." Amos 8:6. They pick out the best grains of the wheat, and sell the worst at the same price as they did the best. To mix a coarse commodity with the fine, and sell it all for fine, is no better than deceit. Isaiah 1:22.

Beware of stretching your consciences too far, or taking more for a commodity than it is worth. "If you make a sale to your neighbor or a purchase from him, do not cheat one another." Lev 25:14. There is a lawful gain allowed—yet one may not so advantage himself as to injure another. Let the tradesman's motto be, "A conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." Acts 24:16. He has a hard bargain, who purchases the world with the loss of his soul.

(5) Sin being so deadly an evil, take heed of the APPEARANCE of sin. Abstain not only from evil—but the appearance of evil. If it is not absolutely a sin—yet if it looks like sin, avoid it. He who is loyal to his prince, not only forbears to have his hand in treason—but he will take heed of that which has a show of treason. Joseph's mistress tempted him, and he fled and would not be with her. Gen 39:12. An appearance of *good* is too little; and an appearance of *evil* is too much.

The appearance of evil is often an occasion of evil. Dalliance in an appearance of evil, oftentimes occasions evil. Touching the forbidden fruit occasions the tasting of it. Dancing has often been the occasion of uncleanness.

The appearance of evil may harm another. "When you sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ." 1 Cor 8:12. Sinning against a member of Christ is sinning against Christ himself.

What MEANS shall we use to be kept from acts of sin?

(1) If you would be preserved from actual and scandalous sins—labor to MORTIFY original sin. If you would not have the branches bud and blossom—smite at the root! I know that original sin cannot be *removed* in this life—but labor to have it *subdued*. Why do men break forth into *actual* sins—but because they do not *mortify* heart sins? Suppress the *first risings* of pride, lust, and passion. *Original* sin unmortified, will prove such a root of bitterness as will bring forth the cursed root of *scandalous* sin!

(2) If you would be kept from actual sins, think what an odious thing SIN is. Besides what you have heard, remember sin is the accursed thing. Josh 7:13. It is the abominable thing which God hates. "Oh do not this abominable thing that I hate." Jer 44:4. Sin is the devil's excrement; it is called filthiness. James 1:21. If all the evils in the world were put together, and their essence strained out, they could not make a thing so filthy as sin is. So odious is a sinner that God loathes the sight of him. "My soul loathed them." Zech 11:8. He who defiles himself with avarice, what is he but a serpent licking the dust! He who defiles himself with the lust of uncleanness, what is he but a swine with a man's head! He who defiles himself with pride, what is he but a bubble which the devil has blown up! He who defiles himself with drunkenness, what is he but a staggering beast! To consider how odious and base a thing sin is, would be a means of keeping us from sinning.

(3) If you would be kept from actual sins, get the FEAR of God planted in your hearts. "Through the fear of the Lord, a man avoids evil." Proverbs 16:6. The fear of God is a bridle to sin, and a spur to holiness. The fear of God puts a holy awe upon the heart and binds it to godly behavior. When the Empress Eudoxia threatened to

banish Chrysostom, "Tell her," said he, "I fear nothing but sin." The fear of God stands as a porter at the door of the soul, and keeps sin from entering. All sin is committed for lack of the fear of God. "Their throat is an open grave; they deceive with their tongues. Vipers' venom is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and wretchedness are in their paths, and the path of peace they have not known. *There is no fear of God before their eyes!"* Romans 3:13-18. Holy fear stands sentinel, and is ever watching against carnal security, pride, and wantonness. The fear of God is a Christian's lifeguard to defend him against the fiery darts of temptation. The way to be safe is always to fear God.

(4) If we would be kept from actual sins, let us be careful to avoid all the inlets and OCCASIONS of sin. Do not run into evil company. He who would not catch the plague—must not go into an infected house. Guard your senses, which may be the inlets to sin. Keep the two portals, the *eye* and the *ear*. Especially guard your eyes. Much sin comes in by the eye; the eye is often an inlet to sin; sin takes fire at the eye; the first sin in the world began at the eye. "When the woman *saw* that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the *eye*, and also desirable for gaining wisdom—she took some and ate it." Gen 3:6. Looking begat *lusting*. Intemperance begins at the eye. Looking on the wine when it is red and gives its color in the glass, causes excess of drinking. Proverbs 23:31. *Covetousness* begins at the eye. "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and a wedge of gold, I coveted them and took them." Josh 7:21. The fire of *lust* begins to kindle at the eye. David walking upon the roof of his house saw a woman washing herself, and she was, says the text, "beautiful to *look* upon," and he sent messengers and took her, and defiled himself with her. 2 Samuel 11:2. Therefore watch your eyes! Job made a covenant with

his eyes. Job 31:1. If the eye is once inflamed, it will be hard to stand out long against sin. If the outworks are taken by the enemy, there is great danger of the whole castle being taken.

(5) If you would be kept from actual gross sin, study TEMPERANCE. 1 Peter 5:8. "Be sober." Check the inordinate appetite, for sin frequently makes its entrance this way. By gratifying the sensitive appetite, the soul, which is akin to angels, is enslaved to the brutish part. Many drink to drowsiness, if not to drunkenness. Not denying the sensitive appetite, makes men's consciences full of guilt, and the world full of scandal. If you would be kept from running into sin, lay restraint upon the flesh. For what has God given reason and conscience for—but to be a bridle to check inordinate desires?

(6) If you would be kept from actual sins, be continually upon your spiritual WATCH.

Watch your THOUGHTS. "How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?" Jer 4:14. Sin begins at the thoughts. First, men nourish revengeful thoughts, then they dip their hands in blood. Set a spy over your thoughts.

Watch your PASSIONS of anger and passions of lust. The heart is ready to be destroyed by its own passions, as a vessel to be overturned by its sails. Passion transports beyond the bounds of reason. Anger is *a temporary insanity*. Moses in a passion "spoke unadvisedly with his lips." Psalm 106:33. The disciples in a passion, wanted to call down fire from heaven. A man in a passion is like a ship in a storm that has neither pilot nor sails to help it—but is exposed to waves and rocks.

Watch your TEMPTATIONS. Satan continually lies in ambush, and watches to draw us to sin. The devil stands girded for battle. He is always fishing for our souls. He is either laying snares, or shooting darts. Therefore we had need watch him, that we be not decoyed into sin. Most sin is committed for lack of watchfulness. "Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour!" 1 Peter 5:8

(7) If you would be kept from the evil of sin, be well versed in SCRIPTURE. "Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you." Psalm 119:11. The Word is a two-edged sword, to cut asunder men's lusts! When the fogs and vapors of sin begin to rise, let but the *light of Scripture* shine in the soul—and it dispels them. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." Col 3:16. Alphonsus, king of Arragon, read through the Bible fourteen times. The Word shows the damnable evil of sin; it furnishes us with precepts, which are so many remedies and antidotes against sin. When Christ had a temptation to sin, he beat back the tempter, and wounded him three times with the sword of the Spirit! "It is written!" Why do men live in sin—but because they either do not read the Word or do not believe it?

(8) If you would be preserved from gross, presumptuous sin—get your hearts fired with LOVE to God. Love has great force in it; it is "as strong as death;" it breaks the league between the heart and sin. Two things in God cause love.

[1] His glorious BEAUTY. Moses desired to see some glimpse of it. "Lord, show me your glory."

[2] His astonishing LOVE. What a wonder of love was it, to give his Son out of his bosom—and lay such a jewel to pawn for our

redemption! The glories of God's beauty, and the magnitude of his love, like two loadstones, draw our love to God; and if we love him, we shall not sin against him. He who loves his friend, will not by any means displease him. I have read of four men meeting together, who

asked one another what it was that kept them from sinning. The first one said, "the fear of hell." The second said, "the joys of heaven." The third said, "the odiousness of sin." The fourth said, "that which keeps me from sin, is love to God. Shall I sin against so loving a God? Shall I abuse His love?" Love to God is the best curbing-bit to keep from sin. "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." John 14:15

(9) If you would be kept from the evil of sin, be diligent in a VOCATION. Adam in paradise must until the ground. Such as live idly, expose themselves to sin. If we have no work to do, Satan will find work enough for us; he sows most of his seed in *fallow* ground. A woman being much tempted to sin, came to the pastor, and asked him what she should do to resist temptation? He answered, Be always well employed, that when Satan comes he may find you busied in your vocation, and not at leisure to listen to his temptation.

(10) If you would be kept from sin, fix the eye of your mind upon the "beauty of HOLINESS." Holiness consists in conformity to God. It is the sparkling of the divine nature, a beam of God shining in the soul. How lovely is Christ's bride when decked and bespangled with the jewels of holiness! What makes the seraphim to be angels of light—but their holiness? Do but think with yourselves what a splendid, glorious thing holiness is—and it will cause a disgust and hatred of sin, which is so contrary to it. The beholding of beauty—will make us revolt at deformity.

(11) If you would keep from the evil of sin, meditate frequently on DEATH. Think of the *unavoidableness* of death.

Heb 9:27. "It is *appointed* unto men once to die." We are not so sure to lie down this night in our bed, as to lie down in our grave. Think of the *uncertainty* of the time. We hold our life at the will of our landlord; how soon may God turn us out of this house of clay! Death often comes when we least look for it. The flood, as some learned writers observe, came in the month of April, in the spring; when the trees were blossoming, and the birds singing, and men least looked for it. Just so, often in the spring of youth, when the body is most healthy, and the spirits most sprightly and vigorous, and it is least thought on—then death comes. Could we think often and seriously of death, it would give a death's wound to sin. [Nothing restrains from sin so much as the frequent thought of death.] Augustine. There is no stronger antidote against sin than the thought, "I am now sinning, and tomorrow may be dying! What if death should find me doing the devil's work—would it not send me to him to receive my wages!" Would the adulterer but think, "I am now in the act of sin—but how soon may death come, and then I who have burned in lust, must burn in hell!" It would strike a cold chill into his soul, and make him afraid of immorality.

(12) If you would be kept from gross, scandalous sins, beware of a COVETOUS heart. Covetousness is a dry drunkenness. He who thirsts insatiably after the world, will stick at no sin; he will betray Christ and a good cause for money. "The love of money is the root of all evil." 1 Tim 6:10. From this root comes *theft*. Achan's covetous heart made him steal the wedge of gold. Josh 7:21. Covetousness makes the prisons full. From the root of covetousness, comes *murder*. Why did Ahab stone Naboth to death, but to possess his vineyard? 1 Kings 21:13. Covetousness has made many swim to the crown—in blood. From this bitter root of covetousness proceeds *fraud*. It is the covetous hand, which holds false weights. From this root of covetousness comes *immorality*. You read of the hire of a

whore. Deut 23:18. For money she would sell both her conscience and chastity! Oh, if you would be kept from the evil of sin, beware of covetousness, which is the inlet to so many sins!

(13) Let us be much in PRAYER to God, to keep us from engulfing ourselves in sin. "Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins." Psalm 19:13. We have no power inherent to keep us from evil. Christ taught us to pray, "Deliver us from evil." If we have power in ourselves to keep from sin, why pray to God for power? Alas! if David and Peter, who were strong grace fell, for lack of a fresh gale of the Spirit to hold them up—much more will they be in danger of falling, who have only the power of freewill to hold them.

Let us therefore sue to God for strength to keep us from sinning! Let us pray the prayer of David, "Hold me up—and I shall be safe!" Psalm 119:117. "Hold up my goings in your paths, that my footsteps slip not." Psalm 17:5. "Lord, keep me from dishonoring you; keep me from the defiling sins of the age, that I may not be worse for the times, nor the times the worse for me." "Keep back your servant from presumptuous sins." "Lord, whatever I suffer, keep me from sin!" The child is safe in the father's arms; and we are only safe from falling into sin, while we are held up in the arms of Christ and free grace. "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand!" John 10:28

Secondly, this exhortation has an application to God's children. You who are professors, and carry Christ's colors—I beseech you, above all others—to take heed of sin! Beware of any action which is scandalous and unfitting the gospel. You have heard what an exceeding evil sin is. Do not come near the forbidden fruit! "Though *Israel* is a prostitute, may *Judah* avoid such guilt!" Hos

4:15. So, though wicked men run into sin—yet let not the *spouse of Christ* defile the breasts of her virginity. Sin ill befits any—but least befits professors. Dung is unsightly in the *street*; but to see it in the *temple* is much more offensive. Leprosy in the *foot* is ill—but to see a leprous sore in the *face* is much worse. To see sin break forth in those who have a face of religion, is most to be abominated.

The sins of the wicked are not so much to be wondered at. "The wicked *shall* do wickedly." Dan 12:10. It is no wonder to see a toad spit poison. It was not so astonishing to see Cain or Ahab sin; but to see Lot's incest, or to see David's hands stained with blood—was astonishing indeed. When the sun is eclipsed everyone stands and looks at it. Just so, when a child of light is eclipsed by scandalous sin, all stand and gaze at such an eclipse.

The sins of God's peopledo, in some sense, provoke him more than the sins of the wicked! We read of the provocations of his sons and daughters. Deut 32:19. The sins of the wicked *anger* God—but the sins of his people *grieve* him. The sins of God's people have a more malignant aspect, and are of a blacker dye than others. There are aggravations in the sins of his people, which are not to be found in the sins of the unregenerate, in eight particulars:

(1) The godly have an internal principle of grace—which may restrain them from sin. When wicked men sin, they have no principle to restrain them; they have wind and tide to carry them, they have nothing to pull them back from sin. But a child of God has a principle of grace to give check to sin; he has the impulses of God's Spirit dissuading him from evil. For him, therefore, to commit sin is far worse than for others. It is to sin more desperately; it is as if a woman should go about to kill her own babe in her womb! Christian,

when you sin presumptuously, you do what in you lie to kill the babe of grace in your soul!

(2) The sins of God's people are greater than others—because they sin against more mercy. God's mercy is like a weight put in a scale to make sin weigh heavier. God has given Christ to a believer; he has cut him off from the wild stock of nature, and grafted him into the true olive tree; and for him to abuse all this mercy is to outdo the wicked, and to sin with a higher aggravation, because it is to sin against greater love! How was Peter's sin enhanced and accented, by Christ having done more for him than others! He had dropped some of the holy oil upon him; he had taken him into the number of the apostles; he had carried him up into the mount of transfiguration, and shown him the glory of heaven in a vision. For Peter to deny Christ after all this mercy was heinous, and could not be forgiven but by a miracle of love!

(3) The sins of the godly have this aggravation in them—that they sin against clearer illumination than the wicked. "They are of those who rebel against the light." Job 24:13. Light is there taken figuratively for knowledge. It cannot be denied—but the wicked sin knowingly; but the godly have a light beyond them, such a divine, penetrating light—as no hypocrite can attain to. They have *better eyes* to see sin than others; and for them to meddle with sin and embrace this dunghill, must needs provoke God, and make the fury rise up in his face! O therefore, you who are the people of God—flee from sin! Your sins are more enhanced, and have worse aggravations in them, than the sins of the unregenerate!

(4) The sins of the godly are worse than the unregenerate; for, when they sin, it is against great experiences. They have felt the *bitterness of sin* in the *pangs of the new birth*, and

afterwards God has spoken peace, and they have had an experimental taste how sweet the Lord is; and yet, after these experiences, that they should touch the forbidden fruit, and venture upon a presumptuous sin, enhances and aggravates their guilt, and is like putting a weight more in the scale to make their sin weigh heavier. The wicked have never tasted the sweetness of a heavenly life; they have never known what it is to have any smiles from God; they have never tasted anything sweeter than corn and wine; therefore no wonder if they sin. But for a child of God who has had such love-tokens from heaven, and signal experiences from God—for him to gratify a lust, how horrid is this! It was an aggravation of Solomon's sin, that his heart was turned from the Lord, who had appeared to him twice. 1 Kings 11:9.

(5) The sins of the godly are greater than others, because they sin against their sonship. When wicked men sin, they sin against the command; but when the godly sin, they sin against a privilege; they abuse their sonship. The godly are adopted into the family of heaven, they have a new name. Is it a light thing, said David, to be son-in-law to a king? So, to be called the sons of God, to be heirs of the promises, is no small honor. For such to run into an open offence, is sinning against their adoption. They hereby make themselves vile—as if a king's son should be tumbling in the mire, or lie among swine.

(6) The sins of the godly are worse than others, because they are committed against more vows and engagements. They have given up their names to God; they have bound themselves solemnly to God by oath. "I have sworn that I will keep your righteous judgments." Psalm 119:106. In the supper of the Lord, they have renewed this sacred vow; and, after this, to run into

presumptuous sin, is a breach of vow, a kind of perjury, which dyes the sin of a crimson color!

(7) The sins of the godly are worse than others, because they bring a greater reproach upon religion. For the wicked to sin, must be expected from them, as swine will wallow in the mire; but when sheep do so, when the godly sin, it redounds to the dishonor of the gospel. "By this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." 2 Samuel 12:14. Everyone's eye is upon a stain in white linen; for the godly to sin, is like a spot in white linen, it is more taken notice of, and reflects greater dishonor upon the ways of God. When the sun is eclipsed, everyone stands and looks upon it; so, when a child of light is eclipsed by scandalous sin, all stand and gaze at it. How does the gospel suffer by the miscarriages of the godly! Their blood can never wash off the stain they bring upon religion.

(8) The sins of the godly are worse, because they encourage and harden wicked men in sin. If the wicked see the godly loose and worldly in their lives, they think they may do so too. The wicked make the godly their pattern, not in imitating their virtues—but their vices; and is it not fearful to be the means to damn others?

These are the aggravations of the sins of the godly. You, therefore, above all others, beware of presumptuous sin. Your sins wound conscience, weaken grace, and do more highly provoke God than the sins of others, and God will be sure to punish you. Whoever escapes, you shall not. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Amos 3:2. If God does not damn you, he may send you to hell in this life; he may cause such agonies and tremblings of heart, that you will be a terror to yourselves. You may draw near to despair, and be ready to look upon

yourselves as castaways. When David had stained himself with adultery and murder, he complained of his broken bones. Psalm 51:8. This metaphor sets forth the grief and agony of his soul; he lay in sore desertion three quarters of a year, and it is thought he never recovered his full joy to his dying day. O, therefore, you who belong to God and are enrolled in his family, take heed of blemishing your profession with scandalous sin; you will pay dearly for it. Think of the broken bones. Though God does not blot you out of his book—yet he may cast you out of his gracious presence. Psalm 51:2: He may keep you in long desertion. You may feel such lashes in your conscience, that you may roar out and think yourselves half in hell.

[2] We also pray in a *special* sense, "Deliver us from evil." We pray to be delivered from evil under a threefold notion.

1. From the evil of *our heart*, which is called an evil heart. Heb 3:12.

2. From the evil of *Satan*, who is called the "wicked one." Matthew 13:19.

3. From the evil of the *world*, which is called an "evil world." Gal 1:4.

(1) In the petition, "Deliver us from evil," we pray to be delivered from the evil of our HEART, that it may not entice us to sin. The heart is the poisoned fountain, from whence all actual sins flow. "For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, eagerness for lustful pleasure, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness." Mark 7:21-22. The cause of all evil lies in a man's own bosom—all sin begins at the heart. Lust is first conceived in the heart, and then it is midwifed into the world. Whence comes rash anger? The heart sets the tongue on fire. The heart is a shop or workhouse, where all sin is contrived and hammered out. How

needful, therefore, is this prayer, deliver us from the evil of our hearts! The heart is the greatest seducer, therefore the apostle James says, "Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed." James 1:14. The devil could not hurt us, if our own hearts did not give consent. All that he can do is to lay the bait—but it is our fault to swallow it!

O let us pray to be delivered from the lusts and deceits of our own heart. "Deliver us from evil." Luther feared his heart more than the pope or cardinal; and it was Augustine's prayer, "Lord, deliver me from myself!" It was good advice one gave to his friend, "Beware of yourself!" Beware of the bosom traitor, the flesh. The heart of a man is the Trojan horse, out of which comes a whole army of lusts.

(2) In this petition, "Deliver us from evil," we pray to be delivered from the evil of SATAN. He is "the wicked one." Matthew 13:19. **In what respect is Satan the wicked one?**

He was the first inventor of evil. He plotted the first treason. John 8:44.

His inclination is only to evil. Eph 6:12.

His constant practice is doing evil. 1 Peter 5:8.

He has some hand in all the evils and mischief which happen in the world.

He hinders from good. "He showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him." Zech 3:1.

He provokes to evil. He put it into Ananias' heart to lie. "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" Acts 5:3. The devil

blows the fire of lust and strife. When men are proud, the old serpent has poisoned them, and makes them swell. Thus he is the evil one and well may we pray, "Lord, deliver us from the evil one." The word *Satan* in the Hebrew signifies an *opponent* or *adversary*.

He is a **restless** adversary, he never sleeps. Spirits need no sleep. He is ever active, and takes no rest. He "walks about." 1 Peter 5:8. And how does he walk? Not as a pilgrim—but as a spy. He narrowly observes where he may plant his pieces of battery, and make his assaults with most advantage against us. Satan is a subtle contriver; there is no place that can secure us from his assaults and inroads. While we are praying, hearing, and meditating—he is in our company.

Satan is a **mighty** adversary, he is armed with power. He is called the "strong man." Luke 11:21. He takes men captive at his pleasure. "Who are taken captive by him at his will." 2 Tim 2:26. This alludes to a bird that is taken alive in the snare. The devil's work is to angle for men's souls; he lays suitable baits. He allures the ambitious man with honor. He allures the covetous man with riches; he baits his hook with silver. He allures allures the lustful man with beauty; he tempts men to Delilah's lap—to keep them from Abraham's bosom. The devil glories in the damnation of souls. How needful then is this prayer, "Deliver us from evil!" Lord, keep us from the evil one! Though Satan may solicit us to sin, do not allow us to give consent; though he may assault the castle of our hearts—yet let us not deliver up the keys of the castle to our mortal enemy. "Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour!" 1 Peter 5:8

(3) In this petition, "Deliver us from evil," we pray to be delivered from the evil of the WORLD. It is called an evil

world, not but that the world, as God made it, is good—but through our corruption—it becomes evil, and we had need pray, deliver us from an evil world. "He died for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from **this evil world** in which we live." Galatians 1:4.

In what sense is it an evil world?

(1) It is a DEFILING world. It is like living in an infectious air, it requires a high degree of grace to keep ourselves "unspotted by the world." James 1:27. It is as hard to live in the world and not be defiled, as to go much in the sun and not be tanned.

The **opinions** of the world are defiling; as that a little religion will serve the turn; that like gold-leaf, it must be spread but thin; that morality runs parallel with grace; that to be zealous is to be righteous over much; that it is better to keep the skin whole than the conscience pure; that the flesh is rather to be gratified than mortified. These opinions of the world are defiling.

The **examples** of the world are defiling. Examples have great force to draw us to evil. [A prince great in power is greater by his example.] Princes are looking-glasses by which we dress ourselves; if they do evil, we are apt to imitate them. Great men are copies we set before us, and usually we write most like the copy, when it is *blotted*. There is great proneness in us to follow the examples of the world; therefore God has put in a caveat against it. "You shall not follow a multitude to do evil." Exod 23:2. How easily are we hurried to sin, when we have the tide of natural corruption and the wind of example to carry us! Lot was the world's wonder; the complexion of his soul kept pure in Sodom's infectious air. The river of Peru, in South America, after running into the main sea, keeps fresh, and does not mingle with the salt waters; to which Lot might be compared, whose

piety kept fresh in Sodom's salt water. Bad examples are contagious. "They mingled among the pagans and adopted their evil customs." Psalm 106:35. Had we not need then pray, Lord, deliver us from this evil world? Living in the world is like trying to keep spotless, while traveling on a dirty road.

(2) It is an evil world, as it is an ENSNARING world. The world is full of snares. Company is a snare, recreation is a snare, riches are golden snares. [Riches are incitements to sin.] The apostle speaks of the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life." 1 John 2:16. The lust of the flesh is beauty; the lust of the eye is money; the pride of life is honor; these are the natural man's trinity. [In the world, the splendor of wealth, the greatness of high reputation and the allurements of pleasure draw us away from the love of God.]

The world is a flattering enemy; whom it kisses it betrays; it is a silken halter. The pleasures of the world, like opium, cast men into the sleep of carnal security. Lysimachus sold his crown for a cup of water; so, many part with heaven—for the world. The king of Armenia was sent prisoner to queen Cleopatra in golden fetters. Too many are enslaved with the world's golden fetters. The world bewitched Demas. 2 Tim 4:10. One of Christ's own apostles was caught with a silver bait. It is hard to drink the wine of prosperity and not be giddy. The world, through our innate corruption, is evil, as it is a snare. "Those who will be rich fall into temptation and a snare." 1 Tim 6:9. If an angel were to live here, there would be no danger of the world's ensnaring him, because he has no principle within to receive the temptation; but we have a corrupt principle that suits the temptation, and that makes us always in danger.

(3) It is an evil world as it is a DISCOURAGING world. It casts scorn and reproach upon those who live virtuously. "What, will you be holier than others, wiser than your ancestors?" The world deals with the professors of religion, as Sanballat did with the Jews when they were building. "He ridiculed the Jews—What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble--burned as they are?" Neh 4:1-2. So the wicked world casts out squibs of reproach at the godly. "What, will you build for heaven? What is the need for all this cost? What profit is it to serve the Almighty?" Thus the world would pluck off our chariot wheels when we are driving towards heaven. These are called cruel mockings. Heb 11:36. It requires a great measure of sanctity to withstand the discouragements of the world—to dance among serpents—to laugh at reproaches—and bind them as a crown about our head.

(4) It is an evil world as it is a DEADENING world. It dulls and deadens the affections to heavenly objects. It cools holy motions, like a damp in a silver mine, which puts out the light. Earthly things choke the seed of the Word. A man entangled in the world is so taken up with secular concerns, that he can no more mind the things above—than an elephant can fly in the air! And even such as have grace in them, when their affections are *beslimed with earth*, they find themselves much indisposed to meditation and prayer; it is like swimming with a heavy stone around the neck.

(5) It is an evil world as it is a MALIGNING world. It hates the people of God. "Because you are not of the world, therefore the world hates you." John 15:19. Hatred, as Aristotle says, is against the whole kind. Haman's hatred was against the seed of the whole Jews. When you can find a leopard without spots, then you may expect to find a wicked world without hatred. The mark that is shot at, is piety.

"They attack me for pursuing good." Psalm 38:20. The world pretends to hate the godly for something else—but the ground of the quarrel is holiness. The world's hatred is implacable; *anger* may be reconciled, *hatred* cannot. You may as well reconcile heaven and hell—as the *two seeds*. If the world hated Christ, no wonder it hates us. "The world hated me before it hated you." John 15:18. Why should any hate Christ? This blessed Dove had no gall, this Rose of Sharon sent forth the sweetest perfume; but it shows the world's baseness, that it is a Christ-hating and a saint-hating world. Had we not need to pray, deliver us from this evil world?

(6) It is an evil world, as it is a DECEITFUL world. There is deceit in dealing. "The balances of deceit are in his hand." Hos 12:7. The Hebrew word *rimmah* signifies both to deceive and oppress. He who dares use deceit will not spare to oppress.

There is a deceit in **friendship**. "But a faithful man who can find?" Proverbs 20:6. Some use too much courtship in friendship; they are like trumpets which make a great noise—but within they are hollow. Some can both flatter and hate; both commend and censure. They have honey on the tongue—and gall in the heart! *Pretended love* is worse than hatred.

There is deceit in **riches**. "The deceitfulness of riches." Matthew 13:22. The world makes us believe it will *satisfy* our desires—but it only *increases* them! It makes us believe it will stay with us, and it takes wings. Proverbs 23:5.

(7) It is an evil world, as it is a VEXING world. It is full of trouble. "In this world you will have trouble." John 16:33. The world is like a beehive; when, having tasted a little honey, we have been stung with a thousand bees. Basil was of opinion that before the fall the rose grew without prickles; but now every sweet flower of our life

has its thorns. There are many things which cause trouble—loss of friends, law-suits, crosses in estate. Relations are not without their troubles; some are troubled that they have no children, others that they have children. *The world is a vexing vanity!* If a man is poor, he is despised by the rich; if he is rich, he is envied by the poor. If we do not find an *ensnaring* world, we shall find it an *afflicting* world; it has more in it to wean us than tempt us.

The world is a *sea*, where we are tossed upon the surging waves of sorrow, and often in danger of shipwreck. The world is a *wilderness*, full of fiery serpents. What storms of persecution are raised against the righteous! 2 Tim 3:12. The wicked are briers, where Christ's sheep lose some of their golden fleece. Mic 7:4. Then had we not need pray, "Lord, deliver us from being hurt by this evil world!" Why should we be forbidden to love the world? Though we are commanded to love our enemies—yet this is an enemy we must not love. "Love not the world." 1 John 2:15.

[3] Let it be observed, however, that abstaining from, or forbearing the external acts of sin, is not sufficient to entitle us to salvation. When we pray, "Deliver us from evil," more is implied in it—that we make progress in holiness. Being *divorced from sin* is not enough—unless we are *espoused to virtue*; therefore in Scripture these two are joined. "Depart from evil—and do good." Psalm 34:14; Romans 12:9. "Cease to do evil—learn to do well." Isaiah 1:16, 17. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit—perfecting holiness." 2 Cor 7:1. Leaving sin is not enough—unless we embrace righteousness. [The mark of righteousness is rather to do good, than not to do evil.] As it is in the body, it is not enough that the disease be stopped—but it must grow in health. Just so, in the soul, it is not enough that acts of sin are

forborne, which is stopping a disease—but it must be healthy, and grow in holiness.

Use. Those are reproved, who labor only to suppress the outward acts of sin—but do not press on to holiness; they cease from doing evil—but do not learn to do well. Their religion lies only in negatives; they glory in this—that they are given to no open vice, none can charge them with any foul miscarriages. "God, I thank you that I am not as other men are; extortioners, unjust, adulterers." Luke 18:11. This is not enough, you must advance a step further in solid piety. It is not enough that a field is not sown with tares or hemlock—but it must be sown with good seed. Consider two things:

(1) If that you are not guilty of gross sins, is the best certificate that you have to show, God makes no account of you. Though a piece of brass is not so bad as clay—yet not being so good as gold, it will not pass for current coin. Just so, though you are not grossly profane—yet not being of the right metal, lacking the stamp of holiness, you will never pass current in heaven.

(2) A man may abstain from evil—yet he may go to hell for not doing good. "Every tree which does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." Matthew 3:10. Why were the foolish virgins shut out? They had done no hurt, they had not *broken* their lamps: yes—but their fault was, there was no goodness in them, they had no oil in their lamps. O therefore, let us not content ourselves in being free from gross acts of sin—but let us launch forth further in holiness; let us cleanse ourselves from all pollution, perfecting holiness.

[4] "Deliver us from evil," may be from TEMPORAL evil. We pray that God will either *prevent* temporal evils—or *deliver* us out of them.

(1) We pray that God will **prevent** temporal evils; that he will be our screen, to stand between us and danger. "Save me from those who persecute me." Psalm 7:1. We may lawfully pray against the plots of the wicked, that they may prove abortive, that, though they have an evil design upon us, they may not have their desire upon us. "Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me." Psalm 141:9.

(2) We pray that God will **deliver** us out of temporal evils; that he will remove his judgments from us, whether famine, sword, or pestilence. "Remove your stroke away from me." Psalm 39:10. Yet may we pray to be delivered from temporal evils, only so far as God sees it good for us. We may pray to be delivered from the evil of sin absolutely—but we must pray to be delivered from temporal evils conditionally—so far as God sees fit for us, and may stand with his glory.

Use. In all the troubles which lie upon us, let us look up to God for ease and support. "Should not this people seek unto their God?" Isaiah 8:19. The Papists, then, are to blame who knock at the wrong door. When they are in any trouble, they pray to the *saints* to deliver them. When they are in danger of shipwreck, they pray to St. Nicholas. When they are in an illness, they pray to St. Petronilla! when they are in travail with childbirth, they pray to St. Margaret. How unlawful it is to invocate saints in prayer, I will prove from one Scripture: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Romans 10:14. We may pray to none but such as we believe in; but we ought not to believe in any saint, therefore we may not pray to him. The Papists have, in their Lady's Psalter, directed their prayers for deliverance to the Virgin Mary—"Deliver me, O Lady. O blessed Lady, in your hands our salvation is laid up." But "Abraham is ignorant of us." Isaiah 63:16. The saints and virgin Mary are ignorant of us.

To pray to saints is idolatry advanced to blasphemy. Our Savior has taught us in all our distresses, to pray to God for a cure. "Deliver us from evil." He alone knows what our troubles are, and can give us help from trouble. He alone who laid the burden on—can take it off. David went to God: "O bring me out of my distresses." Psalm 25:17. God with a word can heal. "He sent his word—and healed them." Psalm 107:20. He delivered the three Hebrew children out of the fiery furnace, Joseph out of prison, Daniel out of the lions' den; which proves him to be God, because none can deliver as he does. "There is no other God who can deliver after this sort." Dan 3:29. Let us, then, in all our straits and exigencies, look to God, and say, "Deliver us from evil."

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