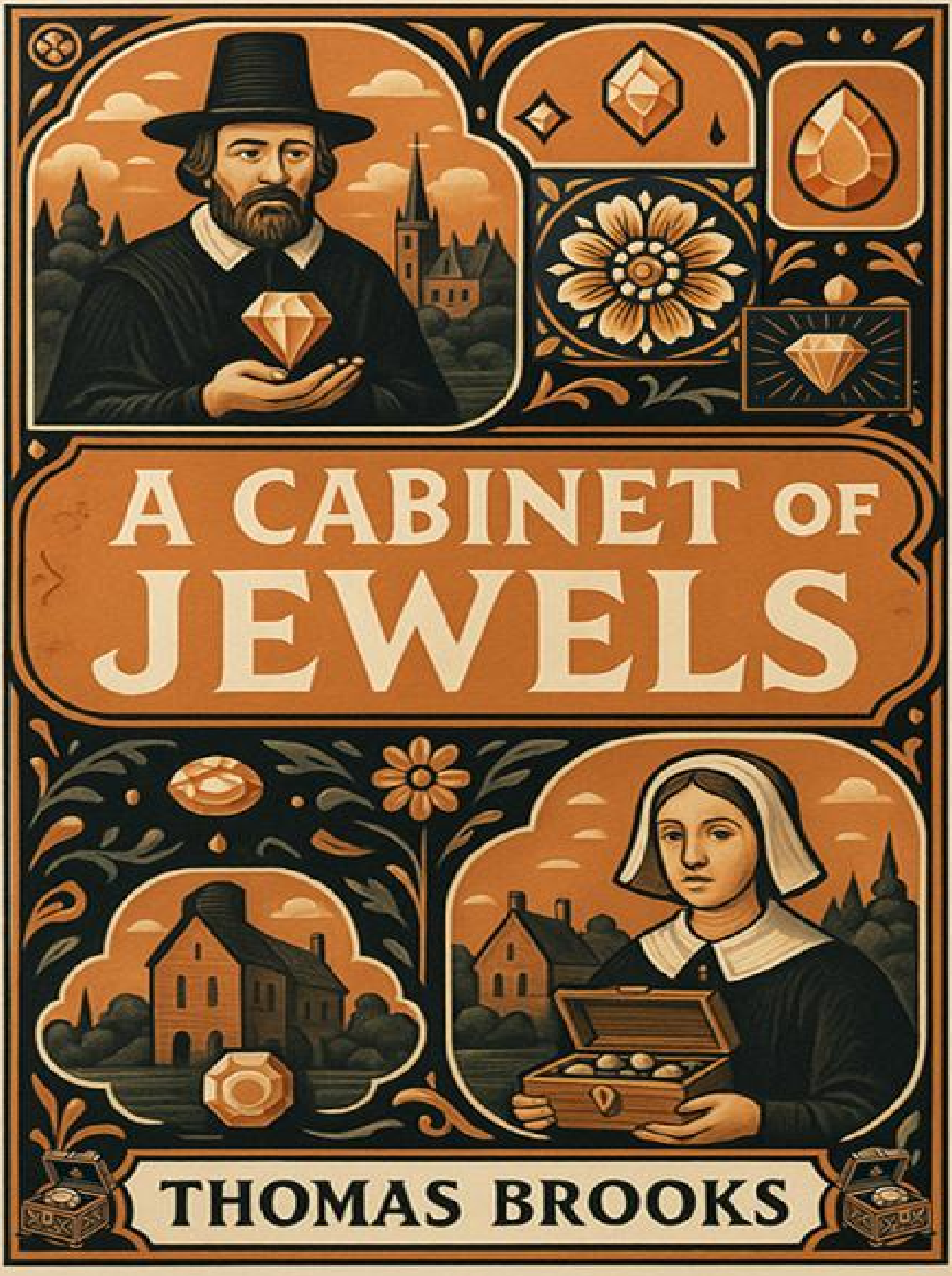
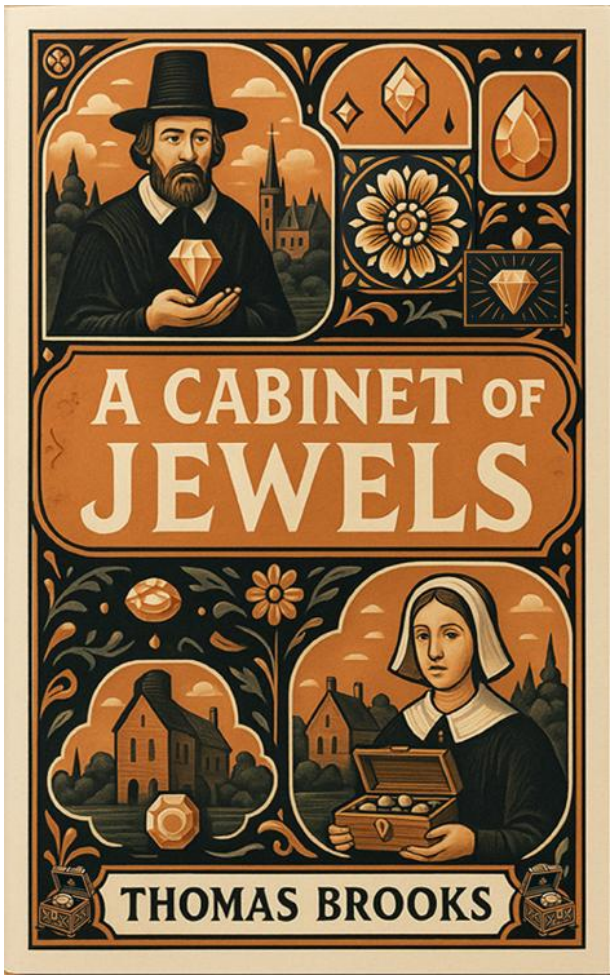

A CABINET OF
JEWELS
THOMAS BROOKS


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A Cabinet of Jewels

Being a Plain Discovery of What Men Are Worth for Eternity, and How 'Tis Like to Go with Them in Another World

Also containing:
A clear and large discovery of the several rounds in **Jacob's Ladder**,
which no hypocrite under heaven can climb.

With such **close, piercing, distinguishing, and discovering evidences**
as will reach and suit:

- Those Christians who are **highest in grace** and spiritual enjoyments, and
- The **weakest saints** in Christ's school.

Here Christians may see, as in a glass:

- What sober **use and improvement** they ought to make of their evidences for Heaven;
- And how, in the use of their gracious evidences, they ought to live:

1. Upon the **free grace of God**,
2. Upon the **mediatory righteousness of Christ**, and
3. Upon the **Covenant of Grace**;

With several other **points of grand importance**, &c.

By Thomas Brooks,
formerly preacher of the Gospel at St. Margaret's, New Fish Street

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"Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."
– 2 Peter 1:10

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"
(Ἀδόκιμοί – unapproved or rejected)
– 2 Corinthians 13:5

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EPISTLE DEDICATORY

To the Right Worshipful Sir John Frederick, Knight, and the Lady Mary Frederick, his pious consort. To Mr Nathaniel Herne, and Mrs Judith his virtuous wife;

All confluence of blessings, both for this life and for that which is to come, from the Father of mercies and God of all consolations.

HONOURED AND BELOVED IN OUR LORD JESUS,

Though I crowd your names together, yet I owe more than an epistle to each of your names; but the Lord having made you near and dear one to another more ways than one, I take the boldness to present

this treatise to you jointly. Here is nothing in this book that relates to government of church or state. The design of this treatise is to shew what men are worth for eternity, and how it is like to go with them in another world. There are none of the sons of men but bear about with them precious and immortal souls, that are more worth than ten thousand thousand worlds. If the soul be safe, all is safe; if that be well, all is well; if that be lost, all is lost. The first great work that men are to attend in this world is the eternal safety and security of their souls; the next great work is to know, to be assured, that it shall go well with their souls for ever. And these are the main things that are aimed at in this discourse. The soul is the better and more noble part of man. Upon the soul the image of God is most fairly stamped. The soul is first converted, and the soul shall be first and most glorified. The soul is that spiritual and immortal substance that is capable of union with God, and of communion with God, and of an eternal fruition of God. Plato, though a heathen, could say that he thought the soul to be made all of eternity, and that the putting the soul into the body was a sign of great wrath from God.

'Each living corpse must yield at last to death,

And every life must lose his vital breath.

The soul of man, that only lives on high,

And is an image of eternity.'

The Romans, when their emperors and great ones died, and their bodies were buried, they caused an eagle to mount on high, thereby to signify the soul's immortality and ascent. He gave good counsel who said, 'Play not the courtier with your soul; the courtier doth all things late, he rises late, and dines late, and sups late, and repents late.' A Scythian captain, having for a draught of water delivered up

his city, cried out, Quid perdidi, quid prodidi? What have I lost, what have I betrayed? So many at last will cry out, what have I lost, what have I betrayed? I have lost God, and Christ, and heaven, and have betrayed my precious and immortal soul into the hands of divine justice, and into the hands of Satan! Who these men are that will at last thus cry out, this treatise doth discover. I have read that there was a time when the Romans did wear jewels on their shoes. Most men in this day do worse, for they trample that matchless jewel of their souls under feet; and who these are this treatise does discover. One well observes, [Chrysostom] 'That whereas God hath given many other things double; two eyes to see with, two ears to hear with, two hands to work with, and two feet to walk with, to the intent that the failing of the one might be supplied by the other; but he hath given us but one soul, and if that be lost, hast thou, saith he, another soul to give in recompense for it?' Now, who those are whose souls are in a safe estate, and who those are whose souls are in danger of being lost for ever, this treatise does plainly and fully discover. To describe to the life who that man is that is truly happy in this world, and that shall be blest for ever in the other world, is the work of this ensuing treatise, Ps. 15, 144:15. The grace of the covenant in us is a sure evidence of God's entering into the covenant of grace with us. To be in a gracious state is true happiness, but to know ourselves to be in such a state is the top of our happiness in this world. A man may have grace, and yet, for a time, not know it, 1 John 5:13. The child lives in the womb, but does not know it. A man may be in a gracious state, and yet not see it; he may have a saving work of God upon his soul, and yet not discern it; he may have the root of the matter in him, and yet not be able to evidence it, Ps. 77:6, 88. Now to help such poor hearts to a right understanding of their spiritual condition, and that they may see and know what they are worth for another world, and so go to their graves in joy and peace, I have sent this treatise abroad into the world. Will you give me leave to say,

(1.) First, Some men of name in their day have laid down such things for evidences or characters of grace, which, being weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, will be found too light. But here a mantle of love may be of more use than a lamp; and therefore,

(2.) Secondly, Many, yea, very many there are, whose graces are very weak, and much buried under the earth and ashes of many fears, doubts, scruples, strong passions, prevailing corruptions, and diabolical suggestions, who would give as many worlds as there be men in the world, had they so many in their hands to give, to know that they have grace, and that their spiritual estate is good, and that they shall be happy for ever. Now this treatise is fitted up for the service of these poor hearts; for the weakest Christians may turn to many clear and well-bottomed evidences in this treatise, and throw the gauntlet to Satan, and bid him prove if he can, that ever any profane person or cunning hypocrite under heaven, had such evidences, or such fair certificates to shew for heaven, which he has to shew. The generality of Christians are weak; they are rather dwarfs than giants; they are rather bruised reeds than tall cedars; they are rather babes than men, lambs than sheep, &c. Now, for the service of their souls, I have been willing to send this treatise into the world; for this treatise may speak to them when I may not; yea, when I cannot; yea, which is more, when I am not. Famous Mr Dod would frequently say, he cared not where he was if he could but answer these two questions: 1, who am I? and 2, what do I hear? am I a child of God? and am I in my way? But,

(3.) Thirdly, Some there are who are so excessively and immoderately taken up with their signs, marks, and evidences of grace, and of their gracious state, &c., that Christ is too much neglected, and more rarely minded by them. Their hearts do not run out so freely, so fully, so strongly, so frequently, so delightfully

towards Christ as they should do, nor as they would do, if they were not too inordinately taken up with their marks and signs. Now, for the rectifying of these mistakes, and the cure of these spiritual maladies, this treatise is sent into the world. We may and ought to make a sober use of characters and evidences of our gracious estates, to support, comfort, and encourage us on our way to heaven, but still in subordination to Christ, and to the fresh and frequent exercises of faith upon the person, blood, and righteousness of Jesus. But oh how few Christians are there that are skilled in this work of works, this art of arts, this mystery of mysteries. But,

(4.) Fourthly, Some there are who in those days are given up to enthusiastical fancies, strange raptures, revelations, and to the sad delusions of their own hearts; crying down with all their might all discoveries of believers' spiritual estates by Scripture characters, marks, and signs of sanctifications, 2 Thes. 2:9–11, as carnal and low; and all this under fair pretences of exalting Christ, and maintaining the honour of his righteousness and free grace, and of denying ourselves and our own righteousness. Though sanctification be a branch of the covenant of grace as well as justification, yet there are a sort of men in the world that would not have Christians to rejoice in their sanctification, under a pretence of reflecting dishonour upon their free justification by Christ, Jer. 33:8, Ezek. 36:25–27. There are many who place all their religion in opinions, in brain-sick notions, in airy speculations, in quaint disputations, in immediate revelations, and in their warm zeal for this or that form of worship. Now, that these may be recovered, and healed, and prevented from doing further mischief in the world, I have at this time put to a helping hand. But,

(5.) Fifthly, No man can tell what is in the breasts, in the womb, of divine Providence. No man can tell what a day, a night, an hour, may

bring forth. Who can sum up the many possible deaths that are still lurking in his own bowels, or the innumerable hosts of external dangers which beleaguer him on every side, or how many invisible arrows fly about his ears continually; and how soon he may have his mortal wound given him by one or other of them, who can tell? Now, how sad would it be for a man to have a summons to appear before God in that other world before his heart and life are changed, and his evidences for heaven cleared up to him! The life of a man is but a shadow, a post, a span, a vapour, a flower, &c. Though there is but one way to come into the world, yet there are many thousand ways to be sent out of the world; and this should bespeak every Christian to have his evidences for heaven always ready and at hand, yea, in his hand as well as in his heart, and then he will find it an easy thing to die. The king of terrors will then be the king of desires to him, and he will then travel to glory under a spirit of joy and triumph. We carry about in our bodies the matter of a thousand deaths, and may die a thousand several ways several hours. As many senses, as many members, nay, as many pores as there are in the body, so many windows there are for death to enter in at. Death needs not spend all his arrows upon us; a worm, a gnat, a fly, a hair, a stone of a raisin, a kernel of a grape, the fall of a horse, the stumble of a foot, the prick of a pin, the paring of a nail, the cutting out of a corn; all these have been to others, and any of them may be to us, the means of our death within the space of a few days, nay, of a few hours. Does not it therefore highly concern us to have our evidences for heaven cleared, sealed, shining, and at hand? Naturalists tell us that if a man sees a cockatrice first, the cockatrice dieth; but if the cockatrice sees a man first, the man dies. Certainly if we so see death first as to prepare for it, as to get our evidences for heaven ready, we shall kill it; but if death sees us first, and arrests us first before we are prepared, and before our evidences for heaven are cleared, it will kill us everlastingly, it will kill us eternally. Time travaileth with God's

decrees, and in their season brings them forth; but little doth any man know what is in the womb of to-morrow till God hath signified his will by the event: 'Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth,' Prov. 27:1. That man that knows what himself intends to bring forth, does not know what the day will bring forth; the next day is not so near the former in time as it may be remote from it in the effects of it. Seneca could say, Nihil estmiserius dubitatione venientium, quo evadant, There is nothing more miserable than the doubtfulness of things to come, to what they will come. Providence in this life is the map of changes, the picture of mutability. Who can sum up the strange circumferences, and rare circuits, and labyrinths of providence? Providence is as a wheel in the midst of a wheel, whose motion, and work, and end in turning is not discerned by every common eye, Ezek. 1:16. Three dreadful judgments God hath lately visited us with, viz., sword, pestilence, and fire. But who repents; who smites upon his thigh; who finds out the plague of his own heart; who says, What have I done? who ceases from doing evil; who learns to do well; who turns to the Most High; who lays hold on everlasting strength; who makes peace with God; who throws himself into the gap? &c., Isa. 1:16, 17, Ps. 106:23. Are not multitudes grown much worse after judgments than they were before? Do not they bid higher defiance to heaven than ever? And, therefore, who can tell what further controversy God may have with such a people, especially considering that terrible scripture, Lev. 26 14th to the 34th verse, with scores of others that sound that way? Were our forefathers alive, how sadly would they blush to see such a horrid, degenerate posterity as is to be found in the midst of us! How is our forefathers' hospitality converted into riot and luxury, their frugality into pride and prodigality, their simplicity into subtilty, their sincerity into hypocrisy, their charity into cruelty, their chastity into chambering and wantonness, their sobriety into drunkenness, their plain-dealing into dissembling, and their works of compassion

into works of oppression, &c. And may we not fear that even for these things God may once more visit us? The nations are angry, and we are low in their eyes; our enemies are not asleep abroad, and are not we too secure at home? And what further confusions may be in the world, who can divine? I point at these things only to provoke all those into whose hands this treatise may fall to make sure work for another world, to make sure their evidences for heaven, and to keep their evidences for life and glory always sparkling and shining; and then I am sure the worst of calamities, the sorest of judgments, shall but translate them from earth to heaven, from a wilderness to a paradise, from misery to glory, and from mixed and mutable enjoyments to the pure and everlasting enjoyments of God, Christ, the angels, and 'the spirits of just men made perfect,' Heb. 12:22–24. But,

(6.) Sixthly and lastly, In this treatise, as in a glass, all sorts of profane persons, and all sorts of self-flatterers, and all sorts of hypocrites, may see [1.] that their present state and condition is not so safe, nor yet so happy, as they judge it to be. Again, in this treatise, as in a glass, all sorts of profane persons, and all sorts of self-flatterers, and all sorts of hypocrites, may see [2.] the happy and blessed state of the people of God, against whom their spirits rise and swell, &c. Again, in this treatise, as in a glass, all sorts of profane persons, and all sorts of self-flatterers, and all sorts of hypocrites, may see [3.] what those things are that they need, and that they ought to beg of God. Again, in this treatise, as in a glass, all sorts of profane persons, and all sorts of self-flatterers, and all sorts of hypocrites, may see [4.] what those things are without which they can neither be happy here nor hereafter. Now, were there no other reasons for my sending forth this treatise into the world, this alone might justify me.

But, honoured and beloved, before I close up this epistle, give me leave to say, that there are two sorts of men that myself and all the world are bound (1.) highly to prize, (2.) cordially to love, and (3.) greatly to honour above all other men in the world; and they are these: First, men of public spirits; secondly, men of charitable spirits, men of merciful spirits, men of tender and compassionate spirits.

(1.) First, Men of public spirits, myself and all others are bound, 1, highly to prize; 2, cordially to love; and, 3, greatly to honour above all other men in the world; and that,

1. First, because a public-spirited man is a common good, a common blessing. All in the family, all in the court, all in the city, all in the country, fare the better for that Christian's sake that is of a public spirit. All in Laban's family did fare the better for Jacob's sake; and all in the city of Zoar did fare the better for Lot's sake; and all Pharaoh's court and the whole country of Egypt did fare the better for Joseph's sake, Gen. 30:27, and 19:21–24, and 41, &c. Sodom was safe while Lot was in it. Elijah was a man of public spirit, and he was 'the chariots and horsemen of Israel,' 2 Kings 2:12. Moses was a man of public spirit, and he often diverted ruining judgments from falling upon Israel, Ps. 106:23. Phinehas was a man of public spirit, and he takes up his censer, and stands between the living and the dead, and the plague was stayed, Num. 16:46, 49. Men of public spirits are public mercies, public blessings. A man of a public spirit is, κοίνον ἀγαθόν, a public diffusive blessing in the place where he lives. Men of public spirits are the true Atlases both of church and state; they are the pillars on whom all do rest, the props on whom all do lean. Do but overturn these pillars and all will fall about your ears, as the house did about the Philistines when Samson shook it. Rack but these, and kingdoms and commonwealths shall be quickly racked themselves. When Metellus heard of the death of Scipio Africanus, a

man of a public spirit, he ran out into the market place and cried out, 'O citizens, come forth and consult what is to be done, for the walls of your city are fallen down.' But,

2. Secondly, Because public-spirited Christians are most like to Christ, and to the choicest and most excellent saints. Christ left his Father's bosom for a public good; he assumed our nature for a public good; he trode the wine-press of his Father's wrath for a public good; he died for a public good, and he rose for a public good; he ascended to heaven for a public good, and he continues in heaven for a public good. When he was in this world he went up and down doing good. He healed others, but was hurt himself; he fed and filled others, but was hungry himself. Christ was all for a public good: 'Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others;' 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,' Philip. 2:4, 5. Though self be a great stickler, yet he that will write after Christ's copy must neglect himself to serve others. That Christian acts most like Christ, who prefers the public interest before his own private interest. The stars have their brightness, not for themselves, but for the use of others; and the sun hath her shining light, but not for herself, but for others. In the natural body every member is diffusive; the eye conveys the light, the head spirits, the liver blood, &c. And why should it not be so in the politic body also? And as Christ, so Moses was a man of a public spirit, when God made a very fair proffer to him that he would make him a great nation if he would but stand neuter till he had revenged himself upon a rebellious people. But Moses had no mind to preferment upon those terms; he preferred the public good before his own honour, profit, and advancement, and therefore follows God close, and never gives over pleading for them till he had procured their pardon, and turned away the wrath of God from them, Exod. 32:10–12; so Num. 14:4, 10, 13, 14. So Joshua was a man of a public spirit: 'When they had made an

end of dividing the land for inheritance by their coasts, the children of Israel gave an inheritance to Joshua the son of Nun among them,' Joshua 19:49. Joshua might have served himself first, and he might have taken as large an inheritance as he had pleased, but he preferred the good of the people before his own. He who had divided the land to others, was himself contented with very mean preferment, for his inheritance was among the barren mountains, as some observe [Jerome]. So Jehoiada was a man of a public spirit. You read that they 'buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both towards God and towards his house,' 2 Chron. 24:16. Men of public spirits shall be honoured both living and dying. So Nehemiah was a man of a brave public spirit. He holds on twelve years together in public work upon his own cost and charge, Neh. 5:14, 15. So Esther was one of a public spirit, and therefore she takes her life in her hand, and goes in to the king with an If I perish, I perish, Esther 4:16. And so Mordecai was a man of public spirit. Mordecai the Jew was 'next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed,' Esther 10:3. Mordecai was more mindful and careful of his people's peace, prosperity, and welfare, than he was of his own concernments. And so David was a man of a public spirit, for 'after he had served his own generation, he fell asleep,' Acts 13:36. The Spirit of the Lord has put this upon record for David's honour and our imitation. David's soul did not live in a narrow bowling-alley. He was not a man of so poor, low, and narrow a spirit as to make himself the centre of his designs and actions. David was a man of a generous, noble spirit. The public good lay nearest his heart, and to serve his generation he was willing to spend and be spent. The public-spirited man, of all men, is most like to Christ, and to those worthies who were once glorious on earth, and are now triumphing in heaven. The apostle speaks of some who are lovers of themselves, 2 Tim. 3:2, and

who are 'seekers of themselves,' Philip. 2:21, and who are 'minders of themselves,' Philip. 3:19. 'They mind earthly things.' Of all these we may say, as God speaks of Israel, 'Israel is an empty vine; he brings forth fruit unto himself,' Hosea 10:1; yea, of all these we may say that light is not more contrary to darkness, heaven to hell, glory to shame, than these are contrary to Christ, and to those precious servants of his who are crowned and chronicled in the blessed Scriptures for their public spiritedness and public usefulness in the world. But,

3. Thirdly, Men of public spirits are rare men, excellent men; of all men they most resemble God, who does good to all, Mat. 5:45; there are none so excellent and truly honourable as these. All the instances cited to make good the second particular evidences this: to which I may add that of Daniel, who was a man of a public spirit, and of that excellent spirit, as that he carried the bell from all the presidents and princes of Darius's court, Dan. 6:3. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because 'an excellent spirit was in him,' and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. I might give you many other instances from the patriarchs and apostles, but what need that, when blind nature speaks so loud in the case. Men of public spirits have been very excellent and honourable in the very eyes of all the heathen. Take a few instances among the many hundreds that might be produced. M. Attilius Regulus was a man of that public spirit, that he valued neither state nor life to serve his country and preserve his own honour; he got very much for his country, but little for himself; seven acres of land being all that ever he had. He was a man highly honoured among the Romans.

Titus Vespasian was a man of a public spirit. He governed so sweetly, moderately, and prudently, that he was generally termed deliciœ humani generis, the delight of mankind. He was greatly honoured

whilst he lived, and when he died the people wept so bitterly for him as if they had been resolved to have wept out their eyes.

Curius Dentatus was a man of public spirit, and very victorious. When his country was settled, he was found at dinner feeding hard on a few parched pease, when the ambassadors were sent to tender him a great sum of gold, which he refused, saying, 'He had rather be at his pease, while they whom he ruled over had the gold, than he to have the gold and they the pease.' When some unworthy persons once accused him for keeping back somewhat from the public, he brought forth a wooden platter, and did swear, that it was all he had reserved to himself of the spoils. He was had in great honour and reputation among the people.

'That pilot dies nobly,' saith Seneca, 'who perisheth in the storm with the helm in his hand.'

Aristides was a man of a public spirit. After the overthrow of the Persians, when there was a mass of treasure, gold, silver, and rich apparel, he would not touch it, nor take so much as one farthing of it to himself. He was in high esteem among the people.

Tully in his book of Scipio's dream, brings in a dead father, now in heaven as he supposed, encouraging his son to do service for his country, wherein himself had given him a most noble and notable example, upon a very high consideration, viz., There is a most sure and certain place in heaven for every man that shall procure the weal of his country, either by freeing it from peril, or increasing the happiness of it any way. To hear a Gentile tell of heaven as of a thing certain; to hear him tell of certain places provided there for those that should do virtuously; to have the service of one's country pressed on his soul with so celestial an argument, what matter of wonder and admiration is it!

Another [Cicero], speaking of men of public spirits, saith, 'Such ennobled spirits, they are the dear offspring, the delight and care of God; a divine race it is; from the heavens they comedown to us, and to the heavens again, whenever they take their leaves of us, shall they triumphantly return.'

A Catiline, says the satirist, a trouble of mankind, grows as the weed, almost everywhere; but a Brutus, a worthy patriot, that bears the welfare of others, the true prosperity of his native land, upon his heart, and sets his eyes perpetually thereon for good; such an one is a rare jewel, worthy of all honour and embraces wherever he is found.

Men of public spirits, of all men, do most exalt the Lord, and honour the Lord; and therefore the Lord, first or last, will most exalt them and honour them, 1 Sam. 2:30. In all the ages of the world, and in all the nations of the world, men of most public spirits have been best beloved, and most highly honoured. A man of narrow spirit is like the hedge-hog, that never goes abroad but to gather what he can for himself, whoever suffers by it; but a man of a public spirit is like the pelican, that draws out her own blood for the good of others; and therefore the light of nature, as well as the law of grace, will lead men by the hand to honour such.

4. Fourthly, Men of public spirits do most and best answer to one of the noblest and highest ends of their creation. By the law of creation every man is bound to serve the public, to serve his generation. A narrow, a private-spirited man is a shame to his creation, because he walks so contrary to the great intendment of God in it. It is a base and unworthy spirit for a man to make himself the centre of all his actions. The very heathen man could say, 'That a man's country, and his friends, and others, challenge a great part of him.' That man sins against the very law of his being who is swallowed up in his own

private interests. Men of public spirits should not bear the sword of justice in vain, for by the law of creation they are bound so to handle it as to be 'a terror to evil-doers and a praise to them that do well,' Rom. 13:3, 4. It is cruelty to the good to spare the bad; it is wrong to the sheep to let the wolves alone; it is the death of the lambs to spare the lions. 'If you will pity Cataline,' says one, 'pity Rome much more;' let the whole have a share in your pity rather than a part. Pereat unus magis quam unitas, Better have one injurious person sit mourning than a whole nation languishing, &c. Men of public spirits should be for the ease of all, and the peace of all, and the comfort of all, and the encouragement of all, and the safety of all. But this age is full of drones and ciphers, and of spiritless, lifeless men, who look at nothing, who design nothing, who aim at nothing, and who endeavour nothing, but how to raise themselves, and greaten themselves, and enrich themselves, and build up themselves, though it be upon other's ruins. How many are there who are so swallowed up in their own interests and private concernments, that Gallio-like, Acts 18:17, they care not whether the public sink or swim. These put me in mind of Jotham's parable, Judg. 9:8–11, &c. The trees went forth to anoint a king over them. They go to the olive, to the fig tree, and to the vine. But shall I leave my fatness? saith the olive; shall I leave my sweetness? saith the fig-tree; and shall I leave my wine? saith the vine, and go up and down for other trees? This is the very temper, spirit, and carriage of many in our day. If you go to them and desire them to lay out themselves for the public good, What, say some, shall we leave our ease, our pleasure, our profits? and, say others, shall we run this and that hazard? shall we lose such and such friends, and create to ourselves such and such enemies, to serve other men, to save other men, to advantage other men? We cannot do it, we will never do it. Learned Tully was a zealous patriot and lover of his country; he wished two wishes, though he never saw either of them effected. One was, that he 'might see Rome settled in

its just liberties;' and the other was, that he 'might see every man's estate proportionable to his affection and love to the public.' Doubtless if Tully's wish might take place in our times, the purses of many would be more empty, and the public coffers would be more full. But,

5. Fifthly, Of all men on earth, there are none that have such a stock of prayers going for them as men of public spirits. Men of public spirits are not only highly prized, and cordially loved, and greatly honoured, but they are also most upon the hearts of all sober and serious Christians, when they are in the mount with God. The lives of such are most desirable, and the deaths of such will be most lamented, who make it their business to serve their generation. Men of public spirits shall never die, as Jehoram did, undesired and unlamented, 2 Chron. 21:20. Men of public spirits lie most open to snares, temptations, and oppositions, &c. This all sober Christians well understand, and therefore they cannot but pray hard for such. The names, the lives, the liberties, the estates, and all the concernments of men of public spirits, always lie nearest their hearts who lie nearest to the heart of Christ. Men of the greatest name, and of the greatest renown, and that have had the greatest stock of prayers going for them all the world over, have been men of public spirits. But,

6. Sixthly and lastly, When Christians of public spirits come to die, their public spiritedness and general usefulness will be no small comfort and cordial to them. Nehemiah was a man of a public spirit, and accordingly he pleads it with God. 'Think upon me, oh my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people,' Neh. 5:19. [See chap. 13:22.] This was that which sweetened death to Hezekiah, 'I beseech thee, O Lord, to remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is

good in thy sight,' 2 Kings 20:3. And when David had 'served his generation, he fell asleep,' Acts 13:36. Sleep is not more welcome and sweet to a labouring man than death is to him who has made it his business, his work, sincerely and faithfully to serve his generation. Such magistrates, ministers, and Christians who have made it their business, according to their different measures, faithfully to serve their generation, have found the king of terrors to be but the king of desires to them, 2 Tim. 4:7–9; when death to men of narrow, selfish spirits, hath been like the handwriting upon the wall, very terrible, Dan. 5:5, 6. Many score instances might be produced out of history to evidence this. Take one for all. Henry Beaufort, that rich and wretched cardinal, bishop of Winchester, and chancellor of England, —a man swallowed up in self-interest,—in the reign of Henry the Sixth, when he perceived that he must die, and that there was no remedy, oh, how terrible was death to him! and oh, how did he murmur and fret, and vex at death, that his riches could not reprieve him till a further time! For, saith he, 'wherefore should I die, being so rich? if the whole realm would save my life, I am able either by policy to get it, or by riches to buy it.' 'Fie upon death,' saith he, 'will not death be hired? will money do nothing?' I might instance in men of a higher rank, but then I should exceed the bounds of an epistle.

(2.) The second sort of men, that myself and all others are bound, (1.) highly to prize, (2.) cordially to love, and (3.) greatly to honour, are men of charitable spirits, men of merciful spirits, men of tender and compassionate spirits. The Hebrew word for godly (חסד) signifies merciful, to note that the godly man is the merciful man, and the merciful man is the godly man. Loving-kindness is an ingredient unto godliness. The godly man is frequently called chasid, gracious or merciful. It notes one that hath obtained mercy, goodness, grace, piety, and benignity from the Lord, and that is pious, kind, gracious, and merciful to others. Though charity, bounty, is the most

compendious way to plenty, and giving to getting, and scattering to increasing, and layings out to layings up:—Prov. 11:24, 'There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.' Ver. 25, 'The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself',—yet how few in our days do honour the Lord with their substance! How few look at this as a duty, to consecrate any part of their gain unto the Lord, or of their substance to the Lord of the whole earth! Prov. 3:9, Micah 4:13. Most men now carry it as if God himself had lost his propriety, and as if there were no rent-penny due to his poor. But yet some there are who have liberal hearts and open hands; some there are who do open their hands wide to the poor and needy, Deut. 15:11. Now, here give me leave to say that these, [1.] Discharge their consciences in the duty of charity, Mat. 25:25, seq., Prov. 31:8, 9. [2.] These rightly improve the talents of mercy, with which they are intrusted, Job 29:13, 2 Tim. 1:16. [3.] These treasure up a stock of prayers, both for themselves and theirs; the blessing and the prayers of them that were ready to perish will come upon them and theirs. [4.] These evidence the liveliness of their faith: James 2:17, 'Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.' Ver. 18, 'Yea, a man may say thou hast faith, and I have works; shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.' Ver. 26, 'For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.' [5.] These take the surest way, the readiest course, to assure their own souls of God's eternal favours and mercies to them: 1 Tim. 6:17, 18, 'Charge them that be rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.' Ver. 19, 'Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.' Charitable Christians are as wise merchants, happy usurers, parting with that which they cannot keep, that they may gain that which they cannot lose. [6.] These take surest way to draw down more outward mercies upon themselves.4 The fountain is not

diminished, but augmented by giving water to the thirsty. The widow's oil did increase by running. We do not lose, but increase our mercies by imparting of them for God's honour, and the comfort and benefit of others. 'Give,' saith Christ, 'and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom,' Luke 6:38. The Jews wore large and loose garments, so that they could bear away much in their bosoms. Hence this expression, 'into your bosom.' The meaning is, that the Lord will largely reward the beneficence of his people; yea, that he will so reward them that they shall perceive that they are rewarded. 'Honour the Lord with thy substance, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine,' Prov. 3:9, 10. God will certainly bless their substance who honour him with their substance. The Jews at this day, though they are not in their own country, and though they have not a Levitical priesthood, yet those who will be reputed religious amongst them, do distribute the tenth of their increase to the poor, being persuaded that God doth bless their increase the more; for they have among them a very elegant proverb to that purpose, decima ut dives fias, Pay thy tithes that thou mayest be rich. The poor man's hand is Christ's treasury, and he shall not lose his reward that casts his mites into that treasury.2 It it fabled of Midas, that whatever he touched he turned it into gold. But this is most sure, that whatever the hand of charity toucheth, it turneth it into gold,—be it but a cup of cold water,—nay, into heaven itself: Mat. 10:42, 'And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.' Cold water, having not fuel to heat it, cold water which cost not the charge of fire to warm it. A sea of pleasures, a heaven of blessings attends men of charitable minds, though their charity can extend no further than to a cup of cold water; for God measures men's deeds by their minds, and not their minds by their deeds. The

Kenites in Saul's time, that were born many ages after Jethro's death, received life from his dust, and favour from his hospitality; nay, the very Egyptians, for harbouring and at first dealing kindly with the Israelites, though without any respect to their righteousness, were preserved by Joseph in that sore famine, and kindly dealt with ever after by God's special command. I have read a story of one Evagrius, a rich man, who lying upon his deathbed, and being importuned by Synesius, a pious bishop, to give something to charitable uses, he yielded at last to give three hundred pounds, but first took bond of the bishop that it should be repaid in another world; but before he had been one day dead, he is said to have appeared to the bishop, delivering in the bond cancelled, as thereby acknowledging that what was promised was made good. Whether the relation be fabulous or not, I shall not now stand to determine; but this is certain, that all acts of charity shall be certainly and signally rewarded. Several writers observe that the ground is most barren nearest the golden mines; and experience tell us that many who are enriched with fair estates, are most barren in good works; but this will be bitterness in the end. He that shall consult two scriptures, among many others, will conclude that he that hath a withered hand has no honest heart, 2 Chron. 31:10, 1 John 3:17. The wealth that such men have is but as Aristotle calls it, fœlix amentia, a happy madness, because they are so taken up with their wealth, that they neither know what they are, nor what they do. Josephus, writing of the waters of Egypt, saith, that 'they were blood in the hands of an Egyptian, but water in the hand of an Israelite.' Wealth in the hand of a worldling is like blood in the hand, which is good for nothing; but wealth in the hand of a charitable Christian is like water in the hand, which may be of use both to a man's self and others. By what has been said, there is nothing more evident than this, viz., that men of public spirits, and men of charitable spirits, of all men on earth are, (1.) to be most

highly prized; (2.) most cordially loved; and (3.) most greatly honoured, &c.

Gentlemen, Those that shall read what I have writ in this epistle, concerning public spiritedness and charitableness, and know you well, they know how to make the application without any further direction from me. Sir John, I must crave leave to say, that it is and will be your honour and comfort, both in life and death, and in the day of your account, that in all the great places, offices, and employments unto which divine providence has called you for divers years together, you have laid out your time, your strength, your estate, for the public good. When others have been serving themselves upon the public, you have been a-serving of the public. Sir, it is your great mercy and happiness that you can stand forth and say, as once Samuel did, 'Behold, here I am, witness against me, whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes there with?' 1 Sam. 12:3. Your prudence and moderation before your mayoralty, and in it, when you had many a narrow bridge to go over, and after it, to this day, will never be forgotten by all sober citizens. Sir, the French history tells us, that when an old courtier would needs depart from the court, and retire himself to a private life, the king desired him to leave his advice in some general rules, about the government of his kingdom. Upon this motion of the king, the old courtier took a sheet of white paper, and writ upon the top of the leaf, Moderation, and in the middle of the leaf, Moderation, and at the bottom of the leaf, Moderation, intimating to the king, that the only way to keep his kingdom in peace and prosperity, was to manage his government throughout with a spirit of moderation. When Vespasian asked Apollonius what was the cause of Nero's ruin, he answered, that Nero could tune the harp well, but in government he did always wind up

the strings too high, or let them down too low. Both of your staying in London in the time of the last great plague, when death peeped in at every window, and when most magistrates, ministers, and people were fled from their habitations,—the terror of the Lord and of his judgments being very great in that day, upon all sorts and ranks of men,—and that chiefly, mainly, if not only, upon the account of public service, and that nothing might be wanting on your side to preserve poor creatures from perishing. The old Romans, for lesser services than you did in these dismal days, have set up many a statue of brass; but the Lord is faithful, and will not forget to reward your work, your great work, your hazardous work, and that matchless love and bowels that you shewed to very many that were impoverished for want of trade, and to very many that lay in a sick, languishing, and dying condition. How free, how full, how seasonable, how suitable, how impartial, how constant, and well regulated your charity then was, and since hath been, is very well known to God above, and to some faithful friends still alive; but all will out in the great day, Mat. 25:35, seq. I know you don't love that your left hand should know what your right hand doth, Mat. 6:3, and therefore I shall not provoke you by sounding a trumpet. The angels have their hands under their wings; they do much good, and yet make no noise, Ezek. 1:8, and 10:8. There are some in the world that are like to them. The violet grows low, and covers itself with its own leaves, and yet of all flowers yields the most fragrant smell to others. There are some charitable Christians that resemble this sweet flower.

Gentlemen and ladies, your respects and undeserved favours, that have been many ways manifested unto me, hath emboldened me to dedicate and present to you this treatise, as a real testimony of my unfeigned love, service, gratitude, and desires to promote the internal and eternal welfare of all your precious and immortal souls. And wherein could I, or any body else, be more truly serviceable to

you than in endeavouring to promote your assurance of eternal salvation, which is the grand design and project of this book. 'Now, the God of all grace fill all your hearts with all the fruits of righteousness and holiness, unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, and of faith and hope in this life,' 1 Peter 5:10; and at last crown you all, and all yours, with ineffable glory in the life to come,' Gal. 5:22, 23, Heb. 10:22, 23. To the everlasting arms of his protection, and to the perpetual influences of his grace and mercy in Christ, he commends you all, who is to you all,

Your much obliged and affectionate friend and soul's servant in our dear Lord Jesus,

THO. BROOKS

CHAPTER I

Eighteen special Maxims for the clearing up of a man's interest in Christ

Containing eighteen special Maxims, Considerations, Rules, and Directions that are seriously to be minded and observed, in order to the clearing up of a man's interest in Christ: the saving work of God upon his own soul; and his title to all the glory of another world.

The first maxim or consideration.

I. First, Some have made the witness of the Spirit to be the only mark or evidence of our interest in Christ, and deny all signs from the fruit of the Spirit; but this is to deny the fruit growing upon the tree to be a sign that the tree is alive, whereas our Saviour expressly tells us, that 'the tree is known by his fruit,' Mat. 12:33. Certainly it is one thing to judge by our graces, and another thing to rest on our graces, or to put trust in our graces, or to make a Saviour of our graces. There is a great deal of difference between declaring and deserving. Doubtless, Christians may look to their graces as evidences of their interest in Christ, justification and salvation, though not as causes of their interest in Christ, justification and salvation. O sirs! we must always carefully distinguish betwixt the root and ground of our comfort, and between the testimonies or evidences of our interest in the root of our comfort. Now it must be readily granted that Jesus Christ is the only root and ground of a Christian's comfort and triumph; and, therefore, saith Paul, 'God forbid that I should rejoice in anything, but in the cross of Christ,' Gal. 6:14; and so in that, 2 Cor. 2:14, 'Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ.' So that, if at any time we behold this or that

saving grace, or this or that part of holiness shining in our hearts or lives, we take comfort in it, not as the cause, or root, or ground of our comfort or triumph, but as in a testimony or evidence, because it doth manifest our interest in him, who is our comfort, our peace, our joy, our salvation, our 'all in all,' Luke 2:25; Col. 3:11. Look, as the, rainbow is not a cause why God will not drown the world, but a sign that God will not drown the world; and as it is a sign that God will not drown the world, we may and ought to rejoice in it, and to take comfort from it, Gen. 9:13, 14, 16. So here, &c. It is agreed on all hands, that sanctification is a precious benefit of the covenant of grace, as well as justification; and what crime can it then be to evidence one benefit of the covenant of grace, by another benefit of the same covenant? Jer. 33:8, 9; Ezek. 36:25, 26; Heb. 8:10, 12, &c. That he that is justified, is also sanctified, and that he that is sanctified is also justified, is so clear, so bright, so sparkling, and so full a truth contained in the covenant of grace, that no man or devil can deny. Now what evil or error can it be for a man to assert, that he that is certainly sanctified, is certainly justified—it being the very language of the covenant of grace—and that therefore he that knows himself to be sanctified, may also know thereby that he is justified. Certainly, those persons that shall deny sanctification to be a most sure, sweet, and comfortable evidence of man's justification, they must not only blot out, and abolish the epistles of James and John, but must also raze out and abolish all those evangelical promises of grace and mercy, of happiness and blessedness, that are made to such persons as are invested, enriched, and bespangled with the several graces of the Holy Spirit. This might be made evident by many hundred scriptures, but take that one for all, Mat. 5 where our Saviour himself, who was the most evangelical preacher that ever was in the world, makes eight or nine promises of mercy and blessedness to those very persons that had the graces of the Spirit inherent in them, as poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness,

hungering and thirsting after righteousness, &c. O sirs! why should we be so frequently and earnestly called upon to try and examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith or no, 2 Cor. 13:5, if we were not to come to the knowledge of our faith, in a discursive way, arguing from the effect to the cause? Have not the saints of old come to assurance, and the knowledge of the goodness of their estates, this way? Ponder seriously on that: 2 Cor. 1:12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world.' Mark, their joy was founded on the testimony of their conscience, and their conscience gave in this testimony from the sincerity of their conversation in this world. So Paul in that, 2 Tim. 4:7, 8, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.' How plainly, how fully, how with open mouth, as I may say, does he conclude his right to the crown of righteousness,—so called, partly because it is purchased by the righteousness of Christ, and partly because he is righteous that hath promised it, and partly because it is a just and righteous thing with God to crown them with glory at last, who have for the gospel sake, and his glory sake, been crowned with shame and reproach in this world, and partly, if not mainly, because it is a crown that can only be had or obtained in a way of righteousness and holiness,—from his graces and gracious actings in this world:'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith;' yea, it is further observable, that in the blessed Scripture, we are strongly pressed to do good works, that by them we may make our calling, election, and salvation sure: 2 Peter 1:10, 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, by good works.' So say all the Latin copies, and so say some Greek copies, though not those that our English translators have been pleased to follow, and that is the reason why those words, 'by good works,' are not in our English Bibles; but he that shall seriously

weigh the scope of the apostle in this place, he must of necessity grant, that good works are to be understood, though they are not expressed in the text; and that of the apostle in 1 Tim. 6:16–18, seems plainly and strongly to sound the same way.

The second maxim or consideration.

II. Secondly, consider, that true, sound, solid marks, signs, and evidences, are the best way to prevent delusions. There is no such deceit in sound and solid evidences, as there is in flashy joys, and in high and strange raptures, by which many glistering professors have been sadly deceived and deluded. Young Samuel, being not acquainted with any extraordinary manifestations of the presence and power of God, took the voice of God from heaven to be the voice of old Eli, 1 Sam. 3:5. Ah! how many have there been in our days, that have taken the irregular motions of their own hearts, and the violent workings of their own distempered fancies, and imaginations, and Satanical delusions, to be the visions of God, celestial raptures, divine breathings, and the powerful impulses of the Spirit of God; and so have been stirred up to speak, write, and act such things that have been, not only contrary to the holy word of God, but also contrary to the very laws of nature and nations. Satan, by transforming of himself into an angel of light, hath seduced and ruined many professors, against whom, as an angel of darkness, he could never prevail, 2 Cor. 11:14. Gerson tells a remarkable story of Satan's appearing to a holy man, in a most glorious and beautiful manner, professing himself to be Christ; and because he, for his exemplary holiness was worthy to be honoured above others, therefore he appeared unto him; but the good old man readily answered him, that he desired not to see his Saviour in this wilderness; it should suffice him to see him hereafter in heaven; and withal added this pithy prayer, 'Oh let thy sight be my reward, Lord,

in another life, and not in this;' and so he became victorious over Satan, though he had transformed himself into a glorious angel of light. But such a victorious crown has not been set upon every one's head to whom Satan hath appeared as angel of glory.3 Certainly, they that stand so much, so mightily, for an immediate testimony, seem to open such a gap to enthusiasm, as will not be easily shut; yea, how will they be ever able to secure to purpose, poor souls from sad delusions? for how easy a thing it is for Satan,—who is the father of lies, John 8:44; who is an old deceiver, Gen. 3:12; 1 Tim. 2:14; who is the grand deceiver, Rev. 12:9; 13:14; 19:20; 20:10; who has his devices, 2 Cor. 2:11; his wiles, Ephes. 6:11; his snares, 1 Tim. 3:7; his depths, Rev. 2:24,—to find various artifices to counterfeit this immediate testimony, and bear witness in the Spirit's stead; so that, when poor souls think that they have the spirit of grace and truth to assure them that all is well, and shall be for ever well with them, they have none but 'the father of lies' to deceive them, they have none but the devil in Samuel's mantle, to put a soul-murdering cheat upon them. I am not fond of advising any poor souls to lay the stress of their hopes in heaven and salvation merely upon immediate impressions, lest they should subject themselves to infinite delusions. O sirs! the way of immediate revelation is more fleeting and inconstant. Such actings of the Spirit are like those outward motions that came upon Samson, Judges 13:25. The Spirit came upon him at times. And so upon every withdrawment, new doubts and scruples arise; but the trial of a man's estate by grace is more constant and durable, saving grace being a continual pledge of God's love to us. Flashes of joy and comfort are only sweet and delightsome whilst they are felt, but grace is that immortal seed that abideth for ever, 1 John 3:9. But,

The third maxim or consideration.

III. Thirdly, consider, In propounding of evidences for men to try their spiritual and eternal estates by, there are two special rules for ever to be minded and remembered; and the first is this, That he that propounds evidences of grace, which are only proper to eminent Christians, as belonging to all true Christians, he will certainly grieve and sad those precious lambs of Christ that He would not have grieved and sadded. Look, as there is a strong faith and a weak faith, so there are evidences that are proper to a strong faith, and evidences that are proper to a weak faith. Now, he that cannot find in himself the evidences of a strong faith, he must not conclude that he has no faith; for he may have in him the evidences of a weak faith when he has not the evidences of a strong faith in him. In Christ's school, house, church, there are several sorts and ranks of Christians, as babes, children, young men, and old men; and accordingly ministers, in their preaching and writing, should sort their evidences that so babes and children may not be found bleeding, grieving, and weeping, when they should be found joying and rejoicing.

Secondly, No man must make such characters, marks, or evidences of a child of God which may be found in an hypocrite, a formalist, &c. For this were to lay a stumbling-block before the blind, this were to delude poor souls, and to make them glad whom God would not have made glad; yea, this is the highway, the ready way, to make them miserable in both worlds, Ezek. 13:22. The rule or evidence that every Christian is to measure himself by must be neither too long nor too short, but adequate to the state of a Christian; that is, it must not be so long, on the one hand, as that all Christians cannot reach it, nor yet so short, on the other hand, as that it will not reach a true Christian; but the rule or evidence must be such as will suit and fit every sincere believer, and none else. Some Christians are apt to judge of themselves, and to try themselves, by such rules or evidences as are competent only to those that are strong men in

Christ, and that are grown to a high pitch of grace, of holiness, of communion with God, of spiritual enjoyments and heavenly attainments, and sweet and blessed ravishments of soul; and by this means they come to conclude against the works of the blessed Spirit in them, and to perplex and disquiet their own souls with needless fears, doubts, and jealousies. Others, on the other hand, are apt to judge of themselves, and to try themselves, by such things, rules, or evidences that are too short, and will certainly leave them short of heaven; as a fair, civil deportment among all sorts and ranks of men; a good nature, paying every man their due; charity to the poor; a good name or fame among men, yea, happily among good men; outward exercises of religion, as hearing, praying, reading, fasting; or that they are good negative Christians, that is to say, that they are no drunkards, swearers, liars, adulterers, extortioners, oppressors, Sabbath-breakers, persecutors, &c., Mat. 23:4, seq., Luke 18:9–12, Isa. 1:2–5. Thus far Paul attained before his conversion, but if he had gone no further he had been a lost man for ever, Philip. 3:4–6, Gal. 6:3, Isa. 33:14; and by this means they flatter themselves into misery, and are still a-dreaming of going to heaven till they drop into hell, and awake with everlasting flames about their ears. And oh that all that preach or print, read or write, would seriously lay this to heart! Some, in describing the state of a Christian, shew rather what of right it should be than what indeed it is; they shew what Christians ought to be rather than what they find themselves to be, and so they become a double-edged sword to many Christians. But,

The fourth maxim or consideration.

IV. Fourthly, consider, Where there is any one grace in truth, there is every grace in truth, though every grace cannot be seen. Look, as a man may certainly know a wicked man by his living under the reign and dominion of any one sin, though he does not live under the

power of other sins, because there is not any one sin mortified in that man that hath any one sin reigning in him, and that does not set himself in good earnest against it as his greatest enemy; so when a Christian can but find any one grace in him, as love to the saints for grace sake, for godliness sake, he may safely conclude that there is in him all other graces. Where there is but one link of this golden chain, there are all the links of this golden chain: John 13:35, 'By this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.' He doth not say if ye work miracles, if ye raise the dead, if ye give eyes to the blind, or ears to the deaf, or tongues to the dumb, or feet to the lame, but 'if ye love one another.' There have been many, yea, very many, precious Christians who have lived and died with a great deal of comfort and peace from the application of that text to their own souls: 1 John 3:14, 'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.' Sincere love to the brethren is a most evident sign of a Christian's being already passed or translated from death to life. Observe, the apostle doth not say, we think we have passed from death to life, but we know we have passed from death to life; nor he does not say, we conjecture we have passed from death to life, but we know we have passed from death to life; nor he does not say, we hope we are passed from death to life, but we are assured that we are passed from death to life, that is, from a state of nature into a state of grace, 'because we love the brethren.' For ever remember this, when all other evidences have failed many gracious Christians, and all other texts of Scripture have afforded them no comfort, here they have anchored, here they have found rest for their distressed souls; and upon this one single plank, this one evidence, they have swam safely and comfortably unto the haven of eternal happiness. Every real Christian hath in some measure every sanctifying grace in him. As a child so soon as it is born is a perfect man for integrity of parts and entireness of limbs, though not for bigness and bulk of body, so every regenerate person, at the very first

hour of his conversion, he is in part renewed in all parts; all the habits of grace are infused into the soul by the Spirit at once. At first conversion the soul is bespangled with every grace, though every grace is not then grown up to its full proportion or perfection; so that where there is one grace in truth, there is every grace in truth. That soul that can truly and seriously conclude that he has any one grace in him, that soul ought to conclude that there is every grace in him. Such as diligently search the Scripture shall find that true blessedness, happiness, and salvation is attributed to several signs: sometimes to the fear of God, sometimes to faith, sometimes to repentance, sometimes to love, sometimes to meekness, sometimes to humility, sometimes to patience, sometimes to poverty of spirit, sometimes to holy mourning, sometimes to hungering and thirsting after righteousness; so that if a godly man can find any one of these in himself, he may safely and groundedly conclude of his salvation and justification, though he cannot see all those signs in him.2 There is no saint but may perceive one sign in him, when he cannot another. Now, he that can groundedly be persuaded of any one sign of grace, he may safely conclude he hath all the rest, though for the present he can neither see them nor feel them in himself. But,

The fifth maxim or consideration.

V. Fifthly, consider, That the promises of God are a Christian's magna charta, his chiefest evidences for heaven. Divine promises are God's deed of gift; they are the only assurance which the saints have to shew for their right and title to Christ, to his blood, and to all the happiness and blessedness that comes by him. Look, as Judah by pleading and bringing forth the signet, the bracelets, and the staff, saved her life, Gen. 38:18–27; so we by believing, pleading, and bringing forth the promises, must save our own souls. The promises are not only the food of faith, but also the very life and soul of faith;

they are a mine of rich treasures, a garden full of the choicest and sweetest flowers; in them are wrapt up all celestial contentments and delights. And this is most certain, that all a Christian's conclusions of interest in any of those choice and precious privileges which flow from the blood of Jesus Christ ought to be bottomed, grounded, and founded upon the rich and free promises of grace and mercy.

Quest. But how may a person come to know whether he has a real and saving interest in the promises, or no? Now, to this great question, I shall give these nine following answers:

[1.] First, A holy reliance, a holy resting, a holy staying of thy soul upon the promises, makes the promises thine own; yea, it makes all the good, and all the sweet, and all the happiness and blessedness that is wrapped up in the promises thine. Even as thy staying, relying, and resting on Christ makes Christ thine, and all that is in him, and that comes by him, thine, so thy staying and resting upon the promises makes them thine.

[2.] Secondly, If thy heart ordinarily, habitually, lies under the word of command, then the word of promise does assuredly belong to thy soul, Ps. 119:6; Acts 13:22; Luke 1:5, 6. There is no soul under heaven that commonly lies under the commanding power of the word, but that soul that has an interest in the word of promise. Men that have no interest in the word of promise, commonly live in the neglect of the word of command. If the word of command commonly carries thy soul, then the word of promise, without all peradventure, belongs to thy soul. Many deal with the commands of God as the heathens dealt with the commands of their gods; when their gods called for a man, they offered a candle; or as Hercules offered up a painted man, instead of a living man. Such as deal thus with the commands of God, they have no interest in the promises of God. Flesh and blood looks

upon the commands of God as impossible to be obeyed, like the unbelieving spies; 'Oh we cannot conquer the land;' but faith and love, like Caleb and Joshua, conclude the land may be conquered, the commands may be evangelically obeyed; and accordingly they readily undertake it. Now, to such a frame of heart the promises are entailed. But,

[3.] Thirdly, If in the face of all objections, discouragements, and difficulties, thy soul be kept up in a waiting frame, for the fulfilling of the promises, as Abraham's was, Rom. 4, then certainly the promises belong to thee. There are some promises that relate to the subduing of sin, as that, Jer. 33:8; Ezek. 36:25–27; Micah 7:19; Ps. 65:3. And there are other precious promises that relate to a growth in grace, as that, Malachi 4:2; Job 17:9; Ps. 92:12–14; Prov. 4:18; Hosea 14:5–7. Now, if thy heart be kept up in a waiting frame for the accomplishment of these promises, then they do certainly belong to thee. The same I may say of all other promises; the waiting soul shall be sure to speed, Ps. 40:1–3; Isa. 40:29–31, 30:18; Heb. 6:12, &c. God never did, nor never will, frustrate the expectations of the patient waiter, &c. But,

[4] Fourthly, He that hath those divine qualities or supernatural graces in him, to which the promises are made, as faith, repentance, love, fear, hope, uprightness, patience, a waiting frame, &c., he has an undoubted interest in the promises. He may lay his hand upon any promise, and say, this promise is mine; and all the blessings, the benefits, the heavenly treasure that is laid up in it, is mine. But,

[5.] Fifthly, He that lives upon the promises as his daily food, he has an unquestionable interest in the promises. Wicked men may make use of promises as of physic, in some cases, as when they are under anguish of spirit, or gripes of conscience, or in fear of hell; or else

when they are under some outward wants or straits, &c., but he that lives upon them as his daily food, he has a most assured interest in them. Our outward man lives not upon kickshaws, though now and then we may taste of them, but we live upon wholesome food; so here, no man lives upon the blessed promises as his appointed food, but he that has a real interest in the promises. Look, as there is a nourishment proper to every animal,—spiders feed on flies, moles on worms, the horse on grass, the lion on flesh, &c.,—so there is food, nourishment, that is proper for men's souls, viz., the precious promises and Christ's 'flesh,' which is meat indeed, and his blood, which is drink indeed, John 6:53, seq.; and he that daily feeds on this food will be happy for ever. But,

[6.] Sixthly, If you are united and married to Christ by faith, then you have a real, a saving interest in the promises: Gal. 3:29, 'And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' The promise is the jointure, and there is no way under heaven to enjoy the jointure but by matching with the person of Christ, Col. 1:28; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 21:7. And faith is the grace of graces, by which the soul gives both its assent and consent to take the Lord Jesus Christ, as he is tendered and offered in the gospel, and is therefore called sometimes a receiving of Christ, John 1:12. The only way to enjoy a lady's jointure, is to marry her person; and so the only way to enjoy the promise of Christ, is to be willing to marry the person of Christ. It is our marriage union with Christ that gives us a right and title to all the promises of Christ: 2 Cor. 1:20, 'For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him, Amen.' All absolute and conditional promises, either of grace or unto grace, are made to us in Christ, and only enjoyed by our enjoying of Christ.

[7.] Seventhly, He that can clear his right to any one promise, he may safely and boldly conclude his interest in every promise. The

promises are a golden chain, and he that has a right in one link of the chain, has a right in every link of the chain, 2 Peter 1:5–7; Eph. 5:22, 23; 2 Peter 1:4. As there is a chain of graces, so there is a chain of promises. He that can lay his hand upon any one promise, and truly say, This is mine, he may safely lay his hand upon every promise, and say, These are mine; he that is an heir to any one promise, he is an heir to every promise. Hence it is they are called 'heirs of promise,' Heb. 6:17; not heirs of this promise or that, but of promise; that is, of every promise, or the covenant which comprehends all the precious promises of the gospel in it. Though the promises may be distinguished one from another, yet they may not be severed one from another; he that has a right to any one promise, he may safely infer his right to every promise. The whole covenant, which is a bundle of promises, is certainly thine, if any one promise be thine. The promises by a divine hand are mutually tied and linked together; and those whom God has joined together no man may put asunder. The promises can be no more divided than Christ can be divided, or than heaven can be divided. The promises are not like loose and unstringed pearls, but as pearls made into one entire chain. He that can lay his hand upon that promise, Mat. 5:6, 'Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be satisfied,' and truly say, This promise is mine, he may safely lay his hand upon that promise, ver. 8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God,' and say, This promise is mine; and the same he may say of the rest of the precious promises that are specified in vers. 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11 of that chapter. He that can lay his hand upon any one promise that God has made to them that love him, and truly say, This promise is mine, he may safely lay his hand upon every promise that God has made to them that love him, and say, These are all mine. He that can lay his hand upon any one promise that God has made to them that fear him, and truly say, This promise is mine, he may assuredly lay his hand upon every promise that God has made to them that fear

him, and say, These are all mine. He that can lay his hand upon any one promise that God has made to faith in Christ, to believing in Christ, and truly say, This promise is mine, he may safely lay his hand upon every promise that God has made to faith in Christ, to believing in Christ, and say, All these promises are mine. He that can lay his hand upon any one promise that God has made to the returning sinner, and truly say, This promise is mine, he may securely lay his hand upon every promise that God has made to the returning sinner, the repenting sinner, and say, All these are mine. He that can lay his hand upon any one promise that God has made to the waiting soul, and truly say, This promise is mine, he may without all peradventure lay his hand upon every promise that God has made to the waiting soul, and say, All these are mine. Prove but your right in one, and you may safely infer your right to all. But,

[8.] Eighthly, If in the times of your greatest outward and inward straits and trials, when you are most sadly and sorely put to it, you fly to the precious promises, as to your surest and choicest city of refuge, then certainly you have an interest in them. Thus Abraham did, Rom. 4:17–22; and thus Jacob did, Gen. 32:6–12 compared; and thus Sarah did, Heb. 11:11; and thus Moses did, Num. 10:29; and thus Jehoshaphat did, 2 Chron. 20:1, 10 compared with the 7th, 8th, and 9th verses of that chapter; and this was David's common practice: Ps. 27:12, 13, and Ps. 9:1–10, compared, and Ps. 119:49, 50. Turn to these scriptures, and ponder upon them. And so when a man is under the guilt of sin, he flies to promises of pardon and forgiveness, as to his surest and choicest city of refuge, Num. 14:19, Isa. 55:7; Jer. 33:8; Isa. 40:1, 2; chap, 43:25; Micah 7:18; Jer. 31:34; Exod. 34:7; Dan. 9:9. And so when a man is under the strength, power, and prevalency of sin, he runs to such promises wherein God has engaged himself to subdue the sins of his people, and to purge and cleanse away the sins of his people, Micah 7:19; Rom. 6:14; Ps. 65:3; Isa.

1:25; Mal. 3:3; Zech. 13:9; Isa. 27:9; Mat. 3:12; Ezek. 36:25, 33; Jer. 33:8, as to his surest and choicest city of refuge. And so when a man is deserted, he runs to such promises as are proper to that state, as to his surest and choicest city of refuge, Micah 7:19; Isa. 54:7–10; Ps. 5:12; Ps. 84:10; Ps. 97:11; Ps. 112:4; Isa. 49:14–16. And so when a man is tempted, he runs to such supporting, succouring, and encouraging promises as are most suitable to that state, as to his surest and choicest city of refuge, 1 Cor. 10:13; Heb. 2:18; Rom. 16:20; James 4:7. Now certainly, such as in all their inward and outward straits run thus to the promises, as to their surest and choicest city of refuge, they have an unquestionable interest in the promises. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, Prov. 10:15. Wealthy world-lings, in times of distress and danger, do run to their hoards and heaps of riches, as to a strong city that is able to outstand all sieges and assaults, and to be safety and security to them; so when once a man makes the precious promises to be his strong city, and runs to them in the day of his distress and dangers, as his only safety and security, then he has doubtless an interest in them. But,

[9.] Ninthly and lastly, If you daily present a greater and a choicer good in the promises to your souls than any this world affords, then certainly you have an interest in the promises. If when honours, or riches, or pleasures, or the applause of men do present themselves unto you, you can readily present to your own souls higher honours in the promise, 1 Sam. 2:30; Luke 12:32; Rev. 2:17, 26, 27; chap. 3:5, 12, 21; chap. 5:10; and more durable riches in the promise, Prov. 8:18; 1 Pet. 3:4; and sweeter and choicer pleasures in the promise, Ps. 16:11; Isa. 12:3, chap. 35:2, 10; Jer. 33:9, 11; Ps. 132:16; and greater applause in the promise, Mat. 10:32, 'Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven;' ay, and before the angels too, Luke 12:8; Mat. 25:31–41; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; 2 Thes. 1:6–10; Rev. 3:9; Isa. 9:12–14; then

certainly you have an interest in the promise. When a man can shew his own heart daily, in the glass of the promises, a greater worth, excellency, and glory, than all this world affords, without all controversy he has an interest in the promises. Thus those worthies, of whom this world was not worthy, Heb. 11, and the martyrs in all ages, did commonly present better, higher, and greater things to their own souls in the promises, than any their adversaries were able to propose to draw them off from Christ, their profession or principles, &c., and by this means they did very courageously and honourably maintain their ground in the face of all the gay and golden temptations that they met withal. Crudelitas vestra, gloria nostra, your cruelty is our glory, said they in Tertullian; and the harder we are put to it, the greater shall be our reward in heaven. Basil will tell you, that the most cruel martyrdom is but a crafty trick to escape death, to pass from life to life, as he speaks. It can be but a day's journey between the cross and paradise. Though the cross be bitter, yet it is but short. 'A little storm,' as one said of Julian's persecution, 'and an eternal calm follows.' Adrianus, seeing the martyrs suffer cheerfully such grievous and dreadful things, asked, Why they would endure such misery, when they might, by retracting, free themselves; upon which one of them alleged that text, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,' 1 Cor. 2:9. The naming of the text, and seeing them suffer such hard things cheerfully, did, by a blessing from on high, so really and effectually convert him, that afterwards he became a martyr too. When we see poor, weak, feeble Christians defying their torments, conquering in the midst of sufferings, singing in prison, as Paul and Silas did, Acts 16:25; kissing the stake, as Henry Voes did; clapping their hands when they were half consumed with fire, as Hawkes did;4 blessing God that ever they were born to see that day, as John Noyes did; calling their execution day their wedding day, as Bishop Ridley did,;6

we cannot but conclude that they had an eye to 'the recompence of reward,' and they saw such great, and sweet, and glorious things in the promises, that did so refresh, delight, and ravish their hearts, and transport their souls, that all their heavy afflictions seemed light, and their long afflictions short, and their most bitter afflictions sweet and easy to them. But,

The sixth maxim of consideration.

VI. Sixthly, Consider, that it is granted on all hands, that the least degree of grace, if true, is sufficient to salvation; for the promises of life and glory, of remission and salvation, of everlasting happiness and blessedness, are not made over to degrees of grace, but to the truth of grace; not to faith in triumph, but to faith in truth; and therefore the sense and evidence of the least grace, yea, of the least degree of the least grace, may afford some measure of assurance. Grace is the fruit of the Spirit, Gal. 5:22; and the tree is known by his fruit, Mat. 12:33; Mark 16:16; John 3:16, 36; Mat. 5:1, seq.; John 6:40. I do not say, that weak grace will afford a strong assurance, or a full assurance, for that rather arises from strength of grace than from truth of grace, but I say, weak grace may afford some assurance. And oh, that all weak Christians would seriously lay this to heart, for it may serve to relieve them against many fears, doubts, discouragements, and jealousies, which do much disturb the peace and comfort of their precious souls. Though the least measures of grace cannot satisfy a sincere Christian, yet they ought to quiet his conscience, and cheer his heart, and confirm his judgment of his interest in Christ. The least measure of grace is like a diamond, very little in bulk, but of high price and mighty value, and accordingly we are to improve it for our comfort and encouragement. A goldsmith makes reckoning of the least filings of gold, and so should we of the least measures of grace. A man may read the king's image upon a

silver penny, as well as upon a larger piece of coin. The least dram of grace bears the image of God upon it; and why then should it not evidence the goodness and happiness of a Christian's estate? It is a true saying, that the assurance of an eternal life is the life of this temporal life. I have read that Mr Jordain, one of the aldermen of the city of Exeter, would use to ask grown professors, whether they had any assurance; which if they denied, he would tell them, that he was even ashamed of them; 'In good earnest,' saith he, I would study the promises, and go into my closet, and lock the door, and there plead them to God, and say, that I would not go forth till he gave me some sense of his love.' He would often mention and try himself by these three marks: first, a sincere desire to fear the name of God, which he grounded upon that Neh. 1:11; secondly, a sincere desire to do the will of God in all things required, which he grounded upon Ps. 119:6; thirdly, a full purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord, which he grounded upon Acts 11:23. These he would often press upon others, and these he frequently tried himself by, and from these he had much assurance and comfort. Mr Stephen Marshal, in a sermon of his on Isa. 9:2, saith, 'Look and examine, whether thou dost not loathe thyself as a base creature; and dost thou make this nothing? Secondly, Dost thou not in thy heart value and prize the meanest child of God more than the greatest man in the world, that have not the image of God, the image of grace and holiness stamped upon them? I pray God,' saith Mr Marshal, 'that many of God's people do not want these evidences.' 'If our souls,' saith another, 'shall like of Christ for a suitor, when we find no other jointure but the cross, we may be sure we are Christians. A man may want the feeling of his faith, and cry and call again and again for it, and feel nothing all this while, and yet nevertheless have true and sound faith; for the feeling of and mourning for the want of faith, and the earnest and constant desire of it, is an infallible sign of faith. For this is a sure rule, that so long as one feeleth himself sick he is not dead; and the high

estimation of faith, joined with a vehement desire of it, is a singular evidence that there is a sound and lively root of faith in our hearts.' 'All the elect of God,' saith another,4 'shall have the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon their hearts, sooner or later. I do not press the having of these things perfectly, but sincerely; an elect person may want many a degree of grace, but if he have them in sincerity, though in the least measure, it is a sufficient evidence of his election.' 'An earnest,' saith Dr Sibbes, 'is little in regard of the whole; perhaps we have but a shilling to secure us of many pounds; so then the point is this, that howsoever we may be assured of our estate in grace, and likewise that we shall hold out, yet the ground of this assurance is not from any great measure of grace; but though it be little in quantity, it may be great in assurance and security. As we value an earnest, not for the worth that is in itself, but because it assures us of a great bargain; we have an eye more to the consummation of the bargain, than to the quantity of the earnest; so it is here, grace is but an earnest; yet notwithstanding, though it be little, as an earnest is, yet it is great in assurance and validity, answerable to the relation of that it hath to assure us. Though grace be little, yet as little as it is, seeing it is an earnest, and 'the first fruits,' as the apostle saith,—which were but little in regard of the whole harvest,—yet it is of the nature of the whole, and thereupon it comes to secure. A spark of fire is but little, yet it is fire as well as the whole element of fire; and a drop of water is but little, yet it is water as well as the whole ocean. When a man is in a dark place, put the case it be in a dungeon, if he have but a little light shining in to him from a little crevice, that little light discovers that the day is broke, that the sun is risen. Put the case there be but one grape on a vine, it shews that it is a vine, and that the vine is not dead; so put the case that there be but the appearance of a little grace in a Christian, perhaps the Spirit of God appears but in one grace in him at that time, yet that one grace sheweth that we are vines, and

not thistles, or thorns, or base plants, and it shews that there is life in the root.' Thus you see how fully this reverend doctor speaks to the case. That friend that writes the life and death of Mr John Murcot, once preacher of the gospel at Dublin, saith, 'That in preparation for the supper ordinance, he would bring himself unto the test, and to say the truth, was very clear in the discovering and making out his own condition, being well acquainted with the way of God's dealing with the soul, and with the way of the soul's closing with Christ. Instance, April 3, 1653. Upon search I find, 1. Myself an undone creature. 2. That the Lord Jesus sufficiently satisfied as mediator the law for sin. 3. That he is freely offered in the gospel. 4. So far as I know my own heart, I do through mercy heartily consent that he only shall be my Saviour; not my works or duties, which I do only in obedience to him. 5. If I know my heart, I would be ruled by his word and Spirit.' 'Behold, in a few words,' saith he that writes his life and death, 'the sum and substance of the gospel.' By these instances we may see that some of the precious servants of God have found a great deal of comfort, support, rest, content, and some measure of assurance, from a lower rank of evidences, than those that many strong Christians do reach unto, &c. But,

The seventh maxim or consideration.

VII. Seventhly, Consider, that all men and women that are desirous to know how it will go with them in another world, they must peremptorily resolve to be determined by Scripture in the great matters of their interest in Christ. This blessed scripture is the great uncontroverted rule, and therefore if a person can prove from Scripture that his graces are true, or that he is in a gracious estate, or that he has an interest in Christ, or that he has savingly, graciously stricken covenant with God, then he must resolutely and peremptorily resolve to grant so much as unchangeably to acquiesce

in it, to stick fast to it, and to hear nothing against it from the world, the flesh, or the devil. God hath plainly told us in his blessed word who shall be saved, and who shall be damned; though not by name, yet by the qualifications by which they are described in the Bible. There are the statute laws of heaven, and the standing rule by which all must be tried. Every man must stand or fall, be eternally blessed or eternally miserable, as his condition is consonant to or various from the infallible characters of saving grace contained in the holy Scripture. Witness that Isa. 8:20, 'To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light (or no morning) in them.' So John 12:48, 'He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.' Mat. 5:18, 'For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.' So John 10:35, 'And the Scripture cannot be broken,' or violated, or made void. But though this be an indispensable duty, yet certainly there is, especially in times of great afflictions, temptations, desertions, fears, and doubts, a very great aptness and proneness in Christians to expect strange means rather than right means, and new means rather than old means, and invented means rather than appointed means, and to build their faith upon something beside the word, or that is without the compass of the word, rather than upon the plain and naked word itself; being in this very like to many weak, crazy, distempered, and diseased patients, that are more ready to fancy every new medicine and new doctor they hear of, and to be tampering with them, than to expect a recovery, by going through a course of physic prescribed by the physician that best understands their diseases, and the most proper and effectual means for their recoveries. You know when Naaman the Assyrian came to the prophet Elisha to be cured of his leprosy, he only sent out a messenger to him, who bid him go and wash seven times in Jordan, and his flesh should come again unto

him, and he should be clean, 2 Kings 5:10; but Naaman's blood rises, and his heart swells, and he grows very wroth, and all because he did not like the means prescribed by the prophet, and because he thought in his own heart that the prophet would have used more likely means to have wrought the cure, verses 11, 12. So many Christians, when they lie under great agonies and sore perplexities of soul, and are encouraged to act faith upon the promises, and to rest their weary souls upon the word of grace, they are ready to think and say that these things, these means, will never heal them, nor comfort them, nor be a relief or support unto them, unless the Lord does from heaven, by extraordinary revelations, visions, signs, and miracles, confirm his promises to them; and hereupon they make light of the blessed scriptures, which are the springs of life, and the only bottom upon which all our comforts, peace, and happiness is to be built; yea, they relinquish that more sure word of prophecy, which shines as a light in a dark place, 2 Peter 1:19. Certainly the acting of faith on the precious promises, and the cleaving of the soul unto those blessed truths declared in the gospel of grace, is the most sure, ready, and compendious way of obtaining a blessed assurance, and a full establishment of heart, in all sound, solid, and abiding joy and peace, Eph. 1:13; and therefore Luther, though, as he confesseth, he was often tempted to ask for signs, apparitions, and revelations from heaven to confirm him in his way, yet tells us how strongly he did withstand them, pactum feci domino Deo meo, &c. I have, saith he, indented with the Lord my God, that he would never send me dreams, visions, angels, for I am well contented with this gift, that I have the holy Scripture, which doth abundantly teach and supply all necessaries for this life, and that also which is to come. Certainly Austin hit the mark, when he prayed, 'Lord, let thy holy Scriptures be my pure delights, in which I can neither deceive, or ever be deceived.' Certainly the balance of the sanctuary should weigh all the oracles of God, decide all, and the rule of God's word be the square and judge of

all. O sirs! dare you venture your souls upon it, that the blessed Scriptures are false, that they are but a fable? dare you stand forth and say, If the Scriptures be not a lie, let us be damned for ever and ever? dare you stand up and say, We are freely contented that the everlasting worm shall gnaw on our hearts for ever, and that our bodies and souls shall for ever and ever lie burning in infernal flames, if the scriptures prove not at last a cheat, a deceit, a mere forgery and imposture? Now, if you dare not thus to say, and thus to venture, then peremptorily resolve to be determined by Scripture, in the great concernments of your precious souls. They that would take their parts in promised comforts, they must follow the voice of the word, and subscribe to the sentence of conscience, following that word. If the word approve of thee, as sound and sincere with God, assuredly thou art so, for that rule cannot err. If the word saith that thy heart is right with God, thou must maintain that testimony against all disputes whatever. Never enter into dispute with Satan, or thine own self, about thy estate, but by taking and making the Scripture the judge of the controversy. When fears rise high, you say you shall never have mercy! But doth the word say so? The Lord never gave himself to me! But doth the word say so? Never was any as I am! But doth the word say so? I cannot see, nor conceive, nor think, that the Lord hath any love for me! But doth the word say so? yea, doth not the word say, that his 'thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor his ways as your ways'? But as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than your ways; and his thoughts than your thoughts,' Isa. 55:8, 9. I have not that peace and joy that others have, therefore the Lord intends no good towards me! But doth the word say so? Oh! but if my inside were but turned outward, good men would loathe me, and wicked men would laugh at me! But doth the word say so? Oh! but my heart was never right with God! But doth the word say so? Oh! but that which I have taken all this while for saving grace is but common grace! But doth the word

say so? Oh! but the face of God is hid from me, my sun is set in a cloud, and will never rise more! But doth the word say so? Oh! but Satan is let loose upon me, and therefore God hates me! But doth the word say so? yea, doth not the word tell you, that those who have been most beloved of God, have been most tempted by Satan? Witness Christ, David, Job, Joshua, Peter, Paul, &c. Oh! but I am afflicted, so as never was any before me! But doth the word say so? Oh! let the word have the casting voice, and not thine own frail distempered reason. Oh! do not only hear what sin, and Satan, and thine own heart can say against thee, but hear also what the word of the Lord Jesus can say for thee. Let the word of the Lord be judge on both sides, and then all will be well.

I know that the impenitent and unbelieving person, that lives and dies without grace in his heart, and an interest in Christ, shall as certainly be damned, as if I saw him this very moment under everlasting burnings; because God in the Scripture has said it, Mark 16:16; John 3:18–36; Rev. 21:8; Rom. 2:4, 5; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19–21; Heb. 12:14. And I know that the holy, humble, true, penitent, believing, self-denying, and sin-mortifying Christian, shall be as certainly saved, as if at this very time I saw him in actual possession of glory; because God in the Scripture has said it, Mat. 5:3–12; Rom. 8:1–13; Acts 10:43; John 3:15, 16, 36; 6:37–40, &c. O sirs! no man in his wits dares dispute against the authority of Scripture, or deny it, as false and erroneous; and therefore if the Scripture say a man has grace, he ought in conscience to subscribe to it against all objections or temptations to the contrary. For ever remember this, till a man comes to be willing to have his spiritual and eternal estate to be determined by Scripture, he will never enjoy any settled rest or quiet in his spirit. When once the goodness of a man's estate is cleared up to him by the word, he is never to regard what Satan or carnal reason objects against him. Satan is a liar and a

deceiver of near six thousand years' standing; he is full of envy, and full of malice, and full of wiles, devices and fetches, and therefore give no credit to any of his reports against the report of the word, but stand by the testimony of the word, and the witness of your own consciences, against all Satan's cavils, temptations, objections and suggestions; and then, and not till then, will you find rest to your souls. He that would hold on cheerfully and resolutely in a Christian course, and go merrily to his grave, and singing to heaven, he must maintain the testimony of the word against all the gainsayings of sense or carnal reason; he must hear nothing, nor believe nothing against the word, nor against the goodness and happiness of his own estate or condition, which has been evidenced to him from the word. Men will not be easily baffled out of their estates. If some great man should come and lay claim to your estates, you will not presently give them up, though your evidences are not at hand, or though they are blotted, or though perhaps you cannot clearly make out your title, yet you will not tamely and quietly give up your estates; and yet how ready are many Christians, upon every clamour of Satan against their souls and spiritual estates, to give up all, and to conclude that they are hypocrites, and have no true grace and spiritual life in them! &c. But,

The eighth maxim or consideration.

VIII. Eighthly, Consider, that a godly man may not only come to a sure knowledge of his gracious estate, but it is also more easily attainable than many,—may I not say, than most,—do apprehend or believe; for if a gracious man will but argue rationally from Scripture, he shall be forced to conclude that he has grace, and that he has an interest in Christ, and that he shall be saved, unless he be resolved beforehand boldly to deny Scripture truths. Sirs! look in what way the spirit of bondage doth ordinarily work fear, terror, and horror in

the hearts of unconverted persons, in the same way the Spirit of adoption doth ordinarily work hope and assurance in the hearts of the saints, Rom. 8:15; John 16:8. Now, the spirit of bondage commonly awakens secure sinners, and fills the heart and consciences of poor sinners with fear, horror, and amazement, by setting home upon their souls such practical syllogisms as these:

'Every liar shall have his portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone,' Rev. 21:8.

But I am a liar;

Therefore I shall have my portion in that lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

Or thus:

'He that believeth not is condemned already,' John 3:18.

I believe not;

Therefore I am condemned already.

Or thus:

'He that hateth his brother is a murderer, and hath not eternal life abiding in him,' 1 John 3:15.

I hate my brother;

Therefore I am a murderer, and have not eternal life abiding in me.

Or thus:

'Christ shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of his Son,' 2 Thes. 1:7, 8.

I know not God, I obey not the gospel of his Son;

Therefore Christ shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance on me.

Or thus:

'The wicked shall be turned into hell,' Ps. 9:17.

I am wicked;

Therefore I shall be turned into hell.

Now in like manner the Spirit of adoption brings the 'heirs of the promise,' Heb. 6:17, to the assurance of hope, by setting home such practical syllogisms as these;—

[1.] First, Whosoever truly and heartily receives the Lord Jesus Christ, are truly and justly reputed to be the sons of God, John 1:12. But I have received Christ all the ways that the word there can import; I am heartily willing to receive the Lord Jesus Christ in all his offices, viz., as a king to rule me, a prophet to teach and instruct me, and a priest to offer and intercede for me; I am willing to receive him as a sanctifier, as well as a Saviour, and to receive him as my Lord, as well as to receive him as my Redeemer, and to receive him upon his own terms, viz., of taking up his cross, denying myself and following of him; therefore I may safely, boldly, plainly and warrantably conclude that I am a son of God, and that I have an interest in God, according to the scripture last cited: which scripture

cannot be broken, nor cannot fail, nor cannot be unbound or loosed, as the Greek word in that John 10:35 imports, &c.

[2.] Secondly, A gracious soul may argue thus: All the great and precious promises concerning everlasting happiness and blessedness, are made over to faith and repentance, as the Scriptures do abundantly evidence. Now, he that really finds faith and repentance wrought in his soul, so that he is able to say I am a repenting and a believing sinner, he may truly and safely conclude that he shall be saved; for all the promises of eternal happiness and blessedness do run out with a full stream to faith and repentance. I readily grant that a strong hope results from the clear evidence it hath of both these. We read in Scripture of a threefold assurance: as, first, an assurance of understanding, Col. 2:2; secondly, an assurance of faith, Heb. 10:22; thirdly, an assurance of hope, Heb. 6:11. And it is a very choice note that acute D. A. hath upon it, viz., 'that these three make up one practical syllogism, wherein knowledge forms the proportion,3 faith makes the assumption, and hope draws the conclusion.' I do, saith the Christian, assuredly know from the word that cannot deceive me, that the believing and repenting sinner shall be saved; my conscience also tells me that I do unfeignedly believe and repent, therefore I do firmly hope that I shall, however vile and unworthy otherwise, be saved. Now mark, answerable to the evidence that a man hath in his own soul, that faith and repentance is wrought in him, so will his hope and assurance be weaker or stronger, more or less. If a man's evidence for the truth of his faith and repentance be dark, and weak, and low, and uncertain, his hope and assurance, that is born of these parents, as I may say, must needs partake of its parent's weakness and infirmities, and be itself weak, and dark, and low, and wavering, and uncertain, as they are from which it results. Hope and assurance ebbs and flows, as the evidence of a man's faith and repentance ebbs and flows.

Assurance cannot be ordinarily had without a serious examination of our hearts; for assurance is the certain knowledge of the conclusion drawn from the premises, one out of scripture, the other by a reflect act of the understanding or conscience, thus: He that believes and repents shall certainly be saved, that is the voice of the word of God; then by the search of a man's own heart, he must be able to say, But I believe and repent; and from these two doth result this assurance, that he may safely conclude, Therefore I shall be saved. And oh that all Christians were so wise, as seriously to ponder upon these things!

[3.] Thirdly, A godly man may argue thus: He that hath respect unto all God's commands shall never be ashamed. Ps. 119:6, 'Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.' He that is so honest and faithful with God, as to do his best, shall find that God will be so gracious as to pardon his worst. And this gospel indulgence David does more than hint at in those words, 'Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments, or, as the Hebrew hath it, 'Then shall I not blush when my eye is to all thy commandments.' The traveller, you know, hath his eye towards the place where he is going; and though he be yet short of it, yet he is putting on and pressing forward all he can to reach it; so when the eye of a saint is to all the commands of God, and he is still a-pressing forwards toward full obedience, such a soul shall never be put to shame; it shall never be put to the blush, but it shall be able, living and dying, boldly to appear in the presence of the Lord. Mark, the psalmist doth not say, when I obey all thy commandments, but 'when I have respect to all thy commandments;' and that implies an inward awe and reverential eye towards every duty God requires. You know, to have respect unto a thing is this, when that of all others sways most with us, as when a master commands such a business, the servant will do it, because he respects him; and at his command he will go and come, though he

will not at the command of any other. But I have respect unto all his commandments, therefore I shall never be ashamed.

[4.] Fourthly, A godly man may argue thus: He that loveth the brethren is passed from death to life, and consequently is in Christ, 1 John 3:18, 19. But I love the brethren, therefore I am passed from death to life, and so consequently am in Christ.

[5.] Fifthly, A godly man may argue thus: He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall certainly find mercy, Prov. 28:13. But I confess and forsake my sins, 1, in respect of my sincere desires; 2, in respect of my gracious purposes; 3, in respect of my fixed resolutions; 4, in respect of my faithful and constant endeavours; therefore I shall certainly find mercy.

[6.] Sixthly, A godly man may argue thus: He that hath the testimony of a good conscience, he may rejoice in that testimony, 2 Cor. 1:12; Isa. 38:3. But I have the testimony of a good conscience, therefore I may rejoice in that testimony.

[7.] Seventhly, A godly man may argue thus, He over whom presumptuous sins has not dominion is upright: Ps. 19:13, 'Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright.' But presumptuous sins has not dominion over me; therefore I am upright. Mark, unfeigned willingness to part with every sin, and to mortify every sin, is a sure sign of uprightness, a sure sign of saving grace. When a man is sincerely willing to leave every sin, and to indulge himself in none, no, not his darling sin, it is a most certain sign of his integrity and sincerity, as you may evidently see by comparing of these scriptures together, Ps. 17:1, 3, 4; 119:1, 2, 3, 6; Job 1:8, 2:3; Ps. 18:23. I was upright before him. Oh! but how do you know that? how do you prove that? how are you assured of that? Why, by this, that 'I have

kept myself from mine iniquity.' Doubtless there is as much of the power of God required, and as much strength of grace required, and as much of the presence and assistance of the Spirit required, to work a man off from his bosom sins, from his darling sins, from his beloved sins, as there is required to work him off from all other sins. A conquest here clearly speaks out uprightness of heart.

[8.] Eighthly, A godly man may argue thus: He whose heart doth not condemn him, 1, of giving himself over to a voluntary serving of sin; or, 2, of making a trade of sin; or, 3, of allowing of himself in any course or way of sin; or, 4, of sinning, as wicked men sin, who sin studiously, resolutely, affectionately, delightfully, customarily, wilfully, or with their whole will, or with the full consent and sway of their souls; or, 5, of indulging, conniving or winking at any known sin; or, 6, of living in the daily neglect of any known positive duty against light and conscience, or of an ordinary shifting off of any known service that God requires of him in that place or station wherein God has set him, may have confidence, παῤῥησίαν, boldness, liberty of speech towards God, 1 John 3:21. But my heart does not condemn me, 1, of giving myself over to a voluntary serving of sin; nor, 2, of making a trade of sin; nor, 3, of allowing myself in any course or way of sin; nor, 4, of sinning as wicked men sin, viz., studiously, resolutely, affectionately, delightfully, customarily, wilfully; nor, 5, of indulging, conniving, or winking at any known sin; nor, 6, of living in the daily neglect of any known duty against light and conscience; therefore I may have confidence or boldness towards God; I may use liberty of speech with God; I may use the liberty and freedom of a favourite of heaven; I may open my heart to God, as favourites do to their prince, viz., freely, familiarly, boldly. When Austin was converted, and his heart sincere with God, he could bless God that he could think of his former evil ways, which were very bad,

without fear. Oh to what a height of holy boldness and familiarity with God had this man of God arrived to! But,

[9.] Ninthly, A godly man may argue thus, To such who are 'poor in spirit, the kingdom of heaven belongs,' Mat. 5:3. By poor in spirit is not meant poor in substance, that not being a thing praiseworthy in itself, but the broken and humble in heart, who hath no high thoughts or conceits of himself, but is lowly in his own eyes, as a young child. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit;' that is, non habentes inflantem spiritum, who hath no lofty or puffed up spirit. The poor in spirit are those that are lowly, being truly conscious of their own unworthiness. Nulli pauperes spiritu nisi humiles; none are poor in spirit but the humble. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit;' that is, blessed are they whose spirits are brought into such an humble gracious frame, as willingly, quietly, and contentedly to lie down in a poor low condition, when it is the pleasure of the Lord to bring them into such a condition. Blessed are the poor in spirit; that is, blessed are they who are truly and kindly apprehensive and sensible of their spiritual wants, poverty, and misery;3 that see their need of God's free grace to pardon them; that see their need of Christ's righteousness to clothe them; that see their need of the Spirit of Christ to purge, change, and sanctify them; that see their need of more heavenly wisdom to counsel them; that see their need of more of the power of God to support them, and of the goodness of God to supply them, and of the mercy of God to comfort them, and of the presence of God to refresh them, and of the patience of God to bear with them, &c.; that see their need of greater measures of faith to conquer their fears, and of greater measures of wisdom to walk holily, harmlessly, blamelessly, and exemplarily in the midst of temptations, snares, and dangers; and that see their need of greater measures of patience to bear their burdens without fretting or fainting; and that see their need of greater measures of zeal and courage to bear up bravely

against all sorts of opposition, both from within and from without; and that see their need of greater measures of love to cleave to the Lamb, and to follow the Lamb whither ever he goes; and that see their need of living in a continual dependence upon God and Christ, for fresh influences, incomes, and supplies of grace, of comfort, of strength, whereby they may be enabled to act for God, and walk with God, and glorify God, and bring forth fruit to God, and withstand all temptations that tend to lead the heart from God; and that see nothing in themselves upon which they dare venture their everlasting estates, and therefore fly to the free, rich, sovereign, and glorious grace of God in Christ, as to their sure and only sanctuary: Luke 18:13, Philip. 3:9, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit;' that is, blessed are they that are truly apprehensive and sensible of their spiritual poverty, that see themselves fallen in the first Adam from all their primitive purity, excellency, and glory. There are five things we lost in our fall: 1, our holy image, and became vile; 2, our sonship, and became slaves; 3, our friendship, and became enemies; 4, our communion, and became strangers; 5, our glory, and became miserable. And that see an utter inability and insufficiency in themselves, and in all other creatures, to deliver them out of their fallen estate. But I am poor in spirit, therefore the kingdom of heaven belongs to me.

[10.] Tenthly, A godly man may argue thus, Such as are true mourners are blessed, and shall be comforted, Mat. 5:4; that is, such as mourn for sin with an exceeding great mourning; that mourn for sin with a funeral sorrow, as the word πενθοῦντες signifies; that mourn for sin as a man mourneth for the loss of his only son, Zech. 12:10, or as Jacob mourned for Joseph, or as David mourned for Absalom, or as the people mourned for the loss of good Josiah, 2 Chron. 35:24, 25; that mourn for secret sins as well as open, for sins against grace as well as for sins against the law; that mourn for sin as

the greatest evil in the world, that mourn for his own sins, Ezek. 7:16; as David did, Ps. 51.; or as Ephraim did, Jer. 31:18, 19; or as Peter did, Mat. 26:75; or as Mary Magdalene did, Luke 7:38; and that mourns for the sins of others as well as for his own, as David did, Ps. 119:136, 158; or as Jeremiah did, Jer. 13:17; or as Lot did, 2 Peter 2:7, 8; or as they did in that Ezek. 9:4; that mourns under the sense of his spiritual wants; that mourns under the sense of his spiritual losses, as loss of communion with God, loss of the favour of God, loss of the presence of God, loss of the exercise of grace, loss of the joys of the Spirit, loss of inward peace, &c.; or that mourn not only for their own afflictions and miseries, but also for the afflictions and miseries of Joseph, as Nehemiah did, Neh. 1:2–4; or as Jeremiah did, Jer. 9:1, 2; or as Christ did when he wept over Jerusalem, Luke 19:41, 42; or that mourns because he cannot mourn for these things, or that mourns because he can mourn no more, or that mourns because God has so little honour in his heart, in his house, in his life, in the world, in the churches. But I am a true mourner, therefore I am blessed, and shall be comforted.

[11.] Eleventhly, A godly man may argue thus: They which truly 'hunger and thirst after righteousness are blessed, and shall be filled,' Mat. 5:6; or they that are hungering and thirsting, as the Greek runs, being the participle of the present tense, intimating, that wherever this is the present disposition of men's souls, they are blessed. He that sees an absolute necessity of the righteousness of Christ to justify him, and to enable him to stand boldly before the throne of God; he that sees his own righteousness to be but as filthy rags, Isa. 64:4; to be but as dross and dung, Philip. 3:7, 8; he that sees the Lord Jesus Christ, with all his riches and righteousness, clearly and freely offered to poor sinners in the everlasting gospel; he that in the gospel-glass sees Christ to be made sin for them, that knew no sin, that they may be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. 5:21;

he that in the same glass sees Christ to be made wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, to all those that are sincerely willing to make a venture of their immortal souls and eternal estates, upon him and his righteousness; and he that sees the righteousness of Christ to be a most perfect, pure, complete, spotless, matchless, infinite righteousness; and under these apprehensions and persuasions is carried out in earnest and unsatisfied hungerings and thirstings, to be made a partaker of this righteousness, and to be assured of this righteousness, and to put on this righteousness as a royal robe, Isa. 61:10, he is the blessed soul; and he that hungers and thirsts after the righteousness of Christ imparted, as well as after the righteousness of Christ imputed, after the righteousness of sanctification, as well as after the righteousness of justification, he is a blessed soul, and shall at last be filled. The righteousness of sanctification, or inherent righteousness, lies in the Spirit's infusing into the soul those holy principles, divine qualities, or supernatural graces, that the apostle mentions in that Gal. 5:22, 23. These habits of grace, which are severally distinguished by the names of faith, love, hope, meekness, &c., are nothing else but the new nature or new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, Eph. 4:24. He that hungers and thirsts after the righteousness of sanctification, out of a deep serious sense of his own unrighteousness; he that hungers and thirsts after the righteousness of sanctification, as earnestly as hungry men do for meat, or as thirsty men do for drink, or as the innocent person that is falsely charged or accused longs to be cleared and righted, or as Rachel did for children, or as David did after the water of the well of Bethlehem, or as the hunted hart doth after the water brooks; he that hungers and thirsts not after some righteousness only, but he that hungers and thirsts after all righteousness; he that hungers and thirsts not only after some grace, but all grace; not only after some holiness, but all holiness; he that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, out of

love to righteousness; he that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, from a sight and sense of the loveliness and excellency that there is in righteousness, Philip. 3:10–15; he that hungers and thirsts after the highest degrees and measures of righteousness and holiness, Ps. 63:1, 8; he that primarily, chiefly, hungers and thirsts after righteousness and holiness, Jer. 15:16; he that industriously hungers and thirsts after righteousness and holiness; he that ordinarily, habitually, constantly, hungers and thirsts after righteousness and holiness: Ps. 119:20, 'My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.' By judgments we are to understand the statutes and commandments of God. Mark that word, 'at all times.' Bad men have their good moods, as good men have their bad moods. A bad man may, under gripes of conscience, a smarting rod, the approaches of death, or the fears of hell, or when he is sermon-sick, cry out to the Lord for grace, for righteousness, for holiness; but he is the only blessed man that hungers and thirsts after righteousness at all times, and that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, according to the other fore-mentioned short hints. He is certainly a blessed man, heaven is for that man, and that man is for heaven, that hungers and thirsts in a right manner after the righteousness of justification, and after the righteousness of sanctification. But I do truly hunger and thirst after righteousness; therefore I am blessed, and shall be filled, &c.

[12.] Twelfthly, A godly man may argue thus: Such as are truly and graciously 'merciful, are blessed, and shall obtain mercy,' Mat. 5:7. Mercy is a commiserating of another man's misery in our hearts, or a sorrow for another man's distress, or a heart-grieving for another man's grief, arising out of an unfeigned love unto the party afflicted. Or more plainly thus: mercy is a pitying of another man's misery, with a desire and endeavour to help him to the uttermost of our ability. The Hebrew for godly, חסד, chasid, signifies gracious,

merciful. The more godly any man is, the more merciful that man will be. 'Blessed are the merciful,' that is, blessed are they that shew mercy to others, out of a deep sense of the mercy of God to them in Christ. Blessed are such who shew mercy out of love to mercy, out of a delight in mercy; blessed are such as shew mercy out of love and obedience to the God of mercy; blessed are such as shew mercy to men in misery, upon the account of the image of God, the glory of God that is stamped upon them; blessed are such as extend their piety and mercy, not only to men's bodies, but also to their precious and immortal souls. Soulmercy is the chief of mercies. The soul is the most precious jewel in all the world; it is a vessel of honour, it is a spark of glory, it is a bud of eternity, it is the price of blood, it is beautified with the image of God, it is adorned with the grace of God, and it is clothed with the righteousness of God. Such are blessed as shew mercy to others, from gracious motives and considerations, viz., it is free mercy that every day keeps hell and my soul asunder; it is mercy that daily pardons my sins; it is mercy that supplies all my inward and outward wants; it is mercy that preserves, and feeds, and clothes my outward man; and it is mercy that renews, strengthens, and prospers my inward man; it is mercy that has kept me many times from committing such and such sins; it is mercy that has kept me many a time from falling before such and such temptations; it is mercy that has many a time preserved me from being swallowed up by such and such inward and outward afflictions. Such as shew mercy out of a design to exalt and glorify the God of mercy; such who shew most mercy to them to whom God shews most mercy: these are blessed, and shall obtain mercy. Now mark, to such who are thus graciously, thus spiritually, thus divinely merciful, do these precious promises belong: Ps. 12:1, 'Blessed is the man that considereth the poor and needy.' Prov. 22:9, 'He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.' Prov. 14:21, 'He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor,

happy is he.' Prov. 11:25, 'The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.' That 2 Cor. 9:8 is very remarkable: 'And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye, always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.' Behold, how words are here heaped up to make grace, and all grace, to abound; and who is it to? Unto the liberal man, the merciful man: Job 29:13, 'The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.' Luke 6:38, 'Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.' Behold and wonder at the height of these expressions that you have in this text. We account it good measure when it is heaped up; but when it is heaped up and pressed down, that is more; but when it is heaped up and pressed down, and then heaped up and running over again, this is as much as possible can be made, this is as much as heart can wish. O sirs! those that are of merciful spirits, they shall have mercy heaped up, pressed down, and running over. Certainly that man must needs be in a happy and blessed condition, that can be in no condition wherein he shall not have mercy, yea, mercy heaped up and running over, to supply all his necessities: Mat. 25:35, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.' Come, ye blessed, that is their estate; receive the kingdom, that is the issue and reward; and why so? 'I was hungry, and you gave me meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink,' &c. But I am truly and graciously merciful; therefore I am blessed, and shall obtain mercy, &c. But,

[13.] Thirteenthly, A godly man may argue thus: They that are 'pure in heart are blessed, and shall see God,' that is, enjoy him, and live for ever with him, Mat. 5:8. But I am pure in heart; therefore I am blessed, and shall see God. By the pure in heart, here in the text, we may safely understand the sincere and single-hearted Christian, in

opposition to the double-minded Christian, as you may easily perceive by comparing the scriptures in the margin together. Mark, purity is twofold: First, simple and absolute; and in this sense no man is pure in this life, no not one. Secondly, respective and in part, and that is the purity here meant. A pure heart is a plain, simple heart, without fraud or guile, like Nathanael, in whom there was no guile; it is a heart that is evangelically blameless and sincere. But, secondly, purity is opposed to mixture; purity consists in the immixedness of anything inferior. That metal we account pure metal, which hath not any baser than itself mixed with it. If you mix gold with silver, the silver is not made impure by the mixture of gold; but if you mix lead or tin with it, it is made impure. Remember once for all, viz., that a pure heart is such a one as hath cast off and cast out the love and allowance of every known sin, and mingles not with it, though never so small; such a heart as hath renounced every known way of sin. Though there is corruption remaining in it, &c., yet it can solemnly and seriously appeal to God, that there is no known way of sin, but it hates, and abhors, and strives against, and will upon no terms allow of. This heart, in the language of the gospel, is a pure heart; yea, it is such a heart as dares venture upon the trial of God himself. Ps. 139:23, 24, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me,' or any way of pain, or of grief, or of provocation, as the Hebrew hath it, or any course of sin that is grievous to God or man. A gracious heart, a pure heart, can neither allow of any way of wickedness, nor wallow in any way of wickedness, nor make a trade of any way of wickedness, nor give up itself to any way of wickedness. Though sin may cleave to a pure heart, as dross doth to silver, yet a pure heart will not mix nor mingle with sin. 'And lead me in the way everlasting,' or in the way of eternity, or in the way of antiquity, as the Hebrew hath it; that is, that good old way that leads to peace and rest, to heaven and happiness, Jer. 6:16. Evangelical purity of heart

lies in this, that it will not admit any known sin to mingle with the frame and purpose of the heart. A pure heart, like a pure fountain, will still be a-working and a-casting out the mud and filth that is in it. Though sin may cleave to a regenerate man, as dross doth to the silver, yet it mingles not with the regenerate part, nor the regenerate part mingles not with it, no more than oil mingles with the water, or water mingles with the oil. Now you know, though the water and the oil touch one another, yet they do not mingle one with another; so though grace and sin, in a regenerate man, may as it were touch one another, yet they do not mingle one with another. Dear hearts! look, as we truly say, that gold is pure gold that is digged out of the mineral, though much dross may hang about it; and as we truly say, that such and such an air is pure air, though at times there be many fogs and mists within it; and as we truly say, that such and such springs are pure springs, though mud, and dirt, and filth may be lying at the bottom of those springs; and as we truly say, that face is a fair face, though it hath some freckles in it; so we may as truly say, that such and such a heart is a pure heart, though there may be much sinful dross and filth cleaving to it. The Jews report, that when Noah sent forth his sons to people the world, he delivered to every one of them some relics of old Adam. It may be fabulous for the history, but it is true in the morality; the relics of his sinful corruptions cleaves close to us all. Beloved! the best, the wisest, the holiest, and the most mortified Christians on earth, do carry about with them a body of sin and death, Rom. 7:22, 23; they have in them a fountain of original corruption, and from this fountain sin will still be arising, bubbling and a-boiling up as the scum in a pot over the fire. But mark, as in wine, or honey, or water, though scum and filth may arise, yet the wine, the honey, the water, will be still a-purging and purifying itself, and a-working and casting it out; so though sin, though corruption, though spiritual filth may, and too often doth, arise in a gracious heart, yet there is a spring of grace, a spring of living water in him,

there is a holy cleansing and purifying disposition in a regenerate person, that will still be a-working and casting it out. But now mark, in men of impure hearts and lives, the scum doth not only arise, but it seethes and boils in. Ezek. 24:12, 'She wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her;' notwithstanding all the threatenings of God, and all the judgments of God upon her, yet her scum and filthiness boiled in. Though God boiled Jerusalem in the pot of his judgments, yet her scum and filth stuck to every side of her. Wicked men's scum and filth doth not only arise, but it also seethes and boils in, and mingles together with their spirits; but so doth not the scum and filth that rises in a gracious heart. A sheep may fall into the mire, but a swine delights to wallow in the mire. But,

[14.] Fourteenthly, A godly man may argue thus: Such as sin hath not a dominion over, are not under the law, but under grace. Rom. 6:14, 'But sin hath not a dominion over me, therefore I am not under the law, but under grace.' Sin may rebel in a saint, but it shall never reign in a saint. Look, as those beasts, in that Dan. 7:12, had their dominion taken away, though their lives were spared and prolonged for a season and a time; so when Christ and grace enters into the soul, they take away the dominion of sin, though they do for a time spare the life of sin. To prevent mistakes, premise with me briefly these few things: First, that in every regenerate man there are two men, an old man and a new man; or if you please, flesh and spirit, Rom. 7. Secondly, The old man, the fleshly part, will incline the soul, and bias the soul, as well to sins against the gospel, as to sins against the law, and to great sins as well as small sins; witness Noah's drunkenness, Lot's incest, Asa's oppression, David's murder and adultery, Solomon's idolatry, and Peter' blasphemy. Thirdly, The old man, the fleshly part, is as much in the will as in any other part of the regenerate man; and therefore, when he falls into heinous sins, he

may fall into them with consent, delight and willingness, so far as his will is unrenewed. Though a real Christian be changed in every part, 1 Thes. 5:23, yet it is but in part and imperfect. Fourthly, The old man, the fleshly part, is in a regenerate man's members, as well as in his will, and therefore they may be exercised and employed in and about those sins they have consented unto. Fifthly, High sinnings do waste and wound the conscience of a regenerate man, and lay him open to the sore rebukes of God, and call for great repentance, and fresh and frequent applications of the blood of Christ. These things being premised, a question may be propounded, viz.:

Quest. What does the dominion of sin import, and wherein does it consist? Now to this considerable question, I shall give these eight following answers:

[1.] First, Sin is in dominion, when it hath the absolute and sovereign command of the soul, when it hath an uncontradicted power, when it hath suck an authority in the soul to command it as a king doth his subjects, or as the centurion did his servants: Mat. 8:9, 'For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.' Now when sin has such a universal and easy authority and command over the whole man, body and soul, as that it can use them in the service of sin, when and where and how it pleaseth, then sin is in dominion. Where there is a peaceable, uncontrolled, willing, universal subjection of the whole man unto the commands of sin, there sin reigns, Eph. 2:2, 3. But,

[2.] Secondly, Sin is in dominion, when in a course, when ordinarily, there is a quiet, free, willing, and total yielding of subjection to the authority, law, and command of sin. Mark, it is a full possession, a plenary delight, and a constant content in sin, that speaks out the

reign and dominion of sin, Rom. 6:13–16. Dominion of sin imports a complete and universal resignation of the whole will and man to the obedience of it. That man that is wholly addicted and devoted to the ways of sin, that man is under the reign of sin; that man whose whole heart is universally married to his lusts, that man is under the dominion of his lusts. When a man does as freely, cheerfully, universally, and readily obey his lusts, as a child does his father, or a wife her husband, or a servant his master, or a subject his prince, then sin is in dominion. When a man sins with greediness, when with Ahab he 'sells himself to work wickedness,' 1 Kings 21:25, when he commits 'wickedness with both hands,' Micah 7:3, when he gives himself up or over 'to all uncleanness and filthiness,' Eph. 2:3, when he freely and voluntarily resigns and surrenders up his body and soul to the obedience of sin, then sin reigns, then it keeps the throne. Where the dominion of sin is erected, there it sits in the heart, as a king in his throne, and gives forth its laws and commands to the soul and body, and those commands are listened and consented to, approved and delighted in, &c. A subject cannot in a course more freely, willingly, universally, and cheerfully obey the commands of his prince, than a sinner doth in a course freely, willingly, universally, and cheerfully obey the commands of his lusts; and wherever this sad temper of spirit is, there is sin in dominion. But now mark, a regenerate man's will riseth against his sin, even then when he is worsted by sin and led captive by sin. A tyrant is obeyed unwillingly; the wills of his subjects rise up against his commands, and if his power were not superior to their wills, they would never obey him. Sin is no king, but a tyrant in the souls of the saints, and therefore their wills, so far as they are renewed, cannot but rise against it. O sirs! remember this for ever, that the molesting, vexing, and tempting power of sin, does not speak out its dominion; for sin may molest, and vex, and tempt as an enemy, where it doth not rule and reign as a king; as you see this day in many nations of the earth,

there are many enemies that do molest, vex, and tempt the subjects of those nations, who yet are far enough off from having any rule or dominion over them; but then sin is in dominion, when it commands in the heart as a king in his throne, or as a lord in his house, or as a general in his army, freely, boldly, universally, cheerfully; and when the soul doth as freely, boldly, universally, and cheerfully subject itself to sin's commands. Where men commonly yield up their wills and affections to the commands of sin, there sin reigns; and this is the case of every unregenerate man; but where the will does commonly make a stout opposition to sin, there it reigns not; now this is the case of every regenerate man. That prince cannot truly be said to reign in that kingdom, where commonly he meets with stout opposition; so it is here. A sincere Christian makes it the great business and work of his life, above all other things in this world, to make all the opposition he can against his lusts, and is thoroughly resolved to die fighting against his sins, as Pietro Candiano, one of the Dukes of Venice, died fighting against the Nauritines, with the weapons in his hand. As Cæsar said in a battle he fought against one of Pompey's sons, 'At other times I fought for honour, but now I fight for my life;' so a sincere Christian fights against his sins, as for his life. Castellio's opinion was vain, viz., that men were of three sorts, some unregenerate, some regenerating, and others regenerated, and that these last have no combat betwixt flesh and spirit, which is quite cross to Scripture, Rom. 7:14–24, Gal. 5:17, &c., and contrary to the experience of all saints, in all the ages of the world, &c. But,

[3.] Thirdly, When a man is usually peremptory in his sinnings, in the face of all reprehensions and arguments that tend to dissuade him from sin, then sin is in dominion, Prov. 29:1; Jer. 5:3, 4; and 44:15–17. When the constant bent of the heart is inflamed towards sin, and when the desires of the soul are insatiably carried after sin, and when the resolutions of the soul are strongly and habitually set

upon sin, then sin is in the throne, and then it reigns as a king. When God hedges up the sinner's way with thorns, yet the sinner will break through all to his sin, Hosea 2:6, 7; when life and death, heaven and hell, glory and misery, are set before the sinner, yet the sinner will be peremptory in his sinnings, though he lose his life, his soul, and all the glory of another world, then sin reigns, Deut. 30:15–19, and 11:26–29. But,

[4.] Fourthly, When men ordinarily, habitually, commonly are very careful, studious, and laborious to make provision for sin, then sin reigns: Rom. 13:14, 'Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof;' or, as the Greek has it, 'Make no projects for the flesh,' or 'cater not for the flesh.' When a man's head and heart is full of projects how to gratify this lust, and how to satisfy that lust, and how to fulfil the other lust, then sin reigns, then it is in its throne: James 4:3, 'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.' Both the law of God and nature requires me to make provision of raiment, food, and physic for my body, and for theirs that are under my charge; but it may cost me my life, my estate, yea, my very soul, to make provision for my lusts. Such as ask amiss shall be sure to ask and miss. He that would make God a bawd to his lusts, may ask long enough before God will answer. Of all affronts there is none to this of making God a servant to our lusts; and where this frame of spirit is, there sin is in dominion, Hosea 2:8. He that abuses mercies to serve his lusts, fights against God with his own weapons, as David did against Goliath, and as Benhadad did against Ahab, with that very life that he had newly given him; such a soul, like the waters of Jordan, will at last certainly drop into the dead lake. But,

[5.] Fifthly, When sin is commonly, habitually sweet, and the soul takes a daily pleasure and delight in it, then it reigns; as you may see

by comparing the scriptures in the margin together. When a man daily takes as joyful contentation and satisfaction in his lusts, and in walking after the ways of his own heart, as he does in his highest outward enjoyments, or in his nearest and dearest relations, then certainly sin is in dominion. Such men as can go constantly on in a way of wickedness, merely to delight and content the flesh, such men are certainly under the power and reign of sin. Many of the heathens, who knew what rational delights were, scorned sensual delights as inferior to them. These will one day rise in judgment against many of the professors in our days. I know there is no real pleasure or delight in sin. If intemperance could afford more pleasure than temperance, then Heliogabalus should have been more happy than Adam in paradise; yea, if there were the least real delight in sin, there could be no perfect hell, where men shall most perfectly sin, and most perfectly be tormented with their sins. 'Hark, scholar,' said the harlot to Apuleius, 'it is but a bitter sweet that you are so fond of.'3 When an asp stings a man, it doth at first tickle him, and make him laugh till the poison by little and little gets to his heart, and then it pains him more than before it delighted him. It is so with sin, it may tickle the soul at first, but it will pain it at last with a witness. I have read of a gallant addicted to uncleanness, who at last meeting with a beautiful dame, and having enjoyed his fleshly desires of her, he found her in the morning to be the dead body of one that he had formerly been naught with, which had been acted by the devil all night, and left dead again in the morning; so that the gallant's pleasure ended in no small terror. And thus it is doubtless with all sinful pleasures. What sin is there so sweet or profitable that is worth burning in hell for, or worth shutting out of heaven for? &c. But,

[6.] Sixthly, When men commonly take part with sin, when they take up arms in the defence of sin, and in defiance of the commands of God, the motions of the Spirit, and the checks of conscience, then sin

is in dominion. He that readily, resolvedly, and habitually fights sin's battles is sin's servant, and without all peradventure under the reign and dominion of sin. Look, as we groundedly conclude, that such men are under the reign and dominion of that king, that they readily, resolvedly, and habitually take up arms to fight for; so when the inward faculties of the soul, and the outward members of the body, do readily resolve, and habitually take up arms to fight for sin, then and there sin is in dominion, as you may plainly see by consulting the scriptures in the margin; but where the soul readily, resolvedly, and habitually strives against it, conflicts with it, and makes war against it, there it is not in dominion, there it reigns not, as you may see by comparing the scriptures in the margin together.2 That man that can truly appeal to God, and say, Lord! thou that knowest all hearts and things, thou knowest that there is nothing under the whole heavens that I am so desirous and ambitious of as this, that my sins may be subdued, that my strongest lusts may be mortified, and that those very corruptions that my nature, constitution, and complexion is most inclined to, may be brought to an under;—that man that can appeal to God, and say, O Lord! whatever becomes of me, I will never be reconciled to any known sin; yea, Lord, though I should perish for ever, yet I am resolved to fight against my sins for ever; let God do what he will against me, I will do all I can against my sins, and to honour my God;—that man is not under the reign and dominion of sin. But,

[7] Seventhly, When sin commonly rises by opposition, then it reigns. Look, as grace, when it is in the throne, it rises by opposition: 2 Sam. 6:22, 'I will yet be more vile;' Mark 10:47, 48, 'And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me'; so when sin is in the throne, it rises higher and higher by opposition. As the more water you cast upon lime, the more fiercely it burns; so when sin is in

its reign and dominion, it flames out the more by opposition. Witness the Jews' malice and envy against Christ, which, when it received but a little easy, gentle check by Pilate, they cried out so much the more, 'Crucify him, crucify him,' Mark 15:12–14. A man that is under the reign and dominion of sin, is like the rainbow; the rainbow is never on that side of the world that the sun is, but wheresoever it appears, it is in opposition against the sun: if the sun be in the east, the rainbow is in the west, &c. Where sin has the throne, it will still rise higher and higher by opposition. Reprove a swearer for swearing, and he will swear so much the more; yea, many times he will swear that he did not swear, when indeed he did; and so it holds in all other vices that the sinner is given up to. It is said of Catiline, that he was a compound and bundle of warring lusts and vices; the same may be said of all others, where sin is in dominion. But,

[8.] Eighthly, and lastly, If the Lord Jesus Christ hath not dominion over you, then sin has certainly dominion over you, Rom. 6:17, 18. Christ hath no dominion over that soul that sin hath dominion over, and sin hath no dominion over that soul that Christ hath dominion over. Christ and sin cannot have dominion over the same soul at one and the same time; Christ's dominion is destructive, and inconsistent with sins dominion, &c.

Quest. But how shall I know whether the Lord Jesus Christ hath dominion over my soul or no? How shall I know whether the Lord Jesus Christ be my Lord or no? For if I can but groundedly conclude that Christ is my Lord, then I may very boldly, safely, and undoubtedly conclude, that sin is not my Lord; but if Christ be not my Lord, I may more than fear that sin is certainly my Lord.

Ans. Sol. Canst thou truly say, in the presence of the great and glorious God, that is the trier and searcher of all hearts, that thou hast given up thy heart and life to the rule, authority, and government of Jesus Christ; and that thou hast chosen him to be thy sovereign Lord and King, and art truly willing to submit to his dominion, as the only precious and righteous, holy and heavenly, sweet and pleasant, profitable and comfortable, safe and best dominion in all the world; and to resign up thy heart, thy will, thy affections, thy life, thy all, really to Christ, wholly to Christ, and only to Christ? Canst thou truly say, O dear Lord Jesus! other lords, viz., the world, the flesh, and the devil, have had dominion too long over me; but now these lords I utterly renounce, I for ever renounce, and do give up myself to thee, as my only Lord, beseeching thee to rule and reign over me for ever and ever, Isa. 26:13; O Lord, though sin rages, and Satan roars, and the world sometimes frowns, and sometimes fawns, yet I am resolved to own thee as my only Lord, and to serve thee as my only Lord, Joshua 24:5; my greatest fear is of offending thee, and my chiefest care shall be to please thee, and my only joy shall be to be a praise, a name, and an honour to thee. O Lord, I can appeal to thee in the sincerity of my heart, that though I have many invincible weaknesses and infirmities that hang upon me, and though I am often worsted by my sins and overcome in an hour of temptation, yet thou that knowest all thoughts and hearts, thou dost know that I have given up my heart to the obedience of Jesus Christ, and do daily give it up to his rule and government; and it is the earnest desire of my soul, above all things in this world, that Jesus Christ may still set up his laws in my heart, and exercise his dominion over me. Now, doubtless there is not the weakest Christian in the world, but can venture himself upon such an appeal to God as this is; and without all peradventure, where such a frame and temper of spirit is, there the dominion of Jesus Christ is set up; and where the dominion of Christ is set up, there sin has no dominion; but

where the dominion of Christ is not set up, there sin is in full dominion. Christ's dominion cannot consist with sin's dominion, nor sin's dominion cannot consist with Christ's dominion, Mat. 6:24. Now by these eight things, if men are not resolved beforehand to put a cheat upon their own souls, they may know whether their sins have dominion over them or no, and so accordingly conclude for or against themselves. But,

[15.] Fifteenthly, and lastly, A godly man may argue thus: There is no condemnation to them who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, Rom. 8:1; but I walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; therefore there is no condemnation to me. Walking after the flesh notes a course of sin, and walking after the Spirit notes a course of godliness. Now, to such as keep off from a course of sin, and that keep on in a course of godliness, there is no condemnation, there is not one condemnation; for God the Father won't condemn such a person, nor Jesus Christ won't condemn such a person, nor the Holy Spirit won't condemn such a person, nor the word of grace won't condemn such a person, nor no commandment or threatenings will condemn such a person, no, nor such a man's own heart nor conscience, if it be rightly informed, won't condemn him; and therefore well may the Holy Ghost say to such a one, There is no condemnation to such a one; there is not one condemnation, &c.

Now thus you see, 'by comparing spiritual things with spiritual things,' and by a rational arguing from Scripture, a man may attain unto a comfortable certainty of his gracious state, and safely and groundedly conclude his interest in Christ. Now this assurance of God's favour, 'by the witnessing of our own spirits,' which assurance is deduced by way of argument syllogistically, is more easily attained than many—may I not say than most?—Christians imagine; for let a gracious man but clear himself of heart-condemning sins, and

rationally argue as before has been hinted, and he will speedily reach to some comfortable, supporting, soul-satisfying and soul-quieting assurance, there being an infallible connection between the fore-mentioned graces and future glory, 1 John 3:20, 21. These fifteen arguments may well be looked upon as fifteen sure and infallible evidences of the goodness and happiness of a Christian's estate.

Oh that you would often, every day, think on this, viz. that the undoubted verity of God's promises proveth an inseparable connection between true faith and eternal glory: John 3:14–16, 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' John 5:24, 'Verily, verily'—these serious asseverations or protestations amount almost to an oath—'I say unto you, He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death to life.' John 3:36, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.' He hath it in the promise, he hath it in the first-fruits, Rom. 8:23; he hath it in the earnest, Eph. 1:13, 14; and he hath it in Christ his head, Eph. 2:6. Mark 16:16, 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.' 1 Peter 2:6, 'Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.' John 6:40, 'And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.' Ver. 47, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.' John 11:25, 'Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.' Ver. 26, 'And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.' John 20:31,

'But these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.' Look, as certainly as the unbeliever shall be cast into outer darkness, so certainly shall the believer be partaker of the glorious inheritance of the saints in light; for certainly the promises are as true as the threatenings: Acts 16:30, 31, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' The apostle speaks not doubtingly, Perhaps thou shalt be saved; nor they do not say, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and it may be thou mayest go to heaven; but they speak boldly, confidently, peremptorily, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' Joshua 23:14, 21:45. O my soul! what greater certainty and security can any man have than the infallible promise of that God that is truth itself, who will not, who cannot, deny his word? But the same love and free grace that moved him to infuse grace into his children's souls, will move him also to keep the word that is gone out of his mouth, and to make good whatever he hath promised. Thus you evidently see that the promises prove an inseparable connection between grace and glory, between faith and everlasting life; so that, let me but prove that I have a saving faith, and the scriptures last cited prove infallibly that I shall be saved.

Oh labour as for life, daily to give a firm and fixed assent to the truth of those blessed promises last cited, and hold it as an indisputable and inviolable principle, that whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ, or whosoever hath received Christ as his Lord and Saviour, shall be certainly saved. This is the person that hath the word, the promise, the covenant, the oath of that God that cannot possibly lie, or die, for the pardon of his sin, and for the salvation of his soul. Now, O my soul, what security couldst thou ask more of a deceitful man, than that which the great Jehovah, the faithful God, of his own accord, hath given to thee, viz., his word and his oath? Now not to believe God upon his promise and oath, is to make him a liar, yea,

the worst of liars; yea, it is to do worse than the devils, for they 'believe and tremble.' Though the word of the Lord deserves the greatest credit that any mortals can give unto it, he being truth itself that hath said it, though it hath no oath nor no asseverations to be its surety, yet God, in his infinite condescending love to poor sinners, that he may sink the truth of what he saith deeper into the hearts and minds of his people, and leave the fairer and fuller print in our assents to the same, he sets on the word of promise with the weight of asseverations and oaths; yea, and to all these he hath annexed his broad seal, the Lord's supper, and the privy seal of his Spirit. Oh unreasonable unbelief! shall not the oath of God silence all disputes? A man would never desire of any honest man, so much as God hath condescended to, for the confirmation of our faith. Witness his promises, his covenant, his oath, and his seals; and therefore let us give glory to him by believing, and quietly rest upon his faithfulness.

O sirs! that soul that dares not take his sanctification as an evidence, yea, as a choice and sure evidence of his interest in Christ, and of the Lord's precious love to him, according to the promises of his favour and grace, several of which hath been but now under consideration, that soul ought to acknowledge it as his sin, yea, as his great sin, for which he deserves to be smartly rebuked, as making God a loud liar. O my friends! it is a spiritual peevishness and sinful crossness that keeps many good men and women long in a sad, dark, doubting, perplexed, and disconsolate condition; and certainly it is no small sin to set light by any work of the blesssd Spirit, and the joy, comfort, and peace that we might have by it. Ah, how many are there that fear the Lord, who quench, grieve, vex, and provoke the Holy Spirit, by denying his work, and by quarrelling against themselves, and the blessed work of the Spirit in them! Certainly it is the duty of every Christian to hear as well what can be said for him, as what can be said against him. Many poor, weak, and yet sincere Christians, are

often apt to be too sour, rigid and bitter against their own souls; they love to practise a merciless severity against themselves; they do not indifferently, impartially consider how the case stands between God and their own souls. It is in this case, as Solomon speaks in another: 'There is that maketh himself rich, and yet hath nothing; and there is that maketh himself poor, and yet hath great riches,' Prov. 13:7. That is, there be those in the world that pretend they are rich, and make a show before men as if they were men of great estates, whereas indeed they are exceeding poor and needy.

There are not a few that stretch their wing beyond their nest; that bear a port beyond their estates; that trick up themselves with other men's plumes, laying it on above measure in clothes, in high entertainments, in stately buildings, in great attendance, &c., when not worth one groat in all the world, but either they die in prison, or lay the key under the door, or compound for twelve pence in the pound, &c. And there are others again that are exceeding rich and wealthy, and yet feign themselves and look upon themselves to be very poor and needy. To apply this spiritually, it is the damning sin of the self-flattering hypocrite, to make himself rich, to make himself significant, to make his condition better than it is, Rev. 3:17; and it is the vanity, the folly of some sincere Christians to make their condition worse than indeed it is, to make themselves more miserable and unhappy than indeed they are. Ah, Christians! it is sad with you, it is night with you, when you read over the evidences of God's love to your souls, as a man does a book which he intends to confute. Is it not sad when Christians shall study hard to find evasions to wheel off all those comforts, refreshings, cheeriags, and supports, that are tendered to them, that are due to them, and that they may upon gospel grounds justly claim as their portion, as their inheritance? And oh that all such Christians would seriously and frequently lay to heart these eight things.

[1.] First, That they highly dishonour the blessed God, and the work of his grace, by denying that which he hath done for them and wrought in them.

[2.] Secondly, They are spiritual murderers, they are self-murderers, they are soul-murderers; for by this means they stab and wound their own precious souls and consciences through and through with many a deadly dart. Now is there any murder like to spiritual murder, to selfmurder, to soul-murder? Surely no. But,

[3.] Thirdly, They are thieves; for by this means they rob their own precious souls of that joy, peace, comfort, rest, content, assurance, and satisfaction which otherwise they might enjoy. Now there is no theft to spiritual theft; and of all spiritual theft, there is none to that which reaches the precious and immortal soul. Mark all prevalent disputes about our personal integrity, they do hold off the application and tastes of comfort, though they do not disannul the title and right. Even the good man will walk uncomfortably so long as he concludes and strongly fears that his estate is sinful; for sensible comfort riseth or falleth, cometh on or goeth off, acccording to the strength of our judgment and present apprehensions. Observe, it is not what indeed our estate is, but what we judge of it, which breeds in us sensible comfort or discomfort. A false heart may even break with a timpany of foolish joy upon an erring persuasion of his estate, and so may a sound sincere heart be very heavy and disconsolate upon an unsound misconstruction and judging of its true condition. But,

[4.] Fourthly, They bear false witness against Christ, his Spirit, their own souls, and the work of grace that is wrought in them. Oh how many dark, doubting, drooping Christians are there, who, if you would give them ten thousand worlds, yet would never be brought to

bear false witness against their poorest neighbour, brother, or friend, and that out of conscience, because of that command, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness,' &c., who yet make no conscience, no bones of it, frequently to bear witness against the Lord Jesus Christ, and his gracious works upon their own hearts! But,

[5.] Fifthly, They join with Satan and his work and his suggestions, and with that strong party he has in them, against the Lord Jesus Christ and his work, and his weak party in them. Sin is Satan's work, and grace is Christ's work. Now, how sad is it to see a Christian fall in with Satan's work in him, against the work of Christ that is in him. Satan has a strong party in their souls, and Christ has but a weak party. Now, how unjust is it for them to help the strong against the weak, when they should upon many accounts be a-helping the weak against the strong, a-helping the Lord against the mighty, a-helping weak grace against strong and mighty corruptions. Ah, how skilful and careful are many weak Christians to make head against the work of Christ in their own souls, and to plead hard for Satan and his works in them, as if they had received a fee from him to plead against Christ and their own souls. O Christians! that you would be wise at last, and let Baal plead for Baal, let Satan plead for himself, but do you plead for Christ and that seed of God that is in you. Well, remember this, that as fire is often hid under the embers, so grace is often hid under many foul distempers; and as a little fire is fire, though it be even smothered under the embers, so a little grace is grace, though it be even smothered under much corruption, 1 John 3:9.

Now, by these short hints you may easily perceive how many royal commands these poor Christians transgress who deny and belie the blessed work of the Lord in them. But,

[6.] Sixthly, They rob the Spirit of all the honour and glory that is due unto him for that blessed work of grace and holiness that he has formed up in their hearts. Oh what a grief and dishonour must it be to the Holy Spirit, that when he hath put forth a power in men's hearts equivalent to that by which the world was created, and by which Christ was raised from the dead, we find it overlooked, and not at all acknowledged, Rom. 8:11. Spiritus Sanctus est res delicata, the Holy Spirit is a very tender thing. But do these poor doubting souls carry it tenderly to him? Surely no. Dear Christians, the standing law of heaven is, 'Quench not the Spirit,' 1 Thes. 5:19. Now, if the word Spirit is not here taken essentially for the three persons in Trinity, nor yet metonymically for the fruits of the Spirit, but hypostatically for the third person in Trinity, as some conceive, then you must remember that you may grieve and quench the Spirit (1.) not only by your enormities, Isa. 63:10; (2.) not only by refusing the cordials and comforts that he brings to your doors, yea, that he puts to your mouths, Ps. 77:2; (3.) not only slighting and despising his gracious actings in others, Acts 2:13; (4.) nor only by fathering those sins and vanities upon him that are only the brats and fruits of Satan and your own hearts; but also, (5.) in the fifth place, by misjudging and miscalling the precious grace that he has wrought in your souls, as by judging and calling your faith fancy, your sincerity hypocrisy, your wisdom folly, your light darkness, your zeal wild-fire, &c. Now, O sirs! will you make conscience, yea, much conscience, of quenching the Spirit in the four first respects, and will you make no conscience of quenching the Spirit in this fifth and last respect? Oh, how can this be? Oh, why should this be? But,

[7.] Seventhly, They keep grace at a very great under; for how can grace spring, and thrive, and flourish, and increase in the soul, when the soul is full of daily fears and doubts that the root of the matter is not in it, Job 19:28; or that the root is still unsound; or that the work

that is passed upon it is not a work in power, 1 Thes. 1:5; or that it is not a special and peculiar work, but some common work of the Spirit, which a man may have and go to hell? But,

[8.] Eighthly, and lastly, They very much discourage, dishearten, and disanimate many poor, weak Christians, who observing of them, of whom they have had very high and honourable thoughts for the grace of God that they have judged to be in them, to be still a-questioning of their integrity, and still a-doubting of the graciousness and goodness of their conditions, do begin to question their own estates and conditions; yea, and many times peremptorily to conclude that surely they have no grace, they have no interest in Christ, and that all this while they have but put a cheat upon their own souls.

Now, oh that all poor, weak, dark, doubting Christians would never leave praying over these eight things, and pondering upon these eight things, till they are perfectly cured of that spiritual malady that they have been long labouring under, and which has been very prejudicial to the peace and comfort of their own souls.

Dear hearts, a gracious soul may safely, boldly, constantly, and groundedly say that which the word of the Lord saith. Now, the word of the Lord saith, that 'the poor in spirit are blessed, and that they that mourn are blessed, and that they that hunger and thirst after righteousness are blessed, and that they that are pure in heart are blessed,' Mat. 5:3, 4, 6, 8, and therefore he is blessed. And assuredly he that cannot embrace and seal to these as true and blessed evidences of a safe and happy condition, is greatly to lament and mourn over his unbelief, and earnestly to seek the Lord to persuade his heart and to satisfy and overpower his soul in this thing, as the

poor man in the Gospel did: Mark 9:24, 'And straightway the father of the child cried out with tears, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.'

O sirs! the condition of the promises last cited being fulfilled, the promises themselves must certainly and infallibly be fulfilled, else the great and blessed God should lie, be unrighteous, unfaithful, and deny himself; which is as impossible as for God to die, or to send another Saviour, or to give his glory to graven images. Assuredly the too hard, the too harsh, the too severe, the too jealous thoughts and conjectures, and the too humble, if I may so speak, censures and surmises that many weak, doubting Christians have of themselves, or of the goodness or graciousness of their estates, by reason of the weakness of their graces, or depth of melancholy, or the present prevalency of some unmortified lusts, or the subtilty of Satan, shall never make void the faithfulness of God, or the promises of God, which in Christ Jesus are all yea and amen, 2 Cor. 1:20. Doubtless God will never shut any poor, weak, doubting Christian out of heaven, because through bashfulness, or an excess of modesty, or the present darkness that is upon his understanding, or through the ungroundedness of some strong fears of an eternal miscarriage, he cannot entertain such good thoughts, such honest thoughts, such gracious thoughts of himself, or of the goodness or happiness of his condition, as he should entertain, and as he would entertain, if once he could but be too hard for the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Oh that you would remember this for ever, viz., that the Lord never makes any promises to support, comfort, cheer, and encourage his people against their sadness, darkness, doubts, and droopings, but they shall support, comfort, cheer, and encourage his poor people in that condition; for otherwise the Lord should provide means for an end, out of his infinite wisdom, love, and tender care and compassion towards his people, and yet they should never attain that end. But

thus to imagine is no small folly; yea, it is little less than blasphemy. Well, sirs! this is to be for ever remembered, viz., that whatsoever gift or grace of God in man brings him within the compass of God's promises of eternal favours and mercies, that gift, that grace, must needs be an infallible sign or evidence of salvation. But such are the gifts and graces specified in the fifteen particulars but now cited, and therefore that soul that really finds those gifts and graces in himself, or any of them, shall certainly be saved. But,

The ninth maxim or consideration.

IX. Ninthly, Consider this, That in divers men there are divers degrees of assurance, and in one and the same gracious soul there are different degrees of assurance at divers times, but there is in no man at any time in this life perfection of degrees; for our understanding and knowledge in this life is imperfect both as to the faculty and its acts. 1 Cor. 13:12, 'For now we see through a glass darkly (Gr., in a riddle), but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.' A clear, distinct, immediate, full, and perfect knowledge of God is desirable on earth, but we shall never attain to it till we come to heaven. This well is deep, and for the most part we want a bucket to draw withal. The best of men can better tell what God is not than what he is; the most acute and judicious in divine knowledge have and must acknowledge their ignorance. Witness that great apostle Paul, who learned his divinity among the angels, and had the Holy Ghost for his immediate tutor, yet he confesses that he know but in part. Certainly there is no man under heaven that hath such a perfect, complete, and full assurance of his salvation, in an ordinary way, as that one degree cannot be added to the former. Neither is there any repugnancy in asserting an infallible assurance and denying a perfect assurance; for I infallibly know that there is a God, and that this God is holy, just,

and true, and yet I have no perfect knowledge of a deity, nor of the holiness, justice, and truth of God, for in this life the most knowing man knows but in part. Dear friends! in the church of Christ there are believers of several growths: there are fathers, young men, children, and babes, 1 John 2:13, 14; 1 Peter 2:2. And as in most families there are commonly more children and babes than grown men, so in the church of Christ there are commonly more weak, staggering, doubting Christians than there are strong ones, grown up to a full assurance. Some think that as soon as they be assured, they must needs be void of all fears, and filled with all joy in believing, but this is a real mistake; for glorious and ravishing joy is a separable accident from assurance; nor yet doth assurance exclude all doubts and fears, but only such doubts and fears as ariseth from infidelity and reigning hypocrisy. But,

The tenth maxim or consideration.

X. Tenthly, Consider, We have no ground from Scripture to expect that God should, either by a voice from heaven, or by sending an angel from about his throne, or by any glorious apparitions or strong impressions, or by any extraordinary way of revelations, assure us that we do believe, or that our grace is true, or that our interest in God and Christ is certain, or that our pardon is sealed in heaven, or that we are in a justified state, and that we shall be at last undoubtedly saved. Oh no! But we are to use all those blessed helps and means that are appointed by God, and common to all believers, for the obtaining of a particular assurance that we are believers, and that our state is good, and that we have a special propriety in Christ and in all the fundamental good that comes by him. Mark, he that will receive no establishment, no comfort, no peace, no assurance, except it be administered by the hand of an angel, and witnessed to by some voice from heaven, &c., will certainly live and die without

establishment, comfort, peace, or assurance. Gregory tells us of a religious lady of the empress's bed-chamber, whose name was Gregoria, that, being much troubled about her salvation, did write unto him, that she 'should never cease importuning of him till he had sent her word that he had received a revelation from heaven that her sins were pardoned, and that she was saved.' To whom he returned this answer, 'That it was a hard and altogether a useless matter which she required of him; it was difficult for him to obtain, as being unworthy to have the secret counsels of God to be imparted to him, and it was as unprofitable for her to know: and that, first, because such a revelation might make her too secure; and secondly, because it was impossible for him to demonstrate and make known unto her or any other the truth and infallibility of the revelation which he had received to be from God, so that, should she afterwards call into question the truth of it, as well she might, her troubles and doubtings concerning her salvation would have been as great as they were before.' Oh therefore, let all believers that would have sure establishment, sound comfort, lasting peace, and true and sweet assurance of the love of God, and of their interest in Christ, &c., take heed of flying unto revelations, visions or voices from heaven, to assure them of their salvation, and of the love of God, and of their interest in Christ, &c. If you who are advantaged to consult history, please to do it, you will find upon record that where one hath been mistaken about searching his own heart, and trying his ways, and observing the frame and temper of his own spirit, many hundreds have been eternally deceived and deluded by voices, visions, apparitions, revelations, and strange impulses and strong impressions, especially among the Romanists, 2 Thes. 2:9–12; and within these few years, have not many hundreds in this nation fallen under the same woful delusions, who are all for crying up a light within, and a Christ within? &c. And this you are seriously and conscientiously to observe in opposition to the papists, who boldly

and stoutly affirm that assurance of a man's salvation can be had by no other means than by extraordinary revelation. Witness the council of Trent, who have long since said, 'That if any man say that he knoweth he shall certainly persevere, or infallibly be assured of his election, except he have this by special revelation, let him be Anathema.' Without all peradventure, God will one day cross and curse such a wicked council, that curseth, that anathematizeth his people for asserting and maintaining that that may certainly be obtained in this life, as I have sufficiently proved by ten arguments in my treatise called Heaven on Earth, from page 1 to page 26. I think there is a great truth in that Confession of Faith, that saith that 'infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it; yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may without any extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto; and therefore it is the duty of every one to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure.' But,

The eleventh maxim or consideration.

XI. Eleventhly, Consider that probabilities of grace, of sincerity, of an interest in Christ, and of salvation, may be a very great stay, and a singular support, and a special cordial and comfort to abundance of precious Christians that want that sweet and blessed assurance that their souls do earnestly breathe and long after. There are doubtless many thousands of 'the precious sons and daughters of Zion comparable to fine gold,' Lam. 4:2, that have not a clear and full assurance of their interest in Christ, nor of the saving work of God upon their souls, who yet are able to plead many probabilities of grace, and of an interest in Christ. Now doubtless probabilities of grace and of an interest in Christ may serve to keep off fears and

doubts, and darkness and sadness, and all rash and peremptory conclusions against a man's own soul, and his everlasting welfare, and may contribute very much to the keeping up of a great deal of peace, comfort, and quietness in his soul. The probable grounds that thou hast grace, and that God has begun to work powerfully and savingly upon thee, are mercies more worth than ten thousand worlds. Will you please seriously and frequently to dwell upon these ten particulars.

[1.] First, That though many weak gracious souls do not enjoy communion with God in joy and delight, yet they do enjoy communion with God in sorrow and tears, Hos. 12:4; Isa. 38:3; Ps. 51:17. A man may have communion with God in a heart-humbling, a heart-melting, and a heart-abasing way, when he hath not communion with God in a heart-reviving, a heart-cheering, and a heart-comforting way. It is a very great mistake among many weak, tender-spirited Christians, to think that they have no communion with God in duties, except they meet with God embracing and kissing, cheering and comforting up their souls. And oh that all Christians would remember this once for all, viz., that a Christian may have as real communion with God in a heart-humbling way, as he can have in a heart-comforting way, John 20:11–19. A Christian may have as choice communion with God when his eyes are full of tears, as he can have when his heart is full of joy. When a godly man upon his dying bed was asked which were his most joyful days, either those before his conversion or those since his conversion, upon which he cried out, 'Oh give me my mourning days again, give me my mourning days again, for they were my joyfullest days.' Many times a poor Christian has never more joy in his heart than when his eyes are full of tears. But,

[2.] Secondly, Though many poor, weak, doubting, trembling Christians dare not say that they do love the Lord Jesus Christ, yet they dare say that they would love the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts, and with all their souls, and they dare say, that if it were in their power, they would even shed tears of blood because they cannot love Christ both as they would and as they should. Blessed Bradford would sit and weep at dinner till the tears fell on his trencher, because he could love God no more. So the poor, doubting, trembling Christian mourns and laments because he can love Christ no more. 'A man may love gold, and yet not have it, but no man loveth God but he is sure to have God,' saith Augustine. A good man once cried out, 'I had rather have one Christ, than a thousand worlds.'

[3.] Thirdly, Though many poor, weak, doubting, trembling Christians dare not say that they have grace, yet they dare say that they prize the least dram of grace above all the gold and silver of the Indies. Were all the world a lump of gold, and in their hands to dispose of it, they would give it for grace, yea, for a little grace. Now certainly no man can thus highly prize grace but he that has grace. No man sees the worth and lustre of grace, no man sees a beauty and excellency in grace, nor no man can value grace above the gold of Ophir, but he whose heart has been changed, and whose eyes has been opened by the spirit of grace. But,

[4.] Fourthly, Though many poor, doubting, trembling Christians dare not say that their condition is good, that their condition is safe and happy, yet they dare say that they would not for ten thousand worlds change their conditions with the vain and debauched men of the world, who delight in sin, who wallow in sin, who make a sport of sin, and who live under the reign and dominion of sin. They had rather, with Lazarus, be full of sores and full of wants, and live and die in rags, and after all be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom,

than with Dives, every day to fare sumptuously, and be clothed gloriously, and perish eternally, Luke 16. Though they are poor, and wicked men rich; though they are debased, and wicked men exalted; though they are empty, and wicked men full; though they are low, and wicked men high; though they enjoy nothing, and wicked men enjoy everything; yet they would not for as many worlds as there be men in the world change conditions with them. But,

[5.] Fifthly, Though poor, doubting, staggering, trembling Christians dare not say that they do not sin, because there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not: Eccles, 7:20, 'And because no man can say I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin;' Prov. 20:9, 'And because in many things we offend all;' James 3:2, 'And because if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;' 1 John 1:8, chap. 3:6, 8, 9, 10; yet they dare say that they would not willingly, wilfully, wickedly, resolutely, maliciously, and habitually sin against the Lord to gain the whole world. Though they dare not say they do not sin, yet they dare say, if they might have their choice, they would never dishonour God more, nor crucify the Lord of glory more, nor grieve the Spirit of grace more, nor wound conscience more, nor cloud the face of God more, nor darken their evidences for heaven more, nor interrupt their communion with God more, &c. But,

[6.] Sixthly, Though poor, doubting, staggering, trembling Christians dare not say that God is their God, or that Christ is their Redeemer, or that the Spirit is their Comforter; yet they dare say, that if God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and grace and glory, and holiness and happiness, were offered to them on the one hand, and all the honours, pleasures, profits, delights, and carnal contents of the world were offered them on the other hand, they had ten thousand times rather, they had infinitely rather, choose God, and Christ, and the

Spirit, and grace and holiness, and everlasting happiness, than the contrary: Cant. 5:10; Deut. 26:17; Ps. 73:25; Philip. 3:6–8. Look, as Rachel cried out, 'Give me children, or I die,' Gen. 30:1; so these poor hearts are still crying out, 'O Lord, give me thyself, or I die; give me thy Christ, or I die; give me thy Spirit and grace, or I die; give me pardon of sin, or I die; lift up the light of thy countenance upon me, or I die; bring me under the bond of the covenant, or I die. O Lord, let all these things be done, or I am undone, and that for ever; Lord, let the men of this world take the world, and divide it among themselves; let me but enjoy thyself, thy Christ, thy love, and I shall say, 'My lot is fallen to me in a pleasant place, and verily I have a goodly heritage,' Ps. 16:5, 6. But,

[7.] Seventhly, Though poor, doubting, staggering, trembling Christians dare not say that they have grace in their own hearts, yet they dare say that they dearly love, and highly honour, and greatly prize the graces of the Spirit which they see sparkling and shining in the hearts and lives and lips of other saints. And they dare say that there are no men in all the world that are so precious, so lovely, so worthy, and so honourable in their eyes, or so high in their esteems, as those who have the image of God, of Christ, of holiness, most clearly, fairly and fully stamped upon them. But,

[8.] Eighthly, Though poor, doubting, trembling Christians dare not say that they have such strength and power against their sins as they would have, or as they should have, or as many of the dear saints of God have, who often lead captivity captive; yet they dare say, that when the Lord is pleased, now and then, by his Spirit, power, word, grace, &c., to help them, though it be but a little, against their sins, to help them in any measure to subdue their sins, or to assist them to bring any one sin or another to an under, or to arm them against any temptations, occasions, or provocations to sin, there are no such

times or seasons of joy, comfort, delight, refreshing, and content to their souls as these are: Ps. 65:3, Gal. 5:14. The language of their souls in such a day as this is, is this: Oh that it might be always thus with us! Oh that every day we might lead captivity captive! Oh that every day we might have our lusts at an under! Oh that every day we might triumph over the old man! Oh that every day one lust or another might fall before the power, the Spirit, the presence, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. But,

[9.] Ninthly, Though poor, doubting, staggering, trembling Christians dare not say that they make so much advantage, so much earnings of the sermons they hear, or of the prayers they make, or of the scriptures they read, or of the communion of saints that they enjoy, as others do; yet they dare say that they would not for all the world cast off praying, or hearing, or reading, or the communion of saints, and give up themselves to the ways of sin and Satan, and the world. Ps. 4:3; 66:19, 20; 138:8; Lam. 3:55–58. But,

[10.] Tenthly and lastly, Though poor, doubting, staggering, trembling Christians dare not say that Christ is their Saviour, yet they dare say that they desire and endeavour to honour Christ as their Lord, though they cannot see Christ bestowing himself on them as their Redeemer, John 20:28, yet they are willing to make a resignation of themselves up to him as their king; they are willing to resign up their hearts and lives to the government of Jesus Christ. Though they cannot find comfort, yet they will oppose sin; though they cannot comprehend Christ, yet they will not willingly offend Christ; though they cannot see their own propriety in Christ, yet they desire nothing more than that Christ may claim a propriety in them; though they cannot see Christ as a friend, yet they can look upon sin as an enemy; though they cannot close with the promises, yet they will close with the precepts; though they cannot close with the

privileges of a Christian, yet they will close with the services of a Christian; though they cannot share in the comforts of a Christian, yet they will side with the duties of a Christian; though they cannot clear up their interest in Christ, yet they are willing to yield subjection to Christ; though they want strength to throw themselves into the arms of Christ to save them, yet they will cast themselves at the feet of Christ to serve him; though they want the light of comfort and consolation, yet they will walk in the light of commands and directions, Isa. 1:10.

All men will grant that these ten things are strong probabilities of grace; but give me leave to say that they are, without all controversy, most sure, sound, solid, and infallible evidences of true grace, and of an interest in Christ and salvation; and therefore all those poor doubting, staggering, and trembling Christians that find all these, or any of these ten things in their own souls, they ought for ever to bless the Lord, and speak well of his name upon these accounts. And therefore, O my soul! be thou much in adoring and admiring of free and infinite grace, that hath wrought all these things in thee and for thee.

But now, dear hearts, that this eleventh particular concerning probabilities of grace may the better stick upon you, and be the more seriously minded and weighed by you, I beseech you often to ponder upon these six following things:

[1.] First, That you have deserved hell, and therefore for you to have but a probability of going to heaven, is infinite grace and mercy. You have deserved to be shut up in chains of darkness with devils and damned spirits to all eternity, Jude 6, and therefore for you to have a probability of enjoying for ever the presence of God, Christ, the glorious angels, and 'the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven,'

Heb. 12:22–24, is a mercy more worth than ten thousand worlds. You have deserved to dwell with a 'devouring fire,' Isa. 33:14, and to lie for ever under those flames and torments that are easeless, endless, and remediless; and therefore for you to have a probability of satiating and delighting your souls in that fulness of joy, and in those 'everlasting pleasures that be at God's right hand,' Ps. 16:11, is grace, yea, glorious grace upon the throne, &c. But,

[2.] Secondly, Consider that if you cast up a true and faithful account, you will certainly find that the comfort, the peace, the joy, the quiet, the rest, the satisfaction, the content that the generality of saints do enjoy, is more from probabilities of grace, than it is from any certainty or assurance that they have of grace being in their souls; it is more from probabilities of an interest in Christ, than from any assurance of an interest in Christ; it is more from probabilities of being saved, than it is from any special persuasions that they shall be saved; it is more from probabilities of going to heaven, than it is from any raised fixed confidence that they shall go to heaven; and therefore the people of God have very great cause to bow before the Lord, and to adore his grace, and for ever to speak well of his name, for the very probabilities of grace, and of an interest in Christ, and of being saved and glorified.

[3.] Thirdly, Consider that there have been very many under such dreadful horrors and terrors of conscience, and under such wrath and displeasure of an angry God, and that have lain trembling upon their dying beds, and that have been even ready to be swallowed up in the gulf of despair, who would have given all the world, had it been in their power, for the very probabilities of grace. Spira, being in a deep despair for renouncing of those doctrines of the gospel which he had once stoutly professed, said, 'That he would willingly suffer the most exquisite tortures of hell-fire for the space of ten thousand

years, upon condition he might be well assured to be released afterward.' He further added, in that hellish and horrible fit, that his dear wife and children, for whose sake principally he turned away from the gospel, to embrace this present world, appeared now to him as hangmen, hags, and torturers. A despairing soul is Magor Missabib, a terror to himself; his heart a hell of horror, his conscience an Aceldama, a field of black blood. So that as Augustine describes such a one flying from the field to the city, from the city to his house, from his house to his chamber, from his chamber to his bed, &c., so that he can rest nowhere, but is as if infernal devils in fearful shapes were still following of him, and still terrifying and tormenting his distressed and perplexed soul. Now, doubtless such poor souls would have given ten thousand worlds, had they so many in their hands to give, and that for the very probabilities of grace; and how many tempted, deserted, clouded, wounded, and benighted souls are there, who would think it a heaven on this side heaven, if they could but see probabilities of grace in their souls! Oh, therefore, let not the probabilities of grace be a small thing in your eyes, but bow the knee, and let the high praises of God be found in your mouths, even for probabilities of grace! But,

[4.] Fourthly, Consider that Satan is a very deadly enemy to the least probabilities of grace, and will do all he can to cloud, darken, and obscure probabilities of grace, since divine vengeance has cut him off from the least hopes, from the least probabilities of ever obtaining the least dram of grace or mercy. Oh how does he storm and take on against every probability of grace and mercy that God vouchsafes to his people for their comfort and encouragement! Satan is an old experienced enemy, almost of six thousand years' standing, and he very well knows that probabilities of grace will certainly arm a Christian against many temptations, and sweetly support him under many afflictions, and exceedingly heighten and raise his resolutions.

He knows that probabilities of grace will turn crosses into crowns, storms into calms, and winter nights into summer days. Satan knows that probabilities of grace will make every bitter sweet, and every sweet seven times more sweet; and therefore his spirit rises and swells against every probability of grace. Now the greater Satan's rage is against the probabilities of grace, the more thankful we should be for the probabilities [of] grace. It is good to move and act cross to him, who in all his actings loves to act cross to the glory of God and the good of our souls. But,

[5.] Fifthly, Consider that from probabilities in outward things, men commonly gather a great deal of comfort, support, quietness, and satisfaction. When the physician tells the patient that it is probable, yea, very probable that he will recover, live and do well, oh what a support, comfort, and refreshing is this to the languishing patient! When there is but a probability of a good market, how does the market-man smile; when there is but a probability of good trading, how does the tradesman cheer up; when there is but a probability of a good voyage, how does the merchants' and the mariners' spirits rise; when there is but a probability of a good harvest, how does the husbandman sing; when there is but some hopes, some probability of a pardon for a condemned man, how does his spirits revive, and how does his heart even leap and dance for joy; and so when a Christian has but some hopes, some probabilities of grace, of an interest in Christ, and of being saved, he may well cheer up and maintain his ground against all fears and doubts, objections and temptations. But,

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, Consider there is a great deal of grace and mercy in Scripture peradventures, as you may easily see by comparing the scriptures in the margin together. Scripture peradventures ought to keep down despair, and raise our hopes and our hearts. To know that God is favourable, and that sin is

pardonable, and that mercy is attainable, and that hell is avoidable, is no small comfort to a poor doubting trembling Christian. And as there is a great deal of grace and mercy in Scripture peradventures, so there is a great deal of grace and favour in Scripture may-bes, as you may see by comparing these scriptures in the margin together.3 Now, if Scripture peradventures and Scripture may-bes afford so much support, relief, and comfort to your souls, as indeed they do, then doubtless probabilities of grace, of an interest in Christ, of going to heaven, and of being saved, ought very much to support, relieve, cheer, and comfort the hearts of all those that have such probabilities. A gracious soul may say when he is lowest and weakest, Well, though I dare not say that I have grace, yet I have a peradventure for it; and though I dare not, I cannot say I have an interest in Christ, yet if I have a may-be for it, I ought to bear up bravely and comfortably against all fears and doubts; yea, and to take the comfort and the sweet of all those blessed probabilities of grace, of an interest in Christ, and of being saved, and of all the peradventures and may-bes that are scattered up and down in the book of God, and with Hannah to walk up and down without a sad countenance, 1 Sam. 1:18.

The twelfth maxim or consideration.

XII. Twelfthly, Consider that it is a Christian's greatest wisdom and highest concernment, to take the most commodious time for the casting up of his spiritual accounts. If I would know what I am worth for another world, and what I have to shew for 'the inheritance of the saints in light,' then I am to take my heart when it is at best, and when I am most divinely prepared and fitted for this great service then to enter upon it. It is no wisdom for a man to go to see his face in troubled waters, or to look for a pearl in a puddle. There are some particular times and seasons in which it is no way safe nor

convenient for a Christian to enter upon the trial of his spiritual estate. As, first, When the body is greatly distempered; 2, When the soul is greatly tempted by Satan, or sadly deserted by God; 3, When the conscience is so deeply wounded by some great falls, as that the soul is filled with exceeding great fear, terror, and horror. It is with many poor Christians in this case, as it hath been with some who have been so struck with the fear and horror of death before the judge, that though they were good scholars, and able to read anything, yet fear and horror hath so surprised them, that when their lives have been at stake, and the book hath been given them to read, they have not been able to read one line, one word.2 So many of the precious servants of Christ, when they have been under wounds of conscience, and when they have been filled with fears, terrors, and horrors, they have not been able to look up to heaven, nor read their evidences, nor turn to the breasts of the promises, nor call to mind their former experiences, nor behold the least glimpse of heaven's glories, Ps. 40:12, 77, 88; Job 23:8, 9. No man in his wits, if he were to weigh gold, would weigh it in the midst of high winds, great storms, and horrible tempests, which would so hurry the balance up and down, this way and that, that it would be impossible for him to weigh his gold exactly. Now the trial of our spiritual estates is like the weighing of gold, for we are all to weigh ourselves by the balance of the sanctuary, Job. 31:6; Dan. 5:27. God himself will one day weigh us by that balance, and if we hold weight when he comes to weigh us, we are safe and happy for ever. But when he comes to weigh us in the balance of the sanctuary, if we shall then be found too light, it had been good for us we had never been born. When Belshazzar saw the handwriting upon the wall, his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled, and the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another, verses 5, 6; but what was all this to an everlasting separation from God, and to those endless, ceaseless, and remediless torments that such must endure, who, when they are

weighed in the balance, shall be found too light? 2 Thes. 1:7–10. A man that would weigh gold to a grain, must weigh it in a quiet still place; and so a man that would make an exact trial of his spiritual estate, he must take his soul when it is most serious, quiet, still, and composed; he must take his heart when it is in the best frame, and most disposed to solemn and weighty work. There are some times which are very unapt for a gracious person to sit as judge upon his spiritual estate, and to pass sentence upon his own soul. The best Christians under heaven do meet with divers inward and outward changes; sometimes the light shines so clear that they can see things as they are, but at other times all is dark and cloudy, and tempestuous, and then they are apt to judge themselves by feeling and new representations, and not according to the truth. O sirs! remember this once for all, that times of inward or outward distresses are best for praying, and worst for judging. If a man will at such times pass sentence on himself or his estate as a judge, he will certainly judge unrighteous judgment, for then the soul is not itself, and is very apt and prone to take Satan's work for his own, and to side with him against itself, yea, and then usually it will see nothing, it will think of nothing, it will dwell upon nothing but what makes against itself. 4. When God exercises a man with some exceeding severe and unusual providences, when God steps out of his ordinary way of dispensations in his dealings with a man; when God sets a man up before all the world as a mark to shoot at, as he did Job, Job 7:20, 16:12. Now a poor Christian is ready to doubt and conclude, Surely the Lord has no regard of me, he has no entire love for me, his heart is certainly not towards me, seeing all these sore trials make so much against me; but here the poor Christian is mistaken, as Jacob once was: Gen. 42:36, 'And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me.' But Jacob was out, for all those things made for him, and for the

preservation of the visible church of God in the world, Gen. 45:5–9. Certainly all the afflictions that befall the people of God, are but his love-tokens. 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,' Rev. 3:19, Heb. 12:5, 6, and therefore those Christians are miserably mistaken that take them for testimonies of his wrath, and effects of his disfavour. O sirs! what can be more absurd, displeasing, and provoking, than for a Christian to make that an argument of God's hatred, that he intends for an instance of his love? and yet Christians are apt thus to act. It is observable the apostle reckons affliction amongst God's honoraries and tokens of respect, 'For to you it is given,' saith he, 'not only to believe, but also to suffer,' Philip. 1:29, 'which,' saith father Latimer, 'is the greatest promotion that God gives in this world.' Job, when he was himself, could not but admire at it, Job 7:17, 18, that God should make such an account of man, and that he should so magnify him, and dignify him, as to think him worthy of a rod, a whipping; as to think him worth a melting and trying every morning, yea, every moment. It is certain that great prosperity and worldly glory are no sure tokens of God's love, Prov. 1:32, Ps. 73:5, Eccles. 9:1, 2; and it is certain that great troubles and afflictions are no sure marks of God's hatred; and yet many poor Christians, when the waters of affliction rise high, and are ready to overflow them, oh how apt are they to conclude that God hates them, and will revenge himself upon them, and that they have nothing of God or Christ, or the Spirit, or grace in them! Or, 5, when the Spirit, the Comforter, stands afar off, Lam. 1:16, and withholds those special influences, without which, in a common ordinary way, a Christian cannot divinely, candidly, clearly and impartially transact with God in order to his own peace, comfort and settlement. Or, 6, when either a Christian's evidences are not at hand, or else they are so soiled, darkened, blotted and obscured, as that he is not able to read them. Or 7, when a Christian is extremely oppressed with melancholy. Melancholy is a dark and dusky humour, which disturbs both soul

and body, and the cure of it belongs rather to the physician than to the divine. It is a most pestilent humour where it abounds; one calls it balneum diaboli, the devil's bath; it is a humour that unfits a man for all sorts of services, but especially those that concern his soul, his spiritual estate, his everlasting condition. The melancholy person tries the physician, grieves the minister, wounds relations, and makes sport for the devil. There are five sorts of persons that the devil makes his ass to ride in triumph upon, viz., the ignorant person, the unbelieving person, the proud person, the hypocritical person, and the melancholy person. Melancholy is a disease that works strange passions, strange imaginations, and strange conclusions. It unmans a man, it makes a man call good evil, and evil good; sweet bitter, and bitter sweet; light darkness, and darkness light. The distemper of the body oftentimes causeth distemper of soul, for the soul followeth the temper of the body. A melancholy spirit is a dumb spirit; you can get nothing out of him; and a deaf spirit, you can get nothing into him.2 Now of all the evil spirits we read of in the Gospel, the dumb and the deaf were the worst. Darkness, sadness, solitariness, heaviness, mourning, &c., are the only sweet, desirable, and delightful companions of melancholy persons. Melancholy makes every sweet bitter, and every bitter seven times more bitter. The melancholy person is marvellously prone to bid sleep farewell, and joy farewell, and meat farewell, and friends farewell, and ordinances farewell, and duties farewell, and promises farewell, and ministers farewell, and his calling farewell, and it is well if he be not even ready to bid God farewell too. Melancholy persons are like idols, that have eyes but see not, and tongues but speak not, and ears but hear not. Melancholy turns truths into fables, and fables into truths; it turns fancies into realities, and realities into fancies. Melancholy is a fire that burns inwards and is hard to quench. Now if a Christian be under the power of natural or accidental melancholy, his work is not now to be a-trying his estate, or a-casting up of his accounts to see

what he is worth for another world, but to use all such ways and means as God hath prepared in a natural way for the cure of melancholy; for as the soul is not cured by natural causes, so the body is not cured by spiritual remedies. Now in the seven cases last mentioned, a Christian's work lies rather in mourning, self-judging, self-loathing, self-abhorring, and in repenting and reforming, and in fresh and frequent exercises of faith on the Lord Jesus, on his blood, on his promises, and on his free rich sovereign and glorious grace, that is displayed and offered in the gospel, and in a patient waiting upon the Lord in the use of all holy and heavenly helps for deliverance out of his present straits, trials and exercises, than in falling upon that great work of casting up his spiritual accounts, and of searching into the records of glory, to see whether his name be registered in the book of life or no. O sirs! when poor Christians are bewildered, their proper work is to cast themselves upon the promises, to trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay themselves upon their God, Isa. 1:10. Job, in a cloudy stormy day, resolves to trust in the Lord, though he should slay him, Job 13:15; and so must you. And oh that this rule were more seriously minded, and effectually observed by all doubting, trembling, and staggering Christians. But,

The thirteenth maxim or consideration.

XIII. Thirteenthly, Consider you must never judge yourselves unsound, or hypocrites, by those things which the Scripture never makes a character of an unsound Christian, or of an hypocrite, or of hypocrisy. Mark, as you are to receive no comfort, but what is backed with clear scripture, nor no evidences for the goodness and happiness of your spiritual estate and condition, but such as are backed with clear scriptures; so you are to receive, you are to admit of no arguments, nor pleas, nor reasonings, to prove yourself an

hypocrite, or unsound, or that you have no grace, or that your spiritual estate and condition is not good, but such arguments, pleas, and reasonings, as are backed with clear scriptures. Now tell me, O thou weak, doubting, staggering, trembling Christian, if thou canst, where are those clear scriptures that proves wandering thoughts in duty, or that proves narrowness or straitness of spirit in a duty, to be characters of an hypocrite, or of hypocrisy, or of one that is unsound? Tell me, O thou sighing Christian, if thou canst, where are those clear scriptures that proves the want of a good memory for the best things, or the want of those gifts or abilities that many Christians have, to pray, to speak, to discourse, to open Scripture, or to dispute for the concernments of Christ and his kingdom, to be characters of an hypocrite or of hypocrisy, or of one that is unsound? Tell me, O thou distressed Christian, if thou canst, where are those clear scriptures that will justify thee to conclude that thou art an hypocrite, because thou art without the present evidence of thy sincerity? Are there not many of the precious sons and daughters of Zion, comparable to fine gold, Lam. 4:2, who have true grace and sincerity in their hearts, though for the present it be hid from their eyes? Isa. 1:10, 1 John 5:13. Joseph's brethren had their money in their sacks, though they did not see it, nor know it till they came to their inn and opened them, Gen. 44. So many of the dear children of God have sincerity in their hearts, though for the present they do not see it nor know it. O sirs! it is Christ's work, not grace's, to evidence itself so clearly and fully to our eyes, as to enable us to own it. It is one thing for the Spirit of God to work grace in the soul, and another thing for the Spirit to shine upon his own work. Now, till the Spirit shines upon his own work, the soul is in the dark. The graces of the Spirit are best seen in the light of the Spirit, as we see the sun best by his own light, 1 Cor. 2:12. It is good for doubting Christians when they are in the dark, to hold fast this conclusion, viz., that they may be upright, though at present they are not able to see their uprightness. Now,

though this will not bring in a full tide of comfort into their souls, yet it will keep them from despair, and it will support and uphold their hearts, till the Spirit, who is a messenger of a thousand, shall shew them their uprightness. Tell me, O thou mourning Christian, if thou canst, where are those clear scriptures that proves deadness, dulness, and indisposedness in duty, though it be sadly lamented, bewailed, and mourned over, and much striven against, yea, though it be the great grief and burden of the soul, to be characters of hypocrites, or of hypocrisy, or of one that is unsound? Tell me, O thou disquieted Christian, if thou canst, where are those clear scriptures that proves the want of those enlargements, ravishments, joys, comforts, peace, or assurance that some others have, to be characters of hypocrites or hypocrisy, or of one that is unsound? And yet, upon the account of the above mentioned things on the one hand, and under a sensible want of the things last cited on the other hand, how exceeding apt and prone are many poor weak, doubting, trembling Christians, confidently and peremptorily to conclude themselves to be hypocrites, and to be unsound, and that they have not a dram of grace, nor no saving interest in Christ at all! O sirs! remember this once for all, that as you must never admit of any arguments, pleas, or reasonings, for the comfort, peace, and refreshment of your souls, but such as are attended with the evidence of clear Scripture, but such as are backed with pregnant scriptures, so you must never admit of any pleas, arguments, or reasonings, to trouble, vex, perplex, and disquiet the peace of your souls, but such as are attended with clear Scripture evidence, but such as are well backed with canonical Scripture. Now if this choice rule were but wisely observed, and carefully, frequently, and conscientiously practised by many weak, doubting, trembling Christians, how would it set them at liberty from their fears, doubts, and misgivings of heart! how would it knock off all their chains, and wipe all tears from their eyes, and remove that sadness that lies like a load upon their hearts, and how

soon would it bring them into a condition of peace, comfort, quietness, and settlement. O sirs! every working and appearance of hypocrisy doth not presently prove the person in whom it is to be an hypocrite. A man may be hypocritical, either, 1, really; or, 2, in opinion and fancy. Many of the dear children of God are very apt and prone many times both to suspect and falsely charge the true estate of their souls. A child in a distemper may question the inheritance which is entailed on him, &c.; but, remember this, if thy heart be upright, all comfort is thy portion; for as our distrustful fears do not prejudice the reality of the estate of grace, so our frequent suspicions that we are hypocrites, does not cut us off from the title and right of promised comforts. Christians must carefully distinguish between the presence of hypocrisy and the predominancy of hypocrisy. In the most upright hearts that are in the world, there is more or less hypocrisy remaining in them. All the saints that ever were in the world have found more or less of this root of bitterness springing up in them, Rom. 7:22, 23, Heb. 12:15. It is not the presence of hypocrisy, but the reign of hypocrisy that damns the soul. That hypocrisy that is discerned, resisted, opposed, and mourned over, will never make a Christian miserable. Where the standing frame and general bent of a man's heart is upright, there the presence of hypocrisy cannot denominate a man an hypocrite. All men must stand and fall for ever according to the standing frame and general bent of their hearts. If the standing frame and general bent of their hearts be sincere, they are happy for ever; but if the standing frame and general bent of their hearts be hypocritical, they are miserable for ever. But,

The fourteenth maxim or consideration.

XIV. Fourteenthly, Consider you must never judge yourselves unsound, or hypocrites, for such things, or from such considerations,

or by such arguments or reasonings, which being admitted and granted to be true, will necessarily and unavoidably prove the whole generation of the faithful, the whole body of them that fear the Lord, to be unsound, and to be a pack of notorious hypocrites, Ps. 73:15. He that shall judge himself unsound, or an hypocrite, because his thoughts and imaginations are that he is not sincere, or because he is thus and thus tempted, or because he is at particular times, and in particular cases, thus and thus worsted and captivated by sin, Isa. 55:7–9, notwithstanding all the resistance that he is able to make against it, and notwithstanding his hatred of it, and his loathing and judging of himself for it, or because he is thus and thus afflicted in his family, or in his relations, or in his own person; or because he is thus and thus distracted in prayer, and straitened in prayer; or because he is sometimes troubled with sad, hard, hideous, and blasphemous thoughts of God; he does in so judging judge and condemn the whole generation of the righteous, for there are none of them but first or last, more or less, have been exercised even as he is, or as he has been exercised. Who dare judge his neighbour, his brother, his friend, an hypocrite, because the hand of the Lord has been various ways lifted up against him, or because Satan has been let loose to play with his grand battery upon him? Now if thou darest not judge thy neighbour an hypocrite upon these accounts, how darest thou to judge thyself an hypocrite upon the very same accounts? When thy neighbour, thy brother, thy friend is thus and thus afflicted, tempted, distressed, &c., thou canst tell them that this has been the common lot of the people of God in all the ages of the world; thou canst tell them that no man knows love or hatred by these things, and that all things come alike to all; thou canst tell them that the choicest saints have been most afflicted, tempted, clouded, and distressed; thou canst tell them that all shall end well, that all shall issue well. Remember the patience of Job, and consider the end that the Lord made with him. Thou canst tell them that thou

hast got that good by afflictions, temptations, cloudings, distresses, that thou wouldst not exchange for ten thousand worlds. Now if Christians, when they are afflicted, tempted, clouded, distressed, would be but as kind, favourable, and merciful to themselves as they are to others in the same condition, how well would it be with them, how soon would they get out of the snare! O sirs! if this rule were but prudently considered, and seriously practised, how would the fears, doubts, and darknesses of many poor weak, doubting, staggering, and trembling Christians vanish, and what peace, comfort, and settlement would they quickly find. O sirs! we must never stand to that judgment which we pass upon our spiritual estates, which is irrational, or without sufficient ground from Scripture, or which would be to condemn the generation of the just. We may safely appeal from that sentence of our judgment, which acts itself in times of passion or violent temptation, as he did from Alexander drunk to Alexander sober, &c. We must not unjustly vex our own hearts, and dash out our integrity, when the sentence that we pass upon ourselves is rather of imagination than of reason. When a man thinks, and thinks again and again that his heart is not sincere with God, though many, if not all, evidences of sincerity appear in him, and when he cannot produce any one inherently distinguishing ground of an hypocrite in himself, why this is but an imaginary judgment, and utterly unreasonable, for this is to condemn the innocent without cause. O sirs! that soul will never be settled in peace and comfort, which gives way to his own imaginations and passions, and which hath a conceit that every sinful thought, or violent temptation, or more durable conflict with an inward corruption, or the resurrection of some old sin, or frequent distractions in religious duties, or particular falls or slips into this or that sin, cannot stand with grace, cannot stand with uprightness, cannot stand with singleness and soundness of heart. Oh that you would for ever remember this, viz., that where a man hath either no

ground at all, or those that he hath are false, he should never so settle on them, and yield and entertain them, as to question his estate for them, or for them to shut the door of comfort against his own soul. But,

The fifteenth maxim or consideration.

XV. Fifteenthly, Consider in judging of yourselves and your spiritual estates and conditions, you must always have an eye to your natural tempers, complexions, constitutions, and inclinations, and the sins and temptations that these do lay you most open to, and remember that as in some tempers a little grace makes a very great show, so in other tempers a great deal of grace makes but a very little show. A little water in a long narrow-mouthed glass seems to be a great deal, when ten times, yea, twenty times as much in a large cistern is hardly discernible; the application is easy. A little sugar will serve well enough for sweet wines, but much more is requisite to sweeten that wine that is sharp and harsh. A little grace will make a very glorious show in such men and women whose very natural tempers are sweet, soft, gentle, meek, affable, courteous; when a great deal of grace is hardly discernible in those men and women whose very natural tempers are cross, crooked, choleric, fierce, passionate, rough, and unhewn. As a good man said of an eminent light now in heaven, 'That he had grace enough for ten men, but scarce enough for himself,' his natural temper was so bad, which he would himself often lament and bewail, saying to his friends, 'That he had such a cross, crooked nature, that if God had not given him grace, none would have been able to have lived one day quietly with him.' A sincere Christian may have more roughness of nature, and more sturdiness of passions, than is in many a moral man. He that hath more Christianity may have less morality, as there is more perfection of animal and sensitive faculties in some brutes than in some men. It

is an old experienced truth, that those sins are with the greatest pains, labour, travail, and difficulty subdued and mortified, which our natural tempers, complexions, and constitutions do most strongly incline and dispose us to, and were but those lusts subdued and brought under, it would be no difficult thing to bring all other things to an under. When Goliath was slain, the Philistines fled, 1 Sam. 17:51, 52; when a general in an army falls, the common soldiers are quickly routed. So it is here; get but the sins of your natural tempers, complexions, and constitutions under your feet, and you will quickly ride in a holy triumph over the rest. When justice is effectually done upon your constitution-sins, other sins will not be long lived; thrust but a dart through the heart of Absolom, and a complete conquest will follow, 2 Sam. 18:14, seq. Now before I close up this particular, let me advise you frequently to consider, that you can never make a true, a right, a serious judgment of yourselves, or of your spiritual estates and conditions, without a prudent eye upon your natural tempers, complexions, and constitutions, granting to yourselves such indulgence and grains of allowance upon the account of your natural tempers, as will stand with sincerity and the covenant of grace. But,

The sixteenth maxim or consideration.

XVI. Sixteenthly, Consider, if you cannot, if you dare not say that you have grace, yet do not say that you have no grace, for the being of grace in the soul is one thing, and the seeing of grace in the soul is another thing. Mark 4:26–28: A man may have grace, and yet not know that he has grace; he may have a seed of God in him, and yet not see it. 1 John 5:13, He may believe, and yet not believe that he does believe; the child lives before it knows that it lives. If you cannot say that your graces are true, yet do not say they are counterfeit, lest you bear false witness against the real work of the Spirit in you.

There are none so apt to question the truth of their grace as those are that are truly gracious. Though Satan cannot hinder the Holy Spirit from working true grace in the soul, yet he will do all he can to fill the soul with fears and doubts and jealousies about the truth of that grace that the Holy Spirit has wrought in it, 1 John 4:4; Ps. 77. When did you ever know the devil to tempt an hypocrite to believe that his graces were not true, and that certainly he had not the root of the matter in him? If you cannot say that you have an interest in Christ, yet do not say that you have no interest in Christ; for a man may have an interest in Christ, and yet not see his interest in Christ, not know his interest in Christ. There are many precious Christians that walk in darkness, who yet have an interest in that Jesus that is all light, life, and love, Isa. 1:10. If you cannot say that your pardon is sealed in the court of your own conscience, yet do not say that it is not sealed in the court of heaven; for many a Christian has his pardon sealed in the court of heaven, before it is sealed in the court of his own conscience, Ps. 51. A pardon sealed in the court of conscience, is that new name and white stone which God does not give to every one at first conversion, Rev. 2:17. God will take his own time to seal up every Christian's pardon in his bosom. If you cannot say that your name is written in the book of life, yet do not say that it is not written in the book of life. The disciples' names were first written in heaven before Christ bid them rejoice because their names were written in heaven, Luke 10:20. A man may have his name written in heaven, and yet it may be a long while before God may tell him that his name is written in heaven. Ay, you cannot say that the precious promises are yours, yet do not say that they are children's bread, and such dainties that your soul shall never taste of. It is not every precious Christian, that has an interest in the promises, that can run and read his interest in the promises, Ps. 77, 88; 1 Pet. 1:4. If you cannot say that the heavenly inheritance is yours, yet do not say that it is not yours. A Christian may have a good title to the heavenly inheritance,

and yet not be able to make good his title, to clear up his title; as a child in the arms or in the cradle may be heir to a crown, a kingdom, and yet he is not able to make good his title. If you cannot say that you have assurance, yet do not say that you shall never have assurance, for a man may want assurance one year, and have it the next; one month, and have it another; one week, and have it another; one day, and have it another; yea, one hour, and have it another, Luke 19:1–10; Acts 16:29–35; Rom. 11:33. If you cannot say that you shall certainly go to heaven, yet do not say that you shall undoubtedly go to hell; for who made you one of the privy-councillors of heaven? Who acquainted you with the secret decrees of God? &c. Now were this rule but thoroughly minded, and conscientiously practised, oh how well would it go with many tempted, troubled, bewildered, and clouded Christians! Oh how would Satan be disappointed, and poor souls quieted, composed, and refreshed. But,

The seventeenth maxim or consideration.

XVII. Seventeenthly, Whenever you cast your eye upon your gracious evidences, it highly concerns you seriously to remember that you have to deal with God in a covenant of grace, and not in a covenant of works. Every breach of peace with God is not a breach of covenant with God. Though the wife hath many weaknesses and infirmities hanging upon her, and though she may often grieve, provoke, and displease her husband, yet as long as she remains faithful, and truly loving, and in the main obedient to him, though he may alter his carriage towards her, yet he will not withdraw his love from her, or deny his relation to her. No more will God towards his weak miscarrying ones, as you may evidently see by comparing the scriptures in the margin together. Doubtless there are many dear Christians whose troubles of conscience about their spiritual and

eternal estates arise from their looking upon God and dealing with God in a covenant of works.2 Are there not many precious Christians, who, when they fall before temptations, and are worsted by their corruptions, that are ready to question all, and throw up all as loss and peremptorily to conclude against their own souls, that all is naught, very naught, stark naught, and that they are hypocrites, and that God will never own such as they are, nor never accept of such as they are, nor never delight in such as they are, nor never have anything to do with such as they are; and all this because they do not aright understand the covenant of grace, and think that they have to deal with God in a covenant of works. Though many Christians do freely and readily acknowledge that there is a covenant of grace, yet upon the least stirring of any corruption, or the least conquest that is made upon them by the violence of any temptation, they are so full of fears, faintings, reasonings, diffidences, and despondencies, &c., and they carry it so weakly and unworthily towards the Lord, as if there were no covenant of grace at all, or as if they had wholly and only to deal with God in a covenant of works. Now what a high dishonour is this to the free, rich, infinite, sovereign, and glorious grace of God, which so sparkles and shines in the covenant of grace, and which tells us that our eternal estates shall never be judged by a covenant of works, and that the want of an absolute perfection shall never damn a believing soul, and that the obedience that God requires at our hands is not a legal but evangelical! Oh that all those dear Christians who are so apt to be dejected and overwhelmed upon the account of the prevalency of such and such corruptions, and because they fail in keeping covenant with God, and in walking in a covenant-relation with God; I say, oh that all these would frequently and seriously consider of these three things.

[1.] First, That so long as a Christian doth not renounce his covenant with God, so long as he doth not wilfully and wickedly break the

bond of the covenant, the substance of the covenant is not yet broken, though some articles of the covenant may be violated, Ps. 89:30–35, 2 Sam. 23:5. While Christ lies at the bottom of the covenant, it cannot be utterly broken. As among men there be some trespasses against some particular clauses in covenants, which, though they be violated, yet the whole covenant is not forfeited; it is so here. Every jar, every miscarriage doth not break the marriage covenant; no more doth every sin, every miscarriage break the covenant between God and the soul. But,

[2.] Secondly, Seriously consider that many weak Christians are much mistaken about the terms and condition of the covenant of grace; they think that the condition of the covenant is perfect and unsinning obedience, whereas it is only sincere obedience. Mark, that man sincerely obeys and sincerely walks in covenant with God, who sincerely, who heartily, who ordinarily desires, labours, and endeavours to obey the law of God, the will of God, and to walk in covenant with God. Mark, particular actions do not denominate any estate; it is the course of actions which doth denominate a man's walking in covenant with God, or his not walking in covenant with God. If his course of actions be sinful, he walks not in covenant with God; but if his course of actions be holy and gracious, he walks in covenant with God. Though the needle of the seaman's compass may jog this way and that way, yet the bent of the needle will still be northward; so though a Christian in covenant with God may have his particular sinful joggings this way or that way, yet the bent of his heart will still be to walk in covenant with God. But,

[3.] Thirdly, Consider that infirmities, aberrations of weakness, do not nullify or evacuate our covenant with God, nor hinder our walking in covenant with God; for if they should, then no man could possibly keep covenant with God, or walk in covenant with God.

Infirmities God passes by and pardons in course, and will never put them into the account, and therefore they cannot hinder our walking in covenant with God. Breaches made in the first covenant were irreparable, but breaches made in the covenant of grace are not so, because this covenant is established in Christ, who is still a-making up all breaches. Mark, there are five things which shew that the deviations of God's people are only infirmities and not enormities, weaknesses and not wickednesses; and the first is this, viz., that they do frequently and principally arise from the subtilty and sudden power of Satan's temptations. 1 Chron. 21:1. (2.) That the frame of their spirits is against the evil that they do, Rom. 7:15, 16, 19, 23, 24. (3.) Their daily cries, tears, and complaints, speak it out to be an infirmity. They are in this particular like a lost sheep, or a lost child, or a lost friend. (4.) Though they do fall, yet they rise again; though they do step or wander out of the way, yet they do return into the right way again. (5.) When they do fall, there is a vast difference, a mighty difference between their falls, and the falls of wicked men that are not in covenant with God, and that [1.] first, in respect of willingness; [2.] in respect of choice; [3.] in respect of affection; [4.] in respect of course; [5.] in respect of quietness; [6.] in respect of continuance. Mark, when wicked men fall, when men out of covenant with God fall, then they fall willingly, they fall out of choice, they fall out of affection to fall, they fall in a course, they fall, and they are quiet under their falls; they fall, and continue to fall, 'to-morrow shall be as to-day,' Isa. 55:12. But persons in covenant with God, though they do fall, yet they do not fall, nor cannot fall, as they do that are out of covenant with God. For [1.] first, there is in all such persons an habitual purpose to keep covenant with God; [2.] an habitual desire to keep covenant with God; [3.] an habitual resolution to keep covenant with God; [4.] an habitual endeavour to keep covenant with God. Now, where it is thus, that man is certainly in covenant with God, and that man walks in covenant with God; he

is under a covenant of grace; his sins are pardoned, and therefore they shall never be his ruin. Doubtless many precious Christians have charged and condemned themselves for those things that the great God will never charge them with, nor condemn them for, Isa. 63:17. Blessed Bradford wrote himself an hypocrite, a painted sepulchre; but doubtless God will never bring in such a charge against him. O sirs! the stirrings of sin, and the workings of sin, and the prevalency of sin for particular acts will stand with the covenant of grace, though not with the covenant of works. You may not by any means conclude that you are not in a covenant of grace, because such and such corruptions stirs in you, or because such or such weaknesses now and then breaks forth and discovers themselves, either in your lips or lives. Did Christians but study the covenant of grace more, and understand better than they do the difference between the covenant of grace and the covenant of works, how would their fears and doubts about their spiritual and eternal estates vanish, as the clouds before the sun when it shines in its greatest strength and glory! &c.

It was the saying of an eminent minister on his deathbed, that he had much peace and quietness, not so much from a greater measure of grace than other Christians had, or from any immediate witness of the Spirit, but because he had a more clear understanding of the covenant of grace than many others, having studied it and preached it so many years as he had done. Doubtless, had Christians a more clear and a more full understanding of the covenant of grace, they would live more holily, serviceably, humbly, fruitfully, comfortably, and sweetly than they do; and they would die more willingly, readily, and cheerfully than many (may I not say than most?) Christians use to do. But,

The eighteenth maxim or consideration.

XVIII. Eighteenthly and lastly, That trouble, grief, and sorrow for sin, that drives a man from God, is sinful, and must one day be repented of and wept over. All true trouble, grief and sorrow, drives to God, as is evident by the scriptures in the margin. Suppose thou hast so and so sinned, yet it is a false inference that therefore thou shouldst be discouraged, and let thy hopes sink, and thy heart faint, as if there were no help, no hope, no comfort for thee in thy God.

Quest. But when is a man's trouble or sorrow for sin sinful?

Ans. [1.] When it keeps Christ and the soul asunder. [2.] When it keeps the soul and the promises asunder. [3.] When it unfits a man for the duties of his place and calling, wherein the providence of God has stated him. [4.] When it unfits a man for the duties of religion, either private or public. [5.] When it takes off the sweet and comfort of all outward comforts and enjoyments, and renders all our mercies like the white of an egg, that has no taste or savour in it. [6.] When it weakens, wastes, or destroys the outward man; all godly sorrow is a friend to the soul, and no enemy to the body.

And thus much for those divine maxims, considerations, and rules that are seriously to be minded and observed in order to the clearing up a man's interest in Christ, and his title to all the glory of another world. Certainly these eighteen maxims, considerations, or rules, if God shall please powerfully to set in with them, are of singular use for the clearing up of the saving work of God upon poor souls. And therefore it highly concerns Christians seriously to ponder upon them, as Mary did upon the sayings of the angel in her heart, Luke 2:19. Now these things being premised, I shall come in the next chapter to lay down some infallible evidences of saving grace.

CHAPTER II

Many choice, precious, and infallible evidences of true saving grace

Containing many choice, precious, and infallible evidences of true saving grace, upon which a Christian may safely and securely, comfortably and confidently, rest and adventure the weight of his precious and immortal soul, and by which he may certainly know that it shall go well with him for ever; and that he has a real saving interest in Christ, and shall be everlastingly happy, when he shall be here no more, &c.

I. First, There are some things in regard of sin, and a Christian's actings about it, that speaks out a gracious estate, and that discovers a saving principle of grace to be in the soul. I shall instance in these eleven particulars.

[1.] First, A universal willingness to be rid of all sin, is an infallible evidence of the truth of grace in a man's soul. The first saving work of the Spirit upon the soul is the dividing between sin and the soul; it is a making an utter breach betwixt sin and the soul; it is a dissolving of that old league that has been between the sinner and his sin. The first work of the Spirit is to make a man look upon sin as an enemy, and to deal with sin as an enemy, to hate it as an enemy, to loathe it as an enemy, to fear it as an enemy, and to arm against it as an enemy. When the Holy Spirit takes possession of a soul, from that day forward the soul looks upon sin with as evil and as envious an eye as Saul looked on David when the evil spirit was upon him. Oh, saith Saul, that I were but once well rid of this David; and oh, saith the gracious soul, that I were but once well rid of this proud heart, this hard heart, this unbelieving heart, this unclean heart, this froward

heart, this earthly heart of mine, &c. Look, as the daughters of Heth even made Rebekah weary of her life, Gen. 26:35, so corruptions within makes the gracious soul even weary of his life. 'Many a day have I sought death with tears,' said blessed Cowper, 'not out of impatience, distrust, or perturbation, but because I am weary of sin, and fearful to fall into it.' Look, as when Christ hath won the will, he hath won the man; so when sin hath lost the will, it hath lost the man. The will is the heart; 'My son, give me thy heart,' is, My son, give me thy will. The will is the fort-royal of the soul; it is that stronghold that stands out stoutest and longest against all the assaults of heaven. When the will is won, all is won, the castle is won, the heart is won; the man is won when the will is won. A man's judgment and reason may say, I ought to turn from sin, and his conscience may say, I must turn from sin, or it will be bitterness in the end, and yet the work not done, nor the soul won; but when the heart says, the will says, I will turn from sin, then the work is done, and the man is won. Where reason saith these lusts ought to be subdued, and the conscience saith these lusts must be subdued, and the will saith these lusts shall be subdued,—Ps. 65:3, 'As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away,'—there is a saving work upon the soul. When the will says to sin, as Ephraim said to his idols, 'Get you hence, what have I any more to do with you?' Hosea 14:8, then the work of God is begun in power upon the soul.

A universal willingness to be rid of all sin, speaks the heart to be sound and sincere with God. The enmity that grace works in the heart against sin is against the whole kind; it is against all sin, as well profitable and pleasurable sins as disparaging and disgracing sins; and as well against small sins as against great sins. True grace strikes at root and branch, at head and members, at father and son. A true Israelite would not have one Canaanite left in the holy land; he would have every Egyptian drowned in the red sea of Christ's blood: Ps.

119:104, 'I hate every false way': Ps. 139:24, 'Search me, O Lord! and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' Saving grace makes a man as willing to leave his lusts, as a slave is willing to leave his galley, or a prisoner his dungeon, or a thief his bolts, or a beggar his rags. But now take a man that is in his natural condition, and he is as unwilling to part with his sins, as Abraham was to turn Hagar and Ishmael out of doors. Ambrose reports of one Theotimus, that having a disease upon his body, the physician told him, That except he did abstain from intemperance, drunkenness, uncleanness, &c., he was like to lose his eyes; his heart was so desperately set upon his lusts, that he answered, Vale lumen amicum, Farewell, sweet light then; he had rather lose his eyes than leave his sins. So they in Micah 6:6, 7, do make very large offers for a dispensation to live in their sins; they offer calves of a year old; they offer thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil; yea, they offer their first born for their transgressions, the fruit of their bodies for the sin of their souls. Sinners' hearts are so glued to their lusts, that they will rather part with their nearest, dearest, and choicest enjoyments, than part with their sins; yea, when they are put hard to it, they will rather part with God, Christ, and all the glory of another world, than they will part with some base bosom lust. Witness that young man in the Gospel, who went away sorrowful, because he had great possessions, Mat. 19:21, 22. Look, as a man leaves his wife and children, his country, estate, and trade, with tears in his eyes and sorrow in his heart; so does an unregenerate man leave his lusts, with tears in his eyes and sorrow in his heart. Very observable is the story of Phaltiel: David had married Michal; Saul injuriously gave her to another. When David came to the crown, and was able to speak a word of command, he sends for his wife Michal; her husband dares not but obey; he brings her on her journey, and then, not without great reluctancy of spirit, takes his leave of her. But what, was Phaltiel weary of his wife that he now forsakes her? Oh no! he

was forced to it, and though she was gone, yet he cast many a sad thought after her, and never leaves looking till he sees her as far as Bahurim, weeping and bemoaning her absence, 2 Sam. 3:15, 16. And just thus it is with carnal and unregenerate men, who, though for fear, or some other reasons, they shake hands with their sins, yet they have many a longing heart after them; they part, but it is upon a force; they part, and yet they are very loath to part asunder. Look, as the merchant throws away his goods in a storm, because he cannot keep them, so carnal men, in times of sickness and distress, or in times of horror and terror of conscience, or when death, the king of terrors, knocks at their doors, or when they see hell gaping to devour them, and God as a terrible judge standing ready to pass an eternal doom upon them, then they are willing to cast overboard their usury, their drunkenness, their swearing, their cursing, their lying, their flesh-pleasing, &c.; but not out of any hatred to their lusts, but out of love to themselves, and out of fear of being damned, &c.; for could they but enjoy their sins and heaven too, sin and they would never part. But now, were there no danger, no wrath, no hell, no damnation, no separation from God attending sin, yet a gracious soul would be heartily willing to part with all sin, and to be rid of all sin, upon the account of the vile nature of sin, upon the account of the defiling and polluting nature of sin. Of all things in the world, sin is the most defiling thing; it makes us red with guilt and black with filth; it is compared to a menstruous cloth, Isa. 30:22, which of all unclean things in the law was the most unclean, as some observe; and upon this very account a gracious soul would be willingly rid of it.

[2.] Secondly, A constant habitual willingness to be rid of all sin, is an infallible evidence of the truth of grace in the soul. It is not a transient willingness to be rid of sin, when a man is either under some outward trouble, or some inward distress, that speaks out the

truth of saving grace, but a permanent, lasting, and abiding willingness to be rid of sin does. Pharaoh in a fit, in a fright, when thunder and hail and frogs and flies were upon him, was then willing to let Israel go; but when his fright was over, and the judgments removed, he grew prouder and harder than before. So many men, when they are a little sermon-sick, or under some smart pangs of conscience, or under some startling or amazing judgments, oh! then they will be willing to let Israel go, then they will be willing to let drunkenness go, and pride go, and uncleanness go, and worldliness go, &c.; but when their sickness is over, and the pangs of conscience abated, and judgments removed, oh! then they return with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow to the wallowing in the mire again. There was a man well known to a minister in this city, who, in the time of his sickness, was so terrified in his conscience for his sins, that he made the very bed to shake upon which he lay, and cried out all night long, 'I am damned, I am damned, I am damned;' and this man, in the days of his outward and inward distresses, made many and great protestations of amendment of life if God would be pleased to recover him; in a little while he did recover, and being recovered he was as bad and as wicked, if not worse, than he was before, 2 Pet. 2:20–22. So in the time of the great sweat in king Edward's days, as long as the heat of the plague lasted, all sorts and ranks of people were still a-crying out, Peccavi: 'Mercy, good Lord, mercy, mercy, mercy!' Then lords and ladies, and other persons of quality, cried out to the ministers, 'For God's sake tell us what we shall do to avoid the wrath of God; take these bags; pay so much to such a one whom I have deceived, and so much restore unto another, whom in bargaining I over-reached; oh! give so much to the poor, and give so much to such and such pious uses.' But after the sickness was over, they were just the same men that they were before. Men in time of trouble are very ready to cry out, 'Arise and save us,' Jer. 2:27; and with them, 'Deliver us this time,' Judges 10:15; and with the

Samaritans, who when God had sent lions among them, inquired after the manner of his worship, 2 Kings 17:25, 26; and yet after all this to remain as vile and wicked as they did: Jer. 2:20, 'For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands, and thou saidst, I will not transgress, when upon every high hill, and under every green tree thou wanderedst, playing the harlot.' A wicked man's willingness to be rid of his sins is transient, not constant; it is like the morning cloud and the early dew, that passeth away, Hosea 6:4. The Jews were a very unstable people, a people bent to backsliding, a people that would often start aside like a deceitful bow, Hosea 11:7; Ps. 78:34, 37, 57; Hosea 7:16. Sometimes when the judgments of God were heavy upon them, or when they were under the reign of some good kings, then down went their groves, their altars, their idols, and their high places; but soon after you shall have them as much set upon idolatry as before; sometimes they were willing to be rid of their idols, and at other times they were mad to go a-whoring after their idols. But now a godly man, when he is himself, he is never unwilling to be rid of his sins, yea, to be rid of all his sins. The fixed, standing, and abiding disposition and bent of a godly man's soul, of a godly man's will, is to be rid of every sin; and thrice happy is that man that is habitually under such a choice and blessed frame.

[3.] Thirdly, A transcendant willingness, a superlative willingness, an overtopping willingness to be rid of sin, is an infallible evidence of the truth of grace in the soul. When a man's willingness to be rid of his sins overtops his unwillingness; when a man is more willing to be rid of his sins than he is to continue in sin, then his spiritual state is certainly good. A gracious heart had much rather, if it were put to his choice, live without all sin, than to have allowance to wallow in any sin; he had rather live without the least sin, than to have liberty to live in the greatest, or the most flesh-pleasing sin. It is certain that sin is more afflictive to a gracious soul than all the losses, crosses,

troubles, and trials that he meets with in the world. David cries, not Perii, but Peccavi; not 'I am undone,' but 'I have done foolishly,' 2 Sam. 24:10. He does not cry, Take away the pestilence, but, Take away the iniquity of thy servant. Nor Daniel cries not out, Oh we are sadly reproached, we are greatly distressed, we are wofully oppressed, but, We have rebelled, Dan. 9:5. And the church cries not out, Take away our captivity, but, Take away all iniquity. It is not, Take away our chains, but, Take away our sins; it is not, Take away our afflictions, but, Take away our pollutions; it is not, Take away all our enemies' lives, but, Take away the lives of all our lusts, Hosea 14:2. And so Paul cries not out of his reproaches, or persecutors, or bonds, or chains, or stripes, or perils, or prisons; he rather glories in these. But he cries out of a law in his members, rebelling against the law of his mind, and bringing of him into captivity to the law of sin, which is in his members, 2 Cor. 11:16; Rom. 7:23. Paul does not cry out, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from all my sorrows and sufferings? but 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?' ver. 24. A sincere heart, when he is himself, had much rather be rid of his sins than of his sufferings, yea, of the least sins than of the greatest sufferings. It was a sweet saying of Bernard: 'I had rather,' saith he, 'that God should better my heart than remove his hand; I had rather that God should continue my strokes than my sins.' And the same noble spirit was working bravely in Job when he was under the heavy hand of God: Job 34:31, 32, 'Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.' (See Job 7:20, 21.)

But now graceless men are much more willing to be rid of their afflictions than to be rid of their sins. Witness Pharaoh, who cries out, Take away the frogs! see Exod. 10:17: Exod. 8:8, 'Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Entreat the Lord, that he may

take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord.' It is not, Entreat the Lord, that he would take away this proud heart, or this hard heart, or this besotted heart, or this blind mind, or this perverse will, or this benumbed conscience that is in me and my people; but Entreat the Lord, that he may take away the frogs from me and my people. A graceless heart is more abundantly willing to be freed from punishment, the effect of sin, than it is willing to be freed from sin, the cause of punishment. A gracious heart sees more filthiness in sin than in frogs, and had rather be rid of his sins than of all the frogs or toads that be in the world. See what a sad spirit was upon the children of Israel, in that Num. 21:6, 7, 'And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned; for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee: pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us.' Now, mark, in the fifth verse you have them murmuring against God, and Moses, and divine dispensations, and nauseating of the wheat of heaven as light meat, because they came lightly by it; they distrust the providence of God, they let fly at God; their spirit swells against the Holy One of Israel, and they scorn, deride, revile, and contumeliously and despitefully speak against Moses; and though they had often smarted for these sins, yet they are at them again. Upon this, God sends an army of fiery serpents among them, and they bite and devour many of them. And now they run to Moses, who but a little before they had despised, and are very importunate with him to pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from them. They do not desire Moses to improve his interest in heaven, that God would take away their proud hearts, their distrustful hearts, their murmuring hearts, &c., but that God would take away the serpents; they were much more desirous to be rid of their serpents than they were to be rid of their sins. So those in Jer. 30:15, 'Why criest thou

for thine affliction? thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee.' They do not cry out of their sins, but they cry out of their afflictions. Why criest thou for thine affliction? Unsound hearts are more ready and willing to be rid of their afflictions than they are willing to have their souls bettered, or their lives mended, or their lusts subdued by them.

Pilate was unwilling to condemn Jesus; witness his seeking to release him, and his washing his hands, and his pleading his innocency, &c., Mat. 27:17, 18, 22–24; but yet the prevailing part of his will carried him forth to deliver up Jesus to be scourged and crucified, ver. 26. So Herod was unwilling to behead John Baptist; witness that word, 'The king was exceeding sorry,' Mark 6:26; but yet the prevailing part of his will carried him forth to cut off John's head, ver. 27, whose head was more worth than Herod's kingdom. So Darius was very unwilling to cast Daniel into the lions' den; witness his being sore displeased with himself, and witness his setting his heart on Daniel to deliver him, and witness his great unquietness of spirit; for he could neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, the night after he was cast into the lion's den; and witness his great joy at Daniel's safety, Dan. 6:14, 18–20: all which did clearly argue a very great unwillingness that Daniel should suffer; and yet the prevailing part of Darius, his will, carried him forth to sacrifice Daniel to the lions, yea, to that which was worse, viz. the lusts of his enemies, ver. 16, 17. By all these instances, it is most evident that the prevalent part of a wicked man's will stands most strongly biased towards sin; but now the prevalent part of a Christian's will is to be rid of sin. If the Lord should say to a gracious Christian, Ask what thou wilt, O Christian, and it shall be granted to thee; the answer would be: Lord, rid me of my sins; Lord, take away mine iniquities; Lord, mortify my corruptions; Lord, whoever lives, let these lusts die; Lord, drown these Egyptians in the sea of thy

Son's blood, who have so violently and unweariedly pursued after the blood of my precious soul; Lord, kill and crucify all these sinful evils that have killed and crucified the Lord of life and glory; 'Lord, wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin,' Ps. 51:2, 7; 'Lord, purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow;' Lord, carnal reason, and flesh and blood, would fain have such and such pleasurable sins, and such and such profitable sins, indulged and spared; but, Lord, the earnest, the ardent desires of my soul are, that I may be rid of them, and that justice to the height may be done upon them; Lord, be but the death of my sins, and my soul shall say, 'My lot is fallen in a pleasant place,' and 'verily I have a goodly heritage;' Lord, cleanse me but from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit, and I shall cry, 'Hosanna' to thee, Mat. 21:9; Lord, let me but outlive my lusts, and follow them to the grave before others follow me to my grave, and I shall say it is enough, Ps. 16:6; 2 Cor. 7:1. And thus every gracious soul is more willing to be rid of his sins than he is to keep his sins. A porter cannot be more willing to be rid of his burden, nor a sick man to be rid of his disease, nor a beggar of his nasty lousy rags, nor a prisoner of his chains, than a gracious soul is willing to be rid of his lusts, &c.

[4.] Fourthly, That soul that does not, nor through grace assisting, will not allow himself, or indulge himself in a course of sin, or in the common practice of any known sin, that soul is certainly a gracious soul. 'The evil that I do, I allow not,' Rom. 7:15. So Ps. 119:1, 3, 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way, that walk in the law of the Lord, they also do no iniquity;' that is, they allow not themselves in the practice of any iniquity. Blessed souls live not in the service of sin, they live not in an ordinary practice of any iniquity: 1 John 3:9, 'Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' He that has the seed of God, the seed of grace and regeneration in him,

he cannot allow himself in a way of sin, he cannot give himself over to a voluntary serving of sin, he cannot make a trade of sin. So Prov. 16:17, 'The highway of the upright is to depart from evil;' that is, it is the ordinary, usual, constant course of an upright man to depart from evil. An honest traveller may step out of the king's highway into a house, a wood, a close, but his work, his business is to go on in the king's highway. So the business, the work of an upright man is to depart from evil. It is possible for an upright man to step into a sinful path, or to touch upon sinful facts; but his main way, his principal work and business is to depart from iniquity, as a bee may light upon a thistle, but her work is to be gathering at flowers; or as the sheep may slip into the dirt, but its work is to be grazing on the mountains, or in the meadows. Certainly there is no man in the world so abominable wicked, but that he may now and then, when he is in a good mood, or when he is under distress of conscience, or bleeding under a smarting rod, or beholding the handwriting upon the wall, or under a sentence of death, depart from evil; but this is not his course, this is not his business, this is not his work, this is not his highway. Thieves do but now and then step into the king's highway to take a purse, they do not keep the king's highway. But now the upright man's highway, his common and ordinary course, is to depart from evil, and therefore he cannot allow himself liberty to walk in an evil way: Titus 2:11, 12, 'For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men,' (without distinction of nations, sex, age, or condition) 'teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' Under the name of ungodliness, he compriseth all the breaches of the first table; and under the name of worldly lusts, he compriseth all inordinate desires against the second table; and those three words, 'soberly, righteously, and godly,' have a threefold reference: the first to ourselves, the second to our neighbour, and the third to God. We must live soberly in respect of ourselves,

righteously in respect of our neighbours, and godly in respect of God. And this is the sum of a Christian's whole duty. Now if the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teaches saints to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, then certainly saints that are taught by that grace cannot live, nor allow themselves in ungodliness or worldly lusts. Without all peradventure, heaven is for that man, and that man is for heaven, that can appeal to heaven that he allows not himself in the practice of any known sin. Thus David did: 'Search me, O Lord,' says he, 'and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me,' Ps. 139:24. It is a most sure sign, that sin hath not gained a man's heart nor consent, but committed a rape upon his soul, when he allows not himself in it, but cries out bitterly to God against it, as Paul did, Rom. 7. If the ravished virgin under the law cried out, she was guiltless, Deut. 22:25–27. Certainly such as cry out of their sins, and that would not for all the world allow themselves in a way of sin, such are guiltless before the Lord. That which a Christian does not allow himself in, that he does not do in divine account, &c.

But now the whole trade, the whole life of formal and carnal Christians, is nothing else but one continued web of wickedness; there is no wicked unregenerate person in the world, but lives in the daily practice of some known sin or other; but allows himself in some trade or way of wickedness or other, as you may evidently see by comparing of these following scriptures together, Prov. 1:20–33; Jer. 5:3, 44:16–19, 9:3–6, 7:8–16; Ps. 50:16, 17; Isa. 66:3; Mat. 7:23; Rom. 6:12, 13, 19, 8:5; Luke 13:27; Ephes. 2:2, 3; Philip. 4:19; Titus 3:3; 2 Peter 2:14. Sin is a sinner's absolute work, it is his main work, and the sinner is besides himself, besides his calling, as it were, when he is besides his sin.

[5.] Fifthly, He that conflicts most with heart-sins, and is most affected with spiritual sins, and that laments and mourns most over secret sins, invisible sins, sins that lie most hid and remote from the eyes of the world, he is certainly a gracious soul. Grace in truth, and grace in power, will rise and conflict, and make head against the most inward and secret vanities of the soul, as against secret self-love, and secret hardness of heart, Isa. 63:17; and secret unbelief, Mark 9:24; and secret carnal confidence, and secret hypocrisy, and secret envy, and secret malice, and secret vain-glory, and secret fretting and murmuring, and secret lustings, and secret runnings-out of the soul after the meat that perisheth, and secret pride. Hence Hezekiah humbles himself for the pride of his heart; and so David, he humbles himself for the pride of his heart in numbering of the people, 2 Chron. 32:25, 2 Sam. 24:10. And how does the same prophet chide himself for sinful dejection of spirit: 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me?' Ps. 42:11. And how does he at another time befool himself, and be-beast himself, for his secret grudging and fretting at the prosperity of the wicked: 'So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee,' Ps. 73:22. And so Paul was most affected and afflicted with a law in his members rebelling against the law of his mind. Inward pollutions and defilements did sit closest and saddest upon his spirits. And the same apostle in that 2 Cor. 7:1, is for keeping down the filthiness of the spirit, as well as the filthiness of the flesh; he is for inward cleansing, as well as for outward cleansing: 'Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,' 2 Cor. 7:1. So Mr Bradford was a man that had attained to so great and eminent a height of holiness, that Doctor Taylor, the martyr, calls him 'that saint of God, John Bradford;' and yet, oh how sadly does he bewail his secret hypocrisy. True grace makes opposition as well against the being of sin in a man's nature, as against the breakings

out of sin in a man's life, Col. 3:5. True grace will make head against the corruptions of the heart, as well as against the excursions of the feet; it is as willing and desirous to be rid of a polluted heart, as it is willing and desirous to be rid of a polluted hand. It would fain have, not only sinful acts, but also sinful dispositions, and not only irregular actions, but also inordinate affections, mortified and subdued. O friends! heart sins are root sins; they are the springs that set all the wheels a-going, the fountain that sets all the streams a-running, the fire that sets the furnace a-smoking, the bellows that sets the fire a-burning. Certainly a proud heart hath more of Satan in it than a proud look, and a wanton heart is more vile than a wanton eye, and a murderous or adulterous heart is worse than a murderous or adulterous act, &c. And therefore true grace makes head against heart sins, against spiritual sins, against the most inward secret sins, against those very sins that lie not within the reach of reason, or the sword of the magistrate, or the piercing eye of the most knowing or observing man in the world, but are only obvious to an omniscient eye. But now carnal men, as they make little of outward sins, so they make nothing of heart sins, of spiritual sins. If they are not drunkards, nor swearers, nor extortioners, nor whoremasters, nor cursers, nor cheaters, nor oppressors, nor liars, nor persecutors, Mat. 19:16–27; if they are good negative Christians, then they think themselves very good saints, and in a very fair way for heaven, and that no man can say black is their eye, when their hearts are as full of evil thoughts and secret lusts, as ignorance, atheism, unbelief, pride, envy, discontent, anger, formality, hypocrisy, indifferency, lukewarmness, deadness, and hardness, &c., as the sun is full of light, or as hell is full of darkness. Restraining grace, common grace, only makes head against gross enormities, against palpable vanities, as you may see in the scribes and pharisees; but saving grace makes head against heart sins, against spiritual sins. Common grace is all for washing the outside, but saving grace is for washing the inside as

well as the outside. Common grace is only for washing the feet and the head, but saving grace is for washing both feet, head, and heart, Mat. 23, John 13:9, 10. Look, as in a dark night we can only see those stars that are of the greatest magnitude; so by the starlight of natural conscience, the natural man can only see those sins that are more great and gross. Natural convictions can reach no further than natural light, but spiritual convictions can reach to the most inward, secret, spiritual, and undiscernible sins. Certainly that is a sincere heart, a heart more worth than gold, that smites a man for inward sins as well as for outward sins; for sins done in a corner, as well as for sins acted upon the house-top; for spiritual sins, as well as for fleshly sins; for sins against the soul, as well as for sins against the body; for sins committed in a closet, as well as for sins committed on the most public stage. Certainly that trouble and grief that springs from heart sins, from spiritual sins, from secret sins, bears a more immediate relation to the holiness of God, who only observes them, and is offended by them, and so is a most sure and infallible evidence of saving grace, and of the work of the Spirit in power upon the soul. When open commissions do humble and abase the heart, and secret inclinations to sin do even break and burst the heart asunder, then the heart is certainly sincere with God. A Christian will readily grant that his God is a good God, and that Jesus Christ is the chiefest of ten thousand, and that the gospel is a glorious gospel, and that the promises are precious promises, and that the ordinances are blessed ordinances, and that the lively communion of saints is the sweetest communion in all the world. But yet he will say, I have such a proud heart, such a hard heart, such a slight heart, such a carnal heart, &c., and I am so vexed and molested with sinful notions, and with sinful imaginations, and with sinful inclinations, and with atheistical risings, and with private murmurings, and with secret unbelievings, and that in despite of all my conflictings, and strivings, and prayings, and mournings, and sighings, and groanings, and complainings, that

I am oftentimes even weary of my life. And if this does not speak out Christ within, and grace within, and the Spirit within such a soul, I know nothing. O friends! remember this once for all, viz., that the main battle, the main warfare of a Christian lies not in the open field, it lies not in visible skirmishes; but his main quarrels and conflicts are most within, and his worst and greatest enemies are them of his own house, they are them of his own heart. A little grace at first conversion may reform an ill life, but it must be a great deal of grace that must reform an ill heart. A little grace may make a man victorious over outward gross sins, but it must be a great deal of grace that must make a man victorious over inward sins, secret sins, spiritual sins, heart sins, yea, a thorough conquest of these sins will hold a man in play all his days. But,

[6.] Sixthly, He that abstains from sin, he whose heart rises against sin, he that sets himself against sin, because of the evil nature of sin, because of that vileness and filthiness that is in sin, he certainly has a principle of grace, a seed of God in him. He who refrains from sin, and whose heart rises more against sin, because of the purity of the law which forbids sin, than because of the severity of the law which condemns sin, is certainly under the power of renewing grace, of saving grace: Ps. 119:140, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.' It is only pure grace that can enable a man to love the word for its purity. The apostle, to set forth the formidable evil that is in sin, expresses it thus, Rom. 7:13, 'That sin might appear to be sin.' He could find nothing more evil and odious to express it by than itself. Sin is so great an evil, that it cannot have a worse epithet given it. Paul can call it no worse than by its own name, sinful sin. Had the apostle said that sin might appear to be a snare, a serpent, a viper, a toad, a plague, a devil, a hell, &c., he had said much, but yet not enough to set forth the transcendent evil that is in sin, and therefore he calls it sinful sin. All other evils are but outward, they

only reach the name, the body, the estate, the life, but sin is an inward evil, a spiritual evil, an evil that reaches the precious and immortal soul, and therefore is the greatest evil. Death puts an end to all other troubles, viz., poverty, sickness, disgrace, scorn, contempt, crosses, losses, &c.; but sin is so great an evil, that death itself cannot put an end to it; eternity itself shall never put a stop, a period, to this evil of evils. All outward evils can never make a man the subject of God's wrath and hatred. A man may be poor, and yet precious in the eyes of God; he may be greatly abhorred by the world, and yet highly honoured by God; he may be debased by men, and yet exalted by God. But now sin is so great an evil, that it subjects the sinner's soul to the wrath and hatred of God. All other evils do but strike at a man's present well-being, but sin strikes at a man's eternal well-being; all other evils can never hinder a man's communion with God. A man may have communion with God in poverty, in sickness, in prison, in banishment; but sin is so great an evil, that it interrupts communion with God, it cuts off communion with God. All outward evils are God's creatures: 'Is there any evil in the city that the Lord hath not done?' But sin is the devil's creature, it is a brat of his own begetting; yea, it is worse than the devil, it is that which has turned glorious angels into infernal devils. All other evils do not fight against the greatest good, but sin is that grand evil that fights against the greatest good; it fights against the being of God, the essence of God, the glory of God. Peccatum est Deicidium, sin is a killing of God, it is a murdering of God. Sin is a universal evil, it is all evil, it is nothing but evil; there is not one drop, one spark of good to be found in any sin, but now in all outward evils there is some good; there is some good in poverty, in sickness, in war, in death, but there is not the least good in sin. Sin is the sole object of God's hatred; he hates nothing but sin; he is angry with nothing but sin; he has forbid nothing but sin; he has revealed his wrath from heaven against nothing but sin; so great an evil is sin. Sin is that grand evil that has

midwived all other evils into the world. It was sin that drowned the old world with water; it was sin that destroyed Sodom with fire and brimstone; it was sin that laid Jerusalem in heaps; it was sin that has midwived sword, famine, and pestilence into the world; it was sin that laid the foundation of hell, that laid the corner-stone in that land of darkness, for before sin there was no hell, Judges 5:8; Ps. 107:34; Deut, 28:21. It was sin that crucified the Lord of glory, Rom. 8:7. Now, oh how great must that evil be that has ushered in all these great evils into the world! Sin is enmity against God; God hath no enemy in the world but sin, and those whom sin hath made him. Sin hath set all the world against the Lord of glory. It is sin that has turned men into incarnate devils, and that has drawn them out to fight against God, and Christ, and their own souls, and the things of their everlasting peace. Now, when a man looks upon sin as the greatest evil in the world, and his heart rises and is enraged against it, because of the vile, filthy, odious, and heinous nature of it, it is a clear evidence that such a man has the divine nature in him. Take that one instance for all: Ps. 19:12, 13, 'Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.' But why does David pray thus? 'So,' says he, 'shall I be innocent from the great transgression.' Mark, he does not pray thus: Lord, keep me from presumptuous sins, that so I may be free from troubles without, and from terrors within, or from hell beneath; but, Lord, keep me from presumptuous sins, that so I may be innocent from the great transgression. He does not say, So shall I be free from the great correction, but, So shall I be free from the great transgression. That is a heart worth gold, that is more sensible and more affected with the evil that is in sin than with the evil that comes by sin. It was a weighty saying of Austin: 'That man,' says he, 'which fears hell, he doth not fear to sin, but fears to burn; but that man fears to sin, that fears sin as he would fear hell.' Common grace never works a man thus to fear sin, but renewing grace doth. Common convictions carry the soul out to look more on the evil that

comes by sin, than on the evil that is in sin; and hence it comes to pass, that souls under common convictions are more affected and afflicted at the fear of hell and dread of wrath and damnation, than they are affected or afflicted at the vileness, odiousness, and heinous nature of sin. When an unsanctified person is angry with sin, and chides sin, and falls out with sin, and makes some head against sin, it is either because it hath cracked his credit, or clouded his honour, or hindered his profit, or embittered his pleasure, or provoked his friends, or incensed the magistrate, or enraged his conscience, or exposed him to shame, disgrace, or contempt here and hell hereafter; but never because a holy God is dishonoured, a righteous law transgressed, a blessed Saviour frequently crucified, or the blessed Spirit greatly grieved. The child will not touch the coal because it will burn him, and the prudent man will not touch the coal because it will smut him. A gracious heart rises against sin because of its defiling and polluting nature, but an unsanctified heart rises against sin because of its burning and damning nature. A sanctified person hates sin, because it pollutes his soul, but an unsanctified person hates it because it destroys his soul. A sanctified person loathes sin, and abhors sin, because it fights against God's holiness; but an unsanctified person loathes it, and abhors it, because it provokes and stirs up God's justice. A sanctified person detests sin, because of the hell that is in sin; but an unsanctified person detests sin, because of the hell that follows sin, &c. But,

[7.] Seventhly, Where there is an irreconcileable opposition in the soul against sin, there is a saving work of God upon that man's heart. Where there is such a detestation of sin, and such an enmity raised in the soul against sin, as that the soul cannot, nor will not, upon no terms in the world, admit of any truce or reconciliation with sin, there is Christ and grace formed in the heart. The war between a gracious heart and sin, is like the war between Rehoboam and

Jeroboam: 1 Kings 14:30, 'There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days.' The oracle said to the Cirrheans, noctes diesque belligerandum, they could not be happy unless they waged war night and day; no more can we, except we perpetually fight against our lusts. O friends! a gracious heart that is weary of sin, will certainly and habitually fall a-striving against it: Gal. 5:17, 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: for these two are contrary the one to the other.' Now contraries are naturally expulsive each of other. Such a pair as a Jacob and an Esau; such twins as an Isaac and an Ishmael, cannot lie quietly together in the same womb; no, nor live quietly together in the same house, but there will be a mutual prosecuting and persecuting each of other. Fire and water may as well agree in the same vessel, as grace and sin in the same heart. True grace hath a real repugnancy and contrariety to all sin; and remember this once for all, that saving grace is not contrary to sin because it is open and manifest, nor to sin because it is private and secret, nor to sin because it is of this or that consequence, but to sin as sin, whether public or private, because both the one and the other are contrary to the law of God, the will of God, the glory of God, the nature of God, the designs of God, &c. As it is with true light, though it be but a beam, yet it is universally opposite to all darkness; or as it is with heat, though there be but one degree of it, yet it is opposite to all cold; so true grace, it is opposite to all sin, it cannot comply with any known sin. Look, as sin and grace were never born together, and as sin and grace shall never die together, so sin and grace can never be reconciled together. There is a natural contrariety between sin and grace, and therefore you can never reconcile them in the heart. The opposition that grace makes against sin is inward as well as outward; it is against sin wheresoever it is. Nothing will satisfy a gracious soul but the destruction of sin: Rom. 6:6, 'Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not

serve sin.' The Greek word καταργηθῇ, that is here rendered destroyed, signifies weakened, and the strength of it broken, and made idle, fruitless, and ineffectual. So Ps. 51:2, 'Wash me throughly' (or multiply to wash me, or play the fuller upon me), 'from mine iniquity;'—David looked upon his sin, his stain, to be so inveterate, so ingrained, that it would hardly be ever gotten out till the cloth were almost rubbed to pieces,—'and cleanse me from my sin.' David was as desirous to be cleansed of the leprosy of sin, as ever any poor leper was willing to be cleansed of his leprosy under the law. And so ver. 7, 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' All the sacrifices of expiation of sin in the old law, were done by blood, and that blood was sprinkled upon the people by a bunch of hyssop, so called from the Hebrew word ezob, by reason of the nearness of the sound. In the legal sprinklings made with hyssop, was shadowed out the washing away of sin through the blood of Christ. The bride's garments are made white in the blood of the Lamb, and not by any washings in snow water, Rev. 1:14, Job 9:30. When a gracious soul looks upon sin, he cries out, Lord, raze it, raze it down to the ground; Lord, let not one stone be left upon another. In every gracious soul there is such a detestation and such an indignation against sin, that neither mountains of gold, nor rocks of pearl, nor honour, nor applause, nor favour on the one hand, nor frowns, nor threats, nor neglects, nor scorns, nor contempt on the other hand, can win the soul over to sin, or make the soul one with sin. Look how it was between the Lord and Amalek, so it is between a gracious soul and his sins. Now if you turn to that Exod. 17:16, you shall find how it was between the Lord and Amalek. 'Because the Lord hath sworn, that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation;' or, as the Hebrew has it, 'The hand upon the throne of the Lord': God's hand is laid upon his own throne, as swearing to root out Amalek;' or because Amalek's hand is lifted up against God's throne, that is the church (so called in Jer. 17:12, and

crown of glory, Isa. 62:3), therefore God will have perpetual wars with Amalek. God could as soon be reconciled to Amalek, as a gracious Christian can be reconciled to his sins. Others sense the words thus, that Moses had a solemn oath, as it were, laying his hand upon God's throne, for asseveration and assurance, that he and the people will have an irreconcileable war with the posterity of Amalek. And so every gracious soul is resolved to make an irreconcileable war with sin. But now, where there is only common grace, there a man deals by his sins as David did by his son Absalom, banish him his court for a time, and afterwards receive him into full favour, and court him as much or more than before. An unsound heart may fall out with his sin, and be very angry with its sin, for the consequence of it, for the shame it brings upon his person, for the blot it leaves upon his name, and for the stinging guilt and convulsion fits which it causeth in his conscience, and yet this very person be in a very close and strict league with sin, and his heart inwardly and strongly adhering unto sin. But a gracious heart will be still a-restraining of sin, a-curbing of sin, a-crossing of sin, a-making head against sin, and a-withstanding it in all its workings. Anger may be reconciled, but hatred cannot.

[8.] Eighthly, Where the very prevailings of sin are ordinarily made serviceable to high and holy, to gracious and spiritual ends, there certainly is a saving work of God upon that man's soul, Ezek. 16:61, 63; Eph. 2:5–7. As when they produce more soul-loathing, soul-humiliation, self-judging, self-abasement, self-abhorring; or when they fill the soul with a greater admiration of the freeness and riches of grace; or when they keep down pride, and prevent the despising of others, or produce holy shame; or when they make the blood of Christ more precious and dear to the soul; or when they engage a Christian so much the more to watch and pray, and pray and watch, that he may either be kept from the hour of temptation, or in the

hour of temptation; or when every fall makes sin more bitter to the soul than ever, and Christ more sweet to the soul than ever, and all the means of grace more delightful to the soul than ever, and heaven more desirable to the soul than ever; or when sin is made the prevention of sin; or when sin, through the over-ruling hand of grace, is made an occasion of more grace, as that good man said, 'As I get hurt by my graces, so I get good by my sins.' You know all the falls, and knocks, and blows, that children get that are learning to go, do but make them cleave the closer and hang the faster upon the nurse's skirts, or about the mother's neck. So when all a Christian's falls do but work him to cleave the closer and hang the faster upon the strength of Christ, and to be still a-drawing more and more virtue and power from Christ, then is the prevalency of sin made serviceable to holy and gracious ends; and where God ordinarily thus works, there is certainly a work of God in power upon that soul: 2 Cor. 7:11, 'For, behold, this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things you have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.' This scripture I have fully opened in my eighth sign of godly sorrow in this book, and to that I refer you. The mother, by suffering the child to get one fall, keeps the child from many a fall; and so it was with these Corinthians. Adam's fall was an inlet to abundance of grace, and his unrighteousness did usher into the world the most glorious righteousness of Jesus Christ. Hezekiah falls, and by his fall God gives him a clearer and fuller sight of his own heart than ever he had before in all his days, 2 Chron. 32:25, 26, 31. Sin is no gainer, but a loser, by every fall of the saints. God does and will, by the over-ruling hand of his grace, make the very miscarriages of his people to be glorious inlets to more eminent degrees of grace and holiness. God hath a great revenue of glory from the very infirmities of the saints;

and the saints have a great revenue of comfort from their very miscarriages, by the wise, powerful, over-ruling, and sanctifying hand of God. God is that powerful, that skilful physician, that can make an antidote and sovereign remedy of sin, that is the most deadly poison in all the world. God does and will make the very sins of his people to further the salvation of his people, according to that golden promise, Rom. 8:28. God never suffers his people to fall into any sin, but out of a design to break the neck and back of that sin they fall into. God suffered David to fall into those two great sins of murder and adultery, but by these very falls he broke the very back of those sins, for we never read that ever he fell into those sins the second time. And so God suffered Peter to deny him once, but by that sore fall God broke the neck of that very sin; for we never read that ever he denied Christ any more at the voice of a damsel; yea, it is very observable that Peter's courage and boldness for the truth received a very high advance by those deep wounds that he had formerly given them, when he denied the Lord that bought him. After his sore falls, for courage and boldness he carries the bell from all the apostles, as you may see in Acts 4:12. It is the nature of true grace to gather strength by every wound. Grace gathers strength by contraries, as fire doth when it is compassed about with coldness, by an antiperistasis. By all a Christian's falls, his graces grow brighter and stronger. At the long run, a Christian by all his falls loses nothing but his dross, his chaff, his scum, his filth. Now, he that finds his sins thus over-ruled for the good of his soul, he is certainly a gracious soul. O sirs! remember this for ever, viz., that the oftener an hypocrite or a formalist falls, the more ground and strength his sins get upon him, and so will continue to do till all that grace and goodness which he seemed to have had be quite extinguished. But,

[9.] Ninthly, Where a bare naked command of God is commonly, ordinarily of that power, force, and authority with the soul, as to curb

sin, and restrain the soul from sin, and to arm and fence the soul against the encroachments and commands of sin, there is certainly a saving work, a powerful work of God upon that soul. When a man can say to heaven and hell, Stand you by for the present, and to precious promises, Stand you by for the present, and to divine threatenings, Stand you by for the present, here is a command of God that forbids such and such actions, and therefore I cannot, I dare not do this or that wickedness, and sin against the Lord; there is certainly a principle of grace in that man's heart, Gen. 39:9. That is a great word of David, Ps. 119:161, 'My heart standeth in awe of thy word.' When a naked command from God does so overawe the heart, as that it dares not sin against God, then doubtless the heart is sincere with God. A child does not stand in more awe of the rod, nor a servant of a beating, nor a favourite of his prince's frowns, than a real Christian, when he is himself, stands in awe of the word. So Ps. 119:11, 'Thy word have I hid within my heart, that I might not sin against thee.' When a man hides the word in his heart as a treasure, that he may not lose it, and as a rule that he may not transgress it, then his heart is indeed right with God. When the law of God in a man's heart arms him against the lusts of his heart and life, then doubtless his heart is sound with God. So Ps. 17:4, 'By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer;' or as some read the words, 'according to the command and charge of thy words, I have kept me from the sinful ways, manners, behaviours, &c., of the destroyer, or the cruel man.' Christ commanded his apostles to make him known to the world, and to preach the everlasting gospel, and to make known those mysteries and riches of grace that were hid in former ages, Mat. 28:18–20; Acts 10:36, seq. The Jewish authority threatens them, and commands them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus, Acts 4:17, 18; but the command of Christ carries it with the apostles against all their threatenings and commands: verses 19, 20, 'But Peter and John answered and said unto them,

Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have heard and seen.' When the commands of authority run counter-cross to the commands of God, the commands of God must be obeyed, though the greatest authority under heaven should be displeased and enraged. God never gave the greatest authority in the world any authority to act contrary to his commands. Disobedience to unlawful commands is no disobedience. Woe to him that obeys the commands of men in opposition to the commands of God: 1 Cor. 9:16, 'For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!' Now it is infinitely better to fall under the displeasure of men, than to fall under the woes of God. The Jews, under a pretence of their authority, command the apostles not to preach Jesus to the people; but the commands of Christ carry it with the apostles against all their contrary commands. The apostles, who were like to bottles of new wine, that must either vent or burst, knew very well that it was not obedience to men's commands that could excuse their disobedience to God's commands. So in that third of Daniel, the commands of the great God carried it with the three children against all the dreadful threatenings, proud boastings, and idolatrous commands of king Nebuchadnezzar. Certainly the commands of sin are of all commands the vilest commands; they are all illegal; sin hath no ground, no reason to command our souls. Sin is but a usurper, a traitor, and therefore has no authority over us. All sin's commands are purely sinful; they are plain and notorious rebellions against the laws of Christ, the life of Christ, and against the crown, honour, and dignity of Jesus. All sin's commands are grievous, burdensome, and painful commands; of all yokes, none so heavy as that which sin lays upon the sinner; hence sin is compared to a talent of lead, Zech. 5:7, to shew the weightiness and burdensomeness of it; and hence it is that sinners are said to weary themselves in

committing iniquity, Jer. 9:5; and hence it is that wicked men are said to travail with iniquity, Ps. 7:14, to shew what anxious pain and trouble they have in bringing about their wickedness: 'Behold he travaileth with iniquity;' or as the Hebrew hath it, he shall travail, or he continually travaileth, he takes as great pains to go to hell as a travailing woman doth to be delivered. Wicked men are as laborious, and as restless and unquiet in the practice of wickedness, as a woman in labour is when the pangs of travail are upon her, Prov. 4:14–16. Sugared poisons go down pleasantly; oh but when they are down they gall, and gnaw, and gripe the very heart-strings asunder; it is so with sin. Lastly, the commands of sin are extremely unreasonable. What an unreasonable thing it is to command a man to run into the fire, or to drown himself in the water, or to strangle himself, &c. Now all the commands of sin tend directly and intentionally to the burning, drowning, strangling, and destroying of the sinner. All sin's commands tend to the dishonour of God, the breach of his righteous laws, and the damnation of the precious and immortal soul. Now where the commands of God do commonly carry it, against all the commands of sin, there the soul is certainly sincere with God. That we owe perfect obedience to God's will, to God's commands, is evident enough several ways, and in particular from the universal obedience of all creatures; I mean those which are without reason, sense, or life, for they inviolably observe his commands: Isa. 48:13, 'Mine hand hath laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call to them, they stand up together,' as prepared to execute his commands. The insensible parts of the world are so compliant with his will, as to contradict their proper natures to serve his glory. Fire descends from heaven at his command, Gen. 19:24; 2 Kings 1:10–12. And the fluid sea stands up at his command, Exod. 14:22. Now what a sad thing is it that Christians should at any time prove disloyal and rebellious,

when all inferior creatures do with one consent serve and glorify the great God! But, &c.

[10.] Tenthly, Constant desires, and earnest and constant endeavours to avoid and shun all known appearances of sin, evidences the truth and reality of grace in the soul. Certainly that man is a true Nathanael, that makes it his business, his work, to abstain from all appearances of evil. An hypocrite loves the appearance of good more than goodness itself, and a sincere Christian hates the very appearance of evil, as well as the evil itself. He who hates a person loathes his very picture. A wicked man may abstain from broad-faced evils, but commonly he is very bold and venturous upon appearing evils. Oh what vain apologies do many make in these days for long hair, gaudy apparel, antique fashions, spotted faces, naked breasts, wanton behaviours, effeminated alliances, and a thousand other suspicious practices and vanities! But now a man that is truly gracious, he makes conscience, not only of shunning real, gross, known evils, but also of shunning the very likeness of evil. His heart does not only rise against real sins, but he is very shy of that which looks like sin. When Joseph's mistress took hold of him and said, 'Lie with me, he left his garment in her hand and fled, and gat him out,' Gen. 39:12. Joseph would not be found in the company of his impudent, brazen-faced mistress, that could so barely and basely, so boldly and frequently, solicit him to defile his master's bed, and to damn two souls at once, her own and his, that so he might avoid the very appearance of evil, the very suspicion of sin. By wanton touches and dalliance, mental adultery is often committed; and therefore Joseph flies, as being unwilling to touch her, or to be touched by her. And so Paul refused the using his liberty in taking a lawful maintenance for his labours, lest a sinister interpretation of covetous and mercenary affection should have been put upon it by his adversaries, 1 Cor. 9:11–15. And so the same apostle would needs

have Titus and two others chosen by the church, to join with him in carrying the benevolence of the church of Macedonia to Jerusalem, because he was very careful to avoid all suspicion of dealing ill in that business. 2 Cor. 8:20, 21, 'Avoiding this, that no man should blame us, in this abundance that is ministered by us; providing for honest things, not only before the Lord, but also before men.' So Daniel would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, Dan. 1:3, that is, say some, he would not defile his conscience by eating such unclean meats as were forbidden under the law, for the Babylonians did eat of divers meats, as of swine, hares, &c., and of sundry sorts of fishes and fowls, which were forbidden by God unto the children of Israel, Levit. 11, Deut. 14; nor with the wine which he drank; but in the Hebrew the plural number is used, of his drinks, whence some gather that the king drank divers sorts of wines, which were also set before Daniel and his companions; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Daniel's living at a full table, and his feeding upon kingly dainties, might have been, not only a means to ensnare him, and drown him in the sensualities of the court, but it would have carried with it also too great a show of Daniel's conformity to the court's manners and customs, and have been too great an appearance of Daniel's forgetfulness of the sore and miserable calamities and matchless miseries of the captive church, who sat sighing and groaning and mourning in her cruel bondage, and had none to comfort her, or speak peace unto her; and therefore Daniel purposed in his heart, or set it upon his heart, or laid it upon his heart, as the Hebrew may be read, that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, &c., that so he might avoid all shows or suspicions of evil. It is very observable, that in the law of the Nazarite, who did for a time special consecrate himself to God, that besides his not coming to the dead, and suffering his hair to grow, it was ordained of God that he should abstain from these six things: (1.) From wine and strong drink; (2.)

from the vinegar of wine or strong drink; (3.) from any liquor of grapes, though it were but the water wherein they were steeped; (4.) from the green or moist grape; (5.) from the dried grape or raisin; (6.) from the husk or kernel of them, Num. 6:3, 4. Had the Nazarite eaten but the skin of the grape or raisin, he had broken the law. Now hereby the Lord would teach us, that those that separate themselves from the world, to be in a special manner serviceable to the Lord, they must avoid not only that which is plain sin, downright sin, or such sins that men may run and read, but also that they must shun and be shy of the very appearances of sin. It was good counsel that Livia gave her husband Augustus, 'It behoveth thee,' saith she, 'not only not to do wrong, but not to seem to do so,' &c. We must shun and be shy of the very show and shadow of sin, if either we tender our credit abroad, or our comfort at home. Walking in the power of holiness lies much in shunning the very appearance of sin. The primitive Christians would not endure that any Christian should look towards Jerusalem praying, because they would avoid the least show of Judaism. And indeed there are great reasons why every Christian should avoid whatever may have the suspicion of sin; and this will be evident, if you please but seriously to consider of these eight following particulars:

(1.) First, Consider those clear and plain commands of God which makes this duty to be a duty, as that 1 Thes. 5:22, 'Abstain from all appearance of evil.' God requires us not only to abstain from all apparent sins, but also from all appearance of sin. We must do nothing which hath a show or shadow of sin. It is duty to abstain from whatever is of an ill show, or an ill report. And so God commands us to hate the garment spotted with the flesh, Jude 23. Saints must abhor everything that carries with it but a favour or suspicion of uncleanness. The apostle alludes to legal uncleanness, which was contracted by touching the houses, the vessels, or the

garments of unclean persons, Levit. 15. Christians must not only hate uncleanness, but they must hate everything that looks like it, or that has the least communion with it. So in that Deut. 12:30, 'Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared, by following of them, after that they be destroyed from before thee, and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.' God does not only command his people to abstain from gross idolatry, but he also commands them to take heed of all those ways and means and inquiries that might tend to draw them to idolatry, or that might carry with them the least show or appearance of idolatry. It is observable in the law, that God commanded his people not only that they should worship no idol, but that they should demolish all the monuments of them, and that they should make no covenant, nor have any affinity with those who worshipped them; and all to avoid the very shows of idolatry, and to prevent his people from being drawn by those means to commit idolatry with them. And so Exod. 23:7, 'Keep thee far from a false matter.' Every good man must stand aloof off, he must keep at a distance, both from the occasions of sin, and from the appearances of sin. So Prov. 5:8, 'Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house.' He that is farthest from fire, is safest from burning, and he that is most remote from the water, is in least danger of drowning. It is no small wickedness to approach near the door of wickedness; he who approaches near the door of a whore's house, is already in the door of whoredom, Prov. 22:14, 23:27. It argues too much mind to be in the house, for any one knowingly, willingly, to come near the door of it. Oh how should a man dread the coming into that house, where he must needs either perish or else overcome! Certainly it is infinite better not to be in danger of perishing, than being in danger not to perish. So Hosea 4:15, 'Though thou Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend, and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, the Lord liveth.' Gilgal was once the key of

Canaan, situate between Jordan and Jericho, famous for sundry services there performed to God, as might be easily shewed by many instances; but now Gilgal was basely abused to idol worship; and hence it is that God charges them not to come near it, that so they might avoid both the show and danger of idolatry; and it is upon the same account that God charges them not to go up to Bethaven. By these scriptures it is evident that God would have his people to abstain from all shows and appearances of sin. But, &c.

(2.) Secondly, The holiness of God, and the honour of God, calls aloud upon all Christians to avoid the suspicion of sin. God is so essentially holy, so unmixedly holy, so universally holy, so eminently, so transcendently holy, so superlatively holy, so originally, radically, and fundamentally holy; he is so independently holy, so unchangeably, so constantly, and so exemplarily holy, that he cannot but hate and abhor the very appearance of evil. Look, as apparent sins stir up the judicial anger of God against sinners, so the appearance of sin stirs up the fatherly anger of God against saints. A gracious heart knows that 'God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,' Hab. 1:13, and therefore he keeps at a distance from the appearance of iniquity. Of all men in the world, none honour God at so high a rate as those that keep most aloof off from the appearance of evil. Many, by their apparent evils, have lived God, and Christ, and the gospel, and their profession, and precious ordinances, into disgrace, scorn, and contempt; and oh that we would all make it our great business, by abstaining from all appearance of evil, to live God, and Christ, and the gospel, and our profession, and precious ordinances, into a greater credit, praise, and honour than ever! He keeps farthest off from dishonouring God that keeps farthest off from the appearance of sin. But, &c.,

(3.) Thirdly, This is the way of ways for a man to keep himself clear from other men's sins. That man that abstains from the appearance of sin is very rarely guilty of other men's sins. Men many times, by venturing upon the appearances of sin, come to wrap themselves up in the guilt of other men's sins. Effeminate dalliance is an appearance of evil; and had Joseph been toying, and playing, and sporting with his mistress in a wanton manner, how soon might he have wrapt himself up in the guilt of his mistress's burning lusts! He that would not tempt nor entice others to sin, must keep off from the very appearance of sin. Certainly there is not the holiest man in the world but has sins enough of his own to sad him, though not to sink him; to humble him, though not to damn him; to abase him, though not to deject him; and therefore how much does it concern the best men in the world to abstain from the very appearance of sin, that so they may not bring upon themselves the guilt and burden of other men's sins. It is very well observed by some, that a more grievous punishment is reserved for them which cause others to sin than for them which sin by their occasion; thus the serpent was punished more than Eve, and Eve more than Adam. And so Jezebel, who tempted and provoked Ahab to sin, was punished with a far greater and sorer punishment or judgment than Ahab himself was. To sin, saith one, hath not so much perdition in it as to make others to sin; and therefore, as you would never draw others to sin, keep off from all appearance of sin. Oh that all superiors, inferiors, and equals, would lay this counsel to heart! But,

(4.) Fourthly, The keeping off from all appearances of evil is the best and noblest way under heaven to keep a good name and to keep a good conscience. Now, a good name and a good conscience are jewels more worth than all the sceptres and mitres in the world, and there is no wisdom in the world to that which leads a man by the hand to secure his name and his conscience: Prov. 22:1, 'A good name is

rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving-favour rather than silver and gold.' So Eccles. 7:1, 'A good name is better than precious ointment;' the one being but a perfume of the nostrils, the other a perfume of the heart. It is observable, the princely preacher does not say, 'a great name is better than precious ointments,' but 'a good name is better than precious ointments.' Ointments are here named, because in those eastern parts they were laid up in the king's treasury, even among his most precious things: Isa. 39:2, 'And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed him the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointments,' &c. Precious aromatical ointments were things greatly in use and esteem amongst the Israelites, and a special part of their treasures, as is evident by the Scriptures in the margin. And yet a good name, which hath its foundation in virtue, and in a holy, innocent, blameless, harmless, and exemplary life, is better than those most precious ointments. And it is observable that the initial letter of the Hebrew word טוב, Tob, that is here rendered good, is bigger than ordinary, to shew the more than ordinary excellency of a good name and fame amongst men. It was good counsel the moralist gave when he said, Whatsoever commodity you lose, be sure yet to preserve that jewel of a good name. A good renown is better than a golden girdle, say some. And a man's eye and his good name can bear no jests, say others. And if I may but keep a good name, I have wealth enough, said the naturalist. O friends! as ever you would keep a good name, keep off from the very appearance of evil; for the very appearance of evil will both eclipse and wound a man's name and his conscience at once. Certainly a man were better not to live, than to outlive his good name. A man's good name is like a piece of white paper, which, if once blotted, will very hardly be got out again, so as to leave no print of it behind. It is like a fair structure, long time a-rearing, but quickly ruined; or like a merchant's estate, long a-getting, but lost in a moment. And therefore how much does it

concern every Christian to keep his name as he would keep his life! and this he can never do, except he keeps off from the appearance of evil. It is his name only that shall be kept green and flourishing, like the rod of Aaron, that was laid up in the tabernacle, who keeps off from the appearance of evil. He takes the best and the wisest course under heaven to preserve his good name in the world, and to maintain the peace of his conscience, who is most studious and industrious to abstain from all appearances of evil. But, &c.

(5.) Fifthly, The appearance of evil may very much offend, scandalise, stumble, and tempt weak Christians; and therefore it highly concerns us to keep off from the very appearance of evil. The more grace any man hath in his own heart, the more fearful he will be of stumbling or offending those that have less. Venturing upon the appearance of evil may not only defile my own conscience, but also wound my weak brother's conscience; and therefore it concerns me to be very shy of the appearance of evil. If in things of an indifferent nature I must deny my own liberty, as I must, rather than grieve, or offend, or wound the conscience of a weak brother for whom Christ hath died, 1 Cor. 8:11–13, 10:25, 28, oh how much more, then, must I shun the very resemblance of sin, considering how wonderful apt weak Christians are to be offended and stumbled when they see others so bold as to venture upon the appearance of evil! Alexander's Macedonians having offended him, laid by their arms, put on mourning apparel, and came running in troops to his tent, where, for almost three days together, they remained with loud cries and tears, to testify their remorse for offending him; and shall we make nothing of offending those weak Christians that are the price of Christ's blood, and the travail of his soul? The Lord forbid!

Besides, our venturing upon the appearance of evil may prove a great temptation to weak Christians, not only to venture upon seeming

evils, but also to venture upon real evils. Doubtless many weak Christians have been drawn to apparent evils by observing others to venture upon the appearance of evil. It is commonly seen, that when strong Christians will adventure upon appearing evils, weak Christians will be emboldened thereby to commit real evils: 1 Cor. 8:8–10, 'But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols?' When the weak shall see men of knowledge communicating with idolaters in their feasts, their consciences will be emboldened and confirmed in their old superstition about those idols which they were beginning to leave, returning now afresh to a more reverent esteem and service of them than ever, &c. O friends! as you would not offend the weak, as you would not tempt the weak, keep off from all shows and appearances of evil, &c. But,

[6.] Sixthly, Christians venturing upon appearing evils, will exceedingly harden and encourage wicked men to commit real evils. It is very natural and customary with wicked men to make use of the appearing infirmities of the saints, as excuses and apologies to bear them out in their greatest enormities and wickednesses. Why, did not such and such knowing eminent Christians do thus and thus? and we have gone but one step beyond them, and is that so great and heinous a crime? they have been playing and sporting themselves about the pit, and we are but slipped or stepped into the pit. They have been sitting and bibbing with such and such company, and we have but taken two or three merry cups more than ordinary in the same company, and is that so great a sin? &c. O sirs! as we should walk wisely towards those that are without, so we should walk

compassionately towards those that are without, 1 Thes. 4:12. 'Of some have compassion, making a difference,' Jude 22. Did not Jeremiah wish that his head were waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears, that he might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of his people? Jer. 9:1. Did not Samuel mourn for Saul? Did not Christ weep over Jerusalem? Did not the compassionate Samaritan bind up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, who fell among thieves in his going from Jerusalem to Jericho? Did not Paul weep over those that were enemies of the cross of Christ? Yea, shall we shew pity and compassion to an ox or an ass that is fallen into a ditch? Nay, shall David rather venture upon a lion than lose a lamb? Shall Jacob rather endure heat by day, and cold by night, than neglect his flock? Shall Moses fight with odds, rather than the cattle shall perish with thirst? Nay, shall Xenocrates, a heathen, shew compassion to a poor sparrow, that being scared and pursued by a hawk, flew into his bosom for succour? &c. And shall not we have that compassion on poor sinners' precious and immortal souls, as to abstain from the appearance of sin, which may more ways than one prove so exceeding prejudicial to them? &c.

Wicked men are wonderful prone to watch for the saints' haltings, Jer. 20:10. Christians are lights upon a high hill; yea, they are stars in the firmament of the church, and therefore every man's eye is upon them, and if wicked men can but discern the least indecency, the least appearance of any eccentric or irregular motion, oh how readily will they let fly against God and the gospel, against religion, and against all that have a profession of religion upon them! Now the honour of God, and the credit of the gospel, should be so dear and precious in the eyes of every Christian, that he should rather choose to die than to venture upon the least apparition of sin, whereby the honour of God may be clouded, or the credit of the gospel impeached or eclipsed, or the soul of a poor sinner endangered or worsted. Both

the least sin, and the least appearance of sin, must be avoided and prevented; the cockatrice must be crushed in the egg, else it will soon become a serpent; the very thought of sin, if not thought on, will break out into action, action into custom, custom into habit, and then both body and soul are in the ready way of being irrecoverably lost. Camerarius tells us a sad story of two brothers, who, walking out in the evening and seeing the element full of bright spangling stars, one of them being a grazier, wished that he had as many oxen as there were stars in the firmament; then said the other brother, If I had a pasture as big as all the world, where would you keep the oxen? He answered, In your pasture. What, said the other, whether I would or no? Yes, said his brother. The matter was very light; it was but a little evil, or an appearing evil, but it fell out very heavily; for presently they fell to words, and then drew one upon another, and in the close killed one another. O friends! as you love the lives of sinners, and as you love the souls of sinners, keep off from all appearance of evil. But,

[7.] Seventhly, Other precious saints have abstained from all appearances of evil; witness Joseph, Paul, Daniel, &c., but lately cited. And to these let me add that great instance of Augustine, who retracted even ironies because they had the appearance of evil. And so the primitive Christians would not set up lights and bays at their doors, though for this they were persecuted as enemies to the emperor, because the temple and the doors of idolaters were wont to be thus garnished. And so David refused to take the threshing-floor, and threshing instruments, and oxen, &c., of Araunah as a gift, but would needs buy them at a price, and this he did, partly out of a divine nobleness, and partly to avoid the very show of covetousness, 2 Sam. 24:21–24. Now why has God left all these famous precedents upon record, but on purpose to encourage his saints in all ages to abstain from all appearing evils, as well as from all apparent evils.

Certainly God looks that we should so eye the best, the highest, the worthiest, and the exactest examples, as that we should make it our great business and work to come up to them, and to imitate them to the life. O friends! the examples last cited should be very awakening, very persuading, very convincing, and very encouraging; because in them you may see that though abstinence from the appearance of evil be a difficult thing, yet it is a possible thing. Shall we love to look upon the pictures of our friends, and shall we not much more love to look upon the holy examples of those eminent saints that had the lively picture of grace, and the lovely image of Christ fairly stamped upon their hearts and lives? It is both our mercy and our duty to eye the examples, and to follow the footsteps of those Christians that have been most eminent in grace, as you may plainly see by comparing of these scriptures together, Prov. 2:20; Heb. 6:12; 1 Thes. 1:6; Philip. 4:9; 2 Tim. 3:10–12; Heb. 12:1; Philip. 3:17; 1 Cor. 11:1; Titus 2:7. He that would fain write a fair hand, had need have his eye often upon his copy; and he that would fain abstain from all appearance of evil, he had need often to eye the gracious examples of such who have made conscience of abstaining from appearing evils, as well as from apparent evils. But,

[8.] Eighthly and lastly, Consider what some refined heathens and civilised pagans have done in this very case. There are stories of heathens that would not look upon excellent beauties, lest they should be ensnared. Democritus plucked out his own eyes to avoid the danger of uncleanness. Socrates speaketh of two young men that flang away their belts, when, being in an idol temple, the lustrating water fell upon them, detesting, saith the historian, the garment spotted by the flesh. Alexander would not see the woman after whom he might have lusted. Scipio Africanus, warring in Spain, took New Carthage by storm, aure victor, at which time a beautiful and noble virgin fled to him for succour to preserve her chastity; he being four-

and-twenty years old, and so in the heat of youth, hearing of it, would not suffer her to come into his sight for fear of temptation, but caused her to be restored in safety to her father. So when Demosthenes the orator was asked an excessive sum of money to behold the beautiful Lais, he answered, He would not buy repentance so dear, neither was he so ill a merchant as to sell eternals for temporals. Nor Cæsar would not search Pompey's cabinet, lest he should find new matters of revenge. Memorable is the story of the children of Samoseta, that would not touch their ball, but burnt it, because it had touched the toe of a wicked heretical bishop as they were tossing and playing with it. Now shall some refined heathens, shall civilised pagans abstain from the appearance of evil, from occasions and temptations to sin? and shall real Christians fall short of them? Shall blind nature do more than grace? Shall men fallen in the first Adam do more than those that are raised and enlivened by the second Adam? But to prevent all mistakes, let me add, though many heathens have abstained from the appearance of some evil, yet they have not abstained from the appearance of all evil; neither have they abstained from the appearance of any evil out of a hatred of evil; nor from any principles of saving light, or life, or love; nor out of any regard to any royal law of God; nor out of any regard to the honour or glory of God, but either out of vain-glory and popular applause, the pole-stars by which they steered all their actions, or out of hypocrisy, which set a tincture and dye upon all their actions. What writer hath more golden sentences than Seneca against the contempt of gold; yet if Tacitus and others of his contemporaries may be credited, none more rich, none more covetous than he, as if out of design he had persuaded others to cast away their money, that he himself might come and gather it up again, &c. And thus you see that there are very great reasons why every Christian should avoid the very show, suspicion, or appearance of evil, &c. But,

[11.] Eleventhly and lastly, He that sets himself resolutely, mostly, habitually, against his bosom sins, his constitution sins, his most prevalent sins, &c., he has certainly a saving work, a powerful work of God upon his soul, Ps. 18:26. True grace will make a man stand stoutly and stedfastly on God's side, and work the heart to take part with him, against the most darling sins, though they be as right hands or as right eyes. True grace will lay hands upon a man's most beloved lusts, and cry out to heaven, Lord, crucify them, crucify them, down with them, down with them even to the ground. Lord, do justice, do signal justice, do speedy justice, do exemplary justice upon this head lust, this master sin! Lord, hew down root and branch! let the very stumps of this Dagon be broken all in pieces! Lord, curse this wild fig-tree, that never more fruit may grow thereon! Certainly God and Christ is set up highest in that man's heart, who bends most of his thoughts, strength, and endeavours against his constitution sins, against the sins of his place, calling, condition and complexion. It is very observable that the Jews, after they had been in the Babylonish furnace for idolatry, they ever hated and feared that sin, as much as the burned child dreads the fire; yea, they would die any death rather than admit an idol. Josephus tells us how stoutly they opposed Pilate and Petronius, that would have set up Cæsar's statue in their temples, offering their throats to the swords of the soldiers, rather than they would endure that idol in God's house. Oh when once the heart of a Christian comes thus to be set against all his golden and silver idols, then we may safely say, 'Behold a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile.' He that finds his lusts, his bosom, his darling lusts, begin to fall before him, as Haman once begun to fall before Mordecai, Esther 6:13, he may safely and confidently conclude that he is of the seed of the Jews, and that the seed of God abideth in him, 1 John 3:9. But having discoursed so largely as I have concerning bosom sins, darling lusts, head corruptions, in my other writings, I need say no more at this time.

And thus you see that there are eleven particulars in regard of sin and a Christian's actings about it, that speaks out a true saving work of grace to be in the souls of the saints. But, &c.

II. Secondly, Where the constant, ordinary, standing, and abiding purpose, disposition, frame, and general bent of a man's heart, soul, spirit, desires, and endeavours are fixed and set for God, for grace, for holiness in heart and life, there is a most sure and infallible work of God passed upon that man's soul. The constant bent and the settled purpose of a true child of God, is for God, for grace, for holiness in heart and life: Ps. 119:112, 'I have inclined my heart to keep thy statutes always, even to the end.' Verse 38, 'Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.' Verse 44, 'So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.' Verse 45, 'And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.' Acts 24:16, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.' Heb. 13:18, 'Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.' Gracious souls do strongly affect that which they cannot easily effect: Ps. 119:57, 'Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words.' Some read this verse thus, 'Lord, I have said, my portion shall be to keep thy words.' Holy David was fully determined and resolved in himself, to keep God's royal law, in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil. And so Barnabas exhorted the disciples, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord, Acts 11:23; as if all piety and truth of grace consisted in gracious purposes of heart. Certainly when the bent of a man's mind, and the settled purpose of a man's soul, and the unfeigned desires of his heart, are for God, for grace, for holiness in heart, in life, then the estate and condition of that man is safe and happy. It is very observable that that great apostle Paul, in his spiritual conflict, lays a very great stress upon these things; witness Rom. 7:16, 'If then I do that which I would not,

I consent unto the law that it is good.' So verse 18, 'For to will is present with me.' So verse 19, 'For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.' So verses 21, 22, 'I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.' So verse 25, 'So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God.' Certainly, the truth, the life, and power of grace; of holiness, of regeneration, is not so much seen in our actions, as in the renewing and sanctifying of our minds and wills, according to that Rom. 12:2, 'Be ye transformed,' or metamorphosed, as the Greek has it, 'by the renewing of your mind.' No man is to judge of the soundness or sincerity of his spirit by some particular acts, but by the constant frame and bent of his spirit, and by his general conversation in this world. If particular actions might determine whether a man had grace or no grace, whether he were in Christ or not in Christ, whether he were a saint or not a saint, whether he were sincere or unsound, we should many times conclude, that those had no grace who indeed have, and that they were not in Christ who indeed are, and that they are no saints who indeed are, and that they are not sincere, who certainly are true Nathanaels. The best saints have had their extravagant motions, and have very foully and sadly miscarried as to particular actions, even then when the constant course and bent of their spirits have been God-wards and Christ-wards, and holiness-wards and heaven-wards, &c. Witness David's murder and adultery, Noah's drunkenness, Lot's incest, Joseph's swearing, Job's cursing, Jonah's vexing, Peter's denying, and Thomas his not believing. Such twinklings do and will accompany the highest and fairest stars. As he who foots it best may be found sometimes all along, and the neatest person may sometimes slip into a slough. He that cannot endure to see a spot upon his clothes, may yet sometimes fall into a quagmire. So the holiest and exactest Christians may sometimes be surprised with many infirmities and unevennesses, and sad miscarriages. Certainly

particular sinnings are compatible with a gracious frame, though none are with a glorious condition. Though no darkness, no clouds can be mixed with the sun in heaven, yet both may be in the air which is enlightened below. Our best estate on earth is mixed, and not absolute. Glory annihilates all sinful practices, but grace only weakens them. The most sincere Christian is but an imperfect Christian, and hath daily cause to mourn over his infirmities, as well as he has cause to bless God for his graces and mercies. Well, sirs! look, as every particular stain doth not blemish the universal fineness of the cloth, so neither doth this or that particular fact disprove and deny the general bent of the heart. Particulars may not decide the estate either way. It is true, a man by a particular sinning is denominated guilty, but by no one particular can a man's estate be challenged, either for good or bad. He that shall judge of a Christian's estate by particular acts, though notorious bad, will certainly 'condemn the generation of the righteous.' We must always distinguish betwixt some single good actions, and a series of good actions. It is not this or that particular good action, but a continued course of holy actions, that denominates us holy. Certainly, as there is no man so holy, but sometimes he falls into this or that particular sin; so there is no man so wicked, but sometimes he falls in with this or that particular duty. Witness Pharaoh, who in a fit desires Moses and Aaron to pray for him; and witness Balaam, who in a good mood desires to die the death of the righteous; and witness Saul, who under a pang condemns himself, and justifies David; and so witness Ahab's humbling of himself, and Nineveh's repenting, and Felix his trembling, and Herod's hearing of John Baptist gladly. Now look, as every sin which a godly man falls into, through infirmity, doth not presently denominate him ungodly, so neither will a few good actions done by a wicked man prove him godly. It is what the course and tenor of the life is, that must be most diligently and wisely observed, for every man is as his course is; if his course be holy, the man is so;

if his course be wicked, the man is wicked. There is a maxim in logic, viz., that no general rule can be established upon a particular instance; and there is another maxim in logic, viz., that no particular instance can overthrow a general rule. So here, as no man can safely and groundedly conclude from no better promises2 than from some few particular actions, though in themselves materially and substantially good, that his heart is therefore sincere; so on the contrary, no man ought to conclude, because of some gross particular sinful actions, and extravagant motions, that his heart is unsound. O sirs! we are not to make a judgment of our states and conditions, by some particular actions, whether they are good or evil, but we are to make a judgment of our estates and conditions by the general frame, bent, and disposition of our hearts, and by the constant tenor of our lives. It is certain, that God accounts every wicked man guilty of all those sins, wickednesses, and vanities, which the settled purpose, desire, bent, bias, and frame of his soul inclined him to, though he doth not actually commit them: Mat. 5:28, 'He that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.' A man may commit adultery, and yet not touch a woman. There are many thousands that die of the wound in the eye. So 1 John 3:15, 'Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.' A man may commit murder, and yet not kill a man, yea, he may commit murder, and yet not touch a man: Prov. 23:7, 'For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.' The man is as the mind is. God esteems of wicked men according to their hearts, and not according to their words. So it is as certain that the Lord accounts every godly man to do all that good, that the settled purpose, frame, bent, bias, and unfeigned desires of the soul inclines him to: 2 Cor. 8:12, 'If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted.' So Heb. 11:17, 'By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only son;' that is, in disposition and full purpose of heart, and willingness of mind, which God

accepted for the deed. A true intent is in God's account as a real act. So David had a purpose, a mind, a will to build God a house, and for this God commends him: 1 Kings 8:18, 'And the Lord said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thy heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thy heart;' yea, God rewards him for it, as if he had actually done it, and tells him in his ear that he would build him an house, 2 Sam. 7:27. So when that servant that owed his Lord ten thousand talents had shewed his readiness, and willingness, and resolvedness to pay all: 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all!' Mat 18:26, a thing as impossible for him to do, as it is for us to keep the whole law, and not to fail in one point; but his desires, his mind, his will, his purposes was to do it; well, and what does his Lord do? Why, his Lord has compassion on him, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt, ver. 27; his Lord took this for full and current payment, he accepted of the will for the deed. So when Zaccheus had unfeignedly professed his purpose and willingness to make restitution, Christ presently replies, 'This day is salvation come to thy house,' Luke 19:9. Certainly the Lord accounts that soul a true believer, and a blessed soul, that unfeignedly desires to believe; witness that Mat. 5:6, 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.' And it is as certain that the Lord accounts that sinner a true penitent, that doth unfeignedly desire, purpose, and resolve to repent, to break off his sins, and to turn to the Lord, as you may see in that great instance of the prodigal: Luke 15:18–20, 'I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.' As soon as ever the prodigal did but purpose and resolve to repent, and return to his father, the compassions of his father are kindled and turned towards

him, and he does not go, but runs and falls on his neck, and instead of kicking and killing, there is nothing but kissing and embracing a returning prodigal. God always sets a higher value upon our dispositions than upon our actions, and in our best services he esteems more of our wills than he does of our deeds, as is evident by the scriptures in the margin. Every good man is as good in the eye and account of God, as the ordinary frame and bent of his spirit speaks him to be. Every man is as holy, as humble, as heavenly, as spiritual, as gracious, as serious, as sincere, as fruitful, as faithful, as watchful, &c., as the settled purposes, desires, resolutions, and endeavours of his soul speaks him to be. Hence Noah is said to be a just man, and perfect or upright in his generation, Gen. 6:9. And hence Job is said to be a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil, Job 1:1–8. And hence David is said to be a man after God's own heart, 1 Sam. 13:14; and to fulfil all his wills, Acts 13:22. Here the Greek word θελὴματα is wills, to note the universality and sincerity of his obedience. And hence Zacharias and Elizabeth are said to be both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of God blameless, Luke 1:5, 6. Hence the church is said to be all fair: Cant. 4:7, 'Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no spot in thee.' And hence those hundred forty and four thousand saints that had their Father's name written in their foreheads, Rev. 14:1, are said to be without fault: ver. 5, 'And in their mouth was found no guile: for they were without fault before the throne of God.' God in the covenant of grace, and upon the credit of his Son's blood, and for the glory of his free grace and favour, is graciously pleased to accept of his people, and to approve of his people, and to delight in his people, and to interpret his people, according to the common bent, frame, disposition, resolution, unfeigned desires, and constant endeavours of their souls. But, &c.

III. Thirdly, If your obedience be the obedience of faith, then your estate is good, then you have assuredly an infallible work of God upon your souls.

Quest. But how shall we know whether our obedience be the obedience of faith or no? How may a man discern when his obedience springs from faith?

Ans. You may certainly know whether your obedience be the obedience of faith or no, by these following particulars:

[1.] First, That obedience that springs from faith is a full obedience, a universal obedience. David did look upon his universal obedience as a special testimony of his uprightness: Ps. 119:6, 'Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.' Mark! the psalmist doth not say, When I obey all thy commandments, then shall I not be ashamed; but, 'When I have a respect to all thy commandments, then shall I not be ashamed.' Now a respect to all God's commandments notes an inward awe and reverential eye towards every duty that God requires. The words, according to the Hebrew, may be read thus: 'Then shall I not blush when my eye is to all thy commandments.' Now you know the traveller hath his eye towards the place whither he is going, and though he be short of it, yet he is still a-putting on and pressing forwards all he can to reach it. So when the eye of a saint is to all the commands of God, and he is still a-pressing forwards towards full obedience, such a soul shall never be put to the blush; such a soul shall never be ashamed in the great day of our Lord Jesus. So Acts 13:22, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will;' πάντα τὰ θελήματα μου, all my wills, to note the sincerity and universality of his obedience. So Acts 24:16, 'And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and

toward men.' So Heb. 13:18, 'We trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.' That obedience that springs from faith doth neither dispute divine commands, nor divide divine commands one from another. Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, Luke 1:5, 6. That obedience that springs from faith is a full obedience, a universal obedience. It is universal in respect of the subject, the whole man, and it is universal in respect of the object, the whole law. Mark! he who obeys sincerely obeys universally, though not in regard of practice, which is impossible; yet (1.) In regard of his will and desires; his will and desire is to obey all: Rom. 8:18, 'For to will is present with me.' Ps. 119:5, 'Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes'! (2.) In respect of election or choice; he chooses to obey all: Ps. 119:173, 'Let thine hand help me: for I have chosen thy precepts.' The word here rendered chosen signifies to choose upon trial and examination: I have chosen thy precepts before all, and above all other things. I have chosen thy precepts for my chiefest good, and for my only treasure. I have chosen thy precepts to own them, to follow them, and to obey them. (3.) In respect of approbation; he approves of all the commands of God, as holy, just, and good; he highly approves of those royal commands that he cannot perfectly obey: Rom. 7:12, 'Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good.' And ver. 16, 'I consent unto the law that it is good.' He assents to the commands of God as holy, and he consents to them as good. (4.) In respect of affection; he loves all the commands of God, he dearly loves those very commands that he cannot obey: Ps. 119:97, 'O how I love thy law!' Such a pang of love he felt, as could not otherwise be vented, but by this pathetical exclamation, 'Oh how love I thy law!' Ver. 113, 'I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.' Ver. 163, 'I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love.' Ver. 119, 'Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love

thy testimonies.' Ver. 127, 'Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold.' Ver. 159, 'Consider how I love thy precepts.' Ver. 167, 'My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.' (5.) In respect of valuation or esteem, he highly values all the commands of God, he highly prizes all the commands of God, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together: Ps. 119:72, 127, 128, Ps. 19:8–11, Job 23:12. (6.) In respect of his purpose and resolution; he purposes and resolves, by divine assistance, to obey all, to keep all: Ps. 119:106, 'I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.' Ps. 17:3, 'I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.' (7.) In respect of his inclination; he has an habitual inclination in him to keep all the commands of God: 1 Kings 8:57, 58, 2 Chron. 30:17–20; Ps. 119:112, 'I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even to the end.' (8.) In respect of endeavours; they endeavour to keep all: Ps. 119:59, 'I turned my feet unto thy testimonies.' There is no man that obeys God truly, who doth not endeavour to obey God fully. And thus you see in what respect that obedience that flows from faith is a full obedience, a universal obedience. A child of God obeys all the commands of God in respect of his sincere desires, purposes, resolutions, and endeavours; and this God accepts in Christ for perfect and complete obedience. This is the glory of the covenant of grace, that God accepts and esteems of sincere obedience as perfect obedience. Such who sincerely endeavour to keep the whole law of God, they do keep the whole law of God in an evangelical sense, though not in a legal sense. In the work of conversion, God infuseth all grace together, and writes not one particular law in the hearts of his children, but the whole law, which is a universal principle, inclining the soul impartially to all, Ezek. 11:19, 20. The gracious soul sincerely falls in with every command of God, so far as he knows it, without prejudice or partiality; he dares not pick and choose what commands to obey, and what to reject, as hypocrites do; he hath an

eye to see, an ear to hear, and a heart to obey the first table as well as the second, and the second as well as the first. He doth not adhere to the first, and neglect the second, as hypocrites do; neither doth he adhere to the second, and contemn the first, as profane men do. All Sauls, Jehus, Judases, Demases, scribes, pharisees, and temporaries, they are still partial in their obedience; for while they yield obedience to some commands, they live in the habitual breach of other commands, Mat. 23:23. Jehu boastingly calls out, 'Come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts,' 2 Kings 10:29, 30. But if Jehoshaphat had gone a little further, he might have seen his calves too, contrary to God's commands. Herod heard John Baptist gladly, and did many things; but if John will be close and plain with him, he shall then first lose his liberty, and then his head for his labour, Mark 6:16, 17. A sincere Christian loves all the known commands of God, and prizes all the commands of God, and sees a divine image, majesty, and authority stamped upon all the commands of God. And therefore the main bent and disposition of his soul is to obey all, and to be subject to all the commands of God. Let me in a few particulars open this great truth a little more fully to you. And therefore take me thus.

First, A sincere Christian will endeavour to obey God in suffering commands as well as in doing commands, in losing as well as gaining commands. An unsound Christian, he loves cheap obedience; he is willing to fall in with those commands that are not chargeable or costly; he loves a cheap gospel, and a cheap ministry, and a cheap membership, and a cheap communion of saints, &c. But when his obedience comes to be chargeable, when his obedience to divine commands may cost him his health, his strength, his liberty, his riches, his estate, his friends, his credit, his name, &c., then he retires, then he cries out, Durus sermo, it is a hard saying, who can bear it? John 6:60. This is a hard commandment, who can obey it? When religion is attended with freedom, honour, and safety, when

religion is attended with riches, pleasures, and applause, then unsound hearts will put forwards; but when these part, then they bid religion farewell. As you see in the young man in the Gospel, who was willing to follow Christ so long as he might be no loser in following of him, Mat. 19:20–25; but when it came to this, that he must part with his riches or with Christ, then he falls off, and went away sorrowful, because he had great possessions. But now a sincere Christian will obey even the most chargeable and costly commands of God, as you may see in that little book of martyrs, tenth and eleventh chapters of the Hebrews; and as you may see in the three children in Daniel, in the disciples, in the primitive Christians, and in the martyrs in the Marian days: Mat. 19:27. But,

Secondly, If your obedience springs from faith, then you will endeavour to obey God in relative commands as well as in absolute commands. You will not only hear, and pray, and read, and meditate, and fast, and mourn, but you will labour to be good in your relations, both as a husband, a father, a master, a magistrate, a minister. Remember this for ever, every one is that really that he is relatively. Many make a great profession, and are under a great name, and have great parts and gifts, and can discourse rarely well on any subject, whose houses are not Bethels, but Bethavens; not little temples, but little hells. One, writing of the Italian women, saith that they were angels in the streets, saints in the church, and devils in their houses. This is very applicable to many high professors this day, who are very forward in the general duties of religion, and yet make little conscience of relative duties; but he whose obedience springs from faith, he will make conscience of relative commands as well as of absolute commands. Whatever command hath the stamp of God, the authority of heaven, upon it, though it seem never so small, he dares not disobey it. If he sees a beam of divine majesty sitting upon the face of any command, he will submit to it. You know men will not

refuse a penny if the king's stamp be upon it; so if the authority of God be stamped upon the least command, a sound Christian will yield subjection to it as well as the greatest. Mark, if a man make no conscience of relative commands, though his general conversation as a Christian be never so admirable, yet he hath great cause to suspect himself and his estate, and that his heart is not right in the sight of God, Acts 8:21. Oh that you would seriously consider that relative and domestical graces and duties do more demonstrate true piety and godliness than public duties, than general duties, do; for pride, vain-glory, self-ends, and a hundred other outward carnal considerations, may put a man upon the general duties of religion, as you may see by the scriptures in the margin, and as you may see in the scribes and pharisees throughout the New Testament; but it argues both truth and strength of grace to be diligent and conscientious in the discharge of relative duties; and this is the true reason why the apostles in their epistles do so frequently, so earnestly, and so strongly, by variety of motives, press Christians to the performance of those relative duties that lie upon their hands. But,

Thirdly, If your obedience springs from faith, then you will endeavour to obey God in affirmative commands, as well as in negative commands. You will not only look upon what God would not have you to do, but you will also look to see what God would have you to do. Dives was not cast into hell for oppressing Lazarus, but for not shewing mercy to Lazarus; he was not damned because he took anything from him, but because he gave nothing to him, Luke 16:19–29. The evil servant did not riot out his talent, but omitted the improvement of it, for which he was cast into outer darkness, Mat. 25:24–31. Nor those reprobates in the same chapter did not rob the poor saints, but omitted the relieving of them, which was their ruin. Moab and Ammon were banished the sanctuary to the tenth

generation for a mere omission, because they met not God's Israel in the wilderness with bread and water, Deut. 23:3, 4. Look, as the omission of good diet breeds diseases, so the omission of religious duties will either make, work for repentance, or for hell, or for the Physician of souls. Mark, there is many a man's religion lies merely in negatives; he is no swearer, no drunkard, no adulterer, no oppressor, no defrauder, &c., Luke 18:11. A formal professor's obedience to divine commands does principally lie in negatives; he considers not so much what the command requires as what it prohibits, and he pleases himself rather in abstaining from evil than in doing of good, in being outwardly reformed than in being inwardly renewed. He thinks it enough that he turns from sin, though he makes no conscience of turning to God. If you ask him concerning affirmative commands, there you will find him speechless. Ask him, Art thou holy? Art thou humble? Art thou heavenly? Art thou sincere? Art thou a believer? Dost thou set up God as the great object of thy fear? Dost thou love God with a superlative love? Is the Sabbath of the Lord a delight unto thee? &c. Now here you strike him dumb; he looks upon the neglect of these things as no sins, because they are not such scandalous sins as the others are, Isa. 8:13, Ps. 18:1, Isa. 58:13. Remember, sirs, sinful omissions many times lead to sinful commissions, as you may see in the angels that fell from heaven to hell; and as you may see in Adam, who fell from his highest glory into a woful gulf of sin and misery. But,

Fourthly, If your obedience spring from faith, then you will endeavour to obey God in the spirit of the command, as, well as in the letter of the command. In every command of God there is an intra and an extra; one part of Christ's law binds the flesh, and another part binds the spirit: 'Thou shalt do no murder;' there is the letter of the command. 'Thou shalt not be angry with thy brother without a cause;' there is the spirit of the command. 'Thou shalt not

commit adultery;' there is the letter of the command. 'Thou shalt not look upon a woman to lust after her;' there is the spirit of the command, Mat. 5:21, 22, 27, 28. The pharisees of old did not look to the spirituality of the law, but only to the letter of the law; they rested wholly upon an outward conformity to the law. When their hearts were full of hellish lusts, they were all for the outside of the law, they regarded not the inside of the law; they were all for washing of platters and cups, and for beautifying of tombs, like an adulteress, whose care is to paint and set a fair face upon a foul matter; they were all for paying tithe of mint and anise and cummin; but they regarded not the inside of the law, they omitted the weightier matters of the law, viz., judgment, mercy, and faith, Mat. 23:23. While Paul walked by the letter of the command, he was blameless in his own account; but when he came to walk by the spirit of the command, then sin revived, and he died, Philip. 3:6, Rom. 7:9. Friends, there are the more general duties of religion, as hearing, praying, reading, receiving, fasting, repeating, discoursing, &c. Now these all lie in the very letter of the command. And there are the more inward and spiritual duties of religion, as the exercise of faith, fear, love, hope, joy, patience, contentation, humble submission, and choosing of God, and cleaving to God, and delighting in God, and admiring of God, and exalting of God, and following hard after God, and holy meditation, and self-examination, &c. Now all these lie in the very spirit of the command. Now in the exercise of these more spiritual duties our fellowship and communion with God mainly lies. In the more general duties of religion, an hypocrite may manifest the excellency of his gifts; but in the more spiritual duties of religion, a sincere Christian doth manifest both the excellency and efficacy of grace. Mark, an unsound heart looks no further than to the bare letter of the command, to bare hearing, and bare praying, and bare preaching, and bare fasting, and bare giving, and bare receiving, and bare suffering; he looks no further than to that part of the command

which only binds the flesh, or outward man; and if he does but observe that in the gross, he thinks he hath done marvellous well; like a melancholy man, that matters not what melody and harmony he makes, so he does but touch the strings of the instrument. But now, a sound, a sincere Christian, he looks to the spirit of the command; and if he does not come up to that in sincere desires, in gracious purposes, in fixed resolutions, and in cordial endeavours, he can have no peace, no rest, no quiet, no comfort. O sirs! as ever you would see God, and enjoy God another day, you must labour, not only to obey the letter of the command, but also to bring your hearts to the sincere obedience of the spirit of the command. This is a very close, piercing, distinguishing, and discovering sign. But,

Fifthly, If your obedience springs from faith, then you will labour, not only to obey God in the matter, but also in the manner of the command, not only in the substance of the command, but also in the circumstance of the command. God requires the manner as well as the matter; and God looks upon that work as not done, that is not done in a right manner. 'Did not the Lord command sacrifice? and did not Cain offer sacrifice? and yet God had no respect to him, nor to his offering, because his sacrifice was not offered up in a right manner, his offering was not offered up by a hand of faith; he offered his offering, but because he did not offer himself as an offering to God, his offering was rejected by God,' Gen. 4:8. A work may be materially good that is not formally and eventually good; and this was Cain's curse. How frequently did God command the Jews to pray? and yet he plainly tells them, 'When you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear,' Isa. 1:15. He commanded them to sacrifice, and yet he saith, 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices?' ver. 11, and all because they did not manage their prayers nor sacrifices in a right manner. Their hands were full of blood, and

their hearts were full of sins, and their lives were full of lewdness; and therefore all their services were vain oblations, yea, an abomination to God. An unsound heart looks no further than to the substance of the command. If he has heard, and prayed, and fasted, and read, and repeated, and given alms, and received the Lord's supper, he strokes himself, and blesses himself, and hugs himself, and thinks all is well, and so he looks no further. But now a sound sincere Christian, he looks to the circumstance as well as the substance, to the manner as well as to the matter of the command. When he prays, he labours to pray fervently, earnestly; he labours to get his heart into his prayers; when he hears, he will hear with attention and intention of spirit; when he walks, he endeavours to walk wisely, humbly, faithfully, fruitfully, circumspectly, exemplarily, winningly, convincingly, blamelessly; when he obeys, he desires and endeavours to obey freely, willingly, cheerfully. O sirs! if we pray, and pray not fervently; if we hear, and hear not fruitfully; if we obey, and obey not willingly; if we shew mercy, and do it not cheerfully; if we sanctify the Sabbath, and not with delight, all is worth nothing, all will come to nothing, Isa. 58:13. Mark, there are some circumstances accessory, some necessary, some wherein the being, and some wherein the well-being of a duty doth consist; and if you abstract these from them, the duty is worth nothing. Take away fervency and humility from prayer, take away faithfulness and fruitfulness from hearing, and take away willingness and delight from obedience, and all will be worth nothing. God regards not only the matter, but the manner. Criton the papist could say, That God loved better adverbs than nouns, not to pray only, but to pray well. Non bonum sed bene agere, Not to do good, but to do it well, is the great wisdom of a Christian. What is the sun without light, or the fountain without water, or the body without the soul, or wood without fire, or a bullet without a gun, or a ship without a rudder? No more are words in prayer, without the spirit of prayer. God looks more at the manner

than at the matter of your prayers. And let thus much suffice to confirm the first particular. But,

[2.] Secondly, That obedience that springs from faith, is an obedience that is only grounded upon the word of God, the commands of God. Ps. 119:4, 5, 'Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently; Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!' Isa. 8:20, 'To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' Mat. 5:18, 'For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.' John 10:35, 'If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken.' Chap. 12:48, 'He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.' 2 Tim. 3:16, 17, 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.' Now the reasons why that obedience that springs from faith is an obedience that is only grounded upon the word of God, the commands of God, are these five:

(1.) And the first is drawn from the supremacy and sovereignty of God, who alone is to prescribe to man his duty. He is our great Lord and Master, he is our only Lord and Lawgiver. Isa. 33:22, 'For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King.' James 4:12, 'There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy; who art thou that judgest another?' Now by the laws of this Lord and Lawgiver, we must square all our actions. Look, as it would be very absurd in a servant to do that work which he thinks meet, and not what his master commands; so it is as absurd for men to think, that God will accept of this or that at their hands, when they

cannot plead his superscription and authority for what they do. God will one day say to such, 'Who hath required this at your hands?' Isa. 1:12. O sirs! you must lay the command of God as a foundation for what you do, or else all your buildings, though never so glorious, will certainly totter and fall; in all you do, you must be able to say, 'Thus saith the Lord,' or else after you have done your best, you may be undone for ever. But,

(2.) Secondly, God's promise and blessing is only annexed to God's command. He that will have the sweet of the promise, and the blessings of heaven, he must look that his obedience be bottomed upon divine commands. In holy actions it is not thy performance, nor thy grace, nor thy warmth, nor thy zeal, but the command and the promise that is annexed to it, that will bear thee out. Therefore we are called children of the promise, and heirs of the promise, Gal. 4:28; Heb. 6:17. The children of God, in all their obedience, should still keep an eye upon the command of God, and the promise of God, as ever they would run the race that is set before them, Heb. 12:1. But,

(3.) Thirdly, Our obedience must be grounded and bottomed upon a divine command, because of that great corruption, pollution, blindness, and darkness which is upon our minds and understandings, which would carry us to what not, if we were not to steer our Christian course by divine commands, Col. 2:20–22. The apostle condemns those things which had a show of humility and great mortification, because they were not bottomed upon a divine command; and Christ condemned many practices of the scribes and pharisees, because they were not bottomed upon a divine command, as you may see by comparing the 6th, 15th, and 23d chapters of Matthew together. But,

(4.) Fourthly, Our obedience must be bottomed upon a divine command, because else we can never be able to bear up our hearts comfortably, courageously, confidently, and resolutely, under all the afflictions, oppositions, temptations, persecutions, and discouragements that we meet with in the ways of the Lord, and in doing the work of the Lord, Ps. 44:9, seq.; Ezek. 28:12, 22. All the messages that the prophets delivered were still grounded upon a divine command, 'Thus saith the Lord;' and this steeled their spirits in the work of the Lord, this made them resolute and undaunted in the midst of all the afflictions and oppositions that they met with. And so it was a word of command that raised the spirits and encouraged the hearts of the apostles in the work of the Lord, in the face of all the oppositions, threatenings, and buffetings that they met with from the civil powers, Acts 4:19, 20, and 5:29. You know Absalom lays his bloody commands upon his servants, as their highest encouragement to that bloody work of killing his brother Amnon, 2 Sam. 13:28. 'Now Absalom had commanded his servants [his assassins], saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon, then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you? Be courageous, and be valiant; or sons of valour, as the Hebrew runs. And so a Christian must lay the command of God before him, as his highest encouragement to do what God requires of him, &c.

(5.) Fifthly and lastly, Our obedience must be bottomed and grounded upon the commands of God, to difference and distinguish ourselves from all hypocrites, formalists, superstitious and profane persons, whose obedience is sometimes bottomed upon the traditions of men, and sometimes upon the commandments of men. It was the sin of the ten tribes, that they complied with the command of Jeroboam and his princes, to worship the calves at Dan and Bethel; and for this the wrath of the Lord fell heavy upon them.

'Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandments.' And sometimes their obedience is bottomed upon the examples of men, sometimes their obedience is bottomed upon the examples of their forefathers and ancestors,—Jer. 10:3, 'The customs of the people are vain,' &c.,—and sometimes upon the examples of great men. This was that which the pharisees objected against believing on Christ. 'Have any of the rulers or of the pharisees believed on him? but this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.' And sometimes they bottom their obedience upon the example of the multitude. This was Demetrius his argument against Paul, on the behalf of Diana, 'that all Asia and the world did worship her,' Acts 19:26, 27; and therefore the doctrine of Paul, that they be no gods which are made with hands, was false, and not to be suffered. This hath always been, and is still, the common plea of many, We do but as the most do; and sure a great many eyes can see more than one or two. And hereupon they exclaim against others for their singularity, because they won't do as the rest of their neighbours do. But,

[3.] Thirdly, That obedience that springs from faith is a growing obedience, it is an abounding obedience. Such a man's desires, will, study, and labour, is to get up to the highest pitch of obedience, to get up to the highest round in Jacob's ladder: Rev. 2:19, 'I know thy work, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.' The angel of the church of Thyatira is commended, (1) first, for his love; (2) for his charity; (3) for his faith; and (4) for his patience. And in the general course of his life, he daily became more excellent; for his 'latter works were more than the first,' that is, they were more manifest proofs of his constancy, and more worthy of praise than the first. This faithful pastor is commended for his holy progress in grace and holiness. So Paul, Philip. 3:12, 'Not as though I had already attained, either were

already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.' Ver. 13, 'Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.' Ver. 14, 'I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' The Greek word διώκω, doth emphatically import a pressing with an eager pursuit after the mark. It is the same word that signifies to persecute, because the earnestness of his spirit in pressing toward the mark now is the same that it was in the persecution of those that pressed toward, the mark before. Look, as good runners, when they come near unto the mark, stretch out their heads, and hands, and whole bodies, to take hold of them that run with them, or of the mark that is before them; so he in his whole race so laboured unto that which was before, as if he were still stretching out his arms to take hold of it. If such a man might have his choice, he would be the most humble, the most holy, the most heavenly, the most mortified, the most patient, the most contented, the most thankful, the most fruitful, the most active, the most zealous, and the most self-denying Christian in the world, 1 Peter 1:15, 16. If he might have his choice, he would be holy as God is holy, and perfect as his heavenly father is perfect; he would do the will of God on earth, as those princes of glory, the angels, do it now in heaven, viz., freely, readily, cheerfully, delightfully, universally, reverentially, and unweariedly, &c. If he might have his choice, he would exercise every grace, and perform every duty, with all his might; he sees so much excellency and beauty in God and Christ, that he cannot be at rest till he be swallowed up in the enjoyment of them; he sees so much excellency in grace, that nothing but perfection of grace will satisfy him; he makes perfection not only his utmost end, but he also labours after perfection with his utmost strength and endeavours. When God is made the one of a man's desires, the one of a man's affections, the one of a man's life

and comfort, then will he be the one of a man's endeavours too. That obedience that springs from faith, when it is not wintertime with a Christian, is a fruitful obedience, it is an abounding obedience, it is a progressive obedience. Look, as the mercy and favour of God to a believer is not stinted nor limited, so the obedience of a believer to God is not stinted or limited; but now the obedience of hypocrites is always stinted and limited. This command they will obey, but not that; this duty they will do, but not that; this work they will attend, but not that, &c.

[4.] Fourthly, That obedience that springs from faith is the obedience of a son, not of a slave; it is a free, voluntary, evangelical obedience, and not a legal, servile, and forced obedience: Ps. 110:3, 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness;' in the Hebrew, it is willingnesses, in the plural number, to shew their exceeding great willingness: Ps. 27:8, 'When thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' By face is meant, (1.) God himself: Exod. 20:3, 'Before my face,' that is, before me. (2.) His favour, Jer. 18:17, 'I will shew them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.' Now, no sooner had God given forth a word of command for the psalmist to seek him, and to seek his favour, but presently his heart did echo to that command: 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' So Jer. 3:22, 'Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings; behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.' Every gracious soul hath the duplicate of God's law in his heart, and is willingly cast into the mould of his word: Rom. 6:17, 'Ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine that hath been delivered to you,' or whereto you were delivered, as the words may be read. They did not only obey, but they obeyed from the heart, their hearts were in their obedience: Ps. 40:8, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God! yea, thy law is within my heart,' or in the midst of my bowels, as the Hebrew runs; these note the tenderest

affections. There is the counterpane of the law written, yea, printed upon every gracious heart; a godly man will live and die with the law of God stamped upon his heart, Col. 1:12; Philip. 1:8; Jer. 31:33. O beata Apocalypsis! said the martyr; catching up the Revelation, that was cast into the same fire with him to be burned. O blessed revelation! how happy am I to be burned with thee in my hands? It was Christ's meat and drink to do his Father's will; and the same mind is in all the saints as was in Christ Jesus. 'They delight in the law of God after the inward man,' John 4; Philip. 2:5; Rom. 7:22: True obedience flows from principles of heartiness and love within, and not from bye and base respects and ends, that are carnal and worldly. It is observable, that Jehu's obedience was as ample and as large as God's command: 2 Kings 10:30, 'And the Lord said unto Jehu, because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.' And yet because his heart was not in his obedience, and because he did not purely act for God, but for himself, that he might bring about his own designs, he met with a revenge instead of a reward; as you may see in that: Hosea 1:4, 'And the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel, for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.' Jehu's heart was not in his obedience, he had a dispensatory conscience: for though he rooted out Baal's worship, yet the golden calves must still continue. He destroyed idolaters, but not idolatry; and this carnal policy brought down vengeance and misery upon him and his posterity. Artaxerxes goes far: Ezra. 7:23, 'Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done.' To what a height doth this heathen prince rise! He will do anything for God, he will do everything for God that he requires. But mark, what is that which moves him to it? Is it love to God? is it delight in God? Oh no! all his obedience proceeded from nothing but fear of wrath and vengeance,

as is evident in the latter part of the verse: 'For why should there be wrath upon the realm of the king, and of his sons?' or, as the Hebrew runs, Why should there be boiling or foaming anger, great indignation? as it is rendered and made the utmost degree of divine displeasure in that Deut. 29:28. Some read these words, 'Against the realm of the king and his sons,' as distinct one from another, and not depending one upon another; thus: Against the realm, the king and his sons; and this reading the original will bear. And this reading shews, that as the king feared God's wrath against himself, so also against his realm and children; and accordingly he was the more studious and careful to escape it. Blind nature was afraid of divine wrath, and therefore was the more sedulous to prevent it. Oh! but now a true child of God, he has the law of God written, not only in his understanding, but also in his heart and affections, Ezek. 36:25–27; and this is that which makes his obedience to be pleasing and delightful to him; so that if he might be free from the injunctions and directions of the word, with the servant in the law, he would not value such a liberty, Exod. 21:4–6, &c.; he would not swear, nor lie, nor be drunk, nor whore, nor dissemble, nor cheat, nor run into all excess of riot if he might, because in his soul he has a principle of grace, and an inward contrariety and antipathy against it; he would not cease to hear, to read, to pray, to meditate if he might, because his soul takes a delight and sweet complacency in these things. There is a principle within him agreeable to the precept without him, which makes all religious performances to be easy and pleasurable to him. Look, as the eye delights in seeing, and the ear in hearing, so a gracious heart (except when it is under a cloud of desertion, or in the school of temptation, or under some grievous tormenting afflictions, or sadly worsted by some prevalent corruption) delights in obeying. Actions of nature, you know, are actions of delight; and so are all those actions that spring from a new nature, a divine nature, &c.

[5.] Fifthly, That obedience that springs from faith is a transforming obedience. It mightily alters and changes a man; from impurity to purity, from sin to sanctity, from unrighteousness to righteousness, from earthly-mindedness to heavenly-mindedness, from pride to humility, from hypocrisy to sincerity, &c., 2 Cor. 3:18, Rom. 12:1, 2. Such as please themselves with this, that they are no changelings, and that they are whatever they were, these are still in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity, Acts 8:23. That obedience of the Romans, which was said to have come abroad unto all men, was an exemplary obedience, and a transforming obedience, Rom. 16:19. Certainly, gospelobedience is a grace of much worth, and of great force upon the whole man; for when it is once wrought in the heart, it worketh a conformity to all God's holy will. But having spoken more largely of this in my other writings, let this touch here suffice, &c.

[6.] Sixthly, That obedience that springs from, faith is a constant obedience; it is a fixed and resolved obedience. Not in respect of practice and continued acts, 'for in many things we offend all.' 'There is not a just man upon the earth, that doth good and sinneth not.' 'Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?' 'There is no man that sinneth not.' 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,' &c. But in respect of a Christian's sincere desires, bent of will, purpose of heart, resolution of soul, and faithful endeavours: Ps. 119:20, 'My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.' Ver. 112, 'I have inclined my heart to keep thy statutes alway, even to the end.' Ver. 33, 'Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end.' Job 17:9, 'The righteous shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.' So Isa. 40:29–31, Job 2:3. Mark, the renewed man hath at all times a desire to fear the name of the Lord, Neh. 1:11; a will to live honestly at all times, Heb. 13:18. And it hath some endeavours and exercise of spirit, to

keep always a conscience void of offence towards God and men, Acts 24:16. The Israelites, in their marches toward the holy land, were many times interrupted by divers enemies, but yet they advanced in their course, as soon as they could get rid of their enemies. So, though the believer be many times interrupted, in the course of his obedience, by many fierce temptations, and strange working of corruptions; yet after the temptation is over, the believer returns to the course of obedience with greater forwardness, and with redoubled strength and courage, and in the end perfects his course of holiness in the fear of the Lord, 2 Cor. 7:1. Mark, the appearing motion and walking of an unregenerate man in a way of righteousness and holiness, is but artificial, from the engine of hypocrisy and self-interest, like the flying of Architus his artificial dove, and therefore having no inward principle of life, it endureth not; but the motion and walking of a man, renewed by grace in ways of holiness and righteousness, is like the natural living motion of birds, it continues as long as life continues; and as everything in motion, the nearer it comes to the centre, the more swiftly it moves, so the nearer the believer, through time, to his rest in heaven, the more propense he is in all his motions towards God; 'he forgets the things that are behind, and reacheth forth unto those things that are before,' Philip. 3:13. That obedience that springs from faith is a fixed and resolved obedience; like David's worthies, it will break through an host of Philistines, through an army of difficulties, impediments, and discouragements, that it may be found doing the will of God. To make this a little more clearly and fully out, observe with me these few things:

First, No contrary commands of men shall take this man off from his obedience to the commands of God, Acts 4:19, and 5:29, &c.

Secondly, No stream of evil examples, no current of corrupt times, shall bear them down in ways of obedience: Joshua 24:15, 'I and my household will serve the Lord, though all Israel should serve idols.' And Noah was upright with God, and walked with God in his generation, when the whole world was overspread with violence, and all flesh had corrupted their ways, Gen. 6:9, and 7:1.

Thirdly, No worldly profit or advantage shall bribe this man from his obedience, Heb. 11:8. Abraham will obey and follow God, though he forsakes all the benefits and contentments of his native country, and of his father's house, not knowing where his lot should fall, &c.

Fourthly, No carnal disputes or reasonings with flesh and blood shall dissuade him from his obedience, Heb. 11:7. Noah might have raised many objections against that strange attempt of building an ark, a work of an hundred and twenty years' continuance; but Noah waves all disputes, and falls upon building of the ark, according to the command of God. So Paul, as soon as he was converted, he was commanded by God to preach to the Gentiles; he might have made abundance of objections against that service, but instead of objecting, he falls close to his Master's work, and never consults with flesh and blood, Gal. 1:15–17.

Fifthly, No flood of natural affection shall hinder them in the way of their obedience. When God commanded Abraham to offer up Isaac as a burnt-offering, he goes about it readily, and never acquaints Sarah with it, lest she should have hindered him in his obedience, and he goes three days' journey to effect it, Gen. 22 compared with Heb. 11:17–19. When God commands, Abraham will not stick at it, though it be to offer up a son, a natural son, and not an adopted son; an only son, and not one of many; a son of the free-woman, and not of the bond-woman; a son of his old age; a son of the promise; a son

in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; a son of his love and delight; a son that made the good old man laugh and be merry,—Isaac signifies laughter,—a son that was grown up to some years; witness the wood of the burnt-offering that he laid upon him, Gen. 22:6, 7. And this was the commendation of Levi: Deut. 33:8, 9, 'And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one' [Urim and Thummim signify light and perfection, according to their best derivation in the Hebrew tongue, and they are here put in the plural number, lights and perfections, to note the plenty as well as the excellency of divine graces,] 'whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children.' This relates to that heroical fact of the Levites, Exod. 32:26–29, when, at the commandment of Moses, they slew their idolatrous brethren that had worshipped the golden calf, not sparing those that were most nearly allied to them, but did execute God's judgments upon parents, brethren, and children, as if they had been mere strangers to them; the Levites were so impartial in God's cause as not to acknowledge either father or mother, brother or children, against his command. Natural affections are strong, but supernatural obedience is stronger. Some have well observed, that the married martyrs, who were parents of many children, as Rogers, Watts, Guest, Rawlins, &c., suffered with most alacrity.

Sixthly, No terrors, no threats, no reproaches, no afflictions, no oppositions, no persecutions, no bonds, no banishments, no dangers, no deaths, shall deter them or affright them from their obedience, as will evidently appear by comparing of these scriptures together, Ps. 44:16–21; Acts 20:23, 24, 21:12, 13, and 24:14; Dan. 3:14–19; Rev. 12:11,' This is most evident in the histories of the ten persecutions, and in all other histories, both of a former and a later date, &c.

Physicians observe a difference betwixt the natural and preternatural heat in men's bodies. The preternatural heat, which ariseth from distemper, may be more for the present; but as it exceeds for measure, so it abates for time, because the natural heat is a more equal, and moderate, and durable heat; every part hath an equal share, and it is not extreme, and yet it continues. Thus it is with hypocrites and upright persons in the matter of obedience. The hypocrite may, in a kind of preternatural heat, in a hot fit, in a present heat, fall upon hearing, and reading, and praying, and reforming of his family, and upon leaving of this sin and that, and upon casting off this vain company and that, and upon associating of himself with this good company and that. But this hot fit does not last; the cold fit takes him again, and then he shakes hands with all his duties, and loses all his good inclinations, and lays aside all his warm resolutions. Will the hypocrite pray always? Job 27:8, 9. Ephraim's goodness was as a morning cloud, which soon vanisheth, and as the early dew, which is soon dried up by the sunbeams, Hosea 6:4. They were both false and fickle, unsteady and unstable, constant only in inconstancy; their hearts were never right with God, for they were not stedfast in his covenant, Ps. 78:36, 37. There are four times wherein an hypocrite may express a great readiness and forwardness to religious duties:

(1.) First, When he is under terrors and distress of conscience. Oh, now for a little ease, a little rest, a little quiet, a little comfort, what won't the hypocrite do! &c.

(2.) Secondly, When he is under sore and heavy afflictions. Hosea 5:15, 'In their affliction they will seek me early;' Isa. 26:16, 'Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them;' Ps. 78:34, 'When he slew them, then they sought him.' It is a reproach to some: No penny, no paternoster.

And it is a shame to others: No plague, no paternoster; no punishment, no prayer, &c. So Pharaoh and Ahab, &c.

(3.) Thirdly, When religion is in fashion, when it is a credit to be a professor, and when profession is the highway to profit and preferment. In the warm summer of prosperity, when there is no hazard, no danger, no loss to be a Christian, who then so forward in religious duties as the hypocrite? but when the sun of persecution is up, then he falls away, Mat. 13:5, 6.

(4.) Fourthly, When others' presence, counsel, and examples have an influence upon them. Oh, now they keep close duties! Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest; but when Jehoiada was dead, Joash serves groves and idols, and turns a deaf ear to those prophets that testified against him, and gives Zechariah the son of Jehoiada his passport out of the world for inveighing against his evil manners, and the wicked courses of his princes and people, 2 Chron. 24:2, 17–23. Whilst the good judges lived, the Israelites kept close to the service of God: Judges 2:7, 'And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel.' But when the good judges were dead, the Israelites did what was right in their own eyes: every man's lust was his law, Judges 17:6, and chap. 21:25. Whilst Moses was present, there was no talking of a golden calf, but no sooner was his back turned but the Israelites make a golden calf, and worship it when they had done, Exod. 32:1–9, &c.

But now mark, that obedience that springs from, faith, that is a constant obedience, that is constant in opposition to fits and starts, and imports the course and bent of a Christian's life, which is always

to walk with God, to cleave to God, to follow God, and to obey God. But,

[7.] Seventhly and lastly, That obedience that springs from faith, is directed to right ends. Gospel obedience has always gospel ends attending of it. Quest. What are they? Ans. They are these nine.

(1.) First, To testify our thankfulness to the Lord for all his favours and benefits that we have received from him, Ps. 103:1–4; 116:12, &c.

(2.) Secondly, To recover the image of God again, to the height of what we are able. The first Adam lost the image of God by his disobedience. Now, this image of God we recover again in Christ our second Adam; but so as that the more enlightened, the more holy, the more humble, the more heavenly, the more righteous, the more gracious, and the more obedient we are, the more we recover of this image of God, which consists in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, Eph. 4:24. Now, saith the believer, my intent is to recover that precious image of God which I lost in the first Adam, and therefore do I labour to come up to the highest pitches of obedience, because the higher I rise in my obedience, the more I shall recover of the lost image of God. I know that I lost this image by partaking of the disobedience and pollution of the first Adam; and I know that I have recovered in part the same image by partaking of the obedience and holiness of the second Adam; and I yet further know that the more holy and obedient I am, the more I shall be like to that God that is holiness itself, and the more I shall recover of that blessed image which consists in perfect holiness.

(3.) Thirdly, Not for the justification of their persons, for that is only by Christ's complete obedience, which is made theirs by faith, 1 Cor. 1:30, Colos. 2:10; but for the testification of their justifying faith, according to that of the apostle, James 2:17, 18, 26, &c.

(4.) Fourthly, That they may imitate the Lord Jesus Christ, that they may be the more conformable to Christ their head, who proposes his holiness to believers as a pattern for them to follow, as a copy for them to write after: 1 John 2:6, 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked.' Now saith the believer, oh how holy, how humble, how heavenly, how meek, how compassionate, how zealous, how exemplary, how convincing, how winning, how obedient was he when in this world! and therefore, O my soul! look to it, that thou makest it thy business, thy work, thy heaven, to imitate the Lord Jesus to the utmost that thou art able to reach to, Mat. 11:28, 29.

(5.) Fifthly, Though not for the obtaining of salvation, that being made sure to us by Christ, yet for the obtaining of assurance of salvation, and for the making of our calling and election sure, according to that word, 2 Peter 1:5–11.

(6.) Sixthly, That they may keep up their communion with God; for though the union the saints have with God by Christ depends wholly upon that which is without, viz., their being married to Christ, and clothed with his righteousness, yet the communion which the saints have with God through the Spirit hath much dependence upon a saint's walking, and upon his obedience; so that, if a saint shall dare to walk carnally and loosely, though he shall not break the marriage-knot, and lose his union, yet he will by such sinful practices grieve the Spirit, and lose his communion with God, Jer. 3:14, Isa. 49:1, 2. But on the other hand, when a believer walks spiritually, graciously, obedientially, oh what sweet communion! what delightful communion! what high communion, what commodious communion! what soul-satisfying, soul-ravishing, soul-filling, soul-contenting communion with God does he then enjoy! When the child walks wisely and obedientially before his father, what sweet and delightful

converses and communion is there between the father and the child; but if the child walk foolishly, stubbornly, rebelliously, disobediently, the prudent father will carry it severely, strangely, frowningly, and at a distance. Though his heart be still full of love to his child, and though he won't disinherit him, yet he will not be familiar with him. The application is easy, &c.

(7.) Seventhly, To keep down the body, and to bring it into subjection to the soul: 1 Cor. 9:27, 'But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.' By spiritual exercises the apostle did subdue his flesh to the obedience and discipline of the Spirit. In former times they had several exercises, as wrestling, and running for the prize. Now, such as were slow, pursy, unwieldy, and lazy, were cashiered; they would not admit such to be of their society or company, who wrestled and run for the prize. Them that were admitted to those exercises kept their bodies at an under, and did not pamper their bodies with dainties and delicates. To these the apostle alludes; of idleness there comes no goodness. When the spirit is not acting in that which is good, that the flesh may be kept under, the flesh will take an advantage to be very active in those things that are evil, that the spirit may be kept under; the flesh is like an unruly beast, which through rest, idleness, and high feeding, grows wild and masterless. Now, the only way to tame this beast is to work him hard; so the way of ways to keep the body under is to keep up the soul as much as may be, in the full exercise of holiness and obedience. Such as have most pampered their bodies, have been the greatest enemies to their own souls; and how many are there this day that pamper their bodies, but starve their souls; that adorn their bodies, but defile their soul; that trick and trim up their bodies with gold, and silver, and silks, whilst their souls are naked of all grace, holiness, and goodness, like the Laodiceans of old. The body itself, if you set too high a price upon it, will make a cheap soul; a man may be as happy in russet as in tissue;

and he is certainly an unhappy man whose outside is his best side. Our bodies are but dirt handsomely tempered, and artificially formed; we derive our pedigree from the dust, and are akin to clay; and therefore we need not scruple the keeping of it under by holy exercises, and by all ways of gospel obedience, &c.

(8.) Eighthly, To the profit and advantage both of sinners and saints. [1.] To convince sinners, to silence sinners, and to stop the mouths of sinners. Let but one man that walks wisely, humbly, circumspectly, convincingly, exemplarily, blamelessly, come into a town, a parish, a family, made up of drunkards, swearers, Sabbath-breakers, whoremasters, &c., and his holy walking will convince them and condemn them, 1 Peter 2:12, 15; chap. 3:13, 16. [2.] To the profit, advantage, and encouragement of the saints. The strict, exact-walking Christian provokes the slight, loose Christian to mend his manners, and to order his steps and conversation aright; and the lively active Christian puts the dull, heavy, sluggish Christian to a blush, and spurs and quickens him up to a more lively walking with God; and the warm, flaming, zealous, burning Christian puts heat and warmth into the cold, formal, frozen Christian; and the free, liberal, bountiful Christian provokes others to be free, noble, and liberal for the supply of the necessities of the saints, 2 Cor. 9:1, 2; chap. 8:1, 2, 3, 4, 19, 20, &c.

(9.) The ninth and last, though not the least, end, is the honour and glory of the great God. God's grace is the spring, and God's glory is the end of all a Christian's obedience. God's glory is the ultimate end, the primary end, the universal end, the sea to which all a Christian's actions, like so many rivers, move and bend, Rom. 14:7, 8; Philip. 1:20, 21. It is true many poor, low, mean, base ends may creep into a Christian's performances; but here mark, [1.] they are disallowed; [2.] they are loathed and abhorred; [3.] they are resisted and striven

against; [4.] they are lamented and mourned over; [5.] the gracious soul would willingly be rid of them. If a Christian might have his choice, he would never be troubled with any base end any more. Beloved, you must always distinguish between a man's settled and his suggested ends. A man's settled end may be one thing, and his suggested end another thing. Now for ever remember this, that the great God always makes a judgment of men according to their settled ends, according to the universal frame of their spirits, and not according to those ends that may be suggested to them by the world, the flesh, or the devil. It is in this case as it may be with a man that shoots at a mark; he aims aright at the mark, but his elbow may meet with a jog, which may carry the arrow quite another way than what he intended; or as it is with a man that is sailing to such a haven, or to such a harbour, he steers a right course by his compass, but the winds blowing contrary, and the sea running high, he is forced into such a creek, or such a harbour, which he never intended, &c.

Quest. Is it requisite, for the clearing of the sincerity of our hearts, that we have a continual eye to the glory of God in every action we do?

Ans. 1. First, You must distinguish between an actual aim and intention, and an habitual aim and intention. For the first, an actual aim and intention of the spirit, in every particular action that a man doth to the glory of God, is utterly impossible, whilst we carry about with us a body of sin and death. The angels and 'spirits of just men made perfect' do thus actually aim at the glory of God in all they do; but it is a work that will be too high and too hard for us, whilst we are here in a polluted estate. This was so high a mark, that Adam missed it in his innocency. No wonder then if we often miss it in our sinful state and condition. But,

Ans. 2. Secondly, There is an habitual inclination in us, in every action we do, to aim at the honour and glory of God, though there be not the actual intention of the spirit in every action we do. It is with us, as with a man travelling towards a town or city; he thinks in the morning to go to such a town, such a place, where he purposes to lie the first night, and therefore sets forth towards it; and though he doth not think of this every step he takes, yet it is his purpose in his journey to rest there at night; or as it is with a man that comes to church, his end is to hear the word of the Lord; yet in every word he hears spoken, he hath not the thought of his end upon his spirit, but he is there by virtue of his first intention. So here, though in every particular there be not an intention of spirit to level this or that action to the glory of God, yet it is the main drift and habitual scope of a man's spirit, that God's glory may be the end of all his actions.

Ans. 3. Thirdly, There is a mediate and there is an immediate eyeing or looking to the glory of God; as when I forbear such and such a sin, because God by such a command hath forbidden it, or I do such and such a duty, because God hath commanded it. Now, in eyeing of the command of God, I eye the glory of God immediately, though not mediately. But,

Ans. 4. Fourthly, In some particular or special cases, I ought actually to eye the glory of God: as [1.] In some eminent or extraordinary service that I am to do for Christ; or [2.] In some special testimony that I am called to give for Christ or his gospel; or [3.] In some great thing that I am called to suffer for Christ, or his gospel, or his interest. But,

Ans. 5. Fifthly, The more a Christian actually eyes the glory of God in all he does, the more, [1.] He glorifies God; [2.] The nearer you are the life of heaven, and the more you act like the glorious angels, and

'the spirits of just men made perfect;' [3.] The more will be your joy, comfort, and peace, both in life and death, and in the day of your account; [4.] The more strong will be your confidence and assurance that your spiritual estate is good, and that you shall be saved for ever; [5.] The better you will be able to bear up under all the false, hard, and sour censures of this world; [6.] The more you will be temptation-proof; [7.] The more glorious and weighty will be your crown of glory at last. He shall be highest in heaven, who has actually aimed most at the glory of God in this lower world.

And thus you see how you may know whether your obedience is such an obedience as springs from faith or no. Now, if upon trial you shall find that your obedience is the obedience of faith, then you may safely and groundedly conclude, that you have a saving work of God upon your hearts. But,

IV. Fourthly, A gracious heart is an uniform heart. Ubiquity is a sure evidence of integrity. He that is truly good, will be good in bad times, and in the worst of places. Principles of grace and holiness are lasting, yea, everlasting; they are not like the morning cloud, nor the early dew, Ps. 119:112; 1 John 3:9; Hosea 6:4. A gracious soul will be steady and fixed in its principles, in the worst times, in the worst places, and under variety of dispensations. Let times and places be what they will, he will not dishonour his God, nor blemish his profession, nor wound his conscience to preserve his safety, or to secure his liberty. An upright man is a right man; so ישר, jashar is rendered by the Septuagint, Judges 17:6. He is one that will not be bowed or bent by the sinful customs or examples of the times and places where he lives. Abraham was righteous in Chaldea, and Noah was perfect in his generation, though it was the worst in the world; and Lot was just in Sodom, and Job was upright in the land of Uz, which was a place of much profaneness and superstition; and

Nehemiah was courageous and zealous in Damascus; and Daniel was holy, yea, eminently and exemplarily holy, in Babylon. The several generations wherein these holy men lived, were wholly devoted to wickedness and superstition, and yet these precious, gracious souls had wholly devoted themselves to the Lord and his service; so David, 'My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments at all times,' Ps. 119:20. Let the times be never so dangerous, licentious, superstitious, idolatrous, or erroneous, yet David's heart was strongly carried forth to God's judgments; that is, to his word, for under this title, judgments, you are to understand the whole word of God. So there were some in Sardis that were of the same spirit with the worthies last mentioned: Rev. 3:4, 'Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.' In polluting times pure hearts will keep themselves pure; a holy heart will keep himself undefiled, even in defiling times, Ps. 119:1–3. Rev. 14:4, 'These are they which were not defiled with women;' when others are besmeared all over, he will keep his garments white and clean. The three children, or rather the three champions, Dan. 3:17–20, were so highly resolved to keep themselves pure from the abominations of their day, that it was neither Nebuchadnezzar's music that would flatter them, nor his fiery furnace that could scare them from their God, or from their duty, or from their religion. Let the times never so often turn, you shall find that he that is really holy, he will be holy under every turn; no turns shall turn him out of a way of holiness: Job 17:9, 'The righteous shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.' The laurel keeps its freshness and greenness in the winter season; a gracious soul is semper idem. Let the wind, and the world, and the times turn which way they will, a gracious soul for the main will still be the same; he is 'like mount Zion, which cannot be removed,' Ps. 125:1. Job 27:5, 6, 'Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will

not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.' A gracious heart is, in some measure, like the heart of God, without variableness or shadow of changing. That Christian that is not for substance the same that once he was, was never what he ought to be, James 1:17. A gracious heart is firm and fixed for God and godliness, both in prosperity and in adversity; take him among the good or among the bad, take him in storms or calms, in winter nights or in summer days, take him among friends or foes, take him at bed or board, take him in health or sickness, take him in an ordinance or out of an ordinance, take him in his work or take him at his recreations, take him in his commerce or in his converse, take him living or take him dying, and you shall still find that the bias of his soul is still God-wards, Christ-wards, holiness-wards, and heaven-wards. A gracious man will stand his ground, and hold his own in all changes, his heart being fixed upon an, unchangeable God. The philosopher's good man is τετράγωνος, four square; cast him where you will, like a die he falls always square and sure. So cast a gracious man where you will, and into what company you will, and into what condition you will, yet still he falls, sure and square for God and godliness. Let the times be never so sad, nor never so bad, yet a gracious soul will keep his hold; he will let all go, he will let everything go, before he will let his God go, or his religion go, or his integrity go. A gracious Christian is like gold. Now cast gold into the fire, or into the water; cast it upon the dunghill, or into the kennel; cast it among the poor, or among the rich; among the religious, or among the superstitious, &c.; yet still it is gold, still it retains its purity and excellency. So cast a gracious Christian, who is the only golden Christian in the world, into what condition you will, and into what company you will, yet still he will retain his purity, his innocency. Lapidaries tell us of the Chelydonian stone,2 that it will retain its virtue and lustre no longer than it is enclosed in gold: a fit emblem of an hypocrite, who is only good while he is enclosed in

golden prosperity, safety, and felicity. An unsound Christian, like green timber, shrinks when the sun of persecution shines hot upon him, Mat. 13:6. The heat of fiery trials cools the courage of an unsound Christian. If you put water into a tub, it will have the shape of the tub that you put it into; or if you put water into a glass, it will have the shape of the glass you put it into. This is the very picture of an unsound heart; but a sincere Christian is like a massive vessel of gold, that keeps its own shape and figure, at all times, in all places, and in all companies. Unsound hearts, they will be righteous among the righteous, and licentious among the licentious. They will be as the company is amongst which they are cast. With the good they will be good, and with the bad they will be bad; with the zealous they will be zealous; and with the superstitious they will be superstitious; and with the lukewarm they will be lukewarm. They are for all times and tides; they are for any turn that will serve their turn; they are for any mood that will bring either profit or pleasure to them; they are like Alcibiades, of whom it was said, that he was omnium horarum homo, a man for all times; for he could swagger it at Athens, and take any pains at Thebes; he could live most sparingly at Lacedæmon, and bib among the Thracians, and hunt among the Persians. They are like the chameleon, ready to change their hue with every one they converse with; they are like Polypus, that resembleth every stone that it sticketh to; or they are like the buskins anciently used in tragedies, that would serve either leg alike; they are as fit for one society as another; or like the players that used them, such as acting princely parts, wear royal apparel, keep state, and demean themselves gravely and soberly, so long as they are in public view upon the stage; but when they have done acting, are no sooner off the stage, but they pass presently into another habit, and retain neither their princely behaviour nor apparel, but are most beggarly, base, and debauched, either in private among themselves, or among their companions like themselves.2 Unsound hearts can accommodate themselves to the

times, and comply with them, whatever they be. With Proteus they will transform themselves into all shapes; as the times change, so will they; what the times favour, that they will favour; what the times commend, that they will commend; what the times cry up and admire, that they will cry up and admire; and what the times frown upon and condemn, that they will frown upon and condemn. Look, as curious and well drawn pictures seem to turn their eyes every way, and to smile upon every one that looks upon them, so these can turn with the times, they can look as the times look, and smile as the times smile; they can say with the times, and sail with the times; sometimes they can act one part, and sometimes another part, as the times require. If the times require a large profession, they can make it; if the times bespeak them to leave their religion at the church door, they can leave it. But now, a sincere Christian, he will labour to be so much the more gracious, by how much the more the times are licentious. A sincere Christian is like gold. If you cast it into the fire, it will not waste; if you throw it into the water, it will not rust, it will retain its own purity and excellency where-ever you dispose of it. But,

V. Fifthly, A gracious heart sets himself most against his darling sin, his bosom-sin, against the sin of his complexion, constitution, inclination, and calling, &c., Heb. 12:1. There is some one sinful quality that is more predominant in the heart of man than any other. There is some one Delilah, some one darling sin that a man is more apt to play withal, and to hug in his own bosom, than any other. There is usually some one sin that is a favourite, some one sin which the heart is most fond of, and which the bias of the soul doth most naturally and strongly incline towards. Pliny writeth of some families that had privy marks on their bodies peculiar to those of that line; and so every man hath as it were his privy sin, which is most justly and peculiarly called his; as in a ground that lieth untilled, amongst

the great variety of weeds, there is usually some master weed, one among the rest that is rifer and ranker than all the rest. And as it is in the body of man, that although in some degree or other, more or less, there be a mixture of all the four elements, not any of them wholly wanting, yet there is some one of them predominant that gives the denomination; in regard whereof some are said to be of a sanguine, some of a phlegmatic, some of a choleric, and some of a melancholic constitution. Now, thus it is in the souls of men. Though there be a general mixture and medley of all evil and corrupt qualities, yet is there some one usually that is paramount, more powerful and prevalent, that swayeth and sheweth forth itself more eminently and more evidently than any other of them do; and from this, therefore, more frequently and apparently discovering itself, is the denomination wont to be given whereby some are styled ambitious, some lascivious, some envious, some malicious, some haughty, some hasty, and the like. Or as in every man's body there is a seed and principle of death, yet some are more prone to die of a fever than of a dropsy, and others are more prone to die of a dropsy than of a fever, &c.; so though original sin hath spread itself over all our noble and ignoble parts, yet every man hath his particular inclinations to one kind of sin rather than another; and this may properly be called a man's own sin, his own evil way. Now mark, a gracious heart makes most head, most opposition, against his darling sin; against his complexion sin, against those sins that were once as dear to him as his right hand, or as his right eye, or as Delilah was to Samson, Herodias to Herod, Isaac to Abraham, and Joseph to Jacob: Ps. 18:23, 'I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity;' that is, from my darling sin whereunto I was most inclined and addicted. What this bosom-sin was that he kept himself from, it is hard to say. Some suppose his darling sin was lying, dissembling, for it is certain he often fell into this sin: Ps. 119:29, 'Remove from me the way of lying.' Others suppose it to be some secret iniquity,

which was only known to God and his own conscience. Others say it was uncleanness, and that therefore he prayed that God would turn away his eyes from beholding vanity, Ps. 119:37. Others judge it to be that sin of disloyalty which Saul and his courtiers falsely charged upon him. Well, be it this or that, it is enough for our purpose that his heart did rise against that very sin that either by custom or complexion, or some strong inclination, he was most naturally apt, ready, and prone to fall into. This is the laying of the axe to the root of the tree; and by this practice David gives a clear proof of the integrity of his heart. Idolatry was the darling sin of the people of Israel; they called their idols delectable or desirable things; they did dearly affect and greatly delight in their idols, Jer. 17:1, 2; Hosea 2:8; Isa. 31:6, 7, 44:9, &c. But when the Lord in the day of his power wrought savingly and gloriously upon their hearts, oh! how did their hatred and indignation against their idols rise! as you may see Isa. 30:22, 'Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.' They were so delighted and enamoured with their idols, that they would lavish gold out of the bag, or they waste or spend riotously, as the Hebrew runs, that they might richly deck them up, and set them forth in the greatest glory and bravery. Oh! but when the Lord should make a glorious turn upon their spirits, then they should readily and roundly deface, defile, and disgrace their idols, then they should hate and abhor them, then they should so detest and loathe them, that in a holy indignation they should cast them away as a menstruous cloth, and say unto them, Get ye hence, pack, begone, I will never have any more to do with you, Isa. 46:6. And so in that Isa. 2:20, 'In that day,' that is, in the day of his people; ver. 17, 'A man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats.' In the day when God should exalt himself in the souls of his people, and before the eyes of his

people, they should express such disdain and indignation against their idols that they should not take only those made of trees and stones, but even their most precious and costly idols, those that were made of silver and gold, and cast them to the moles and to the bats; that is, they should cast them into such blind holes, and into such dark, filthy, nasty, and dusty corners, as moles make underground, and as bats roost in. So when Christ, and grace, and holiness comes to be set up in men's hearts and lives, then all their darling sins, their bosom lusts, which are their idols of silver and their idols of gold, these are with a holy indignation cast to the moles and to the bats.; they are so loathed, abhorred, abandoned, and cashiered, that they desire they may be for ever buried in oblivion, and never see the light more. Idols were Ephraim's bosom sin: Hosea 4:17, 'Ephraim is joined,' or glued, as the word signifies, 'to idols, let him alone.' But when the dew of grace fell upon Ephraim, as it did in chap. 14:5–7, then saith Ephraim, 'What have I any more to do with idols?' ver. 8. Now Ephraim loathes his idols as much or more than before he loved them; he now abandons and abominates them. Though before he was as closely glued to them as the wanton is glued to his Delilah, or as the enchanter is glued to the devil, from whom by no means he is able to stir, as the words in the fountain imports, when it was the day of the Lord's power upon Ephraim, then Ephraim cries out, 'What have I any more to do with idols?' Oh! I have had to do with them too long, and too much already! Oh! how doth my soul now rise against them! how do I detest and abhor them! Surely I will never have more to do with them. The Scripture tells us, Deut. 13:6–9, that if father, or mother, or brother, or sister, or kinsman, or friend, should go about to draw a man from God, his hand should be first upon him to put him to death. Now, bosom sins, complexion sins, they seek to draw a man's heart from God, and therefore a gracious soul can't but rise up against them, and do his best to stone them, and to be the death of them: 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand,'

saith bloody Esau, 'then will I slay my brother Jacob,' Gen. 27:41. It is a bloody speech of a vindictive spirit, whom nothing would satisfy but innocent blood. So saith the gracious soul, The days of mourning for the death of my dear Saviour are now at hand, and therefore I will slay my bosom lusts, my constitution sins; now will I be revenged on them for all the dishonours that they have done to God, and for all the wounds that they have made in my conscience, and for all the mercies that they have embittered, and for all the favours that they have prevented, and for all the afflictions that they have procured, and for all the duties that they have hindered. Samson pleads hard with God, that he might be avenged on the Philistines for his two eyes, Judges 16:28; and so doth the gracious soul plead hard with God, that he may be avenged on his bosom lusts, on his complexion sins, which have put out his two eyes, which have so blinded him that he has not for a long time been able to see God, or Christ, or the things that belong to his external, internal, or eternal peace. The next of kin in the law was always the avenger of blood, and to him it appertained to hunt after the murderer, to bring upon his head the innocent blood that he had shed. If therefore we will shew ourselves brethren or sisters of Christ, or anything of kin unto him, we must even be the avengers of his blood upon bosom sins, upon complexion sins; for for them as well as others was his blood shed. O sirs! what bosom sin is there so sweet or profitable that is worth a-burning in hell for, or worth a-shutting out of heaven for? Surely none. This a gracious soul seriously weighs, and accordingly he sets himself against the toad in his bosom, against his darling sins, against his complexion sins. But now, unsound hearts are very favourable to bosom sins, to complexion sins. They say of them, as Lot of Zoar, 'Is it not a little one, and my soul shall live?' Gen. 19:20. And as David once said concerning Absalom, 2 Sam. 18:5, 'Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom;' 'beware that none touch the young man Absalom,' verse 12. 'And the king said, Is the young

man Absalom safe?' verse 29. An unsound heart is as fond of his bosom sins, of his complexion sins, as Jacob was of his Benjamin; or as Jehu was of his calves; or as Naaman was of his idol Rimmon; or as Judas was of bearing the bag; or as Herod was of his Herodias; or as Demetrius was of his Diana; or as the Pharisees were of devouring widows' houses, and of having the upper-most seats in the synagogues, and of being saluted in the market places with those glorious titles, Rabbi, rabbi. The besotted sinner is most engaged to his bosom sins, his complexion sins; and therefore it is as bitter a thing as death for him to part with them. He had rather part with burnt-offerings and calves of a year old; he had rather part with 'thousands of rams, and with ten thousand rivers of oil; yea, he had rather part with his first-born, than with his bosom sin; he is ready to give the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul,' Micah 6:6. Let God frown or smile, stroke or strike, lift up or cast down, promise or threaten, yet he will hide and hold fast his bosom sin; let God set life and death, heaven and hell, glory and misery before him, yet will he not part with his bosom sins; let God wound his conscience, blow upon his estate, leave a blot upon his name, crack his credit, afflict his body, write death upon his relations, and be a Magor-missabib, a terror to his soul, yet will he not let go his darling sins, Jer. 20:3, 4. An unsound heart will rather let God go, and Christ go, and heaven go, and all go, than he will let his darling lusts go. But now a sound Christian, a throughout Christian, he sets himself most against the Delilah in his bosom, against the Benjamin, the son, the sin of his right hand. A sincere Christian looks upon bosom sins, upon complexion sins, as the most God-provoking sins. There are no sins so provoking to God's jealousies and justice as bosom sins; he looks upon bosom sins, complexion sins, as the most dangerous sins; he looks upon bosom sins, complexion sins, as the worst thing in all the world; he looks upon bosom sins, complexion sins, as more ugly and horrid than the devil himself, or than hell itself; he looks upon bosom

sins as the great make-baits between God and his soul, and between his conscience and his comfort, Isa. 59:1, 2, Lamen. 3:8, 44; he looks upon bosom sins as those enemies that have provoked God often to turn a deaf ear to all his prayers; he looks upon his bosom sins as so many Judases that have often betrayed him into the hands of the devil; he looks upon his bosom sins as the waters of Marah, that has embittered all his mercies; he looks upon his bosom sins as the only things that have often clouded the face of God; he looks upon his bosom sins as dead flies in the box of precious ointment, that spoils all, and accordingly with all his might he sets himself against them. (1.) He fights most against these; (2.) he weeps most over these; (3.) he watches and arms most against these; (4.) he prays most against these; (5.) he resolves most against these; and (6.) he lays the axe of repentance most to these, &c.

But pray sir, before you close up this chapter, lay down some sure and infallible evidences of the goodness, graciousness, and happiness of their estates and conditions, who are but weak in grace, who are but babes of grace, that so they may have their portion, satisfaction, support, and consolation as well as others.

Ans. I shall endeavour to do it, and therefore thus:

VI. Sixthly, True desires of grace is grace, true desires after Christ, and grace, and holiness, is grace. He who does sincerely desire to believe, he does really believe; and he that does sincerely desire to repent, he does really repent; and he that does sincerely desire to obey the Lord, and to fear the Lord, and to serve the Lord, he does really obey the Lord, and fear the Lord, and serve the Lord. It is the first step to grace, for a man to see his heart void of grace; and it is the first degree of grace, for a man to desire grace. Mark, all true desires of grace have the very nature and truth of grace in them, as

there is true fire in a spark as well as in a flame, and true water in a drop as well as in a stream, and true light in a beam as well as in the sun, and true gold in the very filings of gold as well as in the whole wedge of gold; the least of anything partakes of the nature of the whole, Isa. 55:1, 2, 65:1; John 7:37. True desires of grace argues a state of grace and salvation: Ps. 38:9, 'Lord, thou knowest all my desires, my groaning is not hid from thee.' Mat. 5:6, 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled;' or as the Greek runs, after the participle of the present tense, they that are hungering and thirsting; intimating, that wherever this is the present disposition of men's souls, they are blessed: Rev. 22:17, 'And let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' Sincere desires of grace are those holy seeds, those divine beginnings of grace in the soul, out of which grace springs and grows up to its measure and perfection. O sirs! look, as no man can sincerely seek God in vain, so no man can sincerely desire grace in vain. A man may love gold, yet not have it; but no man loveth God, but is sure to have him. Wealth a man may desire, and yet be never the nearer for it; but grace no man ever sincerely desired and missed it. And why? it is God that hath wrought this desire in the heart, and he will never frustrate the desire that himself hath there wrought. Let no man say, I have no faith, no repentance, no love, no fear of God, no sanctifying, no saving grace in me. Doth he see a want of those things in himself? Yes, that is it which so grieves him, that he cannot love God, stand in awe of him, trust in his mercy, repent of sin as he should; yea, but doth he seriously and unfeignedly desire to do thus? Yes, he desires it above all things in the world, and would be willing, as it were, to buy even with a whole world the least measure, or dram, or drop only of such grace. Now let me ask him, who is it that hath wrought this desire in him? Not the devil; for he would rather quench it than kindle it in him; not his own corruption, for that is naturally averse to every thing that is good; it

must needs then be the work of the Spirit of God, who 'works in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure,' and who pronounceth all them blessed that thus desire after grace. 'When I have a good desire,' saith one, 'though it doth scarcely shew itself in some little slender sigh, I must be assured that the Spirit of God is present, and worketh his good work.' Wicked men do not desire the grace of the Holy Spirit, whereby they may resist sin, and therefore they are justly deprived of it; for he that earnestly desireth the Holy Ghost hath it already, because this desire of the Spirit cannot be but from the Spirit. 'Our faith,' saith another, 'may be so small and weak, as it doth not yet bring forth fruits that may be lively felt in us; but if they which feel themselves in such an estate desire to have these feelings, namely, of God's favour and love, if they ask them of God's hands by prayer, this desire and prayer are testimonies that the Spirit of God is in them, and that they have faith already; for is such a desire a fruit of the flesh or of the spirit? It is of the Holy Spirit, who bringeth it forth only in such as he dwells in, &c.2 Then those holy desires and prayers, being the motions of the Holy Ghost in us, are testimonies of our faith, although they seem to us small and weak. As the woman that feeleth the moving of a child in her body, though very weak, assureth herself that she hath conceived, and that she goeth with a live child; so if we have these motions, these holy affections and desires before mentioned, let us not doubt but that we have the Holy Ghost, who is the author of them, dwelling in us, and consequently that we have also faith. Again, saith the same author, (1.) if thou hast begun to hate and fly sin; (2.) if thou feelest that thou art displeased at thine infirmities and corruptions; (3.) if, having offended God, thou findest a grief and a sorrow for it; (4.) if thou desire to abstain from sin; (5.) if thou avoidest the occasions of sin; (6.) if thou doest thy endeavours against sin; (7.) if thou prayest to God to give thee grace; all these holy affections, proceeding from none other than from the Spirit of God, ought to be as so many

pledges and testimonies that he is in thee. It is as impossible for us naturally to do the least good, or to desire the least grace, as it is for a toad to spit cordials, Philip. 2:13, 2 Cor. 8:10, 12. Sincere desires after God, and Christ, and grace, is sometimes the all that the people of God find in themselves. This was all that Nehemiah could say of himself, and the rest of his brethren, Neh. 1:11, that they did desire to fear God's name. And so the church: Isa. 26:8, 'The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thy holiness.' And ver. 9, 'With my soul have I desired thee in the night.' So the spouse, Cant. 3:1–3. So David, Ps. 27:4, 42:1, 2, 63:1. They must needs be sure of grace that have an unfeigned desire of it. This is a maxim that we must live and die with, viz., that no man can truly desire grace but he that hath already grace; certainly he that desireth grace hath grace to desire it. It is an infallible sign, that that man hath already some measure of grace, that doth seriously desire to have it. He would never seriously desire to fear God, who stands not in some awe of him already; nor he would never desire seriously to love God, who has not in him some love to God already; nor he would never seriously desire to believe, who has not in him some faith already; nor he would never seriously desire to repent, that hath not repented already; nor he would never seriously desire sanctifying grace, whose heart in some measure is not already sanctified by the Spirit of grace. It is the very essence of righteousness, saith one of the ancients, for a man to be willing to be righteous. And the poor heathen could say, 'It is a principal part of goodness, for a man to be willing to be good.' It is natural for every one to desire his own natural good, but to desire spiritual grace, holiness, sound sanctification, faith unfeigned, the true fear of God, serious repentance, &c., is more than ever any natural man did or can do. No man did ever desire to eat which had not eaten before, nor no man did ever desire to believe, that did not believe before; all true desires after faith spring from faith as the root

of them. Certainly wicked men do not, and cannot so much as desire saving grace, Job 21:14, Isa. 53:2; and that,

[1.] First, Because grace is above the reach of nature. 1 Cor. 2:14, 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' The water riseth no higher than the springs from whence it came; so natural men can ascend no higher than nature. Spiritual things can neither be discerned nor desired but by those that are anointed with the eye-salve of the Spirit. The natural man is dark and blind, and he sees no beauty nor excellency in grace, that he should desire it or be in love with it. Man in his natural estate is without, Eph. 2:12. There are five withouts: (1.) without Christ; (2.) without the church; (3.) without the promise; (4.) without hope; (5.) without God in the world. Now, every natural man being under these five withouts, how is it possible that he should have any serious desires after grace? Such is the corruption of our nature, that, if you propound any divine good to it, it is entertained as fire by water, or wet wood, with hissing. Propound any evil, then it is like fire to straw; it is like the foolish satyr that made haste to kiss the fire; it is like that unctuous matter which naturalists say sucks and snatches the fire to it with which it is consumed. The contrariety and enmity that is in every natural man's heart against God, and Christ, and grace, and holiness, may sufficiently satisfy us that the natural man is a mere stranger to serious and sincere desires after God, or Christ, or grace, or the great things that belong to his everlasting peace, Rom. 8:7. Such sincere and serious desires as these, Oh that Christ were mine! oh that I were married to his person! oh that I were clothed with his righteousness! oh that my soul were adorned with his grace! oh that I was filled with his Spirit! oh that he would be my king to rule me, and my prophet to teach and instruct me, and my priest to make an atonement for me! oh that I might enjoy choice

and high communion with him! oh that I might sin no more against him! oh that I may do nothing unworthy of him! oh that after death I might live for ever in the enjoyments of him! &c. I say such serious and sincere desires are not to be found in the natural man's breast.

[2.] Secondly, Because grace is contrary to nature. 'The wisdom of the flesh is enmity against God,' Rom. 8:7. Fire cannot desire water, nor water fire, because they are contrary, one expelling the other; for either the water will quench the fire, or else the fire will lick up the water. So here, nature would have a man love himself, and seek himself, and exalt himself; but grace will have a man love God, and seek God, and exalt God, &c. Take nature when it is most adorned, enriched, raised, elevated, &c., yet then you shall find it at enmity with God and grace. Ergo, &c.

[3.] Thirdly, Because grace is not only above nature, and contrary to nature, but it is even a hell to nature. Grace and holiness is a hell to a natural man. Look, as a glorified estate would be a hell to every wicked person (Cœlum est altera gehenna damnatorum, saith one of the ancients, heaven is another hell to the damned), so would a gracious estate also. Grace puts a man to keep up the cross of Christ, to deny his natural self, his sinful self, his religious self, his relative self, and to give up a man's self to the strictest and exactest ways of God, and to crucify his lusts, and to pull out his right eye, and to cut off his right hand, &c. And oh! what hard work is this, yea, what a hell is this to nature! &c.

[4.] Fourthly, Wicked men do not nor cannot so much as truly and seriously desire saving grace: witness their daily withstanding and slighting the offers of grace. Compare these scriptures, Prov. 1:20, seq., chap. 8:1–12; Ezek. 24:13; Mat. 23:37; Luke 19:41, 42, &c.

[5.] Fifthly, Wicked men do not nor cannot so much as truly and seriously desire saving grace: witness their common, ordinary, habitual provoking, vexing, quenching, resisting, and grieving of the Spirit of grace. Turn to these scriptures, Gen. 6:3; Isa. 63:10; Acts 7:55; Eph. 4:30.

[6.] Sixthly, Wicked men do not nor cannot truly and seriously desire saving grace: witness that enmity, hatred, rage, and madness that is in them against the saints, whose hearts and lives are enamelled with grace, Gen. 3:15; Ps. 34:21, 44:10; Job 31:29; Amos 5:10, &c. I have read of a desperate wretch, that, when he came to die, he gave good portions to all his children but one, and to him he would give but twelve pence; and being asked the reason of it, he made answer, he was a Puritan. I have heard him say, said his wretched father, that he had a promise to live on; let us now see whether a promise will maintain him or no. Certainly, wherever there are true serious desires after grace, there is a dear love to those upon whose hearts the work of grace is past.

Now, by these short hints, it is evident enough that wicked men do not, nor cannot sincerely, seriously desire grace. Certainly, such that are 'poor in spirit,' and that mourn for their spiritual defects, and that hunger and thirst after grace and holiness, after a righteousness imparted and a righteousness imputed, must confess themselves to be in a blessed estate, and consequently in a state of grace; for what true happiness is there out of it? or else they must contradict our Saviour, and charge truth itself with untruth, who hath pronounced them blessed that are so qualified, so affected. Were this well weighed and seriously considered of, how would it comfort, refresh, support, and stay up many a troubled soul; and what a well-spring of life would this be to many a wounded spirit! Doubtless, the greatest part of a saint's perfection in this life (witness Paul's own ingenuous

confession, after fourteen years' conversion, say some; and who ever went beyond him? and how exceedingly do most fall short of him!) consisteth rather in will than in work, and in desire and endeavour more than in deed. Rom. 7:15, 18, 19, 21, 22. There is so much good in good desires, that it is the main that the godly have to speak of, and to reckon of. Make an inventory of a Christian's estate, and search every room; if you find not these, you find nothing; and if you set these down in the inventory, you set down even all he is worth for another world. Daniel is called a man of desires, and so is every gracious man, a man wholly made up of gracious desires, Dan. 10:11. Mark, God makes a judgment upon the sons of men, according as their desires stand; he that desires to steal, he is a thief in the account of God; and he that desires to commit adultery, he is an adulterer in the account of God; and he that desires to oppress, he is an oppressor in the account of God; and he that desires to deceive, he is a deceiver in the account of God; and he that desires to persecute, he is a persecutor in the account of God; and he that desires to profane the Sabbaths of God, he is a profaner of the Sabbaths of God in the account of God, &c. Look, as every wicked man is as bad in the account of God as his desires are bad, so every godly man is as good in the account of God as his desires are good; he that sincerely desires to believe, he does believe in the account of God. 'The desire,' saith one, 'to believe in the want of faith is faith; though as yet there want firm and lively grace, yet art thou not altogether void of grace; if thou canst desire it, thy desire is the seed, conception, or bud of what thou wantest.' Now is the spring-time of the engraffed word or immortal seed cast into the furrows of thy heart; wait but a while, using the means, and thou shalt see that leaves, blossoms, and fruits will shortly follow, &c. Another saith [Ursinus], faith in the most holy is not perfect; nevertheless, whosoever feels in his heart an earnest desire to believe, and a striving against his doubts, he both may and must assure himself that he is endued with true faith. And he that

sincerely desires to repent, he does repent in the account of God. Holy Bradford, writing to Mr Jo. Careless, saith, Thy sins are undoubtedly pardoned, &c., for God hath given thee a penitent and believing heart, that is, a heart which desireth to repent and believe; for such a one is taken of him, he accepteth the will for the deed, for a penitent and believing heart indeed. And he that sincerely desires to mortify sin, he does mortify sin in the account of God; and he that sincerely desires to walk with God, he does walk with God in the account of God; and he that sincerely desires to honour God, he does honour God in the account of God; and he that sincerely desires to deny himself, he does deny himself in the account of God; and he that sincerely desires to be weaned from the world, he is weaned from the world in the account of God; and he that sincerely desires to be conformable to God, he is conformable to God in the account of God; and he that desires to grow in grace, he does grow in grace in the account of God; and he that sincerely desires to improve mercies, he does improve mercies in the account of God; and he that sincerely desires to glorify God in the hour of his visitation, he does glorify God in the hour of his visitation in the account of God.2 A gracious man may make a better judgment of his estate by his sincere desires than he can by his duties; and so a wicked man may make a better judgment of his estate by his desires than he can by his words or works. I have been the larger upon this evidence because of its great usefulness to weak believers. But.

[7.] Seventhly, No man can sincerely desire grace for grace's sake, viz., faith for faith's sake, and love for love's sake, and humility for humility's sake, and uprightness for uprightness's sake, and meekness for meekness's sake, and holy fear for holy fear's sake, and hope for hope's sake, and holiness for holiness's sake, and self-denial for self-denial's sake, &c., but he that has true grace. Mark, no man can sincerely and seriously desire grace for the inward beauty, glory,

and excellency of grace, but he that has true grace. 'The king's daughter is all glorious within,' Ps. 45:13, though within is not all her glory. Grace differs nothing from glory but in name; grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace at the full; grace is glory militant, and glory is grace triumphant; grace has an inward glory upon it, which none can see and love, but such as have grace in their own hearts, 2 Cor. 3:18. Wicked men can see no beauty, no glory, no excellency in grace why they should desire it, or be taken with it; and no wonder, for they could see no beauty, nor excellency, nor glory, nor form, nor comeliness in Christ the fountain of grace, why they should desire him, and be taken with him, Isa. 53:1–4. Though next to Christ, grace is the most lovely and desirable thing in all the world, yet none can desire it for its own loveliness and desirableness, but such as have a seed of God in them. Though grace be a pearl of price, though it be a jewel more worth than the gold of Ophir, though it be a beam of God, a spark of glory, a branch of the divine nature; yet carnal hearts can see no glory nor excellency in it, that they should desire it. If carnal eyes were but opened to see the excellency of grace, mirabiles sui excitaret amores, it would ravish the soul in desires after it; but grace's beauty and glory is inward, and so it is not discerned but with spiritual eyes. Plato was wont to say, If moral virtues could be seen with bodily eyes, they would stir up in the heart extrordinary flames of admiration and love. I might say much more of grace, 1 Cor. 2:14, seq. Grace (1.) puts an excellency, it puts a lustre and beauty upon men's persons. 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' Prov. 12:26; and pray what makes him so but grace? Wisdom makes a man's face to shine; riches, and honours, and dignities, and royal ornaments, and costly fare, and noble attendants, don't put an excellency and glory upon man, Dan. 11:21; witness Antiochus, Saul, Haman, Herod, Dives, &c., but saving grace does, 1 Peter 3:4, 5, &c. The graces of the Spirit are that chain of pearl that adorns Christ's bride. (2.) Grace puts an excellency upon all a man's duties; 'By faith

Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain;' faith put an excellency upon Abel's sacrifice. (3.) Grace puts an excellency upon all a man's natural and acquired excellencies. It puts an excellency upon beauty, honour, riches, name, arts, parts, gifts. Now, how excellent and glorious must that be that puts an excellency upon all our excellencies? (4.) Grace makes a man conformable to God and Christ. (5.) Grace fits a man for communion and fellowship with Father, Son, and Spirit. (6.) Grace fits a man for the choicest services. (7.) Grace turns all things into a blessing. (8.) Grace fills the soul with all spiritual excellencies. (9.) Grace preserves a Christian from the worst of evils, viz., sin. (10.) Grace sweetens death, it makes the king of terrors to be the king of desires. (11.) Grace renders a man acceptable to God, and that is the height of a Christian's ambition in this world: 2 Cor. 5:9, 'Wherefore we labour' (φιλοτιμούμεθα, we are ambitious), 'that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' The apostles made it their ambition to get acceptance in heaven. Riches, and honours, and gifts, and arts, and parts, &c., may commend us to men, but it is only grace that commends us to God, and that renders us lovely in his eyes. (12.) Grace will eternalise your names, grace will perfume and embalm your names: Heb. 11:2, 'By faith the elders obtained a good report.' Ver. 39, 'And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.' Nothing raises a man's name and fame in the world like grace. A man may obtain a great report without grace, but he can never obtain a good report without grace. Nothing below grace will perpetuate a man's name. The seven deacons that the church chose, Acts 6:3, 5, were gracious men, and they were men of 'good report,' they were men well witnessed unto, well testified of, as the Greek word imports, Acts 10:1–4, 22. Cornelius was a gracious man, and he was a man of good report among all the nation of the Jews, Acts 9:10, 20, comp. with chap. 22:12. Ananias was a gracious man, and he was a man of a 'good report.' Gaius and Demetrius, they were both

gracious men, and they were men of good report; witness that third epistle of John. How renowned was Abraham for his faith! and Moses for his meekness! and Jacob for his plain-heartedness! and Job for his uprightness! and David for his zeal! and Joshua for his courage! Holy Abel hath been dead above this five thousand years, and yet his name is as fresh and fragrant as a rose to this very day, Heb. 11:4. Grace will make your names immortal. 'The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance,' Ps. 112:6. 'The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot,' Prov. 10:7. Wicked men many times outlive their names, but the names of just men outlive them. When a gracious man dies, he leaves his name as a sweet and as a lasting scent behind him; his fame shall live when he is dead. According to the Hebrew the words may be read thus: 'The memory of the just shall be for a blessing.' The very remembering of the just shall bring a blessing upon them that remember them. When a gracious man dies, as he carries a good conscience with him, so he leaves a perfumed name behind him. Grace is the image of God, the delight of God, the honour of God, the glory of God; grace is the purchase of Christ, and the birth of the Spirit, and the pledge of glory; grace is the joy of angels, the glory of man, and the wonder of the world. What is the body without the soul? what is the cabinet without the jewels? what is the sun without light? what is the fountain without water? what is paradise without the tree of life? what is heaven without Christ? That is a soul without grace. Now, every gracious soul sees a real eternal excellency, beauty, and glory in grace, and accordingly it is carried out in its desires after it. It sees such an innate excellency, beauty, and glory in that faith, wisdom, humility, meekness, patience, zeal, self-denial, heavenly-mindedness, uprightness, &c., that sparkles and shines in such and such saints, that it many times strives with God in a corner, even to sweat and tears, that it may be bedecked and enriched with those singular graces that are so shining in others. Oh that I had the

wisdom of such a Christian, and the faith of such a Christian, and the love of such a Christian, and the humility of such a Christian, and the meekness of such a Christian, and the zeal of such a Christian, and the integrity of such a Christian, &c. Oh that my soul was but in their case! I don't covet their riches, but their graces. Oh that I had but those graces! Oh that I had much of those graces that sparkles and shines in the hearts and lives of such and such Christians! I see a beauty and glory upon sun, moon, and stars, yea, upon the whole creation, but what is that to that beauty and glory that I see stamped upon grace? And this fires his heart with desires after grace. But,

[8.] Eighthly, No man can sincerely desire all grace, every grace, or the whole chain of graces, but he that has true grace, 2 Peter 1:5–9. Vain men, when they are under some outward or inward distresses, may, to serve their present turns, desire, in a cold, formal, customary way, patience, or contentation, or meekness, or hope, or faith, &c.; but they don't, nor can't, whilst they are wicked, whilst they are in their natural estate, whilst they are 'in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity,' Acts 8:19–25, sincerely desire every grace, especially those particular graces that are most opposite to their master sin, to their darling lusts, to their constitution sins, to their complexion sins, to those particular lusts that are to them as dear as their right eyes or right hands. Austin before his conversion he was much given to whoredom, and he would often pray, 'Lord, give me continency, but not yet; Lord, give me continency, but not yet.' He was afraid lest God should have heard him too soon, as he himself confesseth. Wicked men would be very sorry if God should take them at their words, and in good earnest answer the cold and lazy desires of their souls. If when the drunkard in a good mood should desire sobriety, God should take him at his word, he would be very angry; or if when the unclean person should desire chastity, continency, God should answer his desires, he would not be very well pleased. If when the

covetous person should, under some pangs of conscience, desire a free, a charitable, a noble, generous spirit, God should take him at his word, he would be sorely displeased. The same may be said of all other sorts of sinners; but now a real Christian, though he be never so weak, yet he seriously desires every grace; he is for every link of the golden chain of graces; he finds in his own heart sins that are contrary to every grace; and therefore he desires every grace, that he may make head against every sin, and he finds his heart and life so attended and surrounded with all sorts and kinds of temptations, that he earnestly, seriously, and frequently desires the presence and assistance of every grace, that so he may be temptation-proof, yea, victorious over every temptation; and he sees and feels the need of every grace to fill up every place, station, and condition wherein the Lord has set him, and therefore he begs hard for every grace; and he sees a beauty, and a glory, and an excellency upon every grace, and therefore he desires every grace as well as any one single grace, which no hypocrite or profane person in the world does. But,

[9.] Ninthly, No man can sincerely and seriously desire grace for gracious ends and purposes, but he that has true grace in his soul. No man can truly desire grace, that he may enjoy communion and fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and that he may be made conformable to Christ, and that he may be serviceable and useful to the interest of Christ, and that he may walk even as Christ walked, in the exercise of every grace, and that he may be rid of his sins, yea, all his sins, especially his special sins; and that he may run the ways of God's commands more easily, more readily, more delightfully, more resolutely, more patiently, more unweariedly, and more zealously; and that he may be made victorious over the world, the flesh, and the devil; and that he may so live, as to be a praise, a name, an honour, and a glory to Christ; and that after all and by all he may be prepared and fitted for an eternal fruition and enjoyment

of Christ, but he that has true grace in his soul. Now, every weak believer is able to appeal to God, that he desires grace for gracious ends and purposes, as for the ends last cited, and others of the like nature with them. Wicked men may in a fit desire grace, as Simon Magus did desire the Holy Ghost, to get money by it, Acts 8:18–20; or when they are under some pangs of conscience, they may desire grace to be rid of their horrors and terrors, or when they are upon a dying bed they may desire so much grace as may keep them out of hell, and bring them to heaven; but in all this they look no further than self, they are far from desiring of grace for gracious ends and purposes. There is nothing in all the world that the great God so much regards as man, 'All these things have my hands made, but to this man will I look,' Isa. 66:2. Nothing in man so much as the heart; 'My son, give me thy heart.' That is the mount Zion which God loveth above all the dwellings of Jacob; and nothing in the heart so much as the aim and end of it. Let a man's profession be never so glorious, let him be never so abundant in the performance of duties, let his desires after this and that good thing be never so strong, yet if his ends be wrong, all his pretensions and peformances are but beautiful abominations. Did David pray three times a-day? So did the pharisees. Did David and Daniel fast? So did the pharisees, and that twice in the week. Did Cornelius givealms? So did the pharisees. Did Abraham pay tithes? So did the pharisees; they tithed their very mint and rue. But their ends being wrong, their time was lost, and their pains was lost, and their duties was lost, and their alms was lost, and their souls was lost, and that for ever. God writes a nothing upon all those services wherein men's ends are not right, Jer. 32:23. But,

[10.] Tenthly, No man can sincerely desire and earnestly endeavour after the highest pitches of grace, but he that has true grace. Though the weak Christian has but a little grace in his heart, yet he has the top of grace, the perfection of grace in his sincere aims, in his sincere

desires, and in his earnest and constant endeavours, Philip. 3:12–16, &c; and if the weakest saint might have his desires, his mind, his wish, his will, his choice, he would never sin more; he would never dishonour Jesus Christ more; he would never grieve the Spirit of grace more; he would yield unsinning obedience; he would obey in this lower world, as the angels, and as the 'spirits of just men made perfect,' Heb. 12:22, 23, do obey in that upper world. The weakest Christian has his eye to the highest round in Jacob's ladder, and fain would he be at the top of it, Luke 17:5; and oh, how sweet is every providence, and every ordinance, and every duty, and every mercy, and every opportunity, that helps his soul more Christ-wards, and heaven-wards, and holiness-wards! Sincere desires, and serious endeavours to grow in grace, is an infallible evidence of the truth of grace, 2 Peter 3:18, 1 Peter 2:2, 1 John 5:11, 1 John 3:9. Look, as a man may have grace and not know it, so a man may grow in grace and yet not discern it. As in the lopping of a tree there seems to be a kind of diminution and destruction, yet the end and issue of it is better growth; and as the weakening of the body by physic seems to tend to death, yet it produceth better health and more strength; and as the ball by falling downward riseth upward; and water in pipes descends that it may ascend, so the Christian's spiritual growth, when seemingly dead and declining, and to stand at a stay, is still carried on by the hidden method of God to increase; for every true Christian is a member of a thriving body, in which there is no atrophy, but a continual issuing of spirits from the head; so that life, being wrought by the Spirit of life, never dieth, but is always upon the growing hand,—except in the dark winter night of desertion and temptations,—ripening and increasing even in the midst of all ordinary troubles and trials. The apostle tells us, that the whole body of Christ, whereof every true Christian is a limb, is so compact together in itself, and so firmly fastened with certain spiritual nerves and ligaments to the head, that from it there is by them conveyed to

each part a continual supply of spiritual grace, both sufficient to furnish it, and to further the growth of it. Let me give a little further light into this particular, by this similitude: A man is bound for the East Indies, and shapeth his course thitherward, but by the way is put often off by cross winds to the west-ward; he is by contrary winds compelled to put into divers harbours, and to make some stay by the way there, either to shift off stormy weather, or to take in fresh water, or to stop a leak, or to get some fresh provisions; and yet all this while we truly say, he is going on in his way in his voyage, because his settled purpose and constant resolution is to make to his port, his haven, whither he is bound, and all these seeming lets shall help forward his voyage. It is so in spiritual things; for our very growth in grace consists much in sincere desires, in fixed resolutions, and in faithful endeavours to grow in grace. Aristotle makes it the mark of a good man, that he studieth how he may grow better than he is, not contenting himself with any degree or measure of goodness. And another heathen observes, that 'the earnest desire of what men would have, maketh them forgetful of what they have.'2 'I forget what is past,' saith the apostle, 'and press on to what is before,' Philip. 3:13. Their eye is more upon what they want than upon what they have. It is with good Christians in this case as it is with rich worldlings, that, like men in a race, have their eye on those that be before them, not on those that come after them; they are ever eyeing those that seem to outstrip and outgo them in wealth, and think they have nothing, and that they are but poor men, so long as they come short of such and such, who are rich and great in the world. And so it is with many precious Christians; they have still their eye fixed upon those whose examples they either read of, or whose courses and graces they are eye-witnesses of; and hereupon they think that they have no grace, or else that they make no progress in grace, at least worth speaking of, so long as they come behind and fall short of such and such, who are very eminent, or most eminent, in grace and

holiness; and upon this account it is, that they make such sore complaints of their spiritual wants, and of their slow progress in grace and holiness, and that they can hardly perceive but that they stand still at a stay. Now mark, these sad complaints of theirs, and their serious desires to grow in grace, is a sure and infallible evidence of the truth of grace in them; yea, it is a sure argument that they love grace as it is grace, that they love grace for grace's sake, which none can do but such as have grace. It is a sure sign that he was never truly good, that desireth not to be better; ille non est bonus qui non vult esse melior; yea, he has very great cause to fear, that his heart is naught, very naught, if not stark naught, that desireth not to be as good as the best, to be as gracious as he that is most gracious, and to be as holy as he that is most holy. Well, sirs! this will be found an everlasting truth, viz., That no man can sincerely desire, and habitually endeavour after the highest pitches of grace, but he that hath true grace.

[11.] Eleventhly, No man can always desire grace, but he that has true grace. Constant desires after grace argues the reality of grace; constant desires after grace speaks out a state of grace: Ps. 119:20, 'My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.' Isa. 26:7–9, Cant. 3:1–4, Ps. 106:3. Pliny speaks of a golden vine which never withereth. All gracious desires are such golden desires as never wither. Take a Christian when you will, and where you will, and among whom you will, and in what condition you will, and still you shall find his heart full of gracious desires. Oh that I had grace! Oh that I had much grace! &c. Balaam in a fit, in a good mood, desires to die the death of the righteous, but his desires were fleeting and flashy, they were transient, not permanent, Num. 23:10. Some poor sinners, when they are in a good mood, or under some distress of conscience, or under some grievous trials, or when they see the handwriting upon the wall, Dan. 5:6; and when death, which

is the king of terrors, and the terror of kings, knocks at their doors, oh then they cry out, Oh that we had grace! Oh, what shall we do for grace! Oh, send to such a minister, and to such a Christian, whom we have hated, scorned, reproached, and opposed, and desire them to be earnest with God, that he would give us grace; for now we see, that without grace there is no escaping of hell, nor no coming to heaven. But all these desires of theirs are but like the morning cloud, or the early dew, that quickly passeth away, Hosea 6:4, Ps. 78:37, Ps. 5:9. But now if you look upon the weak Christian, as you shall commonly find a tear in his eye, a sigh in his breast, and a complaint in his mouth; so you shall always find desires in his heart after grace, Oh that I had grace! Oh that I had much grace! Oh that I did but excel in grace! Oh that I had as much grace as such a Christian! Oh that I had a greater exercise of grace! Ps. 42:1–3, and 63:1, 2, 3, 8. Whatever outward or inward changes may attend a Christian in this world, yet you shall still find him full of holy desires, and breathings, and hankerings, and longings after God, and Christ, and grace, and holiness. Oh that I had more of these! Oh, when shall I have more of these! Oh that God would cut me short in anything, yea, in everything, rather than cut me short in these things, that the desires of my soul are so much running after! These desires of theirs may further be set forth by a spring between a couple of hills; the spring will always run through those lets that stop it, or else it will run over those lets, for it cannot cease running if it be a living spring; so the desires of a gracious soul will still be running after God, and Christ, and grace. The good desires of bad men after God, and Christ, and grace, and holiness, are like water in a cistern, that quickly runs out; but the desires of a godly man after God, Christ, grace, holiness, are like water in a fountain that is still a-running. An unsound Christian is never good at all times; he is only good by fits, and starts, and turns, sometimes when he is sermon-sick, or under a smarting rod, or a galled conscience, or when he is under some heavy cross or sad

loss. Oh, then he will be good! Oh, then he will have God, and he will have Christ, and he will have grace, and he will have heaven; but this good frame, this good temper of his, is not lasting, it is not abiding; it is like a vapour that quickly vanishes, or like a windmill that goes as long as the wind fills the sails, but no longer. These are like Sigismund the emperor, who, when he was sick, would be very godly, but when he was well, none more wicked. But,

[12.] Twelfthly, No man can sincerely desire to abound and excel most in those particular graces which are most opposite and contrary to those particular sins which his natural temper, constitution, complexion, calling, or condition, does most expose him and incline him to, but he that has true grace, but he whose heart is sincere with God. Ps. 18:23, 'I was upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.' If passion be a sincere Christian's head-lust, then his desires run most out for meekness; if pride, then his desires are most for humility; if earthliness, then his desires are most for heavenly-mindedness; if unbelief, then his desires are most for faith. You shall then find him with the disciples, crying out, 'Lord, increase our faith,' Luke 7:5. But now, though a wicked man's heart rise against every grace, yet it rises most strongly against those particular graces which are most opposite and contrary to those particular lusts which are a wicked man's bosom lusts, his darling sins, &c. Hence the covetous heart rises and swells most against liberality, as you see in Judas, 'What need this waste?' Mat. 26:8, 9. Flesh and blood looks upon all as lost that is laid out upon Christ, his servants and services. And the lukewarm Christian's heart rises and swells most against zeal and fervency, Rev. 3:15–17, Luke 19; and the griping usurer's heart rises and swells most against restitution; and the adulterer's heart rises and swells most against purity, chastity, continency; and the ignorant man's heart rises and swells most against light and knowledge. The ignorant man is willing to go to hell in the dark, and

ready and bold enough to conclude that we never had such sad and bad times as we have had since there hath been so much preaching, and so much hearing, and so much fasting, and so much praying, and so much light and knowledge in the world. But now it is quite otherwise with a true child of God; for his heart rises and swells most against the toad or toads that are in his own bosom, Rom. 7:22, 23; and the daily and earnest desires of his soul are, that God would make him eminent in every grace, yea, that God would make him most eminent in those particular graces which are most opposite and contrary to those particular lusts and corruptions which more peculiarly, more especially he hath cause to call his iniquity, or the iniquities of his heart, and of his heels, Ps. 49:5. Look, as we have some dirt, more or less, that will still cleave to our heels whilst we are in a dirty world, so there is some defilements and pollutions that will still be cleaving to all our duties, services, ways, and walkings in this world, which we may well call the iniquity of our heels. Now, a gracious heart rises most against these, &c.

[13.] Thirteenthly, No man can truly love grace in another, but he that has true grace in his own soul, 1 John 3:10. No man can love a saint as a saint but he that is a real saint. No man can love holiness in another but he that has holiness in his own soul. No man can love a good man for goodness' sake but he that is really good. 'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren,' 1 John 3:14. Sincere love to the brethren is a most evident sign of a Christian's being already passed or translated from death to life, that is, from a state of nature into a state of grace. Such a poor soul that dares not say that he has grace in his own heart, yet dares say before the Lord that he loves, delights, and takes pleasure to see the holy graces of the Spirit sparkling and shining in the hearts, lives, and lips of other saints, secretly wishing in himself that his soul were but in their case; and that dares say before the Lord that there are no men

in all the world that are so precious, so lovely, so comely, so excellent, and so honourable in his account, in his eye, as those that have the image of God, of Christ, of grace, of holiness, most clearly, most fairly, and most fully stamped upon them. When a poor Christian can rejoice in every light, in every sun that outshines his own; when he sees wisdom and knowledge shining in one saint, and faith and love shining in another saint, and humility and lowliness shining in another saint, and meekness and uprightness shining in another saint, and zeal and courage shining in another saint, and patience and constancy shining in another, and then can make his retreat to his closet, admiring and blessing of the Lord for the various graces of his Spirit shining in his children, and be frequent and earnest with God, that those very graces might shine as so many suns in his soul; doubtless such a poor soul has true grace, and is happy, and will be happy to all eternity. In Tertullian's time, the heathen would point out the Christians by this mark, 'See how they love one another.' Now, to prevent mistakes, I shall shew you the several properties of sincere love to the saints.

(1.) First, True love to the saints is spiritual; it is a love for the image of God that is stamped upon the soul. 1 John 5:1, 'Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him;' 1 John 4:7. A soul that truly loves, loves the father for his own sake, and the children for the father's sake. If the image of God be the loadstone that draws out our love to the saints, then our love is real to them. He that does not love the saints as saints, he that does not love them under a spiritual notion, he hath no true affection to them. Naturally we hate God, because he is a holy God; and his law, because it is an holy law; and his people, because they are a holy people, Gen. 3:15; 1 John 3:12. It is only the Spirit of God that can enable a man to love a saint for the image of God that is in him. Many there are which love Christians for their goods, not for their good; they love them for the

money that is in their purses, but not for the grace that is in their hearts. Many, like the Bohemian cur, fawn upon a good suit. Love to the saints, for the image of God stamped upon them, is a flower that does not grow in nature's garden. No man can love grace in another man's heart, but he that hath grace in his own. Men do not more naturally love their parents, and love their children, and love themselves, than they do naturally hate the image of God upon his people and ways, Prov. 29:10; Ezek. 25:15. I have read of one who was so lusty and quarrelsome, that he was ready to fight with his own image so often as he saw it in a glass. Oh how many are there in these days, that are still a-quarrelling and fighting with the image of God wherever they see it! True love is for what of the divine nature, for what of Christ and grace shines in a man. It is one thing to love a godly man, and another thing to love him for godliness. Many love godly men as they are politicians, or potent, or learned, or of a sweet nature, or affable, or related, or as they have been kind to them; but all this is but natural love; but to love them because they are spiritually lovely, because of the seed of God in them, because they are all glorious within, is to love them as becometh saints; it is to love them at a higher and nobler rate than any hypocrite in the world can reach to, John 3:9, Ps. 45:13. The wasps fly about the tradesman's shop, not out of love to him, but the honey and fruit that is there. But,

(2.) Secondly, True love to the saints is appreciating. A gracious soul sets the highest price and the greatest value and esteem upon those that are gracious, Ps. 15:4. He honours them that fear the Lord; he looks upon the wicked as lumber, but upon the saints as jewels; he looks upon the wicked as dross, but upon the saints as the gold of Ophir; he looks upon the wicked as chaff, but upon the saints as wheat; he looks upon the saints as sons, but upon the wicked as slaves; he looks upon the saints as heirs of salvation, but upon the

wicked as heirs of damnation, Ps. 119:119; Ps. 1:4; John 1:12; Heb. 1:14. Gracious souls do not value persons by their great places, offices, names, professions, arts, parts, gifts, gay clothes, gold chains, honours, riches, but by what they are worth for another world. As the great God, so gracious souls look not how rational men are, but how religious; not how great, but how gracious; not how high, but how holy; and accordingly they value them. 'My goodness extends not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight,' Ps. 16:3. 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,' Prov 12:26. It is grace that differences one man from another, and that exalts one man above another. A gracious man, though never so poor, and low, and contemptible in the world, is a better man than his wicked neighbour, though he be never so great or rich in the world; in the eye, account, and esteem of God, angels, and saints, there is no man to the gracious man. The sun doth not more excel and outshine the stars, than a righteous man doth excel and outshine his unrighteous neighbour. 'Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich,' Prov. 28:6. A gracious man prefers a holy Job upon the dunghill, before a wicked Ahab upon the throne. He sets a higher price upon a gracious Lazarus, though clothed with rags and full of sores, than upon a rich and wretched Dives, though he be clothed gloriously, and fares sumptuously every day, Luke 16. This is, and this must be for a lamentation, that this poor, blind, mad, besotted world rates and values men according to their worldly interest, greatness, glory, and grandeur; but gracious souls, they rate and value men by their graces, by their inward excellencies, and by what they are worth for eternity. In the eye of a gracious man, there is no wife to a gracious wife, no child to a gracious child, no friend to a gracious friend, no neighbour to a gracious neighbour, no magistrate to a gracious magistrate, no minister to a gracious minister, no master to a gracious master, nor no servant to a

gracious servant. Internal excellencies carries it with a gracious man before all external glories. The Jews say, that those seventy souls that went with Jacob into Egypt, were as much worth as all the seventy nations in the world. Doubtless, seventy gracious persons, in the esteem and judgment of those that are gracious, are more worth than a whole world, yea, than seventy worlds of graceless persons. Well sirs, remember this: No man can truly prize, and highly value grace in another, but he that hath grace in his own heart. Some prize Christians for their wit, others prize them for their wealth; some prize them for their birth and breeding, others prize them for their beauty and worldly glory; some prize them for the great things that have been done by them, others prize them for the good things that they have received from them; some prize them for their eagle eyes, others prize them for their silver tongues, and others prize them for their golden parts; but he that is truly gracious, he prizes them for the grace of God that is in them, he sets the highest value upon them for their holiness, &c. But,

(3.) Thirdly, True love to the saints is universal, to one Christian as well as another, to all as well as any; to poor Lazarus as well as to rich Abraham, to a despised Job as well as to an admired David, to an afflicted Joseph as well as to a raised Jacob, to a despised disciple as well as to an exalted apostle: Eph. 1:15, 'Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints'; Col. 1:4, 'Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints.' Faith in Christ Jesus maketh love to all the saints; therefore they go commonly coupled in Paul's Epistles. It was the glory of the Ephesians and Colossians that their faith and love reached to all the saints. Their love was not a narrow love, a love confined to some particular saints, but it was universal to all saints: Philip. 4:21, 'Salute every saint in Christ Jesus;' the meanest as well as the richest, the weakest as well as the strongest, the lowest as well

as the highest, and those that have many infirmities as well as those that have fewer infirmities, and those that have but mean parts and gifts as well as those that have the strongest parts and the most raised gifts, Eph. 1:21–23; 1 Pet. 2:17. All saints have the same Spirit, the same Jesus, the same faith, &c.; they are all fellow-members, fellow-travellers, fellow-soldiers, fellow-citizens, fellow-heirs, and therefore must they all be loved with a sincere and cordial love. Love is set upon the brotherhood, upon the whole fraternity of believers, and not here and there upon one. Divine love casts an eye of favour upon grace in rags, upon a dunghill, in a dungeon, a den, a prison, a fiery furnace. Grace is as lovely in the illiterate as in the greatest scholar, in the servant as in the master, in the maid as in the mistress, in the child as in the father, in the subject as in the prince, in the buyer as in the seller, &c. Look, as all our delight must be in the saints, so our delight must be in all the saints. It is sad and sinful to contemn our poor brethren; and yet this was the very case of the Corinthians, for they in their love-feasts carried it so unequally, 'that one was hungry,' to wit, the poor, 'and another was drunken,' to wit, the rich. And this made the apostle put that question to them, 'What! have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not?' 1 Cor. 11:21, 22, or put them to shame that have nothing. And the apostle James doth very roundly reprove and condemn that partial love that was generally among the Jews in his days: James 2:1–4, 'My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons; for if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place, and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool, are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?' Not that the apostle doth simply or absolutely prohibit a civil differencing of men in place from

others; for it cannot be denied but that there is a holy and warrantable respect of persons in respect of their age, callings, gifts, graces, and greatness in the world; but when the rich man's wealth is more regarded than the poor man's godliness, and when men carry it so to the rich as to cast scorn, contempt, disgrace, and discouragement upon the godly poor; they that respect a rich man that has but a little grace, before a poor man that is rich in grace, are worthy of blame. All true-born sons love to see the image and picture of their father, though hung in never so poor a frame, and in never so mean a cottage; so the true-born sons of God, they love to see the image of God, the picture of God, upon the poorest saints. It is sad to prefer a worldly lustre before heavenly grace, a gold ring before a rich faith, a chain of gold before a chain of grace. Ver. 5, 'Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?' It is a vile thing, saith one of the ancients, to have the faith of Christ in respect of persons. We do not judge of faith by persons, but of persons by faith. It is the great wisdom of a Christian not to judge of men by their outwards, but by their inwards; not by their externals, but by their internals; not by what they are worth for this world, but by what they are worth for that other world. The poorest saints are God's portion, Deut. 32:9; they are his pleasant portion, Jer. 12:10; they are his peculiar treasure, Exod. 19:5; they are his jewels, Mal. 3:17; they are the apple of his eye, Zech. 2:8; they are his glory, Isa. 4:5; they are the crown of his glory and royal diadem, Isa. 62:3; and therefore it is a dangerous thing to slight them, to disown them, to look frowningly upon them, or to carry it unworthily towards them. Pompey told his Cornelia, It is no praise to thee to have loved Pompeium Magnum, Pompey the Great, but if thou lovest Pompeium miserum, Pompey the miserable, thou shalt be a pattern for imitation to all posterity. So I say, It is no great matter to love those that are rich and pious, great and gracious, high and holy; but to love the poor saints of God in their lowest and

most miserable condition, when they have not a rag to cover them, nor a crust to refresh them, nor a fire to warm them, nor a friend to stand by them, nor a penny to help them, this is praiseworthy, this speaks out much of God, of Christ, of grace within. Romanus the martyr, who was born of noble parentage, entreated his persecutors that they would not favour him for his nobility; for it is not, said he, the blood of my ancestors, but my Christian faith, that makes me noble. It is not race nor place, but grace, that makes a man truly noble. Without a peradventure, he that loves one saint for the image of God that is upon him, he cannot but fall in love with every saint that bears the lovely image of the Father upon him; he cannot but love a saint in rags as well as a saint in robes; a saint upon the dunghill as well as a saint upon the throne. Usually, those Christians that have least of the world have most of Christ. Commonly, those Christians that have least of the world have most of heaven in their hearts, houses, and lives. But,

(4.) Fourthly, True love to the saints will extend to those that are most remote in respect of place, as well as to those that are near. They of Macedonia and Achaia made a contribution for the poor saints at Jerusalem, Rom. 15:26. The saints of Macedonia and Achaia did freely and cheerfully contribute to the poor saints at Jerusalem, whose faces probably they had never seen. And Gaius is commended for his love to strangers, 3 John 5. A gracious man that has an estate, a treasury, an inheritance, he is like a common fountain, that freely gives out to strangers as well as to near neighbours. A great fire will warm those that sit far from it, as well as those that sit near unto it. So sincere love will extend and stretch out itself to those saints that are most remote. Gracious souls do dearly love and highly value those saints whose faces they have never seen, nor are like to see in this world, and from whose hands they have not received the least civility; and all upon the serious reports that they have had of the

grace of God that has been sparkling and shining in them, whose habitations are at a great distance from them. A sincere love, an unfeigned love, a hearty love, will be running out towards those that live most remote from us, if we do but understand that God is in them and with them of truth, Rom. 12:9, 1 Peter. 1:22, 1 John 3:18. But,

(5.) Fifthly, Our love to the saints is right, when we love them best and most in whom the spiritual and supernatural causes of love are most sparkling and shining. Where grace draws the affections, there the more grace we see, the more we shall love: Ps. 16:3, 'My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.' There are saints, and there are excellent saints. The Hebrew word that is here rendered excellent, signifies magnificent ones, noble ones, glorious ones, wonderful ones. O sirs! there are some saints that are magnificent in grace, noble in grace, glorious in grace, wonderful in grace. Now this is certain, if grace be the true reason why we love any, then the more excellent, the more magnificent any are in grace, the more highly we shall prize them, and the more dearly we shall love them, and the more abundantly in our hearts we shall honour them, Ps. 15:4. Look, as grace rises higher and higher in the same person, so we shall rise higher and higher in our love to the same person. Daniel was greatly beloved, Dan. 9:23, and John was singularly beloved, John 21:20. And why, but because they were more eminently gracious than others were? Where there is most grace, there God is most honoured, and there Christ is most exalted, and there the Spirit is best pleased, and there religion is most adorned, and there Satan is most dethroned, and there the world is most conquered, and there sin is most subdued, and there duties are most exactly performed; and therefore there the gracious soul can't but love best and most. There are some that seem to love such and such godly men, whose

judgments are weak, and light little, and parts low, and grace small, who yet look with a squint eye, an envious eye, upon every sun that outshines their own, upon every one's graces and excellencies that are more sparkling than their own. Though pride and envy have received their death's wound at the soul's first conversion, yet they are not quite slain in a believer. There is an aptness even in real saints to grudge and repine at those gifts, graces, and excellencies in others that outshine their own. John's disciples muttered and murmured because Christ had more followers and admirers than John, Luke 7:16–23, and that spirit that lived in John's disciples is still alive to this very day. This is, and this must be, for a lamentation. Well, sirs, look, as the fairest day hath its clouds, the finest linen its spots, the richest jewels their flaws, the sweetest fruits their worms, so when many precious Christians are not themselves, when they are in an hour of temptation, when their corruptions are up and their graces down, they may, and too often do, envy and repine at those graces, excellencies, and abilities, that do overcast, cloud, darken, and outshine their own, Num. 11:29. The best of men are but men at the best, and there is still those bitter roots of pride, vain-glory, self-love, envy, &c., remaining in them that occasions their hearts to rise and swell, yea, sometimes to cast disgrace upon those excellencies in others that themselves want, Heb. 12:15, as that great man that could not write his own name, and yet called the liberal arts a public poison and pestilence. This spiritual disease is mostly to be found among Christians that are got into some of the highest forms in Christianity. Take your ordinary common Christians, and they commonly rejoice most where they see most grace. And so do your Christians in a higher form too, when they come to themselves, and to make up their accounts, and have wept over those cursed roots of bitterness that are so apt to be sprouting out. Now, there is no greater argument that our grace is true, and that we do love others for grace's sake, than our loving them best that

have most grace, though they have but little of the world. A pearl is rich if found on a dunghill, though it may glister more when set in a ring of gold; so many a poor believer is rich in grace, and precious and glorious in the eye of Christ, and should be so in ours, though like Job he sits upon a dunghill. Though in the eyes of the world he may seem to glister most when adorned with riches, honour, and outward pomp, if grace be the true reason why we love any person, then the more grace that person hath, the more we shall love him. A godly man loves all that are godly, but he loves them most that excel most in the power, purity, and practice of godliness, &c. But,

(6.) Sixthly and lastly, True love to the saints is constant, it is permanent: 1 Cor. 13:8, 'Love never faileth;' Heb. 13:1, 'Let brotherly love continue.' It is a love like that of Christ's, who loved his to the end: 1 John 4:16, 'He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.' John 13:1, and 15:12, &c., Our love to our brother must not only lodge with us a night and away, but we must dwell in brotherly love. Look, as our love must be sincere without hypocrisy, so it must be constant without deficiency. That love was never true that is not constant. True love, like the pulse, will still be beating, it will still be working and running out to the person beloved. True love will not fawn upon a Christian when high, and frown upon him when low; it will not kiss him upon the throne and kick him upon the dunghill. The grounds and causes of their love are constant, viz., God's commands, their spiritual relations, and the truth of grace in their souls; and therefore their love cannot but be constant. 'A friend,' saith Solomon, 'loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity,' Prov. 7:17. Euripides hit it when he said, 'That a faithful friend in adversity, is better than a calm sea to a weather-beaten mariner.' He that truly loves, will love in adversity as well as in prosperity, in storms as well as in calms, in winter nights as well as in summer days. He that sincerely loves the saints, he will love them as well

when men frown upon them, as when they smile upon them; as well when men strike them, as when they stroke them; as well when men cast them down, as when they lift them up; as well when men cry, 'Crucify them, crucify them,' as when they cry, 'Hosanna, hosanna,' to them. Consalvus, a Spanish bishop and inquisitor, wondered how the Christians had that commandment, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' so indelibly printed in their hearts, that no torture could blot it out, and make them confess and betray one another, or cease from loving one another. I have read of one [in Jerome] Ursinus, a Christian physician, who being to suffer martyrdom for the gospel of Christ, began to waver and faint; which, when Vitalis, a holy man, saw, he stepped to him, and though he knew it would cost him his life, yet he thus comforted and encouraged him, saying, What! have ye been heretofore so industrious to preserve men's bodies, and will you now shrink at the saving of your own soul? Be courageous, fear not, &c. For which faithful counsel, he also was condemned to death, and suffered accordingly. A true friend is neither known in prosperity, nor hid in adversity. True love is like that of Ruth's to Naomi, that of Jonathan's to David, permanent and constant. Many there be whose love to the saints is like Job's brooks, which in the winter, when men have no need of them, overflows with tenders of service and shows of love; but when the season is hot and dry, and the poor thirsty traveller stands in most need of water to refresh him, then the brooks are quite dried up. They are like the swallow, that will stay by you in the summer of prosperity, but fly from you in the winter of adversity. It is observed by Josephus of the Samaritans, that whenever the Jews' affairs prospered, they would be their friends, and profess much love to them; yea, they would vaunt of their alliance, saying, that they were near akin, and of the race of Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph. But when the Jews were in trouble and affliction, and brought to an under, then they would not own them, nor have any

thing to do with them; yea, then they would set themselves with all their might against them, as the same historian tells us.2 This age is full of such Samaritans; yet certainly, such as truly love, they will always love; such as truly love the people of God, they will love them to the end. In the primitive times it was very much taken notice of by the very heathen, that in the depth of misery, when fathers and mothers forsook their children, Christians, otherwise strangers, stuck close one to another. Their love of religion and one of another, proved firmer than that of nature. They seem to take away the sun out of the world, said the orator, who take away friendship from the life of man; for we do not more need fire and water than constant friendship. Though wicked men may pretend great love to the saints, yet their love is not constant. God sometimes indeed overrules their spirits with a very strong hand, as he did Laban's and Esau's, or as he overruled the spirits of the lions to preserve Daniel; and of the ravens to feed Elijah, Gen. 31:24, 29, 33:1–5; Dan. 6; but so soon as that overruling providence is over, they are as they were before. God for a time gave the Israelites favour in the eyes of the Egyptians, but before and after they were their utter enemies. But now a gracious soul, he loves the saints at all times, his love to them is constant. But,

[14.] Fourteenthly, That soul that dares not say that he has grace, yet can truly say before the Lord, that he prizes the least dram of grace above ten thousand thousand worlds, certainly that soul has true grace in him. Doubtless there are none that can prize grace in their understandings and judgments above all the world, but such as are first taken out of the world by grace, Micah 6:6, 7; Philip. 3:18, 19; Mat. 19:16–25; Ps. 2:5. There is no man on earth whose heart is void and empty of grace, but sets a higher value and price upon his lusts, or upon his relations, or upon his honours, or riches, or pleasures, or upon this or that worldly enjoyment, than he does upon grace, or the fountain of grace; yea, how many thousands are there that set a

higher price or value upon a hound, a hawk, a horse, a harlot, a good trade, a fair estate, a rich inheritance, yea, upon the very toys and trifles of this world, than they do upon God, or Christ, or grace! It was never yet known in the world, that ever God sent such a man to hell, who prized grace above heaven itself, who had rather have grace and holiness without heaven, than heaven itself without grace and holiness.

[15.] Fifteenthly, That soul that dares not say that his condition is good, yet can say in truth of heart before the Lord, that he would not change his condition with the vain, carnal, formal, and profane men of the world, for ten thousand worlds; that man is certainly for heaven, and heaven is certainly for that man. We may be very highly and groundedly confident, that God will never cast that man to hell, among devils and damned spirits, at the great day, who in his day of life would not choose to be in the condition of the men of the world, for as many worlds as there be men in the world. Look, as none meet in heaven, but such as are like to like in their renewed natures, principles, and practices; so none meet in hell but such as are like to like in their old natures, principles, and practices. That God that would not suffer an ox to be yoked with an ass in this world, Deut. 22:10; nor a believer with an infidel, 2 Cor. 6:14–18; will never suffer such to be yoked with devils and damned reprobrates in that lower world, who would not, to gain many worlds, be willingly yoked with wicked men in this world. Certainly they shall never be a Christian's companions in that other world, whose society and company, and whose wickedness and baseness have been a grief, a torment, a hell to him in this world, Ps. 119:53, 136; Jer. 9:1, 2; Ezek. 9:4, 6; 2 Peter 2:7, 8. When Mrs Catherine Brettergh was upon her dying bed, and most grievously assaulted by temptations, in the midst of her sore conflicts, this was no small support and comfort to her, that surely God would not send her to hell, to live for ever among such wicked

persons, whose company and whose sin was a burden to her in this world, &c. But,

[16.] Sixteenthly, That soul that dares not say that he does not sin, —'For in many things we offend all;' 'and there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good, and sinneth not;' and who can say, 'I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin?' 'And if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,'—yet can say in uprightness before the Lord, that he would not willingly, resolutely, maliciously, wilfully, wickedly, and habitually sin against the Lord to gain a world; that soul that don't or won't, through grace assisting, allow himself, or indulge himself in a course of sin, or in a trade of sin, or in the common practice of any known sin, that soul is certainly a gracious soul. 'The evil that I do I allow not,' Rom. 7:15. It is one thing for a man to sin, it is another thing for a man to allow himself in sin; it is one thing for a godly man to step into a sin, and it is another thing to keep the road of sin. 'Search me and try me, and see if there be any way of wickedness in me,' or as the Hebrew runs, 'any way of pain, or of grief, or of provocation,' Ps. 139:24, that is, any course of sin that is grievous or provoking to the eyes of divine glory. A real saint can neither allow of sin, nor wallow in sin, nor be transformed into the image of sin, nor mix itself with sin. It is possible for a sincere Christian to step into a sinful path, or to touch upon sinful facts, and now and then in an hour of temptation, to slide, to trip, and to be overtaken unawares; but his main way, his principal work, is to depart from iniquity, Gal. 6:1, Prov. 16:17, as a true traveller may now and then step a few steps out of his way, who yet for the main keeps his way, keeps the road; or as a bee may now and then light upon a thistle, but her main work is to be gathering at the flowers; or as a sheep may now and then slip into the dirt, or into a slough, but its main work is to be grazing upon the mountains. Certainly, O soul, if sin be now thy greatest burden, it shall never

hereafter prove thy eternal bane. God never yet sent any man to hell for sin, to whom sin has commonly been the greatest hell in this world. God has but one hell, and that is for those to whom sin has been commonly a heaven in this world. That man that hates sin, and that daily enters his protest against sin, that man shall never be made miserable by sin. Sin in a wicked man is like poison in a serpent; it is in its natural place, it is delightful to a sinner; but sin in a saint is like poison in a man's body, it is offensive, and the heart rises against it, and is carried forth to the use of all divine antidotes whereby it may be expelled and destroyed. Nothing will satisfy a gracious soul, but the heart blood of his lusts. Now, he shall never be damned for his sins, whose heart is set upon killing his sins.

[17.] Seventeenthly, Such a poor soul that dares not say, that God is his God, or that Christ is his redeemer, or that he has a work of grace upon his heart, yet can say with some integrity of heart before the Lord, that if God and Christ, grace and glory, holiness and happiness, were offered to him on the one hand, and all the honours, pleasures, profits, delights, and carnal contents of the world were offered him on the other hand, he had infinitely rather ten thousand thousand times choose God and Christ, grace and glory, holiness and happiness, than the contrary; certainly such a soul has true grace in him, and a saving work passed upon him; for none can freely, seriously, habitually, resolutely, choose God and Christ, grace and glory, holiness and happiness, as their summun bonum, chiefest good, but such who are really good. Look, as our love to God is but an effect of his love to us,—'We love him because he first loved us,' 1 John 4:19,—so our choosing of God for our God, is but an effect of God's choosing us for his people; we choose him because he first chose us, Deut. 7:6–9, 26:17–19. Such who, in their serious choice, set up God and Christ above all other persons and things, such God will certainly make happy and blessed for ever. God never did, nor

never will, reject those, or damn those, who really choose him for their God, and for their great all. The greatest part of the world choose their lusts rather than God, and the creatures rather than Christ; they choose rather to be great than gracious, to be rich in this world than to be rich towards God, Luke 12:21, to be outwardly happy than to be inwardly holy, to have a heaven on earth than to have a heaven after death, and so they miscarry for ever, Mat. 10:42. That soul that with Mary has chosen the better part, that soul with Mary shall be happy for ever; every man must stand or fall for ever as his choice has been. But,

[18.] Eighteenthly, Canst thou truly say, in the presence of the great and glorious God, that is the searcher of all hearts, that thou hast given up thy heart and life to the rule, authority, and government of Jesus Christ? and that thou hast chosen him to be thy sovereign Lord and King, and art truly willing to submit to his dominion, as the only precious and righteous government, and as the only holy and heavenly, sweet and pleasant, profitable and comfortable, safe and best dominion in all the world, and to resign up thy heart, thy will, thy affections, thy life, thy all, really to Christ, wholly to Christ, and only to Christ? Canst thou, O poor soul! look up to heaven and truly say, O dear Lord Jesus! other lords, viz., the world, the flesh, and the devil, have had dominion too long over me; but now these lords I do heartily renounce, I do utterly renounce, I do for ever renounce, and do give up myself to thee as my only Lord, beseeching thee to rule and reign over me for ever and ever! O Lord! though sin rages, and Satan roars, and the world sometimes frowns, and sometimes fawns, yet I am resolved to own thee as my only Lord, and to serve thee as my only Lord; and my greatest fear, by divine assistance, shall be of offending thee, and my chiefest care shall be to please thee, and my only joy shall be to be a praise, a name, and an honour to thee, Isa. 26:13, 33:22. O Lord! I can appeal to thee in the sincerity of my

heart, that though I have many invincible sins, weaknesses, and infirmities that hang upon me; and though I am often worsted by my sins, and overcome in an hour of temptation; yet thou that knowest all thoughts and hearts, thou dost know that I have given up my heart and life to the obedience of Jesus Christ, and do daily give them up to his rule and government; and it is the earnest desire of my soul, above all things in this world, that Jesus Christ may still set up his laws in my heart, and exercise his dominion over me, Ps. 65:3, Rom. 7:23. Now certainly, there is not the weakest Christian in all the world but can venture himself upon such an appeal to God as this is; and without all peradventure, where such a frame and temper of spirit is, there the dominion of Jesus Christ is set up; and where the dominion of Christ is set up, there sin has no dominion; for the dominion of sin and the dominion of Christ are inconsistent, and therefore such a soul is happy, and will be happy to all eternity. But,

[19.] Nineteenthly, That man that will venture his soul upon Christ, and that will lean upon Christ, and cleave to Christ with full purpose of heart, and that will cleave to his blood, and cleave to his righteousness, and cleave to his merits and satisfaction, in the face of all fears, doubts, disputes, cavils, and objections; and though it cannot clear its title to Christ, yet will stay and hang itself upon Christ for life and happiness; that man is certainly a believer, and will be everlastingly saved. 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' Job 13:15; if I must die, I will die at his feet, and in the midst of death expect a better life. That man acts faith to purpose that can love a frowning God, and hang upon an angry God, and follow hard after a withdrawing God, yea, and trust in a killing God, as here, Mat. 15:22–28. Job had his feverish fits, and his impatient slips, and yet he kept up his heroical resolution to lean upon the Lord, whilst he had but one minute to live; and this speaks out not only the truth, but also the strength of Job's faith in the midst of his extraordinary

combats. When the soul is peremptorily and habitually resolved to cleave to the person of Christ, and to cleave to the merits of Christ, and to cleave to the transactions of Christ with the Father for the salvation of sinners, as the wife cleaves to her husband, or as the child cleaves to the father, or as Ruth cleaved to Naomi, or as the ivy cleaves to the oak, with an 'If I perish, I perish,' Ruth 1:14–17, Esther 4:16, then it is safe, then it is happy, then it is out of the danger of hell, then it is within the suburbs of heaven. God never did, nor never will cast such a man to hell, whose soul is drawn forth to a secret resting, staying, leaning, and relying alone upon Christ, for the obtaining of all that good, and all that glory that he has purchased, and his Father has promised. But,

[20.] Lastly, That man that makes it his principal care, his main business, his work of works, to look to his heart, to watch his heart, and to reform his heart, that man doubtless has a saving work of God upon his heart. There are two things which a gracious soul most looks at, his God and his heart. Though a gracious man looks to the cleansing of his hands, yet his principal care is the reformation of his heart, the cleansing of his heart, according to that of the apostle James: 'Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded,' James 4:8. And that of the prophet Jeremiah: O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved,' Jer. 4:14. Man must labour after a clean inside, as well as a clean outside. The conversation must not be only unspotted before the world, but the heart also must be unspotted before God; the heart is as capable of inward defilements as the body is of outward defilements, 2 Cor. 7:1. O sirs! though heart defilement is least taken notice of, yet heart defilement is the worst defilement, and the most dangerous defilement in the world. Heart defilement is spiritual defilement, and spiritual defilement is the defilement of devils, which of all defilement is the most hateful, odious, and pernicious

defilement, Eph. 6:12, [vide Beza.] The hypocrite's only care is to keep his life from defilement, but the sincere Christian's care is mainly to keep his heart from defilement; for he very well knows, that if he can but keep his heart clean, he shall with more ease keep his life clean; if the fountain be kept pure, the streams will run pure. The heart is the spring of all actions, and therefore every action is as the spring is from whence it flows; if the spring be good, the action is good that flows from it; if the spring be evil, the action is evil that flows from it: 'A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things,' Mark 12:35. Certainly, the great work of a Christian lieth with his heart. The reformation of the heart is the highest and choicest part of reformation, because it is the reformation of the noblest part of man, and is that which God looks most after, Prov. 23:26. The reformation of the heart is indeed the heart of reformation. There is nothing reformed to purpose till the heart be reformed; if the heart be naught, all is naught; if that be very naught, all is very naught; if that be stark naught, all is stark naught; but if that be reformed, all is reformed. A gracious man's watch is mainly about his heart: 'Create in me a clean heart, O God! and renew a right spirit within me.' 'Unite my heart to fear thy name.' 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies.' 'Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.' 'When thou saidst, Seek my face, my heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' 'With my whole heart have I sought thee.' 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.' 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness.' The heart of man is the fountain of life or death, and therefore sin in the heart, in some respects, is worse and more dangerous than sin in the life; and hence it is that the sincere Christian doubles his guard about his heart. Luther hit it when he said, 'I more fear what is within me than what comes from without.' The storms and winds without do never move the earth; it is only

vapours within that causeth earthquakes, as philosophers observe. Hypocrites, as our Saviour testifies, are all for the outside; they wash the platters and the cups, and beautify the tombs, like an adulteress whose care is to paint and set a fair face upon a foul matter, Mat. 23:25–30; but now a sincere Christian, though he has a special respect to the well ordering of his life, yet his main business and work is about his heart, Ps. 50:23. Oh that this ignorant heart were but more enlightened! Oh that this proud heart were but more humble! Oh that this profane heart were but more holy! Oh that this earthly heart were but more heavenly! Oh that this unbelieving heart were but more believing! Oh that this passionate heart were but more meek! Oh that this carnal heart were but more spiritual! Oh that this lukewarm heart were but more zealous for God, and Christ, and the gospel, and the great concernments of eternity! Oh that this slight heart were but more serious! Oh that this dull heart were but more quickened! Oh that this dead heart were but more enlivened! &c. The highest and hardest work of a Christian lieth with his heart. Mark, common light, common conviction, education, enforcement of conscience, principles of common honesty and morality, the eye of man, the fear of man, the examples of man, the laws of man, and the rewards of man, with a hundred other things, may be very prevalent to reform the life, to regulate the outward conversation, and to keep that in some due decorum; and yet all these things will be found too weak, too low to change the heart, to reform the heart, to mend the heart, to purify the heart. To this great work there are principles of a higher nature required: 'Purifying their hearts by faith,' Acts 15:9. It is not a guard of moral virtues, but a guard of saving graces that can keep the heart in order; to reform the heart, to keep the heart in a gracious frame, is one of the best and hardest works in the world: Prov. 4:23, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.' The text is about matter of life and death. The words are mandatory, for all counsels in Scripture carry in them the force of

a command. In the words you have two things observable: (1.) A duty enjoined, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence.' (2.) The reason or motive enforcing it, 'For out of it are the issues of life.' In the duty there are two things considerable: (1.) Here is the subject matter, the thing that is to be done, and that is, 'keep thy heart.' This duty is charged upon all in peremptory and undispensable terms. (2.) Here is the manner how it must be done, and that is, 'with all diligence.'

(1.) 'Keep.' The Hebrew word נצר, natsar, to keep, hath various significations, but the main is to keep in safe custody; we should keep our hearts as under lock and key, that they may be always at hand when the Lord shall call for them, &c.

(2.) 'Thy heart.' By the heart we are not to understand that particular vital member of the body that in common speech we call the heart. Heart is not here taken properly for that noble part of the body which philosophers call the primum vivens et ultimum moriens, the first that lives and the last that dies. But by heart, in a metaphor, the Scripture sometimes understands some particular noble faculty of the soul. Sometimes the heart is put for the understanding: Rom. 1:21, 'Their foolish heart was darkened,' that is, their understanding was darkened. Sometimes it is put for the will and affections: Mat. 22:37, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,' that is, with thy will and with all thy affections. So Prov. 23:26, Deut. 10:12. The will is the chiefest power of the soul, as the heart is the principal part of the body; and it commands all the affections, as the centurion did his servants, Mat. 8. Sometimes it is put for the conscience: 1 John 3:20, 'If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things,' that is, if our conscience condemn us justly, then our case must be assuredly sad, because God knows much more by us than we know by ourselves, and can charge us with many sins that conscience is not

privy to, Ps. 19:12. Sometimes it is put for the memory: Ps. 119:11, 'Thy word have I hid in my heart,' that is, in my memory. So Luke 2:19. But here it is taken comprehensively for the whole soul, with all its powers, noble faculties, and endowments, together with their several operations,—all which are to be watched over.

(3.) 'With all diligence,' or as the Hebrew runs, 'with all keeping.' The Hebrew word שמר, shamar, signifies, to keep with watch and ward. A Christian is to keep a perpetual guard about his heart. A-Lapide notes, that the Hebrew word is borrowed from military affairs. We should keep our hearts as soldiers keep a garrisom, with watch and ward. Lavater jumps with him, and tells us that the word shamar is taken from a besieged garrison, begirt by many enemies without, and in danger of being betrayed by treacherous citizens within; in which danger the soldiers upon pain of death are commanded to watch. Junius reads the word thus, 'Keep thy heart,' supra omnem custodiam, above all keeping. So Jerome reads, præ omne custodia, above all keeping keep thy heart, that is, keep, keep, watch, watch, &c. So Rhodolphus reads it, præ omni custodia; and so we read it in the margin of our Bibles. And the Syriac reads it in the same manner that our English doth, cum omni cautione, with all caution and wariness we are to keep our hearts. Oh what guards and double guards! Oh what watches and double watches, should men put upon their hearts! These words, keeping, keep, import both a universal watchfulness over the heart, and a diligent watchfulness over the heart, and a constant watchfulness over the heart; and thrice happy are those persons who keep such a watch upon their hearts. A man is to keep his eye, and keep his mouth, and keep his feet; but above all keeping, he is to keep his heart. It is a duty incumbent upon every Christian to keep his own heart, 'Keep thy heart thyself.' Thou mayest make another thy park-keeper, or thy house-keeper, or thy shop-keeper, or thy cash-keeper, or thy horse-keeper, or thy nurse-

keeper; but thou must be thy own heart-keeper. 'Keep thy heart with all diligence.' Some understand this of all kind of watchfulness. The Hebrew word is applied to several sorts of keeping. As,

First, It is applied to those that are the keepers of a prison, where dangerous felons or malefactors are to be looked to, that they do not break away. 1 Kings 20:39, 'Keep this man,' So Joseph was made the keeper of the prison, Gen. 39:21–23; so Job, 7:12. The Hebrew word is the same with that in Prov. 4:23. Now, oh how diligent, how vigilant are men in looking after their prisoners! Even so should we be in looking after our hearts, &c.

Secondly, It signifies to keep, as men would keep a besieged garrison, or city, or castle, in time of war. So it is used in that Hab. 2:1. Now what strong guards, what watchful guards do men keep up at such a time! A gracious heart is Christ's fort-royal. Now, against this fort Satan will employ the utmost of his strength, art, and craft; and therefore how highly does it concern every Christian to keep a strong guard, a constant guard about his heart! But,

Thirdly, It signifies to keep, as the priests and Levites kept the sanctuary of God, the temple of God, and all the holy things that were committed to their charge; so the word is often used by the prophet, Ezek. 44:8, 15, 16, &c. The temple, and all the vessels of the temple, were to be kept pure, and clean, and sweet. Our hearts are the temples of God, the temples of the Holy Ghost; and therefore we should always keep a strong and diligent guard about them, that nothing may pass in or out, that may be either displeasing, provoking, or grieving to them. But,

Fourthly, The word signifies to keep, as a man keeps his life. Job 10:12, 'Thy visitation hath preserved,' here is shamar, 'my life.' Now with what care, with what diligence, with what labour, with what

watchfulness do men labour to preserve their natural lives! What a guard, what a watch do men daily set about their lives; the same they should set about their hearts. But,

Fifthly, Men should keep their hearts, as they keep a rich treasure of money, or jewels, or plate. Now, to preserve a rich treasure, what locks, what bolts, what bars, what chains are made use of! Our hearts are jewels more worth than all the kingdoms, crowns, and sceptres of this world. There are few men that know how to value a God, a Christ, a gospel, a covenant of grace, a heaven, or their own hearts as they should. What are mountains of gold, and rocks of pearl, to the heart, the soul of man! The heart is that pearl of price for which a man should venture his all, and lay down his all. Oh then, what a guard, what a watch should a man continually keep upon his heart! The heart is camera omnipotentis Regis, the presence-chamber of the King of heaven; and upon this account it becomes a Christian always to keep a guard upon his heart. He keeps his heart best who keeps it as his choicest treasure, &c. But,

Sixthly, Men should keep their hearts, as a fond father keeps his only child. The fond father will still keep his child within doors, he will still have him under his eye, and in his presence, that so no hurt, no harm may befall him day or night. Our eye should be still upon our hearts, or else they will give us the slip, and play the wanton with us. But,

Seventhly, Men should keep their hearts, as lovers keep the love-tokens that are mutually sent one to another. They love to be often a-looking upon them, and a-thinking of them, and a-talking of them; and will be sure to keep the strictest and the strongest guard upon them. So a Christian should still be a-looking upon his heart, and a-thinking upon his heart, and a-speaking of his heart, either of the

badness of it, or of the wants of it, and a-keeping of the strictest and strongest guard upon his heart. But,

Eighthly, A man should keep his heart as a man keeps his house, when he is afraid and in danger of being robbed by thieves in the night. Oh how wakeful, and watchful, and active will a man now be! But what is a man's house to his heart? A man's heart is in ten thousand times more danger than his house, and accordingly his guard should be most about his heart. But,

Ninthly, A man should keep his heart, as men keep their gardens that are full of choice, rich, rare, ripe fruits and flowers. Now, what care, cost, and pains men are at to keep such gardens, you well know. And oh that you did but every day more and more experimentally know what it is to spend your greatest care and pains about your hearts, which are Christ's garden, his bed of spices, where all graces flourish! Cant. 4:16.

Tenthly,, and last, A man should keep his heart as spruce men and women do their fine clothes. Oh they won't endure a speck, a spot upon them! It is your wisdom, and oh that you would more and more make it your work, to keep your hearts from all sinful specks and spots! Let not others be more careful to keep their outsides clean, than you are to keep your insides clean; for what are clean clothes to a clean heart? It is better to go to heaven in ragged clothes with a clean heart, than to go to hell in fine clothes with an unclean heart. Doubtless that man that makes it his business to keep his heart as men keep dangerous felons or traitors, or as soldiers keep their garrisons or castles when closely besieged, or as the priests and Levites kept the sanctuary of God, or as a man keeps his natural life, or as a man keeps a rich treasure, or as a fond father keeps an only child, or as lovers keep their love-tokens, or as a man keeps his house

when he is in danger to be robbed, or as a man keeps his pleasant garden, or as spruce men and women keep their fine clothes, that man is doubtless a true Nathanael, a man that has a work of God passed in power upon his soul; yea, that man whose sincere desires, and whose gracious purposes, and fixed resolutions, and faithful endeavours, is to guard and watch his heart, according to the particulars we have now hinted, that man, without a peradventure, is a gracious man, and one that has the root of the matter in him, and shall be happy to all eternity. Look, as no man can hear as he would and should, nor pray as he would and should, nor believe as he would and should, nor repent as he would and should, nor walk as he would and should, so no man can keep his heart as he would and should; but if a man makes it his great business and work to keep his heart, to watch his heart, to reform his heart, to better his heart, he is accepted of God, and shall be blessed for ever. It is one of the greatest and clearest evidences of grace for a man to make it his greatest business, work, and concernment in this world to keep his heart always in a gracious frame, to keep his heart always in a wakeful frame, in a watchful frame, in a tender frame, in a believing frame, in a repenting frame, in an humble frame, in a patient frame, in a serious frame, in a heavenly frame, and in a jealous frame; for the more gracious the heart is, the more suspicious it will be. Satan has a strong party, a numerous party, an old party, a subtle party, in all our hearts, and therefore it highly concerns us to watch our hearts with a holy jealousy. O sirs! God hath never said, Above all keepings, keep your shops; or above all keepings, keep your estates; or above all keepings, keep your flocks; or above all keepings, keep your bags; or above all keepings, keep your friends; or above all keepings, keep your bodies; or above all keepings, keep your names; or above all keepings, keep your conversations; but he hath said, Above all keepings, keep your hearts. Look, as the heart is the fountain of natural life, and if it fail, life fails; and therefore it is strongly secured

with ribs about it, it is guarded in a castle of flesh and bones; so is the soul the fountain of spiritual life, and runs invisibly through all the body. Fountains were to be kept pure, by the Roman laws of the twelve tables, and the heart, that is the spring and fountain of all actions, is to be kept pure, by the laws of the great God, 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thes. 5:23, &c. Men keep the heart principally from hurt, because every wound there is mortal. Oh that men were as wise for their souls! God's eye is mainly upon the heart. The heart, well guarded and watched, keeps all in security. Alexander was safe while Antipater kept the watch, so all within that little world Man will be safe while the heart is strongly guarded. The heart is the fountain, the root, the store-house, the primum mobile, the great wheel that sets all a-going, and therefore, above all keepings, keep your hearts. It is a foolish thing to watch the outworks, and leave the fort-royal without a guard; so it is a foolish thing to watch the out-works, the eye, the ear, the tongue, the hand, the feet,—though these must all be watched,—and to leave the heart, which is a Christian's fort-royal, without a guard.

Omnia si perdas, animam servare memento.

'If all things else must needs be lost,

Yet save thy soul, whate'er it cost.'

He that makes it his business to watch, and weep, and sigh, and groan most over his own heart, he doubtless is in a gracious estate. He that makes it his work, his daily work, his greatest work, his work of works, to keep a continual guard upon his heart, he certainly is in a blessed estate. He that lamentingly cries out, Oh that my soul did but prosper as my body! Oh that my inward man were but in as good a frame as my outward man! Oh that this proud heart were but more humble! Oh that this hard heart were but more softened! Oh that this

carnal heart were but more spiritual! Oh that this earthly heart were but more heavenly! Oh that this unbelieving heart were but more believing! Oh that this passionate heart were but more meek! Oh that this slight heart were but more serious! Oh that this blind heart were but more enlightened! Oh that this dull heart were but more quickened! Oh my heart, my heart! when wilt thou be better? Oh my God, my God! when shall my heart be better? Oh bring it into a gracious frame, and for ever keep it in a gracious frame! He that thus lamentingly cries out of his heart, he certainly has an honest heart, and will be happy for ever. O Lord, my memory is weak, and my utterance is bad, and my understanding is dark, and my gifts are low, and my affections are flat, and my temptations are strong, and my corruptions are prevalent, Ps. 39:12; but thou, who art the great heart-searcher, thou knowest that I would fain have my heart in a better temper; I had rather have my heart brought into a gracious frame, and kept in a gracious frame, than to have all the riches of the Indies, than to be an emperor, yea, than to be king over all the earth. If it be indeed thus with thee, thou art blessed, and shalt be blessed for ever: 2 Cor. 8:12, 'For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.' I know the apostle speaks this in point of alms, but it is applicable to the case in hand, and to a hundred other cases. God measures his people not by their works, but by their wills. If their wills be to be more holy, humble, heavenly, and to have their hearts always in a most gracious frame, then they are accepted of God; for every good man is as good in the eye of God, in the judgment of God, and in the account of God, as he would be. Not long before famous Mr Baynes died, some friends that were with him in his library, which was an excellent one, fell a-commending of it; 'Ay,' saith he, 'there stand my books, but the Lord knows that for many years last past I have studied my heart more than books. Oh no minister to him, no scholar to him, who studies his heart more than his books;

nor no Christian to him who studies his heart more than his day-books, or more than his shop books, or that studies his heart more than his counting-house, or that studies his heart more than a good bargain, &c. That man is for heaven, and heaven is for that man, who makes it his greatest business in this world to watch his heart, to guard his heart. The hypocrite looks most to externals, but the sincere Christian looks most to internals. The hypocrite's main watch is about his lips, but a sincere Christian's main watch is about his heart. The hypocrite's main work lies without doors, but the sincere Christian's main work lies within doors. All know, that know anything, that both nature and grace begin at the heart, but art begins at the face. A painter doth not begin a picture at the heart; a picture hath but a face, but an outside. And as nature begins at the heart, but art at the face, so grace begins at the heart, but hypocrisy at the face, at the outside of religion. Every man is that really that he is inwardly: 'He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God,' Rom. 2:28, 29. Certainly that man that makes it his great business to watch his heart, and to keep his heart always in a gracious frame, that man is a gracious man. It is true our hearts are like our watches, seldom got to go well; and when they do go well, how hard a work is it to keep them going well! The motions of our watches are not constant; sometimes they go faster, and sometimes they go slower, and often they stand in need of mending. Though in these, and many other respects, our hearts are like our watches, yet if we make it our grand work to keep a constant guard upon our hearts, and our main design in this world to have our hearts brought and kept in a gracious frame, our spiritual estate is good, and we shall be happy for ever, &c.

In my other writings there are variety of special evidences, which the Christian reader, if he please, and if need require, may make use of, in order to the further clearing up of his gracious estate, and therefore let these twenty suffice at this time. And thus much for this chapter, &c.

CHAPTER III

Sound, saving repentance, repentance unto life

Now, in this chapter I shall treat of sound, saving repentance, of repentance unto life; yea, of that evangelical repentance that hath the precious promises of remission of sin and salvation running out unto it. My purpose at this time is not to handle the doctrine of repentance at large, but only to speak so far of it as may speak it out to be evidential of the goodness and happiness of a Christian's spiritual and eternal condition.

Now, before I come to open myself more particularly, give me leave to premise this in the general, viz., that there is a repentance that does accompany salvation: 2 Cor. 7:10, 'For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.' Jer. 4:14, 'O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.' Acts 11:18, 'When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.' Mat. 18:3, 'And Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Acts 3:19, 'Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.'

Having premised thus much in the general, give me now leave to say, That there are three parts of true, sound, saving repentance, unto all which forgiveness of sin is promised. And the

1. First, is contrition or grief of heart for sins committed. Now this is called sometimes godly sorrow, 2 Cor. 7:10; and sometimes a contrite spirit, Isa. 66:2; and sometimes a broken and contrite heart, Ps. 51:17; and sometimes the afflicting of our souls, Lev. 16:29; and sometimes the humbling of the heart, 2 Chron. 7:14, Lam. 3:20; and sometimes a mourning, Zech. 12:10; and sometimes a weeping, Mark 14:72. All repenting sinners are mourning sinners. David repents, and waters his couch with his tears, Ps. 6:6. Hezekiah repents, and humbles himself for the pride of his heart, 2 Chron. 32:26. Ephraim repents, and Ephraim bemoans himself and smites upon his thigh, and is even confounded, Jer. 31:18, 19. Mary Magdalene repents, and weeps, and washes Christ's feet with her tears, Luke 7:38. The Corinthians repented, and they were made sorry after a godly manner, 2 Cor. 7:9. Repentance in the Hebrew is called נחם, an irking of the soul; and in Greek, μεταμέλεια, after-grief, and μετάνοια, after-wit; and in the Latin, pœnitentia; all which do import, that contrition or sorrow for sin is one part of true repentance. Oh the sighs, the groans, the sobs, the tears, that are to be found among repenting sinners, &c. Luther hit the mark when he said, 'What are all the palaces of the world to a contrite heart; yea, heaven and earth, seeing it is the seat of divine majesty? '

2. Secondly, It is very observable, that all mourning persons for their sins, are within the compass of the promise of forgiveness of sins: Zech. 12:11, 'In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo.' Zech. 13:1, 'In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness' Jer. 31:18, 'I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning of himself,' &c. Ver. 20, 'I will surely have mercy on him;' or, as the Hebrew has it, I will, having mercy, have mercy on him. As soon as Ephraim's heart is troubled for his sins, God's bowels are troubled

for Ephraim; as soon as Ephraim, like a penitent child, falls a-weeping at God's foot, God, like a tender indulgent father, falls a-bemoaning of Ephraim. Ephraim could not refrain from tears, and God could not refrain from opening his bowels of mercy towards him. So Isa. 57:15. And how can the contrite heart be indeed revived and cheered without forgiveness of sins, without a pardon in the bosom? Melancthon makes mention of a godly woman, who having upon her deathbed been in much conflict, and afterwards much comforted, brake out into these words: Now, and not till now, did I understand the meaning of these words, 'Thy sins are forgiven.' There is no comfort to that which arises from the sense of forgiveness: Isa. 40:1, 2, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her iniquities are pardoned.' And why is the mourning soul pronounced the blessed soul: Mat. 5:4, 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted:' but because the mourning soul is the pardoned soul?

Quest. But what is that sorrow or mourning for sin, that is a part of true repentance? The resolution of this question is very necessary for the preventing of all soul-deceits and mistakes, and for the quieting, settling, and satisfying of souls truly penitent, and therefore I shall give these eight following answers to it.

[1.] First, It is a sorrow or grief that is spiritual, that is, supernatural. No man is born with godly sorrow in his heart, as he is born with a tongue in his mouth. Godly sorrow is a plant of God's own planting; it is a seed of his own sowing; it is a flower of his own setting; it is of a heavenly offspring; it is from God, and God alone. The spirit of mourning is from above; it is from a supernatural power and principle. There is nothing that can turn a heart of stone into flesh, but the Spirit of God, Ezek. 36:25, 26. Godly sorrow is a gift from

God: Job 23:16, 'God makes my heart soft.' No hand but a divine hand can make the heart soft and tender under the sight and sense of sin. Nature may easily work a man to mourn, and melt, and weep, under worldly losses, crosses, and miseries, as it did David's men, 1 Sam. 30:4; but it must be grace, it must be a supernatural principle, that must work the heart to mourn for sin.

[2.] Secondly, Godly sorrow is a sorrow for sin as sin, it is a mourning rather for sin than for smart; it is not so much for loss of goods, lands, wife, child, credit, name, &c., but for that a holy God is offended, a righteous law violated, Christ dishonoured, the Spirit grieved, and the gospel blemished, &c. Peter's sorrow was godly, but Judas his sorrow was worldly; Peter mourns over the evil of sin, but Judas mourns over the evil of punishment. David mourns over his sin, 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight,' Ps. 51:4. And so 2 Sam. 24:10, 'And David's heart smote him after he had numbered the people; and David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done, and now I beseech thee, O Lord! take away the iniquity of thy servant, for I have done foolishly.' David does not cry out, Take away the threatened famine, but, Take away the iniquity of thy servant; nor he does not cry out, Take away the enemies of thy servant, but, Take away the iniquity of thy servant; nor he does not say, Take away the pestilence from the land, but, Take away the iniquity of thy servant. But now when Pharaoh was under judgments, he never cries to the Lord to take away his sins, his pride, his hardness, his obdurateness, his envy, his malice, his hatred, &c., but he cries out, Take away the judgment, take away the judgment, take away the frogs, take away the lice, take away the caterpillers, &c. But under all these dreadful and amazing judgments that he was under, such a word as this never fell from his lips, Take away my sin, O Lord! take away my sins; thy judgments do terrify me, but my sins will damn me, and therefore whatever becomes of

my life, kingdom, and crown, take away my sins and save my soul. David saw sin to be a greater evil than flying before his enemies, or than famine or pestilence was; and therefore he desires rather to be rid of his sins, than to be rid of the punishment that was due to his sin; but Pharaoh saw no such evil in sin, and therefore he cries out, Take away the plague, take away the plague. And Job upon the dunghill cries out, 'I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men!' Job 7:20. Job does not cry out, Oh, I have lost all my substance, I am bereaved of all my children, I am set as naked upon the dunghill as ever I was born! My friends reproach me, my wife tempts me to curse my God, which is ten thousand times worse than to curse myself; Satan persecutes me, and God has not only forsaken me, but is also become a severe enemy to me, &c. Job cries out of his sin, and not of his sufferings. A deep sense of his sins swallows up as it were all sense of his sufferings.

And so that great apostle Paul does not cry out, O wretched man that I am! that bonds attend me in every place, and that I have neither house nor home to go to, and that I am despised, scorned, reproached, and persecuted, and that I am accounted factious, seditious, rebellious, erroneous, and that I am looked upon as the offscouring of the world, &c. Oh no! but he cries out of his sin: 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?' Rom. 7:23, 24.

So the prophet Micah, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned,' Micah 7:9. Though of all burdens the indignation of the Lord be the greatest burden, yet divine indignation is but a light burden in comparison of sin. A gracious soul can better stand under the burden of God's indignation for sin, than it can stand under the burden of sin itself, which hath kindled that indignation, &c.

[3.] Thirdly, Godly sorrow is a great sorrow, it is a superlative sorrow, it is a sad and serious sorrow. A sincere mourning is a deep mourning, it springs from serious and deep apprehensions of the great anger and deep displeasure of God, and of the woful nature, demerit, burden, bitterness, vileness, and filthiness of sin, &c. The blessed Scripture seems to make godly sorrow a superlative sorrow, calling it a great mourning, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo, and a bitterness, as one is in for his first-born, Zech. 12:10, 11. And so the church, 'My bowels are troubled within me, mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled,' Lament. 1:20. And David watered his couch with his tears, Ps. 6:6. And Mary Magdalene wept much, as well as she loved much, Luke 7. And Peter went out and wept bitterly, Mat. 26:15. Clement observes, that all the time that Peter lived after this great fall, he would every night, when he heard the cock crow, fall upon his knees and weep bitterly. Look, as shallow brooks make the greatest noise, so hypocrites and formalists may howl, and roar, and cry, and make more noise than the true penitent; but yet the sorrow of a true penitent is more inward, secret, solid, still, and deep, Hosea 7:14. As, you know, the deepest rivers run most silently, and make least noise, so the deepest sorrow makes least noise. The mourning of repenting souls, under the apprehensions of their sins, is like the mourning of doves; but the mourning of wicked men under the apprehension of their sins, is like the bellowing of bulls and roaring of bears, Ezek. 7:16; Isa. 51:20, 59:11.

[4.] Fourthly, A sincere mourning is an extensive mourning, it is an universal mourning. Godly sorrow and grief extends itself, not only to some sins, but to all sins, great and small. Look, as a holy heart hates all sin, so a holy heart mourns over all sin that it sees and knows to be sin. God hates one sin as well as another, and he has forbid one sin as well as another, and he has revealed his wrath from

heaven against one sin as well as another, and he is provoked by one sin as well as another, and Christ is crucified by one sin as well as another, and the Spirit is grieved as well by one sin as by another, and the gospel is reproached by one sin as well as another, and the conscience is wounded by one sin as well as another, and Satan is gratified by one sin as well as another, and wicked men's mouths are opened by one sin as well as another, and young comers on in religion are stumbled, grieved, and offended by one sin as well as another, and the soul is endangered by one sin as well as another. An unsound heart may mourn for great sins, that make great wounds in his conscience and credit, and that leave a great blot upon his name, or that waste or rot his body, or destroy his estate, or that expose him to public scorn and shame, &c., but for sins of omission, for wandering thoughts, idle words, deadness, coldness, slightness in religious duties and services, unbelief, secret pride, self-confidence, and a thousand more, such gnats as these he can swallow without any remorse, Prov. 5:8–14.

But now godly sorrow is of a general extent, it mourns as well for small sins as for great. David's heart smote him, as well for cutting off the lap of Saul's garment, as it did for killing of Uriah with the sword. A gracious soul weeps over many sins that none can charge upon him but God and his own conscience: Ps. 19:12, 'Oh cleanse thou me from secret faults.'

Yea, let me say that godly sorrow and grief extends not only to a man's own sins, but also to the sins of others as well as his own, Ezek. 9:4, 5. And this you may see also in David, Ps. 119:53, 136, 158; and in Jeremiah, Jer. 9:1–3; and in Paul, Philip. 3:18; and in Lot, 2 Peter 2:7, 8. And if you please to turn to my treatise on holiness, you may see seven special arguments for this their practice, page 139 to page 145, and therefore a touch in this place may suffice.

[5.] Fifthly, Godly sorrow is a lasting sorrow, it is a durable sorrow. As long as a Christian continues sinning, he cannot but continue mourning. David's sins were always before him, Ps. 51:3, though his Absalom nor his Bathsheba were not ever before him. Godly sorrow will every day follow sin hard at heels. Look, as a wicked man, in respect of his desire and will to sin, would sin for ever, if he should live for ever; so I may say, if a godly man should live for ever, he would sorrow for ever. After Paul had been converted many years, some think fourteen, you shall find him a-mourning and lamenting over his sins, Rom. 7. An ingenuous child will never cease mourning, till he ceases from offending an indulgent father. Though sin and godly sorrow were never born together, yet whilst a believer lives in this world, they must live together. And indeed holy joy and godly sorrow are no ways inconsistent, Ps. 2:11; yea, a godly man's eyes are always fullest of tears, when his heart is fullest of holy joy, &c. A man may go joying and mourning to his grave, yea, to heaven, at the same time.

But now the sorrow, the grief of wicked men for sin, it is like a morning cloud, or the early dew, or the crackling of thorns under a pot, or a post that quickly passeth by, or a dream that soon vanisheth, or like a tale that is told, &c., their sorrowful hearts and mournful eyes soon dry up together, as you may see in Esau, Ahab, Pharaoh, and Judas; but the streams of godly sorrow will last and run as long as sin hangs upon us, and dwells in us: 1 Cor. 15:9, 'I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.' Ps. 25:7, 'Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions.' David prayeth to the Lord, not only to forgive, but also to forget, both the sins of his youth and the sins of his age. David remembered all his faults, both of former and of later times. David was well in years when he defiled himself with Bathsheba; and this he remembers and mourns over, Ps. 51.

And it is very observable, that God charged his people for to remember old sins: Deut. 9:7, 'Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness.' Repentance is a grace, and must have its daily operation as well as other graces; witness the very covenant of grace itself: Ezek. 16:62, 63, 'I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done.' Certainly a true penitent can no more satisfy himself with one act of repentance, than he can satisfy himself with one act of faith, or with one act of hope, or with one act of love, or with one act of humility, or with one act of patience, or with one act of self-denial. Godly sorrow is a gospel grace that will live and last as well and as long as other graces; it is a spring that in this life can never be drawn dry.

[6.] Sixthly, Godly sorrow is a divorcing sorrow; it divorces the heart from sin, it breaks that ancient league that has been between the heart and sin. There is a strong firm league between every sinner and his sin, Isa. 28:15, 18; but when godly sorrow enters, it dissolves that league, it separates between a sinner and his sin, it sets the soul at an everlasting distance from sin. The union between the root and the branches, the foundation and the building, the head and the members, the father and the child, the husband and the wife, the body and the soul, are all near, very near unions; yet, that between a sinner and his sin seems to be a nearer union, Observable is the story of Phaltiel. You know when David had married Michal, Saul injuriously gave her to another; but when David came to the crown, and sent forth his royal commands that his wife should be brought to him, her husband dares not but obey, brings her on her journey, and then not without great reluctancy of spirit takes his leave of her, 2 Sam. 3:14–16. But what, was Phaltiel weary of his wife, that he now

forsakes her? Oh no, he was enforced, and though she was gone, yet he had many a sad thought about parting with her, and he never leaves looking till he sees her as far as Bahurim, weeping and bemoaning her absence. Just thus stands the heart of every unregenerate man towards his sins, as Phaltiel's heart stood towards his wife. But when the springs of godly sorrow rise in the soul, the league, the friendship, the union that was between the sinner and his sins, comes to be dissolved and broken in pieces, Hosea 14:8. All godly sorrow sets the heart against sin. He that divinely mourns over sin, cannot live in a course of sin. When of all bitters God makes sin to be the greatest bitter to the soul, then the soul bids an everlasting farewell to sin; now the soul in good earnest bids adieu to sin for ever, O sirs! this is a most certain maxim, to live and die with, that either a man's sins will make an end of his mourning, or else his mourning will make an end of his sin; for he that holds on sinning, will certainly leave off mourning. No man can make a trade of sin, and yet keep his heart in a mourning frame. But he that holds on mourning for sin, will certainly leave off the trade of sin. Holy grief for sin will sooner or later break off all leagues and friendships with sin. As sin makes a separation between God and a man's soul, so godly sorrow makes a separation between a man's soul and his sin, Isa. 59:1, 2. All holy mournings over sin will by degrees issue in the wasting and weakening of the strength and power of sin; nothing below the death and destruction of sin will satisfy that soul that truly mourns over sin.

But now, though you may find an unsound heart sometimes a-lamenting over his sins, yet you shall never find him a-leaving of his sins. Pharaoh lamented over his sin, crying out, 'I have sinned, the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.' And again, 'Then Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron in haste, and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you,' Exod. 9:27,

10:16. But though you find him here lamenting and complaining over his sin, yet you never find him leaving or forsaking of his sin. So Saul could cry out, he had sinned, but yet he still continued in his sin; he acknowledged that he did evil in persecuting of David, and yet he still held on persecuting of him. An unsound heart mourns over sin, and yet he holds on in a course of sin; he sins and mourns, and mourns and sins, and commonly all his mourning for sin does but the more embolden him in a way of sin; but the gracious soul says with Job, 'If I have done iniquity, I will do it no more,' Job 34:32. He laments over sin and leaves it; he confesses it, and forsakes it, and he is as willing to forego it as he is willing that God should forgive it.

[7.] Seventhly, All,—and if you please I shall give you many things in one,—godly sorrow is the fruit and effect of evangelical faith. It flows from faith as the stream from the fountain, the branch from the root, and the effect from the cause: Zech. 12:10, 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.' Look, as all legal sorrow flows from a legal faith, as you may see in Ahab's and the Ninevites, so all evangelical sorrow flows from an evangelical faith: 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn.' All gracious mourning flows from looking, from believing. Nothing breaks the heart of a sinner like a look of faith. All tears of godly sorrow drop from the eye of faith. Godly sorrow rises and falls, as faith rises and falls. Faith and godly sorrow are like the fountain and the flood, which rise and fall together. The more a man is able by faith to look upon a pierced Christ, the more his heart will mourn over all the dishonours that he has done to Christ. The more deep and wide the wounds are that faith shews me in the heart and sides of Christ, the more my heart will be wounded for sinning against Christ.

Again, godly sorrow is not an enemy, but a friend to holy joy. I have read of a holy man, who lying upon his sick-bed, and being asked which were his joyfullest days that ever he had, cried out, 'Oh give me my mourning days, give me my mourning days again, for they were the joyfullest days that ever I had.' The higher the springs of godly sorrow rise, the higher the tides of holy joy rise. His graces will flourish most, who evangelically mourns most. Grace always thrives best in that garden, that heart, that is watered most with the tears of godly sorrow. He that grieves most for sin, will rejoice most in God; and he that rejoices most in God, will grieve most for sin.

Again, the more a man apprehends of the love of God, and of the love of Christ, and the more a man tastes and is assured of the love of the Father, and of the love of the Son, the more that person will grieve and mourn that he has offended, provoked, and grieved such a Father, and such a Son. Remember this, as a man's assurance of peace and reconciliation with God rises, so his grief for sin rises. The more clear and certain evidences a man has of the love and favour of God to his soul, the more that man will grieve and mourn for sinning against such a God. There is nothing that thaws and melts the heart, that softens and breaks the heart, like the warm beams of divine love; as you may see in the case of Mary Magdalene, Luke 7; she loved much, and she wept much, for much was forgiven her. A sight of the free grace and love of Christ towards her, in an act of forgiveness, broke her heart all in pieces. A man cannot stand under the shinings of divine love with a frozen heart, nor yet with dry eyes. The more a man sees of the love of Christ, and the more a man tastes and enjoys of the love of Christ, the more that man will grieve and mourn for all the dishonours that he has done to Christ. The more an ingenuous child sees, and tastes, and enjoys of his father's love, the more he grieves and mourns that ever he should offend such a father, or provoke such a father, who has been so loving and indulgent towards

him. Injuries done to a friend cut deep, and the more near, and dear, and beloved a man's friend is to him, the more a man is afflicted and troubled for any wrongs or injuries that are done to him; and just so it is between God and a gracious soul.

The free love and favour of God, and his unspeakable goodness and mercy manifested in Jesus Christ to poor sinners, is the very spring and fountain of all evangelical sorrow. Nothing breaks the heart of a poor sinner like the sight of God's free love in a redeemer. A man cannot seriously look upon the firstness, the freeness, the greatness, the unchangeableness, the everlastingness, and the matchlessness of God's free favour and love in Christ, with a hard heart, or with dry eyes: Ezek. 36:31, compared with verses 25, 26. Oh! who is there that has but one spark of ingenuity, that can read over that heart-breaking scripture with dry eyes? Isa. 43:22–24, 'But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices: I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities,' see Isa. 57:17–19. Now a man would think, after all this horrid abuse put upon God, this would certainly follow; therefore I will plague and punish thee; therefore my wrath shall smoke against thee; therefore my soul shall abhor thee; therefore I will shut up my loving-kindness in displeasure against thee; therefore I will shew no more mercy towards thee; therefore I will hide my face for ever from thee; therefore I will take vengeance on thee; therefore I will rain hell out of heaven upon thee, &c. Oh! but read and wonder, read and admire, read and stand amazed and astonished, read and refrain from tears if thou canst: ver. 25, 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy

transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.' The prophet's expression in that Zech. 12:10 is very observable, 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only son.' Now it is observable in a father's mourning for an only son, there is nothing but pure love, sincere love, hearty love; but in a son's mourning for his father, there may be, and often is a great deal of self-love, self-respect, because the child may run and read in his father's death, his own loss, his own ruin, his own undoing; but in the father's mourning for an only son, a man may run and read the integrity, purity, and ingenuity of the father's love; and it is only such a love as this as sets the soul a-mourning and a-lamenting over a crucified Christ, The thoughts and fears of wrath, of hell, and of condemnation, works unsound hearts to mourn; but it is the sight of a bleeding, dying Saviour that sets ingenuous, gracious souls a-mourning.

[8.] Eighthly, and lastly, Godly sorrow, grief, or mourning, may be known by the inseparable concomitants or companions that attend it and wait on it, 2 Cor. 7:11; and they are these seven:

First, 'What carefulness' or study; the word σπουδή notes the serious intension of the mind, and the diligence and dexterity of the soul in shunning and avoiding sin, and arming of the soul against all occasions and temptations thereunto. The great care of the repenting soul is to leave all sin, to shake off all sin, to avoid all sin, and to weaken and subdue, and bring under all sin. Oh! the care, the caution, the circumspection, the vigilancy, the strivings and the strugglings of the repenting soul against temptations and corruptions.

Secondly, Yea, 'what clearing of yourselves,' ἀπολογία, apology or defence; which is not done either by denying of sin, or by excusing of

sin committed, but by confession of sin, and disliking of sin, and bewailing of sin, and by walking quite cross and contrary to the sin confessed, disliked, and bewailed; as Zaccheus did, Luke 19:8; and as the jailor did, Acts 16:13. The true penitent has no ways to clear himself, but by arraigning, judging, and condemning of himself: 1 Cor. 11:31, 'For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.' When men judge themselves, and condemn themselves, God is prevented, and the devil defeated, as having nothing to say against them but what they have said before. When men acknowledge their sins, and aggravate their sins, and pass the sentence of condemnation upon themselves for their sins, they shall find their acquittance from them fairly drawn in the blood of Christ. Repentance for sin takes off the guilt of sin, and sin bewailed is as if it had never been committed; and this becomes the soul's apology, Ezek. 18:21, 22.

Thirdly, 'Yea, what indignation,' or stomach, ἀγανάκτησις, wrath unto grief. It notes the very rising of the stomach with rage, and a being angry unto fretting, fuming, and sickness. Again, it notes the very height of anger and rage. The true penitent is not so exceeding angry with himself for anything, as he is angry with himself for his sins. Indignation here imports the turning of all the passions of the soul wholly against sin. There are no men in the world so hot and angry against themselves for their sins as penitents are. Witness those that polluted the idols that they had perfumed, Isa. 30:22; witness David, Ps. 73:22; witness Ephraim, Hosea 14:8; and witness Paul, Rom. 7:22, 23. There are none that fret, and fume, and chafe at themselves for sin, as penitent souls do; there are none that loathe themselves, that abhor themselves, and that are weary of themselves, upon the account of their sins, like penitent souls. It is not this thing nor that, nor this enemy nor that, nor this party nor that, nor this design nor that; but sin that is the main, the grand object of a

penitent's hatred, scorn, wrath, rage, reproach, disgrace, and contempt, &c. He that would be angry and sin not, must be angry at nothing but sin. If some men would but spend more of their anger and indignation against their sins, they would not be so angry as they are with their brethren, that in disputable things differ from them.

Fourthly, 'Yea, what fear' of God's displeasure, and of doing any more so wickedly before the Lord. Penitent souls are of all souls the most trembling souls, the most timorous souls: Prov. 28:14, 'Blessed is the man that feareth always.' The penitent Christian has still a jealous eye upon his own heart, words, and ways. He is very apt to suspect a snake under every flower, and to fear a snare in every creature-comfort. The burnt child dreads the fire. He that has been once stung hates a snake; he that has been in danger of drowning, trembles at the thoughts of going by water; and he that has once broke his leg, rides and walks with a fear of diligence and vigilancy all his life after. I have read of the dove, that she is afraid of every feather that hath grown upon a hawk; the very sight of any of the hawk's feathers brings as much terror upon her as if she had seen the hawk herself. Such a native dread is, it seems, implanted in her, that it detests and abhors the very sight of any such feather. In every penitent, God implants such a holy fear, such a filial fear, such a reverential fear, such a fear of diligence and vigilancy, that the penitent Christian's heart rises, detests and abhors, not only gross sins, but the least motions, inclinations, and temptations to sin. They that have paid dear for past guilt, that have known what an aching heart, a wounded conscience, and a bleeding soul means; that have experienced what the frowns of God, the threatenings of God, and the wrath of God means, will certainly beware of sin, watch and war against it, and fear to fall into it.

Fifthly, 'Yea, what vehement desire,' Επιπόθησις. It signifies such a desire of fervency that can admit of no delay; it notes such a desire as produces diligence, activity, and industry. The true penitent is full of fervent and vehement desires to be rid of his sins. Rachel was never more vehement and fervent in her desires after children, nor David after the water of the well Bethlehem, nor the hunted hart after the water-brooks, nor the betrothed virgin for her marriage-day, nor the apprentice for his freedom, nor the captive for his ransom, nor the soldier for the conquest, nor the sick man for his cure, nor the condemned man for his pardon, than the true penitent is vehement and fervent in his desires to have his lusts subdued, mortified, and destroyed, Rom. 7:22–24. Many a day have I sought death with tears, said blessed Cowper, not out of distrust, impatience, or perturbation, but because I am weary of sin, and fearful of falling into it. If you ask the penitent, Why do you hear, pray, read, and apply yourself so seriously, so frequently, so unweariedly, and so constantly to all sin-subduing ministrations? he will tell you, it is out of a vehement and fervent desire that he has to be rid of his sins. If you ask him again, why he is so much in complaining against sin, in mourning over sin, and in warring against sin? &c., he will tell you, out of a vehement and earnest desire that he has to be fully and finally delivered from sin.

Sixthly, 'Yea, what zeal.' Zeal is an extreme heat of all the affections set against sin, and working strongly towards God. David's zeal did eat up his sin as well as himself. And Paul was as zealous in propagating the gospel, as he had been furious in persecuting of it. Many men's zeal is hot and burning, when scorns and reproaches are cast upon them; but the penitent man's zeal is most hot and burning, when religion is scorned, saints persecuted, truth endangered, and the great and dreadful name of God blasphemed, &c. The zeal of a true penitent will carry him on in a course of godliness, and in a

course of mortification, in spite of all the diversions and oppositions that the world, the flesh, and the devil can make. Holy zeal is a fire that will make its way through all things that stands between God and the soul. The true penitent is unchangeably resolved to be rid of his sins, whatever it cost him. Whoever escapes, whoever lives, he is fully determined his lusts shall die for it. Only remember this, though zeal should eat up our sins, yet it must not eat up our wisdom, no more than policy should eat up our zeal.

Seventhly, 'Yea, what revenge.' The true penitent revenges himself upon himself for his sins, not by whips and scourges, as the papists do, but by buffeting the flesh, and bringing it into subjection by fasting and prayer, and by crossing of his lusts, and loading of them with chains, and by drawing the sword of mortification against them, and by withholding from them that fuel that might feed them, and by the use of all other holy exercises, whereby the old man, the body of sin and death, may be subdued to the obedience and discipline of the Spirit of God. Holy revenge will shew itself by contradicting of corrupt self, and by a severe chastising and punishing of all those instruments that have been servants to the flesh; as you may see by the daughters of Israel in dedicating their looking-glasses, by which they had offended, to the service of the sanctuary, Exod. 38:8; and as you may see by the Ephesians' burning of their costly and curious books before all men, Acts 19:19; and by Mary Magdalene's wiping of Christ's feet with her hair, wherewith formerly her fond and foolish lovers were enticed and entangled, Luke 7. And the same spirit you may see working in Zaccheus, Luke 19:8, 9; and in the jailor, Acts 16:23–34. And so blessed Cranmer thrust his right hand first into the fire, that being the hand by which he subscribed the popish articles, revengefully crying out, 'This unworthy right hand, this unworthy right hand,' as long as he could speak. The common language of holy revenge is this: Lord, pour out all thy wrath, and all thy fierce anger,

and all thy fiery indignation, upon this lust and that lust; Lord, bend thy bow, and shoot all the arrows of thy displeasure, into the very heart of my strong corruptions; Lord, when wilt thou rain hell out of heaven upon this proud heart, this unbelieving heart, this unclean heart, this worldly heart, this froward heart, this treacherous heart of mine, &c. I have read of Hannibal, that when he saw a pit full of the blood of his enemies, he cried out with much content and delight, Oh beautiful sight! So when a penitent Christian sees his spiritual enemies, his strong corruptions, all in a gore-blood, oh how delightfully and rejoicingly does he cry out, Oh beautiful sight! Oh blessed sight, that ever I have seen! When the children of Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore, then they sang a song of praise, Exod. 15. The application is easy. O sirs! let no man deceive his own immortal soul; for it is most certain, that repentance to life hath all these lively companions attending of it. Sound repentance, and the companions of it, are born together, and will live and continue together till the penitent soul changes earth for heaven, grace for glory. And let this much suffice for the first part of true repentance, &c.

2. The second part of true repentance lies in confession of sin, which flows out of a contrite heart. I mean, not a bare, formal, empty confession, such as is common amongst the worst of sinners, as that we are all sinners, and stand in need of a Saviour, God help us! God be merciful unto us! &c.; but of such a confession of sin as ariseth from a true sight and full sense of sin, and from the due apprehensions of a righteous law that is transgressed, and a holy God that is provoked, &c. When tongue and heart goes together; when the tongue speaks out of the abundance of the heart; when the tongue is the faithful interpreter of the heart, freely, ingenuously and humbly acknowledging iniquity, transgression, and sin; and the penitent

judging himself worthy of death, of wrath, of hell, and unworthy of the least mercy and favour from God, &c.

Now such a confession as this is you shall find in repenting sinners; and if you look again, you shall find those persons so confessing, to be under the capacity of the promise of the forgiveness of their sins, &c.

[1.] First, You shall find repenting sinners confessing their sins: Ezra 9:6, 'O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face unto thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.' Ver. 10, 'And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments,' &c. Ps. 51:3, 'I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.' Ver. 4, 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.' Dan. 9:4, 5, 'I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, &c.; we have sinned and committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments,' &c. Ver. 8, 'O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day.' Luke 15:18, 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee;' ver. 19, 'And am no more worthy to be called thy son,' &c. 1 Cor. 15:9, 'For I am the least of all the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.' 1 Tim. 1:13, 'Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious,' &c. Isa. 53:6, 'All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.' I might easily produce a hundred other scriptures to prove that repenting sinners are confessing sinners, but let these suffice, &c.

[2.] Secondly, If you please to cast your eyes upon other scriptures, you shall find these penitent confessing sinners to be expressly under the promises of the forgiveness of sins: 1 John 1:9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' Ps. 32:5, 'I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.' Lev. 26:40–42, 'If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; and that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember.' Jer. 3:12, 13, 'Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord. Only acknowledge thine iniquity.' And observable is that prayer of Solomon, 1 Kings 8:47–50, 'If they shall bethink themselves, and repent, and make supplication to thee, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; then hear thou their prayer, and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee.'

Quest. But what are the properties or qualifications of true penitential confession of sin?

Ans. They are these eight that follow.

(1.) First, It is free, it is voluntary not forced, not extorted. Nehemiah, Ezra, Job, David, Daniel, Paul, &c., were free and voluntary in the confession of their sins, as all know that have but read the Scripture. The true penitent confesses his sins with much candour, ingenuity,

and freedom of spirit. He is as free in his confession of sin, as he has been free in the commission of sin. His confessions are like water which runs out of a spring with a voluntary freeness, but the confessions of wicked men are like water that is forced out of a still with fire. Their confessions are forced and extracted merely from sense of pain and smart, or from fear of punishments, &c. Pharaoh never confessed his sin till God brought him to the rack, nor Saul till he was in danger of losing his crown and kingdom, nor Balaam till he sees the angel stand with his drawn sword ready to slay him, nor Judas till horror of conscience and the pangs of hell had surprised him, and taken fast hold on him.2 Wicked men cast out their sins by confession, as mariners do their wares in a storm, wishing for them again in a calm. The confessions of wicked men are commonly extorted or squeezed out, either by some outward trouble, or by some inward distress; but penitential confession is free and ingenuous, arising from an inward detestation of sin, and from the contrariety of the heart to sin; and, therefore, were there no rod, no rack, no wrath, no hell, the true penitent would very freely and readily confess his sins. When God is most free in bestowing of mercies, then are they most free in confessing their iniquities, Hosea 14:1–4. Look, as that is the best wine that flows from the grape with least pressing, and as that is the best honey which drops from the honeycomb without crushing; so those are the best confessions that flow, that drop freely, voluntarily from the soul, &c.

(2.) Secondly, True penitential confession is full as well as free. That confession is not sincere that is not full, Lam. 1:18, 19. God loves neither halting nor mincing confessions. These undid the pharisee, Luke 18:11. As penitential confessions are not extorted, so they are not straitened. Sin must be confessed in its particular species and parts; all known sins must be confessed fully, plainly, particularly, as you may see by turning to these scriptures, Lev. 26:40–42, and

19:21; Judges 10:10; Ps. 51; 1 Sam. 12:19; 1 Tim. 1:13; Acts 26:10, 11; Dan. 9:5–17; Lev. 16:21, 22, &c. Some there be that deny their sins, with the harlot: Prov. 30:20, 'Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.' And others there be that father their sins on others, as Adam did, Gen. 3:12; and as Eve did, ver. 13; and as Aaron did, Exod. 32:22; and as Saul did, 1 Sam. 15:22. And many there are that hide their wickedness, that conceal their wickedness, as that proud pharisee did, Luke 18:11, 12. That expression of the prophet Hosea, chap. 10:13, 'You have ploughed wickedness,' is rendered by the Septuagint, 'You have concealed wickedness;' and, indeed, there is nothing more common to a wicked heart, than to keep close his sin, than to cover and hide his transgressions. And, certainly, this is that sore disease that our first parents were sick to death of, almost six thousand years ago; and, therefore, it is no wonder if we are all infected with it. Man by nature is a vain-glorious creature, apt to boast and brag of the sins that he is free of, but unwilling to confess the sins that he is guilty of. There are no men so prone to conceal their own wickedness, as those that are most forward to proclaim their own goodness. There are many that are not ashamed to act sin, who yet are ashamed to confess sin; but certainly of all shame, that is the most shameful shame, that leads a man to hide his sins. But now the true penitent, he makes conscience of confessing small sins as well as great sins, secret sins as well as open sins, Ps. 90:8, 19:12. David confesses not only his great sins of murder and adultery, but he confesses also his self-revenge intended against Nabal, and of his knife being so near Saul's throat, when he cut off the lap of Saul's garment. A true penitent is much in confessing and lamenting over that secret pride, that secret fleshliness, that secret worldliness, that secret hypocrisy, that secret vain glory, &c., that is only obvious to God and his own soul. But it is quite otherwise with wicked men; for they confess their grosser sins, but never observe their lesser sins;

they confess their open sins, but never lay open their secret sins. Cain confesses the murdering of his brother, but never confesses his secret enmity, that put him upon washing his hands in his brother's blood. Pharaoh confesses his oppression of the children of Israel, but he does not confess the pride of his heart, nor the hardness of his heart. Judas confesses his betraying of innocent blood, but he never confesses his covetousness, that put him upon betraying of the Lord of glory. And others have confessed their apostasy, who have never confessed their hypocrisy that hath led them to apostasy, &c. Well, this is certain, that those little sins, those secret sins, that never break a sinner's sleep, do often break a believer's heart.

(3.) Thirdly, As true penitential confession is full, so it is sincere, it is cordial; it is not a feigned, nor a formal, nor a mere verbal confession, but an affectionate confession. It is a confession that has the mind, the heart, the soul, as well as the lip in it. The penitent man's confession springs from inward impressions of grace upon his soul, he feels what he confesses, and his affections go along with his confessions. The poor publican smote upon his breast and confessed. Look, as the sick man opens his disease to his physician, feelingly, affectionately; and as the client opens his case to his lawyer, feelingly, affectionately; so the penitent opens his case, his heart to God, feelingly, affectionately. Cold, careless, verbal, formal, customary confessions are no small abominations in the eye of God, Jer. 12:2. Such men's confessions will be their condemnation at last, their tongues will one day cut their throats. Though confession to men is a work of the voice, yet confession to God must be the voice of the heart. Sometimes the heart alone is sufficient without the voice, as you may see in Hannah, 1 Sam. 1:13–15; but the voice is never sufficient without the heart, as you may see in that Isa. 29:13. Such who make confession of sin to be only a lip labour, such, instead of offering the calves of their lips as the prophet requires, Hosea 14:2,

do but offer the lips of calves! Heart-confessions, without words, shall be effectual with God, and carry the day in heaven, when all formal, verbal confessions, though they are never so eloquent or excellent, shall be cast as dung in sinners' faces, Isa. 1:12–16. Mary Magdalene weeps, and sighs, and sobs, but speaks never a word, Luke 7:38; and yet by her heart-confessions she carries it with Christ, as is evident by his answer to her: Luke 7:48, 'He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven thee.' Penitent souls confess sins feelingly, but wicked men's confessions make no impression upon them; their confessions run through them as water runs through a pipe, without leaving any impression at all upon the pipe. Wicked men do no more taste nor relish the evil of sin, the poison of sin, the bitterness of sin in any of their confessions, than the pipe does taste or relish the water that runs through it. Such who confess sin formally, or rhetorically, and yet love sin dearly, heartily, shall never get good by their confessions. Certainly such confessions will never reach the heart of God, that do not reach our own hearts; nor such confessions will never affect the heart of God, that do not first affect our own hearts. Such as speak very ill of sin with their tongues, and yet secretly wish well to sin in their hearts, will be found at last of all men the most miserablest. But,

(4.) Fourthly, As penitential confession is sincere and cordial, so it is distinct and not confused. The true penitent has his particular and special bills of indictment, he knows his sins of omission, and his sins of commission; he remembers the sins that he hath most rejoiced and delighted in; he cannot forget the sins that have had most of his eye, his ear, his head, his hand, his heart; the by-paths in which he has most walked, and the transgressions by which God has been most dishonoured, his conscience most wounded, and his corrupt nature most pleased and gratified, are always before him, Ezra 10:3. An implicit confession is almost as bad as an implicit

faith; wicked men commonly confess their sins by wholesale, We are all sinners; but the true penitent confesses his sins by retail, Ps. 51:3. Though it cannot be denied but that in some cases a general confession may be penitent, as you see in the publican, 'God me merciful to me a sinner,' Luke 18:13; yet it must be granted that a true penitent cannot content nor satisfy himself with a general confession. And therefore David confesses his particular sins of adultery and blood-guiltiness, and Paul particularizeth his sins of blasphemy, and persecution, and injuriousness against the saints, 1 Tim. 1:13. And more you have of this in that Acts 26:10, 11, 'Which thing I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them; and I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.' So Judges 10:10, 'And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.' 'We have sinned,' there is their general confession; 'we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim,' there is their distinct and particular confession, both of their apostasy and idolatry. And so 1 Sam. 12:19, 'And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not, for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.' They were discontented with that government that the Lord had set over them, and they would need be governed by a king, after the mode of other nations; and this sin they confess distinctly and particularly before the Lord and Samuel. And so David, in that 1 Chron. 21:17, 'And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? Even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but as for these sheep, what have they done?' Thus that princely prophet confesses that particular sin that he then lay under the guilt of. And so Zaccheus makes a particular confession; he does

as it were point with his finger at that wrong and injustice that he had been guilty of: 'Behold, Lord, half my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.' Thus you see that true penitents make a particular confession of their right-eye sins, and of their right-hand sins; and indeed, what is confession of sin but a setting our sins in order before the Lord? And how can this be done but by a distinct and particular enumeration of them? But to prevent mistakes, this must be taken with a grain of salt, this must be understood with this limitation; we are to confess our sins distinctly, particularly, so far as we know them, so far as we are acquainted with them. There are many thousand sins which we commit that we know not to be sins, and there are many thousand sins committed by us that cannot be remembered by us. Now certainly it is impossible for us to recount or confess those sins that we know not, that we remember not; so that our particular confessions can only reach to known sins, so far as we can call them to mind; for indeed our particular acts of sin are innumerable; they are 'more in number than the hairs of our head;' and indeed we are as well able to tell the stars of heaven, and to number the sands of the sea, and to recount all the sparing mercies, the pitying mercies, the preventing mercies, the succouring mercies, the supporting mercies, and the delivering mercies of God, as we are able to tell, to number, to recount, the individual particular acts of sin that we are guilty of; yet so far as the knowledge and memory of a penitent Christian reaches, so far his confession reaches. But now, wicked men confess sin in the general, in the lump; as Pharaoh, 'I have sinned;' and their confessions are commonly confused, and at random. When and where do you find wicked men confessing their sins distinctly or particularly before God or man? This is none of the least of their miseries, that they have not a clear, distinct, particular view of their own corruptions and abominations. But,

(5.) Fifthly, The true penitent does not only distinctly and particularly confess his sins, but he does very highly aggravate his sins, by confessing not only the kinds and acts, so far as he knows and remembers them, but the circumstances of them also, Ps. 32:5, Lev. 16:21. There are sometimes some circumstances that may somewhat lessen a penitent man's sins. Now these he readily and easily passes over. But then there are other circumstances which do exceedingly heighten and aggravate his sins, and that makes them more heinous and dangerous; and these he carefully and faithfully acknowledges. The penitential confessions recorded in the Old and New Testament are full of exaggeating expressions, as is evident in these instances: Ezra at once heightens and aggravates their sins by this circumstance, that they had been committed against manifold experiments that they had had both of the severity and also the mercy of the Lord, Ezra 9; and so does Nehemiah also, Neh. 9. The like instance you have in Daniel, chap. 9:5, 6, 'We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments; neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.' In these words you have seven circumstances that Daniel useth in confessing of his and the people's sins, and all to heighten and to aggravate them. First, 'We have sinned;' secondly, 'We have committed iniquity;' thirdly, 'We have done wickedly; fourthly, 'We have rebelled against thee; fifthly, 'We have departed from thy precepts; sixthly, 'We have not hearkened unto thy servants; seventhly, 'Nor our princes, nor all the people of the land.' These seven aggravations which Daniel reckons up in his confession, are worthy of our most serious consideration. The same spirit you may find working in Peter: Mark 14:72, 'When he thought thereon he wept;' or nearer the original, 'When he cast all these things one upon another, he wept.' Ah wretch! that ever I was born,

that ever I should deny the Lord that bought me; that ever I should deny him who hath not only externally, but also internally, called me; that ever I should deny him that made me an apostle, that fed me at his table, that beautified me with his grace, and that in the mount shewed me some glimpses of his glory; that ever I should deny him who has brought me out of a state of death and wrath, into a state of life and love; that ever I should deny him that has been the best, the wisest, the holiest, the tenderest, the faithfullest, and the noblest master that ever man served. Ah wretch that I am! he forewarned me of this sin beforehand, that I might be not only cautioned but armed against it, and yet I denied him. I promised him beforehand, that I would never deny him, that I would never forsake him, that I would never turn my back upon him, and yet like a base coward, I have denied the Captain of my salvation; yea, this very night, and no longer ago, did I say again and again, that I would not deny him, and yet now, even now, I have most shamefully denied him; yea, I told him, that though all others should deny him, yet would not I deny him, and yet in all the world there is not such another to be found, that has so sadly, so desperately denied him, as I have denied him, and that before a silly maid; nay, more beast that I am! to my denying of him, I have added a most incredible lie, saying, I know not the man, when there was not a man in all the world that I was so well acquainted with as I was with Christ, feeding constantly at his table, and drinking constantly of his cup, and living constantly upon his purse, and waiting constantly upon his person, and being a constant eye-witness of all the famous miracles that were wrought by him; nay, yet more monster that I am, I did not only lie, but I also bound that lie with a hideous oath; I did not only say that I knew not the man, but I also swore that I knew not the man; nay, yet more than all this, I did not only basely deny him, I did not only tell an incredible lie against my own light and conscience, I did not only bind a fearful lie with a hideous oath, but I also fell a-cursing and

damning of myself:—for so much the Greek word αναθεματίζειν imports;—I wished that the curse, the wrath, or vengeance of God might fall upon me if I knew the man, I wished myself separated from the presence and glory of God if I knew the man; and woe and alas to me! all this I did when my Lord and Master was near me, yea, when he was upon his trial; yea, and yet more, when all the world had forsaken him; yea, and yet more, when I had the greatest and loudest call that ever I had to have stood by him, and to have given my testimony for him. And thus Peter, casting up all these circumstances and aggravations together, and meditating seriously on them, 'he went out and wept bitterly.' Another famous instance of this you have in Paul, Acts 26:10, 11. In these two verses the apostle lays down no less than eight aggravations of his sins, and all to greaten and heighten them, that his soul might be the more ashamed and humbled in him, &c.

First, That they were not the worst, but the best of men, viz., saints; that they were not sinners but saints; that they were not drunkards, swearers, adulterers, murderers, oppressors, Sabbath-breakers, but saints; saints by calling, saints by their high and holy calling, saints by profession, saints by a gospel-conversation. 'The saints have I cast into prison.'

Secondly, To cast a man into prison for theft, for murder, for perjury, is no iniquity. Ay, but says he, many have I cast into prison for 'professing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.' Oh! it is dreadful to persecute men merely for professing of Christ! and yet this I did. Though their profession and practice went together; though they lived as they professed; though I had nothing against them, but in the matters of their God, yet upon that very single account I did persecute them.

Thirdly, If it had been been but one, or two, or three, or five, or ten saints that I had persecuted, the matter had not been much. Oh! but they were a great number; 'many of the saints did I cast into prison.' I have been a cruel ravening wolf, that have sucked the blood, not of a few, but of many of the precious lambs of Christ; I have neither spared nor pitied any sex, but have broken into every house, haling and dragging both men and women to prison. Acts 8:3, 'As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison.'

Fourthly, Though he had cast them into prison, yet if he had given them but some liberty in a prison, as Joseph had, and as others have had, and as himself once had when he begot Onesimus in his bonds, Philem. 10, and when Onesiphorus oft refreshed him, and was not ashamed of his chain, 2 Tim. 1:16, &c., or as the primitive Christians had, the matter had not been so great. Oh! but I kept them close prisoners; 'Many of the saints did I shut up in prison.' I shut them up from friends, from relations, and from all comfortable accommodations; and thus he further aggravates his sin, Acts 9:1, 2.

Fifthly, If he had rested there, if he had proceeded no further, the matter had not been so bad; Oh! 'but I gave my voice against them to put them to death.' My heart and my hand was not only against them, but my tongue also. If I could not kill them with my hand, I was ready and willing to kill them with my tongue; if the casting voice fell upon me, I would be sure to give it against them; I never wanted a word to do them mischief. If they wanted a word, instead of a knife, to cut their throats, I would be sure to lend them one.

Sixthly, He rises yet higher, for he does not only severely punish their bodies, but he does what he can to damn their souls; I compelled them to blaspheme, like that Italian, who first made his enemy deny

God, and then stabbed him, and so at once murdered both body and soul. As there is no love to soul love, so there is no cruelty to soul cruelty; and as there is no mischief to soul mischief, so there is no murder to soul murder; and yet in this murder had Paul a hand. It is sad to compel a man to bear a burden beyond his strength, to lie in chains, to forsake his own country, &c., but it is infinitely more sad to compel a man to sin, to the least sin; but saddest of all to compel a man to blaspheme, 'And yet this I did,' says Paul, &c.

Seventhly, He yet further aggravates his sin by his madness, by his exceeding madness against the saints, in those words: 'and I was exceeding mad against them.' He was mad with rage and wrath, he was exceedingly mad with passion and fury against the dear saints of God. Madmen think madly, and madmen speak madly, and madmen act madly against those they are mad with; and so did he against the saints. The Alcoran saith, that God created the angels of light, and the devils of flame. Certainly, as God's children are children of the light, so Satan's children are furious children, wrathful children, children of the flame, children of madness; and such a one was Paul, &c.

Eighthly, and lastly, 'I did persecute them to strange cities;' them I did not kill I did scatter; I forced them to leave both house and home; them whom God had joined together I put asunder: I made the husband run one way, and the wife and children another way, and all of them glad to hide their heads in a corner.

And thus you see, that true penitents, in the confession of their sins, do clothe their sins with the highest aggravations imaginable. A penitent in his confession of sin cries out, Oh the sparing mercies, the preventing mercies, the succouring mercies, the supporting mercies, the renewed mercies, the delivering mercies that I have with

a high hand sinned against! Oh that clear light! oh that free love! oh that gospel grace! oh those bowels of mercy that I have sinned against! Oh the fatherly corrections, the dreadful warnings, the high resolutions, the serious protestations, the frequent vows and promises that I have desperately sinned against! Oh the checks of conscience, the rebukes of conscience, the lashes of conscience, the wounds of conscience, and the frequent motions of the Spirit, and strivings of the Spirit, that I have sinned against! &c. But now wicked men confess their sins slightly, carelessly, triflingly. They are careful and skilful to hide their sins, to cloak their sins, and to extenuate and lessen their sins; and with the unjust steward, for an hundred to set down fifty, Luke 16:6. All wicked men do commonly flatter themselves, that either their sins are not sins, when indeed they are, or that they are not great and grievous sins, when indeed they are, or that they are not so great and grievous as other men's sins are, when indeed they are more grievous and heinous than other men's sins are; so far are they from aggravating of their sins. The truth is, wicked men are so far from aggravating of their sins, that they are still extenuating of them, and that by fathering of them, sometimes upon their constitutions, sometimes upon bad company, sometimes upon their callings, sometimes upon Satan, and sometimes upon chance, as they call it, &c. But no more of this; enough is as good as a feast.

(6.) Sixthly, The true penitent confesses his sins humbly, sorrowfully. In his confessions he appears before the Lord with ropes about his neck, as Benhadad's servants, and with tears in his eyes. His confessions savour of contrition of heart, and not of ostentation of spirit. Contrition of heart, and confusion of face, is the common result of a penitential confession, Lev. 23:27, 28. David waters his couch with his tears, Ps. 6:6; and he mingles his meat with his tears, Ps. 42:3; and Ezra and Daniel confess their sins with wet eyes and

blushing cheeks, Ezra 9, Daniel 9. Confession without contrition neither pleaseth God nor profiteth man. Confession is the language of the tongue, contrition is the language of the heart, and God looks for both. The publican does not only confess his sins, but he smites also upon his breast, as a man full of grief and sorrow, Luke 18:13. Lying in the dust, and rending of garments, and putting on sackcloth and ashes, were of old required of those that confessed their iniquities. The spirit of repentance is a spirit of mourning. Penitential confessions are commonly attended with grief in the heart, and with shame in the face: Ps. 38:18, 'For I will declare mine iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin. He tells you not only that he will declare his iniquity, but he tells you also, that he will be sorry for his sin. The same spirit you may find working in Jacob, Hosea 12:4; yea, he had 'power over the angel and prevailed, he wept and made supplication unto him.' The people of God, in the day of their confession, do not only say, We have sinned, but they also draw water and pour it out before the Lord in token of contrition, 1 Sam. 7:6. Every sin is as a sword in a penitent man's bosom, and therefore whilst confessions are in his mouth, you shall mostly find either tears in his eyes or sorrow in his heart. And indeed, true confession of sin is many times rather a voice of mourning than a voice of words. Sometimes a penitent man's eyes will in some sort tell what his tongue can in no sort utter. Many times the penitent is better at weeping than he is at speaking: Ps. 39:12, 'Hold not thy peace at my tears.' Tears hath a voice as well as blood hath, and are very prevalent orators with God: Ps. 6:8, 'The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.' Penitent tears are undeniable ambassadors, and they never return from the throne of grace without an answer of grace. Tears are a kind of silent prayers, which though they say nothing, yet they obtain pardon; they prevail for mercy, and they carry the day with God, as you may see in that great and clear instance of Peter. He said nothing, he confessed nothing that we read of, but 'went out and

wept bitterly,' and obtained mercy. That prescription that God gave to the leper in the law is worthy of your most serious consideration; it is in that Lev. 13:45, 'And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.' In these words the leper stands charged with four things: (1.) to go in rent or torn garments, to note that there must be brokenness and sorrow of heart joined with confession of sin; (2.) to go bareheaded, and that partly that men might not mistake him, but mainly to shew his humility under his present misery; (3.) to put a covering upon his upper lip, some read it, upon his mouchaches. The Jews in their mournings used this ceremony among the rest, of covering their chin, mouth, mouchaches, all under the nose. Now, the use of this ceremony in lepers, was partly to preserve others from being infected by his loathsome breath, and partly to shew that God takes no pleasure nor delight in the breathings, the prayers of spiritual lepers, of wicked men,—God loves not to hear good words drop from an ill mouth,—and partly to note that shame that must be mingled with his sorrow. (4.) Twice to proclaim his own uncleanness, 'Unclean, unclean.' And thus you see that there was to be a close connection between the leper's confession and his contrition; and thus it is with the true penitent; he does not only cry out, Unclean, unclean, but he also rents and tears his garments, that is, he joins contrition to his confession.

But to prevent mistakes, and that I may not shoot an arrow, instead of giving a cordial, to the weak and weary soul, let me only give you this short hint, viz., that when the true penitent cannot pour out his soul in heart-melting confessions before the Lord, yet then he can mourn over his own hardness of heart. When he is at worst he can grieve that he cannot grieve, and mourn that he cannot mourn, and melt that he cannot melt, and break that he cannot break; and he can

bless God for every rod, and every stroke, and every word, and every work, and every ordinance, and every frown, and every reproof, and every cross, and every comfort that has the least tendency to the melting and mollifying of his soul. The true penitent always sets a very high price and value upon a broken heart, though he has not the happiness always to have his heart broken. I know that sometimes the penitent soul is so shut up, that if he might have all the world he cannot mourn; he can only sit down and sigh, and groan; nay, if all the joys and delights of heaven were to be bought for one single tear, he cannot shed it; and yet all this time he can grieve that he cannot grieve for sin, and he can be sorry that he cannot be sorry for sin; and without all peradventure this is in a measure true godly gospel sorrow for sin, &c.

But now wicked men confess their sins, but they never grieve for their sins. They confess their sins, but they are not ashamed of their sins; they confess their sins, but they cannot blush for their sins. Though men of good names, and of good natures, would be ashamed to be found doing of base things, things that are below them, that are not worthy of them, yet the generality of sinners are so bold and base, so ignorant, arrogant, and impudent, so frontless2 and graceless, &c., that they are no ways ashamed, no, not of those very sins that has put Christ to an open shame, yea, that has put the sun and moon to a blush. Most sinners in these days have brows of brass, and whores' foreheads, that cannot blush. They are so far from being ashamed of their sins, that they think it a shame and disgrace not to sin, not to swear, and whore, and curse, and be drunk, and profane Sabbaths, and despise ordinances; yea, there are many that are so far from being ashamed of their abominations, that they even glory in them, like those in that Philip. 3:19. They shew their sins as Sodom, they make both a sport of acting, and a jest of confessing their sins. Thus Austin confesseth that it was sometimes with himself before the

Lord wrought upon him; I was stricken with such blindness, as that I thought it a shame unto me to be less vile and wicked than my companions whom I heard boast of their lewdness, and glory so much the more, by how much they were the more filthy; therefore, saith he, lest I should be of no account, I was the more vicious; and when I could not otherwise match others, I would feign that I had done those things which I never did, lest I should seem so much the more abject, by how much I was the more innocent; and so much the more vile, by how much I was the more chaste. But for a close remember this, the true penitent knows, that the more God has been displeased with the blackness of sin, the better he will be pleased with the blushing of the sinner; and therefore he cannot but blush when either he looks upon sin within him, or God above him. But,

(7.) Seventhly, Penitential confession, it is believing and fiducial; it is mixed with some faith, though not always with a strong faith, Hosea 14:2. It is not like the confession of a malefactor to the judge, but like the confession of a child to his father, or like the confession of a sick man to his physician. As a penitent man has one eye of sorrow upon his sin, so he has another eye of hope upon pardoning grace. Thus David, though he had sinned greatly, yet he hangs upon free mercy, and begs his pardon believingly, Ps. 51. Thus Daniel, 'To the Lord our God belongs mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him,' Dan. 9:9. Thus Shechaniah, Ezra 10:2, 'And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.' If it were not for hope, the heart would break. There was hope among them that Israel would repent, and there was hope among them that God would have mercy upon their repentance. And the same spirit was working in the prodigal: 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have

sinned against heaven and before thee,' Luke 18:18. Though he was a prodigal, yet he would go to God as to a father, who knew how to pity and forgive the mourning and repenting child. When confessions of sin are mingled with hopes of mercy, and the soul draws near to God as a father, then the heart breaks most and melts and mourns most. That confession of sin that is not mixed with some hope of pardon, and with some faith in the mercy of God, is not penitential, but desperate. Cain in some sort confesses, but then he flies into the land of Nod, and there he falls a-building and planting, partly in contempt of the dreadful doom God had passed upon him, and partly to drown the noise of his conscience, and despairing of ever obtaining pardon in this world, or enjoying a house not made with hands in another world, Gen. 4:16, 2 Cor. 5:1, 2. Judas likewise confesses his most heinous sins, 'I have sinned in betraying innocent blood,' Mat. 27:3, 4; but having no hope of pardon, no faith in that innocent blood he had shed, he goes out and hangs himself. Judas had no faith to mingle with his confession; he confesses despairingly, not believingly, and so goes forth and strangles himself. Since Adam fell in paradise, there has not been one wicked man in the world, continuing in that state, that has ever mixed faith with his sorrows, believing with his confessing. It is only the penitent man that confesseth sin believingly, and that is pardoned graciously. The confessing penitent reasons thus with God: Lord, though I am a sinful creature, yet thou art a merciful God; though I am unworthy of mercy, yet thou forgivest sins freely; though my sins reach as high as heaven, yet thy mercies reach above the heavens; I am here ready and willing to accuse and condemn myself, and therefore be thou as ready and as willing to absolve me, and forgive me. O Lord! though my sins are very many, yet thy mercies are exceeding more; though I have multiplied my sins, yet thou canst multiply thy pardons; though I am a sinner, a very great sinner, yet there is mercy with thee, that thou mayest be feared and loved, served and trusted; and therefore

in the face of all my sins, provocations, and unworthiness, I will look up for mercy, and wait for mercy. But,

(8.) Eighthly, and lastly, True penitential confession is joined with reformation. That confession of sin that carries forgivenness of sin with it, is attended with serious desires, and earnest endeavours to reformation, Ps. 51:10; therefore forsaking of sin is annexed to confession of sin: Prov. 28:13, 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.' Confession of sin must be joined with confusion of sin, or all is lost. God will never cross the book, he will never draw the red lines of Christ's blood over the black lines of our transgressions, except confessing and forsaking go hand in hand. He that does not forsake his sin, as well as confess it, forsakes the benefit of his confession. And indeed, there is no real confession of sin, where there is no real forsaking of sin. It is not enough for us to confess the sins we have committed, but we must peremptorily resolve against the committing again the sins we have confessed. We must desire as freely to forego our sins, as we do desire God to forgive us our sins. Confession of sin is a spiritual vomit. Now you know, a man that is burdened in his stomach, is heartily willing to be rid of that load on his stomach that doth oppress nature; and so a man that is real in his confession of sin, is as heartily willing to be rid of his sin, that lies as a load upon his conscience, as any sick man can be heartily willing to be rid of that load that lies upon his stomach. The penitential confessor doth as heartily desire to be delivered from the power of his sins, as he does desire to be delivered from the sting and punishment of his sins. This is observable in the confession of good Shechaniah: Ezra 10:2, 3, 'We have trespassed against our God, and taken strange wives of the people of the land; now therefore let us make a covenant with Our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and those that

tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.' And this was the former practice of the children of Israel, who joined reformation with their confession, as you may see in that Judges 10:15, 'We have sinned;' ver. 16, 'And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.' That Job 34:31, 32, is observable, 'Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more; that which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.' And the same spirit you may find working in those that were once given up to sorcery and witchcraft: Acts 19:18, 'And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.' Ver. 19, 'Many also of them which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men.' Penitential confession leaves a holy awe and dread on the soul, to take heed of committing sins confessed. Though a godly man may, in an hour of temptation, or in a day of desertion, or in a season of God's withholding the gracious influences of heaven from falling upon his soul, commit a sin which he has seriously confessed and sadly bewailed, yet he retains in his course and practice such a holy fear and awe upon his heart, as in some measure proves armour of proof against future commissions of sin. But now wicked men are very ready, bold, and venturous to commit the same sins they have confessed, as you may see in Saul: one while you shall have him confessing his sinful injuries against David with tears; and soon after you shall find him pursuing of him in the wilderness of Ziph with three thousand chosen men at his heels. The same evil spirit was predominant in Pharaoh; one day you shall have him confessing his sin, and promising to let Israel go, and the next day you shall find his heart hardened, and he peremptorily resolved that Israel shall not go. And so the harlot made the confession of her sin to be but a provocation to more sin, Prov. 7:14. The wicked sometimes confess their sins, but they never forsake their sins; after

confession they commonly return with the dog to the vomit, as Fulgentius hath worthily observed. 'Many,' saith he, 'being pricked in conscience, confess that they have done ill, and yet put no end to their ill deeds; they humbly accuse themselves in God's sight of the sins which oppress them, and yet with a perverse heart rebelliously heap up those sins whereof they accuse themselves. The very pardon which they beg with mournful sighs, they impede with their wicked actions; they ask help of the physician, and still minister matter to the disease, thus in vain endeavouring to appease him with penitent words, whom they go on to provoke by an impenitent course.' Well, remember this, real confession of sin is always attended with real endeavours of turning from sin. Look, as the patient lays open his diseases to the physician for this very purpose that he may be cured and healed, so the penitent soul confesses his sins to the physician of souls on purpose to be cured and healed. The daily language of the penitent soul is this, Lord, when wilt thou heal the maladies of my soul? When wilt thou heal my unbelief, and heal my pride, and heal my vain-glory, and heal my hypocrisy, and heal my impurity, and heal my hard-heartedness, and heal my carnalness, and heal my worldliness, and heal my selfishness? &c. Lord! I do as earnestly beg grace to heal my soul, as I do mercy to pardon my soul. And let thus much suffice for the second part of true evangelical repentance.

3. The third part of true repentance lies in turning from all sin to God. That great and precious promise of forgiveness of sin is made over to repenting and turning from sin. All who truly repent of their sins, and turn from their sins, shall receive the forgiveness of their sins. Pardon of sin is for that man, and that man is for pardon of sin, who truly repents and returns from his sin. Four things speak out this, &c.

[1.] First, Scripture exhortations to repent, that so our sins may be forgiven: Ezek. 18:30, 'Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.' Acts 2:38, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins.' Ver. 19, 'Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,' &c.

[2.] Secondly, Express promises that our sins shall be forgiven upon our repentance: 2 Chron. 7:14, 'If my people shall turn from their evil way, then will I forgive their sin.' Prov. 28:13, 'Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy.' Ezek. 18:21, 'If the wicked will turn from all his sins which he hath committed, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die;' ver. 22, 'All his transgressions which he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him,'

[3.] Thirdly, A most certain assurance of the forgiveness of sins, upon repentance, though they have been never so great and heinous: Isa. 1:16–18, 'Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings; cease to do evil; learn to do well. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'

[4.] Fourthly, Express records and instances of forgiveness unto such as have repented and turned from their sins: 2 Sam. 12:13, 'And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord; and Nathan said to David, The Lord hath also put away thy sin.' Jer. 31:18–20, 'I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself; turn thou me, and I shall be turned,' &c. 'Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.

Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him,' saith the Lord.' Luke 7:38, 'And she stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head; and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment.' Ver. 47, 'Wherefore, I say, her sins, which were many, are forgiven.' Chap. 15:18–20, 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. And he arose, and came to his father; but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell upon his neck, and kissed him.'

Quest. But what are the properties or qualifications of that right turning from sin, which brings poor sinners within the compass of the promise of forgiveness of sins? Now, to this great question I shall give these four following answers:

Ans. 1. First, That turning from sin which brings a man within the compass of the promise of forgiveness of sin, is a cordial turning from sin: Joel 2:12, 'Turn ye, even to me, with all your heart.' 2 Chron. 6:38, 39, 'If they return to thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, then hear thou from the heavens their prayer and their supplication, and forgive their sins.' Deut. 30:10, 'If thou turn unto the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul,' &c. Jer. 3:10, 'And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord.' Chap, 24:7, 'And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.' Wicked men are serious and cordial in their sinning, and they must be as serious and cordial in their returning, or they are lost and undone for ever. The true

penitent turns from sin with his heart, with all his heart, and with all his soul. He is turned in good earnest from his sins, whose heart is turned from his sins. If the heart turns not, all is naught, all is stark naught. He that turns from sin, but not with his heart, turns but feignedly, partially, hypocritically, deceitfully. God is a jealous God, and he will never endure co-rivals or co-partners in the throne, the heart of man; a holy God will never divide with an unholy devil. The true God is a righteous God, and he will never share his glory with another. The true God must be served truly, heartily; he loves neither halting nor halving. Such as divide the rooms of their souls betwixt God and sin, God and Satan, God and the world, that swear by God and Malcham, that sometimes pray devoutly, and at other times curse most hideously, that halt betwixt God and Baal, are mere heteroclites in religion, and such whom God abhors. When a man's heart gives a bill of divorce to his sins, when his heart breaks the league with sin, when his heart casts it off, and casts it out as an abominable thing, then the heart is turned from sin really, effectually, &c. If, notwithstanding all the professions that a man makes against his sins, his heart still loves them, and delights in them, and he will still retain them, and welcome them, and cleave to them, and make provision for them, &c., his repentance is feigned and not real, &c. But,

The second answer.

Ans. 2. Secondly, A true penitential turning is an universal turning, a turning not from some sins, but from all sins: Ezek. 18:30, 'Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions.' Ver. 31, 'Cast away from you all your transgressions.' 2 Cor. 7:1, 'Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit.' Ps. 119:101, 'I have refrained my feet from every evil way.' Ver. 128, 'I hate every false way.' Ezek. 14:14, 'Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith

the Lord God, Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.' Chap. 18:28, 'Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.' True repentance is a turning from all sin, without any reservation or exception. He never truly repented of any sin, whose heart is not turned against every sin. The true penitent casts off all the rags of old Adam; he throws down every stone of the old building; he will not leave a horn nor a hoof behind. That which Nehemiah speaks of himself in that Neh. 13:7, 8, is very observable to our purpose. 'And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me sore' (but he rests not there; but goes further); 'therefore I cast forth all the household-stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber.' What should Tobiah do with a chamber? therefore he not only outs Tobiah, but out goes all his stuff too. Thus the true penitent, when he considers all the evil that sin has done, how it has taken up not only one chamber, but every chamber in the soul, and how it has for many years quite shut out God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and everything that is good; he is grieved sore, and so falls upon the outing of every lust; being highly resolved that neither Satan nor any of his retinue shall ever find the least entertainment in his soul any more. Such as are resolved against turning from any sin, are horribly profane; such as turn from some sins, but close with others, are hideous hypocrites; such as turn from one sin to another, or change their sins as men do their fashions, are most sadly blinded, and desperately deluded by Satan; but such as turn not from some sins, but from every sin, are sincerely penitent. And certainly there are very great reasons why the true penitent does turn, and must turn from sin universally. As,

[1.] First, It is to no purpose for a man to turn from some sins, if he does not turn from all his sins: James 1:26, 'If any man seem to be religious, and bridle not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is in vain.' This at first sight may seem to be a hard saying, that for one fault, for one fault in the tongue, all a man's religion should be counted vain; and yet this you see the Holy Ghost does peremptorily conclude. Let a man make never so glorious a profession of religion, yet if he gives himself liberty to live in the practice of any known lust, yea, though it be but a sin of the tongue, his religion is in vain, and that one lust will separate him from God for ever. If a wife be never so officious2 to her husband in many things, and though she gives him content several ways, yet if she entertains any other lover into his bed besides himself, it will alienate his affections from her, and for ever separate him from her. The application is easy. To turn from one sin to another, is but to be tossed from one hand of the devil to another; it is but, with Benhadad, to recover of one disease and die of another, it is but to take pains to go to hell. If a ship spring three leaks, and only two be stopped, the third will sink the ship; or if a man have two grievous wounds in his body, and take order only to cure one, that which is neglected will certainly kill him. It is so here; if a man that has divers lusts fighting against the life of his precious soul, shall only mortify and slay some of them, the rest will certainly destroy him, and all his pains in subduing some of them will be lost. I have read of a devout man, who had amongst many other virtues the gift of healing, unto whom divers made resort for cure; among the rest, one Chromatius being sick, sent for him. Being come, he told him of his sickness, and desired that he might have the benefit of cure, as others had before him. I cannot do it, said the devout person, till thou hast beaten all the idols and images in thy house to pieces. Oh that shall be done, said Chromatius; here take my keys, and where you find any images let them be defaced, which was done accordingly. To prayer went the

holy man, but no cure was wrought. Oh, saith Chromatius, I am as sick as ever! Oh I am very weak and sick! It cannot be otherwise, replied the holy man, nor can I help it; for certainly there is one idol more in your house undiscovered, and that must be defaced too. True, says Chromatius, there is so indeed; there is one all of beaten gold, it cost two hundred pounds, I would fain have saved it; but here take my keys again, you shall find it locked up fast in my chest, take it and break it in pieces; which done, the holy man prayed, and Chromatius was healed. The moral of this story is this: we are all spiritually sick, full of wounds and putrefied sores; Christ our spiritual physician tells us, that if we will be cured, we must break off our sins by repentance. Now this we are willing to do in part, but not in whole; we would fain keep one Delilah, one darling beloved sin, but it must not be; there must not be one sin unrepented of; we must repent as well for our Achans as our Absaloms, our Rimmons as our Mammons, our Davids as our Goliaths, our covert as well as our open sins, our loved as well as our loathed lusts, our heart abominations as well as our gross transgressions, our babe iniquities as well as our giant-like provocations. Our repentance must be universal, or it will be to no purpose.

Herod turned from many evils, but would not turn from his Herodias, and that was his ruin, Mat. 6:18–20. Judas his life was as fair and as free from spots and blots as the lives of any of the apostles; no scandalous sin was to be found upon him; only that golden devil covetousness was his sin, and his everlasting ruin. His apostleship, preaching, working of miracles, hearing of Christ, and conversing with him, &c., was to no purpose, because of that serpent he kept in his bosom, which at last stung him to death. If a man lives in the practice of any known sin, the union between sin and his soul is not dissolved; and if that union be not dissolved, Christ and his soul were never united, and therefore such a person can never be

saved. Saul spared Agag and the witch of Endor, whom he should have destroyed, and so lost his crown, his kingdom, and his soul, which was saddest of all, Gideon had seventy sons, and but one bastard, and yet that one bastard destroyed all the rest, Judges 8:13. The Jewish rabbins report, that the same night that Israel departed out of Egypt towards Canaan, all the idols and idolatrous temples in Egypt, by lightning and earthquakes, were broken down; so, when a man truly repents, all the idols that were set up in his soul are cast down. But,

[2.] Secondly, God has so connexed the duties of his law one to another, that if there be not a conscientious, care to walk according to all that the law requires, a man becomes a transgressor of the whole law, according to that of St James, chap. 2:10, 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all.' The bond of all is broken, the authority of all is slighted, and that evil disposition, that sinful frame of heart, that works a man to venture upon the breach of one command, would make him venture upon the breach of any command, were it not for some infirmity of nature, or because his purse will not hold out to maintain it; or for shame, or loss, or because of the eye of friends, or the sword of the magistrate, or for some sinister respects; and might the breach of any other of the commands of God serve his turn, and advance his ends, he stands as strongly pressed in spirit to transgress them all, as to transgress any one of them. He that gives himself liberty to live in the breach of any one command of God, is qualified with a disposition of heart to break them all. Every single sin contains virtually all sin in it. He that allows himself a liberty to live in the breach of any one particular law of God, he casts contempt and scorn upon the authority that made the whole law, and upon this account breaks it all. And the apostle gives the reason of it in ver. 11, 'For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit

no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.' Not that he is guilty of all distributively, but collectively; for the law is copulative; there is a chain of duties, and these are all so linked one to another, that you cannot break one link of the chain, but you break the whole chain. All the precepts of the law are, as it were, a string of pearls strung by the authority of God. Now break this string in any place, and all the pearls fall to the ground. No man can live in the breach of any known command of God, but he wrongs every command of God: and this at last he shall find to his cost, without sound repentance on his side, and pardoning grace on God's. But,

[3.] Thirdly, One sin never goes alone. Cain's anger is seconded with murder; Ahab's covetousness is attended with bloody cruelty; and Jeroboam's rebellion with idolatry; and Judas his thievery with treason. I might give instances of this in Adam and Eve, and in Lot, Abraham, Noah, Jacob, Joseph, Job, David, Solomon, and Peter, &c., but a touch on this string is enough. One sin commonly disposes the heart to another sin. A small sin many times draws the heart to a greater, and one great sin draws the heart to another great sin, and that to a greater, till at last the soul comes to be drowned in all excess. Augustine relates the story of Manicheus, who being tormented with flies, was of opinion that the devil made them and not God. Why then, said one that stood by, if the devil made flies, then the devil made worms, and not God, for they are living creatures as well as flies. True, said he, the devil did make worms. But said the other, if the devil did make worms, then he did make birds, beasts, and man. He granted all. And thus, saith that old father, by denying God in the fly, he came to deny God in man, and so consequently the whole creation. And thus yielding to lesser sins, draws the soul to the commission of greater, yea, often to the greatest of all. I have both heard and read a story of a young man, who being often tempted by the devil and his own wicked heart, to

commit three sins, viz., to kill his father, to lie with his mother, and to be drunk; the two former his heart would not yield to, as being things abhorrent to the light and law of nature, and therefore to free himself from the temptation, he yielded to the last and least; but when he was drunk, he killed his father, and ravished his mother. Thus these two abominable sins, murder and incest, were ushered in by one that was not of so deep a dye.2 There is something in sin, like the radical virtue that is in the seed of herbs and plants. The seed is but a small inconsiderable thing in itself, yet let it be but cast into the ground, and there rest quietly a time, and it will take root, and grow up to a great stock, and bring forth many flourishing branches; like the grain of mustard-seed, Mat. 13:31, 32, which though it be the least of seeds, yet being cast into the ground, grows up to be the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Satan will be sure to nest himself, to lodge himself in the least sins, as birds nest and lodge themselves in the smallest branches of a tree, and there he will batch all manner of wickedness. A sinful motion, if it be not rejected, will procure consent, and consent will break forth into act, and one act will procure another act, until the multiplying of acts have begot a habit, and that habit hath choked and stifled conscience; and when once conscience is stifled and benumbed, it will be ready upon all occasions to lay the soul open, and to prostrate it to the basest and worst of sins. Oh there is a prodigious evil in the least of sins; it will quickly multiply itself into all manner of evils. Unless sin be cut off in the first motion, it will proceed to action, and from action to delectation, and from delight to custom, and from custom to a habit; and so the soul will be in eminent danger of being undone for ever. A little thief put in at the window, may open the doors for stronger and greater to come in, that may take away both life and treasure at once. A little wedge makes way for a greater, and so do little sins make way for greater. Satan and our own hearts will be modest at first, and

therefore they are often in a combination, first to draw us to lesser sins and then to greater, and so from sins less obnoxious to sins more scandalous, till we come to be abominable to God, hateful to others, and a terror to ourselves. Such as live in one sin, God will in justice give over to other sins. The Gentiles gave up themselves to idolatry, Rom. 1:23; 'And God gave them up to uncleanness,' ver. 24. It is impossible for any man to take one sin into his bosom, and to shut all others out. He that lives but in the allowance of himself in one sin, will find that sin at last to shut the door of heaven against him, and therefore the true penitent turns from sin universally.

[4.] Fourthly, The reasons of turning from, sin, are universally binding to a penitent soul. There are the same reasons, and grounds for a penitent man's turning from every sin, as there is for his turning from any one sin. Do you turn from this or that sin, because the Lord has forbid it? Why, upon the same ground you must turn from every sin, for God has forbid every sin as well as this or that particular sin. There is the same authority forbidding or commanding in all; and if the authority of God awes a man from one sin, it will awe him from all. There is one and the same Lawgiver in respect of all the commandments. He that gave one commandment gave also another; therefore, he that observes one commandment in obedience unto God, whose commandment it is, will observe all, because all are his commandments; and he that slights one commandment is guilty of all, because he doth contemn the authority and will of him that gave them all. Even in those commands which he doth observe, he hath no respect to the will and authority of him that gave them. Therefore, there is no obedience towards God, where there is not an uniform endeavour to please God, as well in one thing as in another. The same God that hath inhibited one sinful act, hath inhibited every sinful act; and, therefore, he that out of conscience and respect to God's will, and word, and authority, turns from any one sin, or

abhors any one sin, he will out of conscience of the same will, and word, and authority, turn from every sin, and abhor every sin, because the same God in his word hath alike forbidden all. O sirs! how is it possible for a man truly to repent of this or that sin, because it is contrary to the law, will, and authority of God, but he must needs repent of whatsoever he knows to be contrary to the law, will, and authority of God? He that turns from any one sin because it is a transgression of the holy and righteous law of God he will turn from every sin upon the same account. He that turns from any one sin, because it is a dishonour to God, a reproach to Christ, a grief to the Spirit, a wound to religion, &c., will upon the same grounds turn from every sin. He that turns from any one sin, because of the curse, the threatenings, the judgments, the wrath, the hell that hangs, as it were, over the head of that sin, he will turn from every sin, because the curse, the threatenings, the judgments, the wrath, the hell, that hangs over the head of that one sin, hangs over the head of every sin. By these hints it is most evident, that the reasons of turning from sin are universally binding to a penitent soul; and therefore he turns not from some sins only, but from every sin. He says not to one, but to all his idols, 'Get you hence, for what have I any more to do with you?'

[5.] Fifthly, One sin allowed, wallowed and tumbled in, is sufficient to deprive a man for ever of the greatest good. Moses came within the sight of Canaan; but for one sin, viz., not sanctifying God's name at the water of Meribah, he was shut out, Exod. 22; for him to be so near the holy land, and yet so far off from entering into it, was doubtless of all strokes the hardest that ever he felt. In the law, the leper that had the spot of leprosy in any one part of his body was accounted a leper, although all the rest of his body were sound and whole, and accordingly he was to be shut up, and shut out from the society and company of the people of God, Lev. 13; so one sin, one leprous spot, allowed and beloved, will for ever shut a man out from

the glorious presence of God, Christ, the Spirit, angels, and the 'spirits of just men made perfect.' One sin wallowed in, will as certainly deprive a man of the blessed vision of God, and of all the treasures, pleasures, and delights that be at God's right hand, as a thousand. It was a sore vexation to king Lysimachus, that he should lose his earthly kingdom for one draught of water. O sirs! it will be an everlasting vexation to such, who for one lust shall at last lose not an earthly but a heavenly kingdom. One sin stripped the fallen angels of all their glory; and one sin stripped our first parents of all their dignity and excellency, Gen. 3:4, 5. Satan, by one loud lie to Adam and Eve, made fruitless all that God had preached to them immediately before. To turn from some sins, but not from all, is gross hypocrisy, Job 20:13. One sin set up in the love and service of it, will keep Christ out of his throne. It speaks sin to be rampant, and Satan to be victorious; and what can be the issue of these things but ruin and damnation? Rom. 6:16. One fly in the box of precious ointment spoils the whole box; one thief may rob a man of all his treasure; one disease may deprive a man of all his health; one strong wind may blow down and blow away all a man's comforts; and so one sin delighted and wallowed in, will make a man miserable for ever. Though this or that particular sin be very pleasant to the flesh, and delightful to the fancy, yet he is the wisest man, and he is the best man, and the only blessed man in all the world, that keeps furthest from it; and therefore the true penitent turns not merely from this or that sin, but from every sin.

[6.] Sixthly, The principle of regeneration, and seed of grace, which God lays into the soul of every penitent person at first conversion, is a universal principle, a principle that spreads itself over all the faculties of the soul, and over all the members of the body, 1 Thes. 5:23: Ps. 45:13, 'The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold.' In regeneration there is infused the

habits or principles of all grace, which like a divine leaven spreads itself over the whole man, Mat. 13:33. Look, as Absalom's beauty was spread all over him, even from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, 2 Sam. 24:25; so grace spreads itself over every faculty of the soul, and over every member of the body. Look, as Solomon's temple was all glorious both within and without; so that grace which a man receives at first conversion, makes him all glorious both within and without. Look, as Adam's sin spread itself over the whole man, so that grace which we receive from the second Adam spreads itself over the whole man, John 1:16. And as that grace which was in Christ did diffuse and spread itself over all of Christ, so that grace which is in the true penitent does diffuse and spread itself all over the penitent. Now look, as heaven is contrary to all of hell, and as light is contrary to all darkness, and heat to all cold, so that divine, that noble, that universal principle of grace, which God at first conversion infuses into the penitent's soul, is contrary to all sin; and therefore the penitent turns from all sin. But,

[7.] Seventhly, The true penitent would have God to forgive him, not only some of his sins, but all his sins; and therefore it is but just and equal that he should turn from all his sins. 'If God be so faithful and just to forgive us all our sins,' 1 John 1:9, we must be so faithful and just as to turn from all our sins. The plaster must be as broad as the sore, and the tent as long and as deep as the wound. It argues horrid hypocrisy, damnable folly, and wonderful impudency, for a man to beg the pardon of those very sins that he is resolved never to forsake. Look, as he that hath any one sin forgiven hath all sins forgiven, so he that hath sincerely turned from any one sin, he hath turned from every sin; and he that hath not repented him of all known sin, he hath not yet sincerely repented of any known sin, nor as yet experienced the sweetness of forgiveness of sin. He that will not renounce those sins that he would have God to remit, shall be sure to

have a hell of guilt in his conscience. Of all fools there is none to him that is very importunate with God to forgive those sins which he is resolved beforehand to commit; for what prince, in his wits, will pardon his treasons that is resolved to continue a traitor? or what judge will forgive his thievery, that is peremptorily determined to continue a thief? or what husband will pardon his wife, that is resolved to defile his bed with other lovers? Such as continue in the practice of those very sins, which they beg a pardon of, shall certainly go without their pardon. Pardon of sin is for that man, and that man is for pardon of sin, that is as truly willing to forsake his sins as he is to receive the pardon of his sins. Who would not look upon that man as a madman, who should earnestly beg his pardon, and yet before his pardon is sealed should afresh cut purses, and murder persons before the eyes of the judge? The pardoned soul is the repenting soul, and the repenting soul is the pardoned soul: Ps. 32:2, 'Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.' He that begs pardon of sin, and is resolved against turning from sin, shall find no more sweetness in that grand promise of pardon, Prov. 28:13, than devils or damned spirits do. Look, as one sin unforgiven will as certainly undo a man as a thousand, so one sin unforsaken will as certainly undo and damn a man as a thousand. The true penitent is as willing to turn from all his sins, as he is willing that God should pardon all his sins. But,

[8.] Eighthly and lastly, There is in every penitent a sincere hatred of sin, a universal hatred of sin: Ps. 97:10, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.' Prov. 8:13, 'The fear of the Lord is to hate evil.' Amos 5:15, 'Hate the evil and love the good.' Ps. 119:104, 'Through thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way.' Ver. 128, 'Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.' Ver. 113, 'I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.' Ver. 163, 'I hate and abhor lying, but thy law do I love.' True hatred is

universal; it is of the whole kind. He who hates a toad because it is a toad, hates every toad; he that hates a serpent because it is a serpent, hates every serpent; he that hates a wolf because it is a wolf, hates every wolf; he that hates a man because he is holy, hates every man that is holy; and so he that hates sin because it is sin, hates every sin, and therefore he cannot but turn from it, and labour to be the death and ruin of it. Holy hatred is an implacable and an irreconcilable affection. You shall as soon reconcile God and Satan together, Christ and antichrist together, heaven and hell together, as you shall be able to reconcile a penitent soul and his sin together. A true penitent looks upon every sin as contrary to the law of God, the nature of God, the being of God, the glory of God, and accordingly his heart rises against it. He looks upon every sin as poison, as the vomit of a dog, as the mire of the street, as the menstruous cloth, which of all things in the law was most unclean, defiling and polluting;2 and this turns his heart against every sin. He looks upon every sin as having a hand in apprehending, betraying, binding, scourging, condemning and murdering his Lord and Master Jesus Christ; and this works him not only to refrain from sin, but to forsake it, and not only to forsake it, but also to abhor it, and to loathe it more than hell itself. The penitent soul will do all he can to be the death of every sin that has a hand in the death of his Lord and Master. He looks upon the sins of his body to be the tormentors of Christ's body, and the sins of his soul to be the tormentors of Christ's soul, to be those that made his soul heavy to the death, and that caused the withdrawing of his Father's love from him, and that forced him in the anguish of his soul to cry out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Mat. 27:46. And this raises up in him a universal hatred of sin; and a universal hatred of sin always issues in a universal turning from sin Now these eight arguments do sufficiently prove, that a true penitential turning is a universal turning; a turning not from some sins, but from all sins.

Objection. But some may be ready to object, and say, Sir, this is a hard saying, who can hear it, who can bear it, who shall then be saved? For if a man repents not unless he turns from every sin, then there is not a man to be found in all the world that repents; for there is not a man in all the world that turns from every sin, that forsakes every sin, &c.: 1 Kings 8:46, 'For there is no man that sinneth not.' Prov. 20:9, 'Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?' It is a question that implies a strong denial. Who can say, and say it truly, that he is pure from his sin? Surely none. He that shall say that he has made his heart clean, and that he is pure from his sin, sins in so saying; and commonly there are none more unclean than those that say they have made their hearts clean, nor none more impure than they that say they are pure from their sin: Eccles. 7:20, 'For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doth good and sinneth not.' These words, in their absolute sense, are a full testimony of the imperfection of our inherent righteousness in this life, and that even justified persons come very short of that exact and perfect obedience which the law requireth: James 3:2, 'For in many things we offend all'; or, as the Greek hath it, 'we stumble all.' It is a metaphor taken from travellers walking on stony or slippery ground, who are very apt to stumble or slide. This apostle was worthily called James the Just, and yet he numbers himself among the rest of the sanctified ones, that in many things offend all. The apostle does not say, in many things they offend all, but in many things we offend all. We that have more gifts than others, we that have more grace than others, we that have more assurance than others, we that have more experiences than others, we that have more preservatives to keep us from sin than others, even we in many things offend all. Nor the apostle does not say, in some things we offend all, but in many things we offend all; the apostle speaking not of the singular individual acts of sin, but of the divers sorts of sin. Nor the apostle does, not say, in many things we may offend all, but in many things we do offend all: 1

John 1:8, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' The apostle does not say, If thou sayest thou hast no sin, thou deceivest thyself, as if he spake to some particular person only; but if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. Nor the apostle does not say, If ye say ye have no sin, ye deceive yourselves, as if he intended weak or ordinary Christians alone, but if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; we apostles, we that in all grace, and in all holiness, and in all spiritual enjoyments exceed and excel all others, even we sin as well as others. He that is so ignorant and so impudent, so saucy and so silly, as to say he has no sin, sins in saying so, and has no sincerity, no integrity, nor no ingenuity in him: Ver. 10, 'If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.' As much as in us lies we make God a liar, if we say we have not sinned. He that says he has no sin, he does no sin, he does by consequence charge God with falsehood, who hath frequently told us in that word of grace, that cannot deceive us, that all men are sinners, and that they have all gone astray, and that they all need pardoning and purging grace, and that upon these very accounts he sent his beloved Son to lay down his dearest life, and to make himself an offering for sin, Isa. 53:3, Rom. 5:10 and 5:12, &c. Now, from these scriptures these two things are most evident: first, that sinful qualities do remain in the most sanctified persons; secondly, that these sinful qualities are sometimes very prevalent over the most sanctified persons, and therefore I shall answer the objection thus, viz. that a true penitential turning from all sin consists in these six things:

Ans. 1. (1.) First, In the alienation and inward aversation and drawing off of the soul from the love and liking of all sin, and from all free and voluntary subjection unto sin, the heart being filled with a loathing and detestation of all sin, Ps. 119:104, 128, as that which is most contrary to all goodness and happiness.

(2.) Secondly, In the will's detestation and hatred of all sin. When the very bent and inclination of the will is set against all sin, and opposes and crosses all sin, and is set upon the ruin and destruction of all sin, then the penitent is turned from all sin, Rom. 7:15, 19, 21, 23; Isa. 30:20, 'Thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.' Hosea 14:8, 'Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?' When the will stands upon such terms of defiance with all sin as that it will never enter into a league of friendship with any sin, then is the soul turned away from every sin. When the will is set upon avenging itself upon all sin, and upon daily endeavours to mortify and crucify all sin, then is the penitent turned from all his sins. When those sins that were once to the will as Delilah to Samson, are now to the will as Tamar to Amnon, then is the soul turned from sin with a witness.

(3.) Thirdly, In the judgment's turning away from all sin, by disapproving, disallowing, and condemning of it: Rom. 7:15, 'For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.' Oh, saith the judgment of a Christian, sin is the greatest evil in all the world; it is the only thing that God abhors, and that brought Jesus Christ to the cross, that damns souls, that shuts heaven, and that has laid the foundations of hell. Oh, it is the pricking thorn in my eye, the deadly arrow in my side, the two-edged sword that hath wounded my conscience, and slain my comforts, and separated between God and my soul. Oh, it is that which hath hindered my prayers, and embittered my mercies, and put a sting into all my crosses; and therefore I cannot but disapprove of it, and disallow of it, and condemn it to death, yea, to hell, from whence it came. I thus preach and thus think, saith Chrysostom, that it is more bitter to sin against Christ, than to suffer the torments of hell. Plutarch reports of Marcus Cato, that he never declared his opinion in any matter in the senate but he would close it with this passage,

Methinks still 'Carthage should be destroyed.' So whenever a penitent looks upon his sins in his judgment, he is still saying, Methinks these sins should be destroyed; methinks this pride, this unbelief, this earthly-mindedness, this hypocrisy, this vainglory, &c., should be destroyed.

(4.) Fourthly, In the purpose and resolution of the soul, the soul sincerely purposing and resolving never willingly, wilfully, or wickedly to transgress any more. Ps. 17:3, 'I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.' The general purpose and resolution of my heart is not to transgress. Though particular failings may attend me, yet my resolutions and purposes are firmly fixed against evil. Ps. 39:1, 'I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked are before me.' David highly resolves so to bridle and muzzle up his mouth, that he would not break out into any impatient or unbeseeming speeches, that might give the wicked any advantage to reproach religion, or to blaspheme the Holy One of Israel, &c. Anselm was a man of a holy resolution: 'I had rather,' saith he, 'go to hell pure from sin, than to heaven polluted with that filth.' And saith another, 'I will rather leap into a bonfire, than wilfully to sin against God.' When Valens the emperor threatened Basil with imprisonment, banishment, death: 'Threaten,' says he, 'your boys with such fray-bugs, and your purple gallants, that give themselves to their pleasures; I am resolved neither menaces nor flatteries shall silence me, Or draw me to betray a good cause, or a good conscience,' &c.

(5.) Fifthly, In the earnest and unfeigned desires, and careful endeavours of the soul to abandon all sin, to forsake all sin, to be rid of all sin, Rom. 7:22, 23. Now where God sees this frame of spirit, there he will certainly pardon the failings, and pass by the

imperfections of his people; and he 'will spare them as a man spareth his son that serveth him,' Mal. 3:17. Now you know, when a prudent, tender, indulgent father sees his child to fail and come short in that which he enjoins him to do, yet knowing that his desires and endeavours is to please him and serve him, he will not be harsh, rigid, sour, or severe towards him, but will spare him, and exercise much tenderness and indulgence towards him; and will God, will God whose mercies reach above the heavens, and whose compassions are infinite, and whose love is like himself, carry it worse towards his children than men do carry it towards theirs? Surely no. God's fatherly indulgence accepts of the will for the work, Heb. 13:18, 2 Cor. 8:12, as a father will accept in his child the desire for the deed, and if there be a blemish in his child, he will pity it, and cast a mantle of love over it. A sick man is not more desirous to be rid of all his diseases, nor a prisoner to be freed from all his bolts and chains, than the true penitent is desirous to be rid of all his sins, &c.

(6.) Sixthly and lastly, In the ordinary declining, shunning, and avoiding of all known occasions, temptations, provocations, inducements, and enticements to sin, &c. That royal law, 1 Thess. 5:22, 'Abstain from all appearance of evil,' is a law that is very precious in a penitent man's eye, and commonly lies warm upon a penitent man's heart; so that take him in his ordinary course, and you shall find him very ready to shun and be shy of the very appearances of sin, of the very shows and shadows of sin. Job made a covenant with his eyes, Job 31:1; and Joseph would not hearken to his bold tempting mistress, to lie with her, or to be with her, Gen. 39:10; and David, when himself, would not sit with vain persons, Ps. 26:3–5; and at another time he refused to take the threshing-floor, oxen, and threshing instruments of Araunah as a gift, but would buy them, because he would avoid the very show of covetousness, as some conceive, 2 Sam. 24:20, seq. Austin being often ensnared in

uncleanness in his younger days, before his conversion, he was exceeding careful to avoid all occasions of it afterwards.

Now a true penitential turning from all sin lies in these six things, and therefore you had need look about you; for if there be any one way of wickedness wherein you walk, and which you are resolved you will not forsake, you are no true penitents, and you will certainly lose your souls, and all the great and glorious things of another world.

The third answer.

Ans. 3. Thirdly, A true penitential turning is a constant and continued turning from sin, 2 Chron. 7:14. As it is total in respect of the act, so it is final in respect of the time. True repentance takes an everlasting farewell, an everlasting adieu of sin. It saith with the spouse, Cant. 5:3, 'I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?' I have found the smart of sin, I have put off the garments of the old man, the rags of old Adam, and how shall I put them on again? The burnt child will dread the fire. The man that hath smarted for suretyship will by no means be persuaded to come into bonds. Though you urge him to it never so frequently, never so strongly, never so rhetorically, yet he will tell you he has smarted for it, he has paid dear for it, and therefore you must excuse him; he has peremptorily resolved, nay, he hath seriously vowed against it; and though he be never so much entreated and by variety of arguments importuned, yet still he remains inexorable, A Christian that hath truly repented, is so sensible of the freeness and sweetness of the grace of God on the one hand, and of the weight of sin and wrath of God on the other hand, that he is highly resolved never to have any more to do with idols, never to meddle more with those burning coals, Ps. 40:12, Hos. 14:8. True repentance is a continued act, 'a repentance never to be repented of.' The true penitent is every day a-

turning further and further from sin, and nearer and nearer to God. There is nothing that fetches so many tears from a penitent man's eyes, nor so many sighs and groans from a penitent man's heart, as this, that he can get no further off from sin, and that he can get no nearer nor no closer to God. Repentance for sin, and a willing continuance in sin, cannot consist in the same subject. A sincere penitent makes as much conscience of repenting daily, as he doth of believing daily, and he can as easily content himself with one act of faith, or love, or fear, or hope, or joy, or obedience, as he can content himself with one act of repentance. 'My sins are ever before me,' Ps. 51:3. This is the voice of every true penitent: Oh that I might sin no more! Oh that I might never dishonour God more! Oh that I might never walk contrary to Jesus Christ more! Oh that I might never grieve the Spirit of grace more! To sin is common to man, yea, to the best man in all the world; but to continue in a course of sin, is only proper to a wicked man. To err and fail, that is human; but to maintain a league or friendship with sin, that is diabolical. Though a true penitent dares not continue in a trade, a path of sin, whilst he lives in this world, yet sin will continue in him whilst he continues in this world. Though sin and grace were not born together, and though sin and grace shall never die together, yet whilst a penitent man lives in this world they must live together. It is one thing for sin to continue in us, and it is another thing for us to continue in sin. The apostle having closed the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, in the triumph of gospel grace, that 'As sin hath reigned unto death, so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord,' begins the next with a prevention of the abuse of this grace; 'What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?' Rom. 6:1, 2. To live in sin, in the face of gospel grace, is most unreasonable, and to a gracious and ingenuous nature impossible. The very question implies a kind of impossibility.

Such as were once dead in sin, and now by gospel grace are dead to sin, such can no longer continue in sin. Look, as it is not the mere falling into the water that drowns a man, but his lying and continuing in it; so it is not a mere falling into sin that damns a man, that drowns a man, that everlastingly undoes a man, but his living in it, his continuing in it. It is bad to sin, but it is infinitely worse to continue in sin. The first best is not to sin, the next best is not to continue in sin, no not for an hour, as Paul speaks in another case, Gal. 2:5, 'To whom we gave place by subjection, no not for an hour.' Certainly to argue from gospel mercy to sinful liberty, is the devil's logic. The more a man lives in the sight of gospel grace, the more sin will be discountenanced, resisted, hated, and totally displaced. A man may as truly assert that the sea burns, or that the fire cools, or that the sun darkens the air, as he may assert that the sight, sense, or sweet of gospel grace will breed security or carnality, looseness or wickedness, in a gracious heart. The true penitent never ceases repenting, till he ceases living. He goes to heaven with the joyful tears of repentance in his eyes; he knows that his whole life is but a day of sowing tears, that he may at last reap everlasting joys. True repentance makes a final and everlasting separation between sin and the soul. It makes such an absolute and complete divorce between sin and the soul, and casts them so far asunder, that no power nor policy can ever bring them to meet as lovers together. The true penitent looks upon sin as an enemy, and deals with it as Amnon dealt with Tamar: 2 Sam. 13:15, 'And Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred wherewith he hated her, was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her; and Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone.' And just thus doth the penitent soul carry it towards sin. He that truly repents, so turns from his sins, that he never returns to the bondage and service of his sins any more, Isa. 30:22, 'Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a

menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.' Isa. 1:16, Ps. 85:8.

But now the repentance of hypocrites is not constant, but inconstant; it is not stedfast, but unstedfast; it is not permanent, but transient; it is quickly on, as quickly off. 'Come,' say they, in that Hosea 6:1, 'and let us return unto the Lord.' But ver. 4, 'O Ephraim! what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.' The hypocrite's repentance is like Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night, and perished in a night, Jonah 4:10. An hypocrite's repentance springs from mutable grounds, causes, considerations and circumstances; and therefore it is compared to a deceitful bow, Hosea 7:16; it is as variable as the wind. An hypocrite is only constant in inconstancy, Ps. 78:8, 'whose spirit was not stedfast with God.' Ver. 37, 'Neither were they stedfast in his covenant,' &c. An hypocrite puts off his sins in the day of adversity, as he doth his garments when he goes to bed, with an intent to put them on again in the morning of prosperity. Ver. 34–36, 'When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God: and they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.' In the language of the blessed Scripture, he is a dog that returns to his vomit again, and such a dog was Judas; and he is a swine that returns to the wallowing in the mire again, and such a swine was Demas; and such dogs and swine are all hypocrites, 2 Peter 2:20–22. It is an extraordinary vanity in some men to lay aside their sins for a time, but with a purpose to return to them again; as they fable it of the serpent that layeth aside his poison when he goeth to drink, and when he hath drunk he returns to it again. It is a sad and sore evil, when men say to their lusts, as Abraham said to his servants, 'Abide you here, and I

will go and worship, and return again unto you,' Gen. 22:5. Doubtless such souls are as far off from sound repentance as light is from darkness, or as hell is from heaven, &c.

Quest. But in what respects is a true penitential turning from sin such a turning from sin as never to return to sin any more? In what respects is the penitent's turning from sin a continued and stedfast turning from sin? &c.

Ans. This is a very sober, serious, weighty question, and bespeaks a very sober, serious, and satisfactory answer, and therefore I would answer the question, (1.) negatively; (2.) affirmatively, &c.

[1.] Negatively, It is not such a turning from sin as never to sin more. 1 Kings 8:46, 'For there is no man that sinneth not.' Prov. 20:9, 'Who can say, I have made my heart clean? I am pure from my sin?' Prov. 24:16, 'A just man falleth seven times, and riseth again.' Eccles. 7:20, 'For there is not a just man upon the earth that doth good, and sinneth not.' Luke 17:4, 'If he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again unto thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.' Mat. 18:21, 22. 'Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him; till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven.' James 3:2, 'For in many things we offend all;' or we stumble all, as the Greek has it. 1 John 1:8, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' Ver. 10, 'If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. And what did the continual burnt-offering which was to be made day by day import, but a daily sinning, and expiating of it? &c., Num. 28:3. Such is the universal corruption of human nature, that the souls of the best, of the purest, and of the holiest men in the world, do from day to day, yea, from moment to

moment, contract some filth and uncleanness. The choicest saints can never acquit themselves from sins of infirmity, such as do inevitably and inseparably cleave unto the best of men, especially considering the state and condition wherein they are, carrying still about them corrupt flesh and blood. Methodius compares the in-bred corruptions of man's heart to a wild fig-tree, growing upon the wall of some goodly temple or stately palace, whereof although the main trunk of the stem be broke off, and stump of the root be plucked up, yet the fibrous strings of it piercing into the joints of the stone-work, will not be utterly extracted, but will be ever and anon shooting and sprouting out, until the whole frame of the building be dissolved, and the stone work thereof be disjointed and pulled in pieces.

[2.] Secondly, It is not such a turning from sin, as that the true penitent shall never relapse into the same kind of sin any more; for a true penitent may fall into the same sin again and again. It was a sin for the disciples to sleep when Christ had commanded them to watch and pray, and yet they slept again and again, Mat. 26:40–45. The prophet Jonah was a holy man, and yet he relapsed into passion and discontent with God again and again; he was discontent with the work God set him about; therefore he flieth to Tarshish, Jonah 1:2, 3; and sorrows for it, and confesseth that they that 'trust upon lying vanities forsake their own mercies,' chap. 2:8; and yet when God had shewed mercy to Nineveh, he was exceedingly discontented with God again: Jonah 4:1, 'But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.' And when the Lord, who might have sent him to his grave, or affrowned him to hell, reasons lovingly, sweetly, and mildly with him, to take him off from his passion, chap. 4:3, 4, and provides for him in his extremity; yet upon a very small occasion, viz., the taking away of a gourd or shrub, which God did to convince him of his folly and, waspishness of spirit, he breaks out again into the same

passion, or worse, as if he had never seen the evil of it, or been humbled for it: Jonah 4:8, 9, 'I am greatly angry,' or I do well to be angry, 'even unto death.' And that is very considerable that Job speaks concerning his friends: Job 19:3, 'These ten times have ye reproached me, yet are ye not ashamed.' It is a sin to reproach any man; it is a greater to reproach a godly man; but yet greater to reproach a godly man under sad and sore afflictions; but yet greatest of all to reproach a godly man under his sufferings, often, frequently; yet, saith Job, 'These ten times have ye reproached me;' and yet Job's friends were not only godly, but eminently godly. By this sad instance it is evident, that gracious men, yea, that men eminently gracious, may fall into the same sin again and again, yea, ten times, that is, often. Though Christ told his disciples that his kingdom was not of this world, yet at three several times their pride and ambitious humour put them upon striving for pre-eminence and worldly greatness. King Jehoshaphat, though he was a godly man, yet he joins affinity with that nonsuch wicked Ahab, for which he was smartly reproved by the prophet: 2 Chron. 19:2, 'And Jehu went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from the Lord.' Now, though this gracious prince was thus reproved and saved, even by a miracle of mercy,—2 Chron. 18:1, 2, 3, 30, 31 compared;—yet soon after he falls into the same sin again, and joins himself with Ahaziah, king of Israel, who did very wickedly, 2 Chron. 20:35, 36, and for which he is severely reproved in ver. 37. 'Then Eliezer, the son of Dodavah of Mareshah, prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.' Lot was twice overcome with wine, &c., and Abraham, though the father of the faithful, yet falls once and again into the same sin: Gen. 12:11–13, compared with chap. 22:1, 2, 3, 4, 13. Peter falls once and again into the same sin;

and John twice worshipped the angel; and Samson, who is by the Spirit of the Lord numbered amongst those worthies of whom this world was not worthy, Heb. 11:32, 33, 38, fell again and again into the same gross sin, as is evident in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of the book of Judges. And the church confesses, that their backslidings are many, Jer. 14:7. By all which it is most evident, that good men may fall again and again into the same sin; and no wonder, for though their repentance be never so sincere and sound, yet their graces are but weak, and their mortification but imperfect in this life, and therefore it is possible for a gracious soul to fall again and again into the same sin. If the fire be not wholly put out, who will think it impossible that it should catch, and burn again and again?

I readily grant that the Lord hath graciously promised to heal the backslidings of his people: Hosea 14:4, and so Jer. 3:22, 'Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings: behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.' See Jer 3:1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14. But I can nowhere find in all the Scriptures, that God hath engaged himself by any particular promise or promises, that Christians truly converted, truly penitent, shall never fall again and again into the same sins after their conversion. I cannot find in all the book of God, where God has engaged himself to give such strength or power against this sin or that, as that a Christian shall be for ever, in this life, put out of all possibility of falling again and again into the same sins. No person on earth can shew such a promise, that when a Christian has been thus or thus troubled, grieved, humbled, or melted for his sins, that then God will assuredly preserve him from ever falling into the same sins again. The sight of such a promise under God's own hand, would be as life from the dead to all real Christians, who fear nothing more than the sin of backsliding. Certainly, there is no such power or infinite virtue in the greatest horrors or terrors, troubles or sorrows, that the soul can be

under for sin, nor in the fullest, sweetest, or choicest discoveries of God's rich grace and free love to the soul, as for ever to fence and secure the soul from relapsing into the same sin again and again. Though grace be a glorious creature, yet it is but a creature. Grace is but a created habit, that may be prevailed against by Satan's temptations, and by the strong, secret, and subtle workings of sin in our hearts. But this must be carefully minded and remembered, that though the saints may and do sometimes relapse, yet they do not relapse in such a manner as wicked men do relapse. For,

(1.) First, They do not relapse voluntarily, but involuntarily. Involuntary relapses are when the resolution and full bent of the heart is against sin, when the soul strives with all its might against sin, by sighs and groans, by prayers and tears, and yet by some invincible weakness is forced to fall back into sin again, because there is not spiritual strength enough to overcome.

(2.) Secondly, They do not relapse out of choice, as wicked men do, Isa. 66:3.

(3.) Thirdly, They do not relapse out of any delight that they take in relapsing. Witness their sad complaints, their great lamentations, and their bitter mournings over their relapses. Relapses into diseases, and relapses into sins, are more troublesome and dangerous than they are any ways delightful to all that are in their wits.

(4.) Fourthly, They do not relapse out of any settled purpose or resolution of heart to relapse, as wicked men do, Jer. 2:25. All the relapses of a saint are against the settled bent, bias, and resolution of his soul.

(5.) Fifthly, They do not relapse out of any love or longing to relapse, as wicked men do, who long and love to return to the flesh-pots of Egypt.

(6.) Sixthly, They do not relapse into enormities, as wicked men do, for it is not usual with God to leave his people frequently to relapse into enormities; for by his Spirit and grace, by his smiles and frowns, by his word and rod, he doth commonly preserve his people from a common, a frequent relapsing into enormities, into gross wickednesses. The common and ordinary relapses of the people of God are relapses into infirmities, as idle words, passion, hastiness, rashness, vain thoughts, &c., and these God pardons in course; but the common and ordinary relapses of wicked men are relapses into enormities, into gross impieties.

(7.) Seventhly, They do not relapse habitually, constantly, as wicked men do. Their relapses are transient, not permanent, they are not of course. A sheep may fall into the mire, but a swine wallows in the mire, &c.

[2.] But, secondly, I answer affirmatively, That notwithstanding all this, yet a true penitential turning from sin is a continued and stedfast turning from sin, and that in these five respects:—

(1.) First, In respect of his habitual purpose and resolution not to sin: Ps. 39:1, 'I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.' David resolves to lay a law of restraint upon his tongue, and to clap a muzzle upon his mouth, whilst he was in the presence of the wicked, who did lie at the catch to ensnare him and trepan him. Come health, come sickness, come honour, come reproach, come poverty, come plenty, come liberty, come restraint, come life, come death, the true penitent is fixed in his purpose and resolution

not to sin. Jerome writes of a brave woman, that being upon the rack, told her persecutors that they might do their worst, for she was firmly resolved rather to die than lie.

(2.) Secondly, In respect of his habitual desires, which are, that he may not sin: Ps. 119:133, 'Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' David's great desire is that he may walk as in a frame, that he may walk by line and rule, exactly, accurately; and that though sin did dwell in him, that yet it might not reign in him; and though it did rebel in him, that yet it might not have dominion over him. He would have his sins to be like those beasts in Daniel, whose dominion was taken away, though their lives were prolonged for a season and a time, chap. 8:12; Ps. 119:10, 'O! let me not wander from thy commandments.' Ver. 36, 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.' Under the name of covetousness all manner of viciousness is to be understood, that being the root of all evil, 1 Tim. 6:10.

(3.) Thirdly, In respect of his habitual endeavours, which still are not to sin. The ordinary and habitual endeavours of a true penitent are still set against sin. He ordinarily rows against the stream of sin, though sometimes the stream proves too strong for him: Ps. 119:11, 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.' He hides the word in his heart as a treasure, that he might not lose it, and as a rule, that he might not transgress against it. The law of God kept close in the heart is the best armour of proof against evil lusts. David locks up the law of God in his heart, as in a chest or cabinet, to secure him against Satan's ambushes and assaults on the one hand, and to preserve him from sin on the other hand. So Ps. 18:23, 'I have kept myself from mine iniquity.'

(4.) Fourthly, In respect of his habitual hatred of sin. Although the true penitent does sometimes sin, yet he always hates the evil he does. There is a firm and fixed hatred in his soul against sin: Ps. 119:104, 'Therefore I hate every false way.' Ver. 113, 'I hate vain thoughts.' Ver. 163, 'I hate and abhor lying.' So Rom. 7:15, 'The evil that I hate, that I do.' A penitent heart usually rises and swells against the toad in the bosom. Some say, that there is such a native dread and terror of the hawk implanted in the dove, that she is afraid of every feather, and that she detests and abhors the very sight of any feather that hath grown upon a hawk; so there is such a detestation and abhorrency of sin divinely implanted in every penitent man's heart, that he cannot but hate everything that looks like it, or that belongs to it, or that comes from it.

(5.) Fifthly, In respect of his constant path, or continued way, or course of life, which is quite opposite and contrary to sin: Gal. 5:17, Isa. 26:7, 'The way of the just is uprightness.' Prov. 16:17, 'The highway of the upright is to depart from evil.' It is as common and ordinary for upright persons to depart from evil, as it is for passengers to keep the king's highways. Though an upright man, through mistake or weakness of grace, or violence of temptation, may step out of a way of holiness, yet walking in a way of wickedness cannot be charged upon him: Ps. 139:23, 24, 'Search me, O God! and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' You know the path and practice of penitent Zaccheus, of penitent Paul, and of the penitent jailor, was quite contrary to those ways of wickedness that they had formerly walked in.

The fourth answer.

Ans. 4. But fourthly and lastly, As a true penitential turning from sin is a constant and continued turning from sin, so it is a returning to God. Sin is an aversion from God, and repentance is a conversion to God, Acts 26:18. Sound repentance is not only a ceasing from doing evil, but also a learning to do well, Isa. 1:16, 17. Repentance and turning to God are joined together, as being one and the same thing, Acts 26:20. The prodigal's repenting was his returning to his father: Luke 15:17, 'When he came to himself, he said, I will arise and go to my father, and say, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee.' &c. The Hebrew word for repentance is from שוב, shob, which signifies to return, implying a going back from what a man had done. It notes a returning or converting from one thing to another, as from sin to God, from evil to good, from hell to heaven. The common call of sinners to repentance is to turn from sin, and to return to God: Isa. 55:7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord,' &c. Jer. 1:4, 'If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me; and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.' And so chap. 18:11, 'Return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your way and your doings good.' 1 Peter 2:25, 'For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls.' It is not enough for a sinner to forsake his sins, but he must also return to the Lord. The true penitent subjects his heart to the power of divine grace, and his life to the blessed will and word of God. Look, as negative goodness can never satisfy a penitent soul, so negative goodness can never save an impenitent soul. It is not enough, O man, that thou art not thus and thus bad, but thou must be thus and thus good, or thou wilt be miserable for ever: Ezek. 18:21, 'But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.' Negative righteousness and holiness is no righteousness, no holiness in the

account of God. It was not the pharisee's negative righteousness, nor his comparative goodness, that could prevent his being rejected of God, or his being shut out of heaven, or his being turned into hell, Luke 18:5, Mat. 20:13, 14. It is not enough that the tree bears no ill fruit, but it must bring forth good fruit, else it must be cut down and cast into the fire; that tree that is not for fruit, is for the fire: 'Every tree that brings not forth good fruit,' says Christ, 'is hewn down, and cast into the fire,' Mat. 7:19. Heaven at last will be found too holy, and too hot, to hold such as please themselves, as satisfy themselves with a negative righteousness. All that negative righteousness and holiness can do, is only to help a man to one of the coolest chambers and casiest beds in hell. True repentance brings the heart and life, not only off from sin, but on to God too; it takes a man not only off from the ways of death, but it engages him to walk in the paths of life: Ps. 119:3, 'They do no iniquity, they walk in his ways.' Prov. 13:14, 'The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.' Prov. 15:24, 'The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.' Ps. 34:14, 'Depart from evil, and do good.' We read in Scripture of God's returning to us, as well as of our returning to God; in both there is repentance. When God returns to us, he repents of the evil of punishment that he hath brought upon us; and when we return to God, we repent of the evil of sin which we have committed against him. The true penitent does not only sadly smite upon his thigh, and say, What have I done? but he also speedily faces about and cries out, I will do so no more, Jer. 31:19. When God calls for true repentance, it is with an 'If thou wilt return,' O Israel, 'return unto me,' Jer. 4:1. And when the people of God do provoke and encourage one another to repentance, it is with a 'Come let us return unto the Lord,' Hosea. 6:1. Repentance unto life is not a turning from sin to sin, nor it is not a turning from profaneness to civility, nor it is not a turning from civility to formality; but it is a turning from darkness to light, it is a turning from the ways of

iniquity into the ways of piety, it is a turning from sin to God, Acts 26:18. In this respect Israel's repentance was very defective. Witness that sad complaint of the prophet: Hosea 7:16, 'They return,' that is, they make a show of repentance, 'but not to the most High.' So they in that Joel 2:12 have the half-turn, but returned not to the Lord with all their hearts. So Jehu went far, and gave many a half-turn, but never turned to the Most High; and that was his ruin at last. Such a repentance as brings the soul never the nearer to God, is a repentance never the nearer; but that repentance that brings the soul nearer to God, is a repentance never to be repented of. And let thus much suffice to have spoken concerning that evangelical repentance that hath the precious promises of remission of sin and salvation running out unto it, &c.

CHAPTER IV

How far an hypocrite cannot go

Several have observed to my hand how far an hypocrite may go, but my design in this chapter is to shew how far an hypocrite cannot go. Many have discovered at large what an hypocrite can do, but my scope in this chapter is to shew what an hypocrite cannot do. Some have shewed what an hypocrite is, and I shall now shew what he is not. Some have shewed the several rounds in Jacob's ladder, that an hypocrite may climb up to; but my business and work in this chapter, is to shew you the several rounds in Jacob's ladder that no hypocrite under heaven can climb up to.

[1.] First, An hypocrite's inside is never answerable to his outside. An hypocrite's inside is one thing, and his outside another thing; an hypocrite is outwardly clean, but inwardly unclean; he is outwardly glorious, but inwardly inglorious, Mat. 23:25–27, Luke 11:39. Hypocrites are like apothecaries' gally-pots, having without the title of some excellent preservative, but within they are full of some deadly poison. They are like the Egyptian temples, that were beautiful without, but within there was nothing to be found but serpents and crocodiles, and other venomous creatures. Hypocrites trade more for a good name, than for a good heart; for a good report, than for a good conscience; they are like fiddlers, more careful in tuning their instruments than in watching their spirits. Hypocrites are like white silver, but they draw black lines; they have a seeming sanctified outside, but stuffed within with malice, worldliness, pride, envy, &c. Like window cushions, made up of velvet and richly embroidered, but stuffed within with hay. An hypocrite may offer sacrifice with Cain, and fast with Jezebel, and humble himself with

Ahab, and lament with the tears of Esau, and kiss Christ with Judas, and follow Christ with Demas, and offer fair for the Holy Ghost with Simon Magus; and yet for all this his inside as bad as any of theirs. An hypocrite is a Cato without and a Nero within; a Jacob without and an Esau within; a David without and a Saul within; a Peter without and a Judas within; a saint without and a Satan within; an angel without and a devil within. An hypocrite is a Jew outwardly, but an atheist, a pagan, a Turk inwardly, Rom. 2:28, 29. I have read of certain images, which on the outside were covered with gold and pearl, resembling Jupiter and Neptune, but within were nothing but spiders and cobwebs; a fit resemblance of hypocrites. Hypocrisy is but an outside, like cloth of arras, fair and beautiful without; but if you look to the inside, you shall find nothing but rags and ends. That monk hit it, that said, To be a monk in outward show was easy, but to be a monk in inward reality was hard. To be a Christian in outward show is easy, but to be a Christian inwardly and really is very hard. An hypocrite's inside never echoes or answers to his outside; his inside is vicious, and his outside is religious. But let all such hypocrites know, that dissembled sanctity is double iniquity, and accordingly at last they shall be dealt with, Mat. 24:5. But,

[2.] Secondly, No hypocrite under heaven is totally divorced from the love and liking of every known sin. There is still some secret lust or other, which as a sweet morsel he rolls under his tongue, and will not spit it out, Job 20:12–14. Every hypocrite tolerates some evil or other in himself, and takes liberty to transgress. An hypocrite will make hard shift to daub up his conscience, and to secure himself from the checks thereof. After once the bag was committed to Judas his custody, after once he was chosen into that sweet office, he quickly put conscience out of office, and never left stealing and licking his fingers, whilst there was any money in his bag to finger. Herod knew much, and heard John Baptist, and had some temporary affections,

and did many good things, Mark 6:20. But yet (1.) he kept Herodias his brother's wife, Mark 6:17; (2.) he took away the life of John the Baptist, Mark 6:27; (3.) he sets Jesus Christ at naught, and rejected him, Luke 23:11. As fair as Herod seemed to carry it, yet he lived in a known notorious sin, and unjustly murdered the messenger of God, and mocked and rejected Jesus Christ as a vile person. Some sin or other always reigns without control in an hypocritical heart. As they say of witches, that they have one familiar or another that still sucks them, an hypocrite always reserves one nest-egg or another in his heart or life, for Satan to sit and brood on. Jehu did many brave things, but yet he kept up the worship of his golden calves. Naaman promises high, but yet he is for bowing in the house of Rimmon. The pharisees were very devout, but yet they loved the praises of men, and the upper-most seats in the synagogues. There is never an hypocrite in the world, but will do what he can to save the life of his sin, though it be with the loss of his soul. O sirs! Satan can be contented that hypocrites should yield to God in many things, provided they will be but true to him in some one thing; for he very well knows, that one sin lived in and allowed, gives him as much advantage against the soul as more. Satan can hold a man fast enough by one sin, as the fowler can hold the bird fast enough by one claw. Satan knows, that one sin lived in and allowed, will mar all a man's sweetest duties and services; as one dead fly will mar the whole box of precious ointment, Eccles. 10:1, and as one jarring string will bring the sweetest music out of tune. It is said of Naaman the Syrian, that he was a valiant man, and a victorious man, and an honourable man, and a great favourite with his prince, but a leper, 2 Kings 5:1. So it may be said of many hypocrites, they have such and such excellencies, and they perform such and such glorious duties, but they live and allow themselves in this or that sin, and that mars the beauty of all their services, Mat. 7:21–23. Satan knows, that one sin lived in and allowed, will as certainly damn a man as many; as

one disease, one ulcerous part, may as certainly kill a man as many. Satan knows, that one sin lived in and allowed, will render a man as unclean in the eye of God as many. If the leper in the law had the spot of leprosy in any one part of his body, he was accounted a leper, although all the rest of his body were sound and whole, Lev. 14. So he who hath the spot of the leprosy of sin allowed in any one part of his soul, he is a spiritual leper in the eye of God; he is unclean, though in other parts he may not be unclean. The schoolmen say, that if a sow do but wallow in one miry or dirty hole, she is filthy; and certainly, that soul that doth but wallow in any one sin, he is filthy in the eye of God. Satan knows, that one sin lived in and allowed, will as effectually keep Christ and the soul asunder as many, as one stone in the pipe will as effectually keep out the water as many. Satan knows, that one sin lived in and allowed, will make way for many, as one thief can open the door to let in many more. Satan knows, that one sin lived in and allowed, will as certainly shut the soul out of heaven as many. One enemy may shut the door upon a man as well as many; and what difference is there between that man that is shut out of heaven for living in many sins, and he that is shut out of heaven for living but in one sin? One sin lived in and allowed, will arm conscience against a man, as well as many. If there be but one crack in the honey glass, there the wasps will be buzzing, One sin allowed and countenanced, will spoil the music of conscience. One sin lived in and allowed, will make death as terrible and as formidable to the soul as many. One handwriting upon the wall made King Nebuchadnezzar's countenance to change, and his thoughts to be troubled, and the joints of his loins to be loosed, and his knees to be dashed one against another, Daniel 5:5, 6. Now, all this Satan knows, and therefore he labours mightily to engage hypocrites to live in the allowance of some one sin. O sirs! remember that as one hole in a ship will sink it, and as one stab at the heart will kill a man, and as one glass of poison will poison a man, and as one act of treason will

make a man a traitor, so one sin lived in and allowed will damn a man for ever. One wound strikes Goliath dead, as well as three-and-twenty did Cæsar; one Delilah will do Samson as much mischief as all the Philistines; one wheel broken spoils all the whole clock; one vein's bleeding will let out all the vitals as well as more; one bitter herb will spoil all the pottage. By eating one apple, Adam lost paradise, Gen. 3; one lick of honey endangered Jonathan's life, 1 Sam. 14:33; one Achan was a trouble to all Israel, Joshua 7; one Jonah was lading too heavy for a whole ship, Jonah 1; so one sin lived in and allowed, is enough to make a man miserable for ever. One millstone will sink a man to the bottom of the sea as well as a hundred; so one sin lived in and indulged will sink a man to the bottom of hell as well as a hundred. I have read of a great Roman captain, who, as he was riding in his triumphant chariot through Rome, had his eyes never off a courtezan that walked along the street, which made one say, Behold how this great captain, that hath conquered such and such armies, is himself conquered by one silly woman! There is never an hypocrite in the world, but lies under the conquest of one base lust or another, but lives under the reign and dominion of one sin or another. That soul that can in sincerity of heart appeal to a heart-searching God, that it is otherwise with him, viz., that he does not live nor allow himself in any one sinful way or practice, that soul, I dare assure in the Lord's name, is no hypocrite, Ps. 139:23, 24.

[3.] Thirdly, As an hypocrite's heart is never thoroughly subdued to a willingness to part with every lust, so neither is his heart thoroughly subdued to a willingness to perform all known duties. Sometimes he is all for public duties, but makes no conscience of closet-duties, or of family-duties; sometimes he is all for the duties of the first table, but makes no conscience of the duties of the second table; and sometimes he is all for the duties of the second table, but makes no

conscience of the duties of the first table. If he obeys one command, he willingly lives in the neglect of another; if he does one duty, he will be sure to cast off another; as he is not willing to fall out with every sin, so he is not willing to fall in with every duty. An hypocrite's obedience is always partial, it is never universal; he still baulks or boggles with those commands that cross his lusts. The pharisees fasted, prayed, gave alms, and paid tithes, Mat. 23:23. Oh but they omitted 'the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith,' chap 6; and they were unnatural to parents, and under a pretence of praying, they made a prey of widows' houses, Mat. 15:4–6; under a pretence of piety, they exercised the greatest covetousness, unrighteousness, and cruelty, and that upon widows, who are usually the greatest objects of pity and charity; they made no bones of robbing the widow, under a pretence of honouring of God. So Judas, under a pretence of laying up for the poor, robbed the poor; he pretended to lay up for the poor, but he intended only to lay up for himself, and to provide against a rainy day, John 12:6. It is probable that he had no great mind to stay long with his Lord, and therefore he was resolved to make the best market he could for himself. Judas being willing to set up for himself, under a cloak of holiness, he practises the greatest unfaithfulness. Though the eagle soars high, yet still her eye is upon her prey; so though Judas did soar high in profession, yet his eye was still upon his prey, upon his bags; and so he might have it, he cared not who went without it; so he might be rich, he did not care though his Lord and his retinue grew never so poor. Judas under all his shows and sanctity, had not so much as common honesty in him. Counterfeit holiness is often made a stalking-horse to much righteousness;2 but certainly it were better with the philosopher to have honesty without religion, than to have religion without honesty. An hypocrite may exercise himself in some outward, easy, ordinary duties of religion; but when shall you see an hypocrite laying the axe to the root of the tree, or a-searching

and trying his own heart, or severely judging his bosom sins, or humbly mourning and lamenting over secret corruptions, or doubling his guards about his own soul, or rejoicing in the graces, services, or excellencies of others, or striving or pressing after the highest pitches of grace, holiness, and communion with God, or endeavouring more to cast out the beam out of his own eye, than the mote out of his brother's eye, or to be more severe against his own sins than against the sins of others? Alas! an hypocrite is so far from practising these duties, that he thinks them either superfluous or impossible. An hypocrite's obedience is always a limited and stinted obedience. It is either limited to such commands which are most suitable to his ease, safety, honour, profit, pleasure, &c., or else it is limited to the outward part of the command, and never extends itself to the inward and spiritual part of the command; as you may see in the scribes and pharisees. Their obedience was all outward; they had no regard at all to the inward and spiritual part of any command; as is evident in that high charge that Christ gives in against them, Mat. 6. They did not murder, they did not commit adultery, they had an eye to the outward part of the command; but Christ charges them with unjust and adulterous thoughts, unchaste glances, contemplative wickedness, speculative uncleanness, &c., they having no regard at all to the inward and spiritual part of any command. Common grace looks only to some particular duties, but saving grace looks to all. Renewing grace comes off to positives as well as negatives; it teacheth us to cease to do evil, and it learns us also to do good, Isa. 1:16, 17. It teacheth us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and also to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, Titus 2:11–13. These words contain the sum of a Christian's duty. To live soberly towards ourselves, righteously towards our neighbours, and godly towards God, is true godliness indeed, and the whole duty of man. There is never an hypocrite in the world that can sincerely appeal to God, and say, Lord! thou knowest that my heart is

subdued to a willingness to perform all known duties; I would willingly do the best I can to observe all thy royal laws: Lord! I unfeignedly desire, and really endeavour to have, an eye upon every command of thine, and to live up to every command of thine; and it is the real grief of my heart, and the daily burden of my soul, when I violate any of thy blessed laws, Ps. 119:6; Luke 1:5, 6; Acts 13:22. He that can in uprightness thus appeal to God, shall never miscarry in that other world. But,

[4.] Fourthly, There is never an hypocrite in the world that makes God, or Christ, or holiness, or his doing or receiving good in his station, relation, or generation, his grand end, his highest end, his ultimate end of living in the world. Pleasures, profits, and honours, are the hypocrite's all he aims at in this world; they are his trinity which he adores and serves, and sacrificeth himself unto, 1 John 2:16. An hypocrite's ends are corrupt and selfish. God may possibly be at the higher end of his work, but self is at the further end; for he that was never truly cast out of himself, can have no higher end than himself. An hypocrite is all for his own glory; he acts for himself, and from himself. So I may have the profit, the credit, the glory, the applause, come of God's glory what will! this is the language of an unsound heart. An hypocrite will seem to be very godly when he can make a gain of godliness; he will seem to be very holy when holiness is the way to outward greatness and happiness; but his religious wickedness will double-damn the hypocrite at last. Self-ends are the operative ingredients in all an hypocrite does; self is the chief engine, self is the great wheel, that sets all an hypocrite's wheels a-going. When hypocrites take up religion, it is only to serve their own turns, to bring about their own carnal ends; they serve not the Lord, but their own bellies, Rom. 16:18; Philip. 3:19. They use religion only as a stream to turn about their own mill, and the more neatly to effect their own carnal projects. Simon Magus will needs be baptized, and

he is very desirous to have power to give the Holy Ghost to others; but his aim being only to get a name, and to get money, Peter tells him to his face, that his heart was not right in the sight of God, Acts 8:21. No man can go higher than his principles, and therefore an hypocrite having no higher principles than himself, all he does must needs be terminated in himself. Look, as all the rivers that come from the sea do return back again to the sea, from whence they come, so all those duties which arise from a man's self, must needs centre in a man's self. An hypocrite always makes himself the end of all his service; but let such hypocrites know, that though their profession be never so glorious, and their duties never so abundant, yet their ends being selfish and carnal, all their pretensions and performances are but beautiful abominations in the sight of God. An hypocrite has always a squint eye, and squint-eyed aims and squint-eyed ends in all he does. Balaam spake very religiously, and he multiplied altars and sacrifices; but the thing he had in his eye was the wages of unrighteousness, Num. 22:23, 2 Pet. 2:15. Jehu destroyed bloody Ahab's house, he executed the vengeance of God upon that wicked family; he readily, resolutely, and effectually destroyed all the worshippers of Baal, but his ends were to secure the kingdom to him and his, 2 Kings 10. Ahab and the Ninevites fasted in sackcloth, but it was merely that they might not feel the heavy judgments that they feared would overtake them, 1 Kings 21, Jonah 3. The Jews in Babylon fasted and mourned, and mourned and fasted seventy years, but it was more to get off their chains than their sins, it was more to be rid of their captivity than it was to be rid of their iniquity, Zech. 7:5, 6. Look, as the eagle hath an eye upon her prey when she flies highest, so these Jews in all their fasting, praying, mourning, they had only an eye to their own ease, deliverance, freedom, &c.; in all their religious duties they were acted from evil principles, and carried on by self-respects; and therefore Daniel denies that in all that seventy years' captivity they had prayed to any purpose. 'All this

has come upon us, yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth,' Dan. 9:13. It is the end that dignifies or debaseth the action, that rectifies it or adulterates it, that sets a crown of honour or a crown of shame upon the head of it. He that commonly, habitually, in all his duties and services, proposes to himself no higher ends than the praises of men, or rewards of men, or the stopping the mouth of natural conscience, or only to avoid a smarting rod, or merely to secure himself from wrath to come, he is an hypocrite. The ends of a man's actions are always a great discovery either of sincerity or hypocrisy. Look, as great gifts, not sweetened with sincerity, are no ornaments to us; so great infirmities, not soured with hypocrisy, are no great deformities to us. An hypocrite's ends are always below God; they are always below glorifying of God, exalting of God, walking with God, and enjoying communion with God. An hypocrite, in all he does, still proposes to himself some poor, ignoble, self-end or other.

But now mark, a sincere Christian, if he prays or hears, or gives or fasts, or repents or obeys, &c., God's glory is the main end of all. The glory of God is his highest end, his ultimate end, Ps. 115:1; 1 Thess. 2:6. A sincere Christian can be content to be trampled upon and vilified, so God's name be glorified. The bent of such a heart is for God and his glory, nothing but sincerity can carry a soul so high, as in all acts natural, civil and religious, to intend God's glory, Rev. 4:9–11. A sincere Christian ascribes the praise of all to God; he sets the crown on Christ's head alone; he will set God upon the throne, and make all things else his servants, or his footstool, Rom. 14:7, 8. All must bow the knee to God, or be trodden in the dirt. He will love nothing, he will embrace nothing but what sets God higher, or brings God nearer to his heart. The glory of God is the mark, the white, that the sincere Christian has in his eye. The sincere Christian lives not to himself, but to him who lives for ever; he lives not to his own will, or

lusts, or greatness, or glory in this world, but he lives to his glory, whose glory is dearer to him than his own life, 1 Cor. 10:31; Rev. 12:11. Look, as bright shining golden vessels do not retain the beams of the sun which they receive, but reflect them back again upon the sun; so the sincere Christian returns and reflects back again upon the Sun of righteousness the praise and glory of all the gifts, graces, and virtues that they have received from him. The daily language of sincere souls is this: Non nobis Domine, non nobis Domine, not unto us, Lord, not unto us, Lord, but to thy name be all the glory, 1 Chron. 29:10, 18; Rom. 13:7. A sincere Christian makes conscience of giving men their dues; how much more, then, does he make conscience of giving God his due, Ps. 96:7, 8. Now glory is God's due, and God stands upon nothing more than that we give him the glory due unto his name, as you may see in Ps. 29:1, 2. There are three gives in those two verses: 'Give unto the Lord, give unto the Lord, give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto his name.' Glory is God's right, and he stands upon his right; and this the sincere Christian knows, and therefore he gives him his right, he gives him the honour and the glory that is due unto his name. But pray do not mistake me: I do not say that such as are really sincere do actually eye the glory of Christ in all their actions. Oh no! This is a happiness desirable on earth, but shall never be attained till we come to heaven. Bye and base ends and aims will be still ready to creep into the best hearts, but all sincere hearts sigh and groan under them. They complain to God of them, and they cry out for justice, justice upon them; and it is the earnest desires and daily endeavours of their souls to be rid of them; and therefore they shall not be imputed to them, nor keep good things from them. But now take a sincere Christian in his ordinary, usual, and habitual course, and you shall find that his aims and ends in all his actions and undertakings are to glorify God, to exalt God, and to lift up God in the world. If the hypocrite did in good earnest aim at the glory of God in what he does, then the glory of God would

swallow up his bye-aims and carnal ends, as Aaron's rod swallowed up the magicians' rods, Exod. 7:10–12. Look, as the sun puts out the light of the fire, so the glory of God, where it is aimed at, will put out and consume all bye and base ends. This is most certain, that which is a man's great end, that will work out all other ends. He that sets up the glory of God as his chief end, will find that his chief end will by degrees eat out all low and base ends. Look, as Pharaoh's lean kine ate up the fat, Gen. 41:4, so the glory of God will eat up all those fat and worldly ends that crowd in upon the soul in religious work. Where the glory of God is kept up as a man's greatest end, there all bye and base ends will be kept at an under. By what has been said, it is most evident that an hypocrite in all his transactions looks at himself, and designs the advance and advantage of himself. An hypocrite is as well able to make a world, and to unmake himself, as he is able to make the glory of God, the exaltation of God, his highest end, his utmost aim, in what he does. But,

[5.] Fifthly, No hypocrite can live wholly and only upon the righteousness of Christ, the satisfaction of Christ, the merits of Christ, for justification and salvation. The hypocritical scribes and pharisees prayed and fasted, and kept the Sabbath, and gave alms, &c., and in this legal righteousness they rested and trusted, Mat. 6, Luke 18:11, 12. Ponder upon that Rev. 3:16–18. Upon the performance of these and such like duties they laid the weight of their souls and the stress of their salvation, and so perished for ever. An hypocrite rests upon what he doth, and never looks so high as the righteousness of Christ. He looks upon his duties as so much good moneys laid out for heaven; he weaves a web of righteousness to clothe himself withal; he never looks out for a more glorious righteousness to be justified by than his own, and so puts a slight upon the righteousness of Christ: Rom. 10:3, 'For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their

own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.' The first step to salvation is to renounce our own righteousness; the next step is to embrace the righteousness of Christ, which is freely offered to sinners in the gospel; but these things the hypocrite minds not, regards not. The righteousness of an hypocrite is not only imperfect, but impure, a rag, a filthy rag; and therefore he that rests upon such a righteousness must needs miscarry to all eternity, Isa. 64:6. O sirs! who will say that that man needs a saviour, that can fly to heaven upon the wings of his own duties and services? If a man's duties can pacify an infinite wrath, and satisfy an infinite justice, then farewell Christ, and welcome duties. He that will rest upon his own righteousness for life and justification, must needs sit down on this side salvation; he that rests upon his duties, and that rests upon a gift of knowledge, a gift of utterance, a gift of memory, or a gift of prayer, though he may come near to heaven, and bid fair for heaven, yet he will never be able to get into heaven. Now, how sad is it for a man to lose himself and his soul in a wilderness of duties, when he is upon the borders, yea, the very brink, of the holy land. He that rests upon anything in him, or done by him, as a means to procure the favour of God, or the salvation of his soul, will put such a cheat upon himself as will undo him for ever. Non-submission to the righteousness of Christ keeps Christ and the hypocrite asunder. Christ will never love nor like to put the fine, clean, white linen of his own righteousness upon the old garment, the old rags of an hypocrite's duties, Rev. 19:7, 8; neither will Christ ever delight to put his new wine into such old bottles, Mat. 9:16, 17. An hypocrite's confidence in his own righteousness turns his righteousness into filthiness, Prov. 21:27. But now a sincere Christian, he renounces his own righteousness, he renounces all confidence in the flesh, Philip. 3:3; he looks upon his own righteousness as dung, yea, as dogs' meat, as some interpret the word σκύβαλα in that Philip. 3:8; he will say no more to his duties, to the

works of his hands, 'Ye are my gods,' Hosea 14:3. When they look upon the holiness, of God's nature, the righteousness of his government, the severity of his law, the terror of his wrath, they see an absolute and indispensable necessity of a more glorious righteousness than their own to appear before God in. A sincere Christian sets the highest price and value upon the righteousness of Christ: Ps. 71:16, 'I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.' Mark the emphasis doubled, 'of thine,' and 'thine only.' A sincere Christian is convinced of the nature, worth, and excellency of the righteousness of Christ, and therefore he cries out, 'I will make mention of thy righteousness, of thine only.' The costly cloak of Alcisthenes, which Dionysius sold to the Carthaginians for an hundred talents, was indeed a mean and beggarly rag in a sincere Christian's eye, to that embroidered mantle of righteousness that Christ puts upon his. A sincere Christian rejoices in the righteousness of Christ above all: Isa. 61:10, 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.' It is matter of joy, and a sign of great favour from the great Turk, when a rich garment is cast upon any that comes into his presence. Oh then, what matter of joy must it be to a sincere Christian to have the rich and royal garment of Christ's righteousness cast upon him! Isa. 28:16. A sincere Christian rests on the righteousness of Christ as on a sure foundation: Isa. 45:24, 'Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.' It was a very sweet and golden expression of one, when he thought himself to be at the point of death: 'I confess,' said he, 'I am not worthy; I have no merits of mine own to obtain heaven by; but my Lord had a double right thereunto; an hereditary right as a Son, and a meritorious right as a sacrifice; he was contented with the one right himself, the other right he hath given unto me, by the virtue of

which gift I do rightly lay claim unto it, and am not confounded.' A sincere Christian looks upon the righteous-of Christ as that which renders him most splendid and glorious in the eyes of God: Philip. 3:9, 'And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' 'The church,' saith Marloratus, 'which puts on Christ and his righteousness, is more illustrious than the air is by the sun.' A sincere Christian looks upon the righteousness of Christ as his only security against wrath to come, 1 Thes. 1:10. Wrath to come is the greatest wrath, wrath to come is the purest wrath, wrath to come is infinite wrath, wrath to come is everlasting wrath. Now the sincere Christian, he knows no way under heaven to secure himself from wrath to come, but by putting on the robe of Christ's righteousness, Rom. 13:14. The story tells us, if we may believe it, that Pilate being called to Rome to give an account unto the emperor for some misgovernment and mal-administration, he put on the seamless coat of Christ, and all the time he had that coat upon his back, Cæsar's fury was abated. There is nothing that can abate the wrath and fury of a sin-revenging God, but the seamless coat of God's righteousness. Well, for a close remember this, there is never an hypocrite in the world that is more pleased, satisfied, delighted and contented with the righteousness of Christ, than with his own, &c. Though an hypocrite may be much in duties, yet he never lives above his duties; he works for life, and he rests in his work, and this proves his mortal wound. But,

[6.] Sixthly, An hypocrite never embraces a whole Christ; he can never take up his full and everlasting rest, satisfaction, and content in the person of Christ, in the merits of Christ, in the enjoyment of Christ alone. No hypocrite did ever long and mourn after the enjoyment of Christ, as the best thing in all the world. No hypocrite did ever prize Christ for a Sanctifier as well as a Saviour. No

hypocrite did ever look upon Christ, or long for Christ to deliver him from the power of his sins, as much or as well as to deliver him from wrath to come. No hypocrite can really love the person of Christ, or take satisfaction in the person of Christ. The rays and beams of Christ's glory has never warmed his heart; he never knew what bosom communion with Christ meant, 1 Thes. 1:10. An hypocrite may love to be healed by Christ, and to be pardoned by Christ, and to be saved by Christ, &c.; but he can never take any complacency in the person of Christ; his heart never seriously works after union with Christ. The love of a sincere Christian runs much out to the person of Christ. Heaven itself without Christ would be to such a soul but a poor thing, a low thing, a little thing, an uncomfortable thing, an empty thing. It is the person of Christ that is the sparkling diamond in the ring of glory, Cant. 5:10; Philip. 1:21, and 3:7–10. No hypocrite in the world is sincerely willing to receive Christ in all his offices, and to close with him upon gospel terms. The terms upon which God offers Christ in the gospel are these, viz., that we shall accept of a whole Christ with a whole heart, 1 John 5:1; Mat. 16:24. Now, mark, a whole Christ includes all his offices, and a whole heart includes all our faculties. Christ as mediator is king, priest, and prophet; and so God the Father in the gospel offers him. Salvation was too great and too glorious a work to be perfected and completed by any one office of Christ. Christ as a prophet instructs us, and as a priest he redeems us and intercedes for us, and as a king he sanctifies and saves us. The apostle hit it when he said, 'He is made to us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,'1 Cor. 1:30. Consider Christ as our prophet, and so he is made wisdom to us; consider him as our priest, and so he is made righteousness and redemption to us; consider him as our king, and so he is made sanctification and holiness to us. An hypocrite may be willing to embrace Christ as a priest to save him from wrath, from the curse, from hell, from everlasting burning, but he is never sincerely willing to embrace

Christ as a prophet to teach and instruct him, and as a king to rule and reign over him. Many hypocrites may be willing to receive a Christ Jesus, that are not willing to receive a Lord Jesus; they may be willing to embrace a saving Christ, but they are not willing to embrace a ruling Christ, a commanding Christ: 'This man shall not rule over us,' Luke 19:27. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' 'And ye will not come to me that ye might have life.' 'He came to his own, and his own received him not.' An hypocrite is willing to receive Christ in one office, but not in every office; and this is that stumbling-stone at which hypocrites stumble and fall, and are broken in pieces. Certainly Christ is as lovely and as comely, as desirable and delightful, as eminent and excellent in one office as he is in another; and therefore it is a just and righteous thing with God, that hypocrites that won't receive him in every office, should have no benefit by any one of his offices. Christ and his offices may be distinguished, but Christ and his offices can never be divided, 1 Cor. 1:13. Whilst many have been a-labouring to divide one office of Christ from another, they have wholly stripped themselves of any advantage or benefit by Christ. Hypocrites love to share with Christ in his happiness, but they don't love to share with Christ in his holiness. They are willing to be redeemed by Christ, but they are not cordially willing to submit to the laws and government of Christ; they are willing to be saved by his blood, but they are not willing to submit to his sceptre. Hypocrites love the privileges of the gospel, but they don't love the services of the gospel, especially those that are most inward and spiritual. But now a sincere Christian, he owns Christ in all his offices, he receives Christ in all his offices, and he closes with Christ in all his offices. He accepts of him, not only as a Christ Jesus, but also as a Lord Jesus; he embraces him, not only as a saving Christ, but also as a ruling Christ. The Colossians received

him as Christ Jesus the Lord, Col. 2:6; they received a Lord Christ as well as a saving Christ; they received Christ as a king upon his throne, as well as a sacrifice upon his cross, 2 Cor. 4:5. God the Father in the gospel tenders a whole Christ. We preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and accordingly a sincere Christian receives a whole Christ, he receives Christ Jesus the Lord, Acts 5:31; he says with Thomas, 'My Lord and my God,' John 20:28; he takes Christ for his wisdom as well as for his righteousness, and he takes him for his sanctification as well as for his redemption. An hypocrite is all for a saving Christ, for a sin-pardoning Christ, for a soul-glorifying Christ, but regards not a ruling Christ, a reigning Christ, a commanding Christ, a sanctifying Christ, and this at last will prove his damning sin, John 3:19, 20. But,

[7] Seventhly, An hypocrite cannot mourn for sin as sin, nor grieve for sin as sin, nor hate sin as sin, nor make head against sin as sin. Mark, to hate sin is not (1.) Merely to refrain from sin, for so Balaam did, even then when he was tempted to it, Num. 22. (2.) To hate sin is not merely to confess sin, for so Pharaoh and Judas did, Exod. 10:16, Mat. 27:4. (3.) To hate sin is not merely to be afraid to sin, for this may be where the hatred of sin is not. (4.) To hate sin is not merely to mourn because of the dreadful effects and fruits that sin may produce, for so Ahab did, and the Ninevites did, &c. He that fears sin for hell, fears not to sin but to burn, but he hates sin indeed whoso hates sin as hell itself. It was a saying of one of the ancients, that if hell and sin were before him, he would rather fall into hell than fall into sin.3 Here was a true hatred of sin indeed. An hypocrite may be troubled for sin, as it blots his name, and wounds his conscience, and brings a scourge, and destroys his soul, and shuts him out of heaven, and throws him to hell; but he is never troubled for sin, he never mourns for sin, he never hates sin because it is contrary to the nature of God, the being of God, the law of God, the

glory of God, the design of God, or because of the evil that is in the nature of sin, or because of the defiling and polluting power of sin. True hatred of sin is universal; it is of the whole kind. He who hates a toad because it is a toad, hates every toad; and he who hates a man because he is holy, hates every holy man; and so he who hates sin because it is sin, hates every sin: Ps. 119:128, 'I hate every false way.' True hatred is ever against the whole kind of a thing. Every sincere Christian hath in him a general hatred of every false way, and dares not allow himself in the least sin. 'What I do I allow not,' Rom. 7:15: Rom. 12:9, 'Abhor that which is evil.' The Greek word ἀποστυγοῦντες is very significant. The simple verb imports extreme detestation, which is aggravated by the composition. The word signifies to hate evil as hell itself. Though an hypocrite may hate some sins,—'Thou abhorrest idols,' Rom. 2:22,—yet that is out of some peculiar and particular indisposition to a particular sin; but this hatred of this or that particular sin, ariseth not from an inward nature or gracious principle, as it doth in him that is a sincere Christian; and the reason is this, because that contrariety to sin which is in a real Christian arising from this inward gracious nature, is to the whole species or kind of sin, and is irreconcilable to any sin whatsoever. As contrarieties of nature are to the whole kind, as light is contrary to all darkness, and fire to all water; so this contrariety to sin arising from the inward man, is universal to all sin. Though a sincere Christian has not a universal victory over all sin, yet there is in him a universal contrariety to all sin. Victory argues strength, contrariety argues nature. Hence it is that an hypocrite may hate one sin and love another, because there is not a gracious nature in him which would be contrary to all. The inward nature of a Christian is to be judged by the universal contrariety of his inward man to all sin. Now this universal contrariety to all sin will beget a universal conflict with all sin. O sirs! remember this: universal contrariety to sin can be found in no man but he that is sincere; and this universal contrariety to sin

argues an inward nature of grace, and this is that which differences a real Christian from an hypocrite, who may oppose some sins out of other principles and reasons. An hypocrite may be angry with this sin and that, which brings the smarting rod, and wounds his conscience, and disturbs his peace, and embitters his mercies, and strangles his comforts, and that lays him open to wrath, and that brings him even to the gates of hell, but he can never hate sin as sin. An hypocrite, he hates some sins but likes others, he loathes some but loves others, he opposes some but practises others, like the angel of the church of Ephesus, that hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, but loved lukewarmness. Many men detest theft that love covetousness, abhor whoredom that like irreligiousness, &c., Rev. 2:5, 6. There is no hypocrite under heaven that can truly say, I hate every false way; but a sincere Christian he hates all sinful ways, but his own first and most. An upright heart leaves no nest-egg for Satan to sit on, but the hypocrite always does. Mark, in true hatred there are six things observable:

(1.) First, True hatred includes an extreme detestation. Every dislike is not hatred, but true hatred is an extreme loathing: 'Thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence,' Isa. 30:22; 'In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats,' chap. 2:20. Their detestation should be so great that they should cast their most costlyidols of silver and gold to the most dark, nasty, dusty corners. To testify the sincerity of their conversion to God, they should hate and abhor, abandon and abolish, their gold and silver idols which they valued above all others.

(2.) Secondly, True hatred includes earnest separation. He that hates his sin would fain be separated from his sin; 'For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened,' 2 Cor. 5:4. A sincere Christian

finds no burden to lie so heavy and weighty upon his spirit as sin, and therefore he groans to be delivered from it. In the law, he that hated his wife did sue out a bill of divorce from her, Deut. 24:3. He that truly hates sin, puts in many a bill into the court of heaven that he may be for ever divorced from his sin.

(3.) Thirdly, True hatred includes an irreconcilable alienation. He that hates sin has his heart for ever alienated from sin; he who hates sin can never be one with sin. Two angry men may be made friends; but if two men hate each other, all friendship is everlastingly broken betwixt them. A man may be angry with sin, and yet made friends with sin again; but if once he comes to hate his sin, then all friendship with sin is everlastingly broken. When Christ and the soul comes to be really one, then sin and the soul comes to be everlastingly two, &c.

(4.) Fourthly, True hatred includes a constant and perpetual conflict: 'The flesh will be still lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.' Though sin and grace were not born together, and though sin and grace shall never die together, yet whilst a believer lives in this world, they must live together; and whilst sin and grace do cohabit together, they will still be opposing and conflicting one with another, Gal. 5:17, Rom. 7:22, 23. That man that truly hates sin will everlastingly conflict with sin. He will die fighting against his sins, as one of the dukes of Venice died fighting against his enemies with his weapons in his hand. Well, Christians, remember this, though to be kept from sin brings most peace and comfort to us, yet for us to oppose sin, and for God to pardon sin, that brings most glory to God, 2 Cor. 12:7–9.

(5.) Fifthly. True hatred includes a deadly intention and destruction, for nothing satisfies hatred but death and ruin. Saul hated David,

and sought his life; he hunted him up and down as a partridge in the mountains; he left no stone unturned, nor no means unattempted, whereby he might revenge himself upon David, 1 Sam. 26:19, 20; 1 Sam. 23:22. Haman hated Mordecai, and nothing would satisfy him but to bring him to a shameful death, to see him hanged on a gallows fifty cubits high, Esth. 5:14, which was designed, saith Lyra, to put Mordecai to the greater shame, for he hanging high, every one might see him and point to him. Now when there was but one night betwixt Mordecai and a shameful death, divine providence opportunely struck in and saved him from Haman's malice, and caused the mischief which he had plotted against Mordecai suddenly to fall upon his own pate; for he who was highly feasted with the king one day, was made a feast for crows the next day. Absalom hated Amnon and killed him, 2 Sam. 13:22–33. Julian the apostate hated the Christians with a deadly hatred. He put many thousands of them to death, and threatened and vowed that at his return from fighting against the Persians, he would put all the Christians in his empire to the sword; but God prevented him by cutting him off in that expedition. A Christian that hates sin can't be satisfied but in the death and destruction of it. In all his duties the language of his soul is, Lord, let my sins be destroyed; whoever escapes, let not my sins escape the hand of thy revenging justice. And in all ordinances the language of his soul is, O Lord! when shall my sins be subdued and mortified? when shall my cursed corruptions be brought to an under? yea, when shall they all be drowned in the Red Sea of my Saviour's blood? &c.

(6.) Sixthly, True hatred includes an impartial aversation; true hatred is of the whole kind. But of this before.

To wind up all, ask thy heart what is it that thou abhorrest as the superlative evil? What is that which thou wouldest have separated as

far from thee as heaven is from hell? What is that thy heart will never renew league or friendship with any more? What is that against which thy soul doth rise, and with which, as Israel with Amalek, thou wilt have war for ever? Exodus 17:16. What is that which thou wilt be avenged of, and daily dost endeavour the mortifying and crucifying of? What is that which thou settest thy heart against in the comprehensive latitude thereof, whether great or little, open or secret? If it be sin, if it be thy sins, if it be all thy sins, then assuredly here is a true hatred of sin, and assuredly here is a most distinguishing character of a child of God, of a sound conversion, and of a saving change. It was not wont to be thus with thee, nor is this findable in any hypocrite, or in any unconverted person upon the face of the earth. Sin was once to thee as Delilah to Samson, Judges 14:3, 7; but now it is to thee as Tamar to Amnon, 2 Sam. 13:15. Once it was a sweet morsel which thou heldest fast and wouldest not let it go, Job 20:12, 13; but now it is the menstruous cloth, Isa. 30:22, which thou castest away, saying, 'Get thee hence.' Now with Ephraim thou criest out, 'What have I to do any more with idols?' Hosea 14:8. Oh, if it be indeed thus with thee, then thou hast cause for ever to be much in blessing and in admiring of the Lord for his distinguishing grace and favour towards thee. O sirs! the world is full of baits, snares, and temptations; but whilst the hatred of sin burns in your breasts, you may cast up your caps, and throw the gauntlet to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Well, remember this for ever, there are three things an hypocrite can never do: (1.) He can never mourn for sin as sin. (2.) He can never mourn for the sins of others as well as his own. Moses, Lot, David, Jeremiah, Paul, and those in that Ezek. 9:4, 6, mourned for others' sins as well as their own; but Pharaoh, Ahab, Judas, Demas, Simon Magus never did. (3.) He can never hate sin as sin. But,

[8.] Eighthly, No hypocrite is habitually low or little in his own eyes. No hypocrite has ordinarily mean thoughts of himself, or a poor esteem of himself. No hypocrite loves to lessen himself to greaten Christ, to debase himself to exalt Christ, 1 Cor. 8:1, 2, John 7:49 and 9:34. No hypocrite loves to be outshined; all hypocrites love to write an I, not a Christ, upon what they do. The pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess,' Luke 18:11, 12. All hypocrites stand not only upon their comparisons, but also upon their disparisons: 'I am not as this publican.' All hypocrites stand much upon their negative righteousness and their comparative goodness. There is no hypocrite in the world but sets down his penny for a pound, and always prizes himself above the market: 2 Kings 10:15, 16, 'And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab, coming to meet him; and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand, and he took him up to him into his chariot; and he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord.' Come, make a greater blaze than fixed stars: 'Come, see my zeal for the Lord.' Jehu his words were for the Lord, but his project was for the kingdom. The actor in the comedy said with his mouth, O cœlum, O heaven, but with his finger he pointed to the earth. Lapidaries tell us of a stone called the chelydonian stone, that it will retain its virtue no longer than it is enclosed in gold; a fit emblem of an hypocrite, of a Jehu. Jehu made a great blaze, but he was but a comet. An hypocrite always loves the praise of men more than the praise of God, John 12:43. He loves more to be honoured by men than to be honoured by God: 'How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?' John 5:44. Nothing below that power which raised Christ from the

grave can make an hypocrite purely nothing in his own eyes. An hypocrite is always a great thing in his own eyes; and when he is nothing, a great nothing in others' eyes; he cannot bear it. An hypocrite cannot endure to be outshined in gifts, in graces, in experiences, in duties, in communion with God, in spiritual enjoyments. An hypocrite's heart is full of pride when his deportment is most humble. He always thinks best of himself, and worst of others; he looks upon his own vices as graces, and he looks upon other men's graces as vices, or at least as no true current coin. A proud spirit will cast disgrace upon that excellency that himself wants; as Licinius, who was joined with Galerius in the empire, he was so ignorant that he was not able to write his own name; he was a bitter enemy to learning, and as Eusebius reports of him, he called the liberal arts a public poison and pestilence.3 The emptiest barrels make the loudest sound, the worst metal the greatest noise, and the lightest ears of corn hold their heads highest. An hypocrite may well lay his hand upon his heart, and say, Is it not so with me, is it not just so with me?

But now sincere Christians, they are men of another spirit, of another temper, of another metal, of another mind; their hearts lie low when their gifts, and graces, and spiritual enjoyments are high. Abraham is but dust and ashes in his own eyes, Gen. 18:27. The higher any man is in his communion with God, the more low that man will be in his own eyes. Dust and ashes are poor, base, vile, worthless things, and such a thing as these was Abraham in his own eyes. So Jacob was a plain man, an upright man, and lo! what a low esteem had he of himself: 'I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies which thou hast shewed unto thy servant,' Gen. 32:10. In the Hebrew it is, 'I am little before thy mercies;' for the Hebrews have no comparative, and therefore they are wont to express this by a positive and a preposition. When Jacob had to do with Laban, he pleads his

merits; but when he has to do with God, he pleads nothing but grace, setting a very low esteem upon himself. He looks upon himself as less than the least of mercies, and as worse than the worst of creatures. The least of my mercies are greater than I deserve, and the greatest of my troubles are less than I deserve, saith Jacob. The language of a plain-hearted Jacob is this: O Lord, I might with Job have been stripped of all my comforts and enjoyments at a clap, and set upon a dunghill; I might with Lazarus have been begging my bread from door to door; or I might have been getting my bread with the peril of my life, because of the sword of the wilderness, Lam. 5:9; or I might have been with Dives in hell a-crying out for a drop of water to cool my tongue, Luke 16:24. A sincere Christian cannot tell how to speak good enough of God, nor ill enough of himself. Agur was one of the wisest and holiest men on earth, and see how greatly he debases himself: 'Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man,' Prov. 30:1, 2. Agur had seen Ithiel, God with me, and Ucal, God almighty, and this made him so vile and base in his own eyes; this made him vilify, yea, nullify himself to the utmost. You know no man ever received a fairer or a more valuable certificate under the hand of God or the broad seal of heaven, for his being a soul famous in uprightness and holiness, than Job, as you may see, Job 1:8, 'And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil.' Job was high in worth and humble in heart: Job 42:5, 6, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, I abhor myself in dust and ashes.' This expression is the deepest act of abhorrency. Abhorrency strictly taken is hatred wound up to the height: 'I abhor myself.' The Hebrew word that is rendered abhor signifies to reject, to disdain, to contemn, to cast off. Ah! says Job, I abhor myself, I reject myself, I disdain myself, I cast off myself, I have a very vile and base esteem of myself. David was a

man of great integrity, a man after God's own heart, and yet he looks upon himself as a flea; and what is more contemptible than a flea? 1 Kings 15:5, 1 Sam. 26:20. And as he looks upon himself as a flea, so he looks upon himself as a worm: 'I am a worm, and no man,' Ps. 22:6. The Hebrew word תולעת, tolagnath, that is here rendered a worm, signifies a very little worm which breedeth in scarlet, a worm that is so little that a man can hardly perceive it. A worm is the most despicable creature in the world, trampled under foot by man and beasts. He who was in God's eye a man after his own heart, is in his own eye but a despicable worm. A sincere Christian is a little nothing in his own eyes.

So Paul, who had been caught up into the third heaven, and learned his divinity among the angels, as one speaks [Chrysostom], and had such glorious revelations as could not be uttered, yet he accounts himself less than the least of all saints: Eph. 3:8, 'Unto me who am less than the least of all saints.' The Greek is a comparative made of a superlative: less than the least of all saints is a double diminutive, and signifies lesser than the least, if lesser might be; not that any thing can be less than the least. Paul's rhetoric doth not cross Aristotle's philosophy. The original word being a double diminutive, his meaning is that he was as little as could be; therefore he put himself down so little as could not be less than the least. Here you have the greatest apostle descending down to the lowest step of humility: great Paul is least of saints, last of the apostles, and greatest of sinners, 1 Tim. 1:15.

So Peter, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,' Luke 5:8, or as the Greek runs, ἀνὴρ ἁμαρτωλός, 'a man, a sinner,' a very mixture and compound of dirt and sin; a mere bundle of vice and vanity, of folly and iniquity. So Luther, 'I have no other name than sinner, sinner is my name, sinner is my surname; this is the name by

which I shall be always known. I have sinned, I do sin, I shall sin in infinitum,' saith Luther, speaking vilely and basely of itself. Lord, I am hell and thou art heaven, said blessed Hooper; I am a most hypocritical wretch, not worthy that the earth should bear me, said blessed Bradford. Thus you see by these several instances that sincere Christians do as it were take a holy pleasure and delight to debase, humble, and vilify themselves. But this is a work hypocrites are mere strangers to. There is not an hypocrite under heaven that loves to debase himself, or that makes it his duty conscientiously to vilify and lessen himself that Christ may be set up above all. Humility is a grace hardly attained unto. 'Many,' saith one [Augustine], 'can more easily give all they have to the poor, than themselves become poor in spirit.' But,

[9.] Ninthly, No hypocrite will long hold out in the work and ways of the Lord, in the want of outward encouragements, and in the face of outward discouragements. An hypocrite is an apostate cased, and an apostate is an hypocrite uncased: Job 27:8, 'For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God shall take away his soul?' Ver. 10, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?' Or, as the Hebrew runs, 'Will he in every time call upon God?' It may be he may formally call on God in time of prosperity; but can he seriously do it in time of adversity? Sometimes when the rod is upon them, then they will pour out a prayer to God: 'In their affliction they will seek me early,' Isa. 26:16, Hosea 5:15. 'When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired after God,' Ps. 78:34. But this was not the standing frame of their hearts: Ver. 36, 'Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.' Ver. 37, 'For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.' When Pharaoh was upon the rack, he could roar a confession, and earnestly cry out for a prayer, Exod. 10:16, 17, 19, 20;

but when the judgment was removed, Pharaoh was as proud, and hard, and blind as ever. When Adonijah was in danger of death, then he could hang on the horns of the altar, 1 Kings 1:50, 51. When Ahab was threatened with utter desolation, then he could fast and lie in sackcloth; and so did the Ninevites. But all this was but like Ephraim and Judah's goodness, that as a morning cloud and as the early dew passeth away. Will the hypocrite always, or in every time, call upon God? Will the hypocrite call upon God as often as providence calls him to call upon God? Will he call upon God as often as judgments call him to call upon God? Will he call upon God as often as conscience calls him to call upon God? Will he call upon God as often as it his duty to call upon God? Will he call upon God as often as others call upon him to call upon God? Oh no! The hypocrite will not always call upon God; he will not persevere in prayer; he will not hold on nor hold out in prayer; he is short-spirited; he cannot always pray and not faint, or shrink back as sluggards do in work, or cowards in war, as the original word in Luke imports, Luke 18:1, ἐκκακεῖν. An hypocrite, for want of an inward principle, can neither delight in God, nor always call upon God. If God comes not at his call, if he opens not as soon as he knocks, he is out of patience, and ready to say with that proud profane prince, 'Behold, this evil is of the Lord, and what should I wait for him any longer?' 2 Kings 6:33. If an hypocrite obtains the mercy he desires, then he will throw off prayer, as he said, 'Take away the net, the fish is caught;' if he obtains not the mercy, then he will grow weary of his duty. 'Thou hast been weary of me,' O Israel, Mal. 1:13, Isa. 43:22. Prayer is too hard and too high a work for an unsound heart to hold on in. Prayer is heart-work, and that proves heavy work to him. The soul of prayer lies in the pouring out of the soul before God, and this is a work that an hypocrite has no skill in, 1 Sam. 1:15. It was a profane and blasphemous speech of that atheistical wretch, that told God he was no common beggar, he never troubled him before with prayer, and if

he would but hear him that time, he would never trouble him again. Even such a spirit and such principles lie lurking in every hypocrite's breast. Doubtless he hit it who said, 'How canst thou expect that God should hear thee, when thou wilt not hear thyself? or that God should give thee a return in prayer, when thou art not mindful what thou askest in prayer?'2 But now a sincere Christian he will go on in prayer, speed or not speed. If he prevails, he will love prayer the better all his days; if he do not for the present prevail, he will be so much the more importunate with God in prayer. It is as natural for a bird to live without air, and for a fish to live without water, and for a man to live without food, as it is for a sincere heart to live without prayer. 'Oh,' saith Chrysostom, 'it is more bitter than death to be spoiled of prayer.' And hereupon, as he observes, Daniel chose rather to run the hazard of his life, than to lose or give over his private prayers, Dan. 6. Prayer is the key of heaven, and a sincere Christian loves much to be a-handling of that key, though he should die for it. As that emperor said, Oportet imperatorem stantem mori, It behoves an emperor to die standing; so may I say, Oportet Christianum mori precantem, it behoves a Christian to die praying. An hypocrite will never hold out to the end. Let but outward encouragements fail him, and his heart will quickly fail him in a way of duty. Hypocrites are like blazing stars, which, so long as they are fed with vapours, shine as if they were fixed stars; but let the vapours dry up, and presently they vanish and disappear. Let but the eye, the ear, the applause of men, fail the hypocrite, and he will be ready to throw up all. If an hypocrite cannot make some gain of his godliness, some profit of his profession, some advantage of his religion, he will be ready with Demas to turn his back upon all religious duties and services, 2 Peter 2:20–22, 2 Tim. 4:10. Look, as a lame horse, when he is heated, will go well enough, but when he cools, will halt downright; even so an hypocrite, though for a time he may go on fairly in his way, yet in the end he will halt downright, and bid farewell, if not defiance, to all

religious duties and services. Profit and applause are usually the baits that hypocrites bite at, and if they miss these baits, then farewell profession, farewell religion, farewell all: John 6:66. 'From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.' Many hypocrites who had given up their names to Christ, and who for a time had been followers of Christ, at last deserted him and turned their backs for ever upon him: Mat. 13:5, 'Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth' (not much care to receive, not much understanding to apprehend, not much faith to believe, not much will to obey, or not much love to retain it), 'and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.' Ver. 6, 'And when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.' This second ground goes beyond the former: for (1.) it receives the seed; (2.) incontinently; (3.) with joy; (4.) it brings up the seed sown. It sprung up to sundry degrees: [1.] to external obedience and reformation in many things; [2.] to an outward profession; [3.] to a kind of faith; but when the sun of persecution beat hot upon them they withered and fell away; not all at once, but by little and little, as a leaf loseth his greenness and flourish, and withers by degrees. In the Palatinate, when the sun of persecution began to scorch them, scarce one professor of twenty stood out, but fell to popery as fast as leaves in autumn. The crystal looks like pearl till it comes to the hammering; so an hypocrite looks like a Christian, and in many things acts like a Christian, till he comes to be hammered by sufferings, by persecutions, and then he discovers himself in his colours; and with Hymeneus and Alexander, he makes shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, 1 Tim. 1:19, 20, Hosea 5:2. In suffering times, hypocrites labour mightily to put out that light which shines in their bosoms, and when they have quenched that light, then farewell faith, farewell profession, farewell a good conscience, farewell all. The wolf, though he often dissembles and closely hides his nature, yet he cannot always do so; for at one

time or other he will shew himself to be a wolf; so though an an hypocrite may carry it closely for a time, yet he will one time or other discover himself to be an hypocrite. It is reported of the waters of Nilus, that having run many hundred of miles a pure and clear water, when it comes near the Mediterranean Sea, it begins to grow brackish and salt, and at last it falls into the sea and loseth its name. Sooner or later this will be the case of all hypocrites; they won't retain their spiritual fairness, clearness, and sweetness long, but by degrees will grow brackish and salt, and lose their names, and all that seeming goodness and sweetness that once seemed to be in them.

But now a sincere Christian, he will hold on and hold out in the ways of the Lord, in the want of all outward encouragements, and in the face of all multiplied discouragements. When the eye of men, the favour of men, the bounty of men, and all other encouragement from men fails, yet then a sincere Christian will hold up, and hold on in his work and way. 'The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger,' Job 17:9. The righteous man shall go on in a way of righteous[ness] to the end; no multiplied calamities or miseries shall ever work him to decline the way of righteousness. From this way a sincere Christian will never be withdrawn, either by any hopes or advantages on the one hand, or by any fears or dangers on the other. Sincere Christians have not taken up religion on such slight grounds, as to be either flattered or frighted out of it. Sincere Christians reckon upon afflictions, temptations, crosses, losses, reproaches on the one hand, and they reckon upon a crown of life, a crown of righteousness, a crown of glory on the other hand, and hereupon they set up their staff, fully resolving never to depart from the good old way wherein they have found rest to their souls, John 16:33; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 4:8. Sincere Christians take Christ and his ways for better for worse, for richer for

poorer, in prosperity and adversity; they resolve to stand or fall, to suffer and reign, to live and die with him, Jer. 6:16. When all outward encouragements from God shall fail, yet a sincere Christian will keep close to his God, and close to his duty. 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herds in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Hab. 3:17, 18. When all necessary and delightful mercies fail, yet he will not fail in his duty. Though God withhold his blessings, yet he will not withhold his service; in the want of a livelihood, he will be lively in his duty; when he hath nothing to subsist by, yet then he will live upon his God, and joy in his God, and keep close to his God. Though war and want come, yet he will not be wanting in his duty. Mark, there are three things in a sincere Christian that will strongly incline him to keep close to the Lord, and close to his ways in the want of all outward encouragements, and in the face of all outward discouragements. And the first is a forcible principle, divine love; the second is a mighty aid, the Spirit of God; and the third is a high aim, the glory of God, 2 Cor. 5:14; Philip. 4:12, 13; Rom. 14:7, 8. Look, as Ruth kept close to her mother in the want of all outward encouragements, and in the face of all outward discouragements, —'And Ruth said, Whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge, and nothing but death shall part thee and me,' Ruth 1:16, 17,—so saith a sincere Christian, I will take my lot with Christ wherever it falls; I will keep close to the Lord, and close to my duty, in the want of all outward encouragements, and in the face of all outward discouragements. Though outward encouragements be sometimes as a side wind, or as oil, or as chariot wheels, means to move a Christian to go on more sweetly, easily, and comfortably in the ways of God, yet when this wind shall fail, and these chariot wheels shall be knocked off, a sincere Christian will keep close to the

Lord and his ways. 'All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy ways,' Ps. 44:17, 18. But what do they mean by saying, 'All this is come upon us'? Why, that you may see in the foregoing part of the psalm: 'Thou hast cast us off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies. Thou makest us turn back from the enemy; and they which hate us spoil for themselves. Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen. Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price. Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. Thou makest us a by-word among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people,' vers. 9–14. Antiochus Epiphanes looked upon the Jews' religion as superstition; his wrath and rage was exceeding great, both against the Jews and against their religion; he practised all manner of cruelty upon the miserable Jews, but yet there was a remnant among them who were faithful to the Lord, and to his covenant, and to his laws, and to his ways, even to the death. Though in the time of the Maccabees many revolted to paganism, yet some maintained their constancy and integrity to the last. That is a great word of the prophet Micah: 'For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever,' Micah 4:5. This absolute and peremptory resolution to be really the Lord's, and for ever the Lord's, is of the essence of true conversion. It is not the world's flatteries that can bribe off a sincere Christian from the ways of God; nor it is not the world's frowns that can beat off a sincere Christian from the ways of God; but an hypocrite will never, an hypocrite can never hold it out to the end. His ground tackle will never hold when the storm beats strong upon him. An hypocrite is hot at hand, but soon tires and gives in. But,

[10.] Tenthly, No hypocrite ever makes it his business, his work, to bring his heart into religious duties and services, Mat. 15:8, Mark 7:6. He never makes conscience of bringing his heart into his work. An hypocrite is heartless in all he does: Ps. 78:34, 'When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God.' Ver. 36, 'Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.' Ver. 37, 'For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.' All lip-labour is but lost labour. When men's hearts are not in their devotion, their devotion is mere dissimulation. These hypocrites sought God, and inquired early after God, but it was still with old hearts, which are no hearts in the account of God. They made lip work of it, and head work of it, but their hearts not being in their work, all was lost: their seeking lost, their inquiring lost, their God lost, their souls lost, and eternity lost: Hosea 7:14, 'And they have not cried unto me with their hearts, when they howled upon their beds.' When men's hearts are not in their prayers, all their praying is but as an hideous howling in the account of God.3 The cry of the heart is the only cry that God likes, loves, and looks for. He accepts of no cry, he delights in no cry, he rewards no cry, but the cry of the heart. Hypocrites are heartless in their cries, and therefore they cry and howl, and howl and cry, and all to no purpose. They cry and murmur, and they howl and repine; they cry and blaspheme, and they howl and rebel; and therefore they meet with nothing from heaven but frowns, and blows, and disappointments: Isa. 29:3, 'Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.' Ezek. 33:31, 'And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.' Though this people flocked to the prophet in troops, as men and

women do to places of pleasure; and though they carried it before the prophet as if they were saints, as if they were the people of God, as if they were affected with what they heard, as if they were resolved to live out what the prophet should make out to them; yet their hearts ran after their covetousness. Though these hypocrites professed much love and kindness to the prophet, and paid him home with smooth words, and seemed to be much affected, delighted, ravished, and taken with his person, voice, and doctrine, yet they made no conscience of bringing their hearts into their duties. An hypocrite may look at some outward, easy, ordinary duties of religion, but he never makes conscience of bringing his heart into any duties of religion. When did you ever see an hypocrite a-searching of his heart, or sitting in judgment upon the corruptions of his soul, or lamenting and mourning over the vileness and wickedness of his spirit? It is only the sincere Christian that is affected, afflicted, and wounded with the corruptions of his heart. When one told blessed Bradford that he did all out of hypocrisy, because he would have the people applaud him, he answered, It is true, the seeds of hypocrisy and vain glory are in thee and me too, and will be in us as long as we live in this world; but I thank God it is that I mourn under and strive against. How seriously and deeply did good Hezekiah humble himself for the pride of his heart! 'Out of the eater came meat,' out of his pride he gat humility, 2 Chron. 32:25.

O sirs! a sincere Christian makes it his great business to get his heart into all his religious duties and services, to get his heart into every way and work of God, Cant. 3:1–6. Jehoshaphat's heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord, 2 Chron. 17:6. So David, 'I will praise thee, O Lord, with all my heart,' Ps. 36:12. And so Ps. 119:7, 'I will praise thee with uprightness of heart.' Ver. 10, 'With my whole heart have I sought thee.' So Jehoshaphat he sought the Lord with all his heart, 2 Chron. 22:9. Isa. 26:8, 'The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to

the remembrance of thee.' Ver. 9, 'With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.' Lam. 3:41, 'Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.' Rom. 1:9, 'For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son.' Paul's very spirit, his very soul, was in his service. Philip. 3:3, 'For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.' Rom. 7:22, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man.' Ver. 25, 'With the mind I myself serve the law of God.' A sincere Christian is always best when his heart is in his work, and when he cannot get his heart into his duties, oh! how does he sigh, and groan, and complain, and mourn at the foot of God! Lord, my tongue has been at work, and my head has been at work, and my parts have been at work, and my eyes and hands have been at work, but where has my heart been this day? Oh! it is and must be for a sore and sad lamentation that I have had so little of my heart in that service that I have tendered to thee! This is the daily language of an upright heart. But now all the work of an hypocrite is to get his golden parts into his duties, and his silver tongue into his duties, and his nimble head into his duties; but he never makes conscience of getting his heart into his duties. If any beasts sacrificed by heathens, who ever looked narrowly into the entrails, was found without a heart, this was held ominous, and construed as very prodigious to the person for whom it was offered, as it fell out in the case of Julian. Hypocrites are always heartless in all the sacrifices they offer to God, and this will one day prove ominous and prodigious to them. But,

[11.] Eleventhly, An hypocrite never performs religious duties from spiritual principles, nor in a spiritual manner. An hypocrite is never inclined, moved, and carried to God, to Christ, to holy duties, by the power of a new and inward principle of grace working a suitableness between his heart and the things of God. An hypocrite rests himself

satisfied in the mere external acts of religion, though he never feels anything of the power of religion in his own soul. An hypocrite looks to his words in prayer, and to his voice in prayer, and to his gestures in prayer, but he never looks to the frame of his heart in prayer. An hypocrite's heart is never touched with the words his tongue utters; an hypocrite's soul is never divinely affected, delighted, or graciously warmed with any duty he performs. An hypocrite's spiritual performances never flow from spiritual principles, nor from a heart universally sanctified. Though his works may be new, yet his heart remains old; his new practices always spring from old principles; and this will prove the hypocrite's bane, as you may see in that Isa. 1:15, 'When you spread forth your hands to heaven, I will hide my eyes; and when you make many prayers, when you abound in duty,' adding prayer to prayer, as the Hebrew runs, 'I will not hear, your hands are full of blood.' These were unsanctified ones; their practices were new, but their hearts were old still, Isa. 1:10–16. The same you may see in the scribes and pharisees, who fasted, prayed, and gave alms, but their hearts were not changed, renewed, sanctified, nor principled from above; and this proved their eternal bane, Mat. 6, 23; Luke 18. Nicodemus was a man of great note, name, and fame among the pharisees, and he fasted, and prayed, and gave alms, and paid tithes, &c., and yet a mere stranger to the new birth; regeneration was a paradox to him. 'How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?' John 3:4. This great doctor was so great a dunce, that he understood no more of the doctrine of regeneration, than a mere child does the darkest precepts of astronomy. Look, as water can rise no higher than the spring from whence it came, so the natural man can rise no higher than nature, 1 Cor. 2:14. An hypocrite may know much, and pray much, and hear much, and fast much, and give much, and obey much, and all to no purpose, because he never manages anything he does in a right manner; he never carries on his work from inward

principles of faith, fervency, life, love, delight, &c. Will the hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty? Ans. No; he cannot delight himself in the Almighty.

(1.) To delight in God is one of the highest acts of grace; and how can an hypocrite put forth one of the highest acts of grace, who hath no grace? An hypocrite may know much of God, and talk much of God, and make a great profession of God, and be verbally thankful to God; but he can never love God, nor trust in God, nor delight in God, nor take up his rest in God, &c.

(2.) An hypocrite knows not God; and how then can he delight in that God whom he does not know? An hypocrite has no inward, saving, transforming, experimental, affectionate, practical knowledge of God; and therefore he can never take any pleasure or delight in God.

(3.) There is no suitableness between an hypocrite and God; and how then can an hypocrite delight himself in God? There is the greatest contrariety imaginable betwixt God and an hypocrite. God is light, and the hypocrite is darkness; God is holiness, and he filthiness; God is righteousness, and he unrighteousness; God is fulness, and he emptiness, 2 Cor. 6:15, 16. Now what complacency can there be where there is such an utter contrariety?

(4.) Every hypocrite's heart is full of enmity against God; and how then can he delight himself in God? 'The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be,' Rom. 8:7. The best part of an hypocrite is not only averse, but utterly adverse to God and all goodness. The eagle, saith the philosopher, hath a continual enmity with the dragon and the serpent. And so an hypocrite's heart is still full of enmity against the Lord; and therefore he can never delight himself in the Lord.

(5.) The stream, cream, and strength of an hypocrite's delight runs out to himself, and to this lust or that, or this relation or that, to this creature-comfort or that, to this worldly enjoyment or that, or else to arts, parts, gifts, privileges, &c., and therefore how can he delight himself in the Almighty? An hypocrite always terminates his delight in something on this side God, Christ, and heaven. Look, as the apricock tree, though it leans against the wall, yet it is fast rooted in the earth; so though an hypocrite may lean towards God, and towards Christ, and towards heaven, yet his delight is still rooted fast in one creature-comfort or another, &c. God nor Christ is never the adequate object of an hypocrite's delight. An hypocrite is never principled to delight himself in a holy God, neither can he cordially, divinely, habitually delight himself in holy duties. An hypocrite may reform many evil things, and he may do many good duties, and yet all this while it is only his practices, but not his heart or principles, that are changed and altered. Mark, though an hypocrite hath nothing in him which is essential to a Christian as a Christian, yet he may be the complete resemblance of a Christian in all those things which are not essential to him. An hypocrite, in all the externals of religion, may be the complete picture of a sincere Christian; but then if you look to his principles, and the manner of his managing of holy duties, there you will find him lame and defective, and as much unlike a sincere Christian, as ever Michal's image was unlike to David, 1 Sam. 19:13–16; and this will prove the great crack, the great break-neck of hypocrites at last.

O sirs! it is considerable, that outward motives and natural principles have carried many heathens to do many great and glorious things in the world. Did not Sisera do as great things as Gideon? The difference did only lie here, that the great things which Gideon did, he did from more spiritual principles and raised considerations, than any Sisera was acted by. And did not Diogenes trample under his feet

the great and glorious things of this world, as well as Moses? Heb. 11:24. The difference did only lie in this, that Moses trampled under his feet the gay and gallant things of this world, from inward gracious principles, viz., faith, love, &c., and from high and glorious considerations, viz., heaven, the glory of God, &c., whereas Diogenes did only trample upon them from poor, low principles, and from mere outward, carnal, external considerations. The favour of men, the eye of men, the commendations of men, the applause of men, and a great name among men, were golden apples, great things among the philosophers. The application is easy.

Mark, A sincere Christian, he looks to the manner as well as to the matter of his duties; he acts and performs duties, not only from strength of parts and acquired qualifications, but from strength of grace and infused habits; he acts from God and for God; he acts from a new heart; he acts from the law written in his heart; he acts from the love of God shed abroad in his heart; he acts from the divine nature communicated to him; he acts from the Spirit's indwelling in his heart; he acts from the fear of God established in his heart. These be the springs and principles of a sincere Christian's spiritual life and actions; and where they act and bear rule, it is no wonder if [there be] such motions and performances as the world may admire but not imitate. Saul's life, after his conversion, was a kind of constant miracle. So much he did, and so much he suffered, and so much he denied himself, that if he lived in these days his life would be a miracle; but yet if we consider the principles that he was acted by, the great wonder will be, not that he did so much, but that he did no more: 'For,' saith he, 'Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me,' Gal. 2:20. It was a great saying of blessed Bradford, that he could not leave a duty till he had found communion with Christ in the duty, till he had brought his heart into a duty-

frame. He could not leave confession till he had found his heart touched, broken, and humbled for sin, nor petition till he had found his heart taken with the beauties of the things desired, and carried out after them; nor could he leave thanksgiving till he had found his spirit enlarged and his soul quickened in the return of praises. And it was a great saying of another, 'that he could never be quiet till he found God in every duty, and enjoyed communion with God in every prayer.' 'O Lord,' said he, 'I never come to thee but by thee, I never go from thee without thee.' A sincere Christian that is taken with Christ above all, cannot be satisfied nor contented with duties or ordinances, without he enjoys Christ in them, who is the life, soul, and substance of them. But now hypocrites they do duties, but all they do is from common principles, from natural principles, and from an unsanctified heart; and that mars all. Remigius, a judge of Lorraine, tells this story, that the devil in those parts did use to give money to witches, which did appear to be good coin; it seemed to be current at first, but being laid up a while, it then appeared to be nothing but leaves.2 Hypocrites they make a great profession, and are much in the outward actions of religion; they make a very fair show, they hear, they read, they pray, they fast, they sing psalms, and they give alms; but these duties being not managed from a principle of divine love, nor from a principle of spiritual life, nor from a sanctified frame of heart, turn all into leaves; they are all lost, and the authors of them cast and undone for ever and ever. But,

[12.] Twelfthly, No hypocrite in the world loves the word, or delights in the word, or prizes the word, as it is a holy word, a spiritual word, a beautiful word, a pure word, a clean word: Ps. 119:140, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.' There are no hearts but men after God's own heart, that can love the word, and delight in the word, and embrace the word for its holiness, purity, and spirituality. Witness Paul: Rom. 7:12, 'Wherefore the law is holy, and the

commandment holy, and just, and good.' Well, and what then? Why, saith he, ver. 22, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man.' But is this all? No; saith he, ver. 25, 'With the mind I myself serve the law of God.' Holy Paul delights in the law as holy, and serves the law as holy, just, and good. A sincere heart is the only heart that is taken with the word for its spirituality, purity, and heavenly beauty. None can joy in the word as it is a holy word, nor none can taste any sweetness in the word as it is a pure word, but sincere Christians: Ps. 19:8–10, 'The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean' (that is, the doctrine of the word that teacheth the true fear of God), 'enduring for ever. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether: more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb;' or, as the Hebrew hath it, 'sweeter than the droppings of honeycombs.' The word of God, as it is a pure word, a spiritual word, a clean word, a holy word; so it rejoices a sincere heart, and so it is sweeter than the very droppings of honeycombs. The word, as it is a pure word, a holy word, is more sweet to a sincere Christian than those drops which drop immediately and naturally without any force or art, which is counted the purest and sweetest honey. There is no profit, nor pleasure, nor joy to that which the purity of the word yields to a sincere heart: Ps. 119:48, 'My hands will I lift up to thy commandments which I have loved.' Sometimes the lifting up of hands betokens admiration. When men are astonished and ravished, they lift up their hands. 'I will lift up my hands to thy commandments;' that is, I will admire the goodness, spiritualness, holiness, righteousness, purity, and excellency of thy commandments. Luther would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible, he took such sweet pleasure and excellent delight in it. Rabbi Chiia, in the Jerusalem Talmud, says, 'That in his account all the world is not of equal value with one word out of the law.' The

martyrs would have given a load of hay for a few chapters of the Bible in English. Some of them gave five merks for a Bible; they were so delighted and taken with the word, as it was a holy word, a pure word, a spiritual word. Dolphins, they say, love music; and so do sincere Christians love the music of the word. It is upon record, that Mary spent the third part of her time in reading the word, she was so affected and delighted with the holiness and purity of it. King Edward the Sixth being about to lay hold on something that was above the reach of his short arm, one that stood by espying a bossed Bible lying on the table, offered to lay that under his feet to heighten him; but the good young king disliked the notion, and instead of treading it under his feet, he laid it to his heart, to express the joy and delight that he took in the holy word.

But now never did any hypocrite, since there was one in the world, ever love God as a holy God, or love his people as a holy people, or love his ways as holy ways, or love his word as a holy word. There is no hypocrite in the world that can truly say with David, 'Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it.' Saul could never say so, nor Ahab could never say so, nor Herod could never say so, nor Judas could never say so, nor Demas could never say so, nor Simon Magus could never say so, nor the scribes and pharisees could never say so, nor the stony ground could never say so, nor Isaiah's hypocrites could never say so, Isa. 58. It is true, some of these did rejoice in the word, and delight in the word, but not as it was a holy word, a pure word; for then they would have rejoiced and delighted themselves in the whole word of God, every part of God's word being pure and holy. Hypocrites are sometimes affected and delighted with the word, as it is dressed up with fine high notions, which are but mysterious nothings; they are taken with the word, as it is clothed with arts, parts, and elegancy of phrase; they are pleased with the word, as it is apparelled with a spruce wit, or with silken expressions,

or with some delicate elocution: Ezek. 33:32, 'So thou art to them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument;' or as the Hebrew may be read, 'Thou art as one that breaks jests.' These hypocrites looked upon the solemnity and majesty of the word but as a dry jest. The prophet being eloquent, and having a pleasing delivery, they were much taken with it, and it was as sweet and delightful to them as a fit of music; but they were not at all taken or delighted with the spirituality, purity, and holiness of the word, as is evident in ver. 31, 'And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.' It was a very smart reproof of Chrysostom to his hearers: 'This is that,' saith he, 'which is like to undo your souls; you hear your ministers as so many minstrels, to please the ear, not to pierce the conscience.' Augustine confesseth, that the delight which he took before his conversion in St Ambrose's sermons was more for the eloquence of the words than the substance of the matter. Hypocrites are taken more with the wit, eloquence of speech, action, quickness of fancy, smoothness of style, neatness of expression, and rareness of notion, than they are with the spirituality, purity, and holiness of the word, which they either hear or read. These hypocrites are like those children who are more taken with the fine flowers that are strewed about the dish, than they are with the meat that is in the dish; and that are more taken with the red weeds and blue-bottles that grow in the field, than they are with the good corn that grows there. But now look, as the prudent farmer is taken more with a few handfuls of sound corn than he is with all the gay weeds that be in the field, so a sincere Christian is more taken with a few sound truths in a sermon than he is taken with all the strong lines, and high strains, and flourishes of wit; or than he is taken with some new-coined phrases, or some quaint expressions, or some seraphical notions, with which a

sermon may be decked or dressed up. Some are taken with the word as the profession of it brings in customers into their shops, and keeps up their credits in the world; others are taken with the word as it seems to tickle their ears and please their fancies; some are affected with sermons because of the elegancy of the style, delicacy of the words, smoothness of the language, and gracefulness of the delivery. And these deal by sermons as many do by their nose-gays, that are made up of many picked sweet flowers, who, after they have smelt to them awhile, cast them into a corner, and never mind them more; so these, after they have commended a sermon, after they have highly applauded a sermon, they cast away the sermon, they smell to the sermon, if I may so speak, and say, It is sweet, it is sweet; and presently they throw it by, as a nosegay that is withered, and of no further use. But now a sincere heart savours the word, and relishes the word, and is affected and taken with the word, as it is a holy word, a spiritual word, a pure word, which the most refined hypocrite under heaven never was affected or taken with, nor can be, whilst hypocrisy keeps the throne in his soul. But,

[13.] Thirteenthly, and lastly, An hypocrite cannot endure to be tried, and searched, and laid open. An hypocrite hates the light, and had rather go to hell in the dark than come to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, John 3:20. A soul-searching ministry is to an hypocrite a tormenting ministry. That is no man for his money that will never let his conscience alone; he knows he is like a velvet saddle, velvet without and straw within; he knows he is like a whited sepulchre, glorious without and dead bones within, Mat. 23:27, 28; and therefore his heart rises and swells against such a man and such a ministry, that is all for the anatomising and laying of him open to himself and to the world. But now look, as pure gold fears neither fire nor furnace, neither test nor touchstone, neither one balance nor another, so a sincere heart dares venture itself upon trial, yea, upon

the very trial of God himself: Ps. 139:23, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts.' A sincere Christian prays his friends to search him, and he prays soul-searching ministers to search him; but above all, he begs hard of God to search him: 'Search me, O God.' The Hebrew word חקרני, is imperat. kal; he commands God to search him. The original word signifies a strict, curious, diligent search: see Job 31:5, 6. A sincere Christian is very willing and desirous that God should thoroughly search him, that God should search into every corner and cranny of his heart: Ps. 26:2, 'Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.' Every word here has its weight: 'Examine me, O Lord.' The Hebrew word צדופה signifies to melt, and so to try which makes the most intrinsecal and exact discovery. O Lord, let my heart and reins be melted, that it may be known what metal they are made of, whether gold or tin; 'prove me.' The Hebrew word בחנני signifies to view, as when a man gets upon some high tower or hill to see all from thence. 'Mount aloft, O Lord,' take the high tower, take the hill, 'that thou mayest see what is in me; try me, and know my thoughts.' The Hebrew word וסני, is from נסח, nasah, which properly signifies to take away, and is applied to Abraham's taking away of his son, Gen. 22:1. Lord, saith the prophet, if, upon searching and examining of me, thou shalt find any sin, any creature, any comfort, any enjoyment that lies in thy room, take it away, that thou mayest be all in all to me. A sincere Christian knows that God never brings a pair of scales to weigh his graces, but only a touchstone to try the truth of his graces; he knows if his gold, his grace, be true, though it be never so little, it will pass for current with God, and therefore he is free to venture upon the closest search of God, Mat. 12:20. Now look, as bankrupts care not for casting up their accounts, because they know all is naught, very naught, yea, stark naught with them; so hypocrites, they care not to come to the trial, to the test, because they know all is naught, yea, worse than naught with them. They have no

mind to cast up their spiritual estates, because at the foot of the account they must be put to read their neck verse, 'Undone, undone.' And therefore, as old deformed women cannot endure to look into the looking-glass, lest their wrinkles and deformity should be discovered, so hypocrites cannot endure to look into the glass of the gospel, lest their deformities, impieties, and wickednesses should be discovered and detected. I have read of the elephant, how unwilling he is to go into the water, but when he is forced into it, he puddles it, lest by the clearness of the stream he should discern his own deformity; so hypocrites they are very unwilling to look into their own hearts, or into the clear streams of scriptures, lest their soul's deformity and ugliness should appear, to their own terror and amazement. O sirs! look, as it is a hopeful evidence that the client's cause is good when he is ready and willing to enter upon a trial, and as it is a hopeful sign that a man's gold is true gold when he is willing to bring it to the touchstone, and that a man thrives when he is willing to cast up his books, so it is a hopeful evidence that a Christian is sincere with God when he is ready and willing to venture upon the trial of God, when he is willing to cast up his books, his accounts, that he may see what he is worth for another world, Gal. 6:4, 5. Augustine speaks of an acute person, who was wont to say that he prized that little time which he constantly set apart every day for the examination of his conscience, far more than all the other part of the day, which he spent in his voluminous controversies. Of all the duties of religion, an hypocrite dreads most that of self-examination, and that of venturing himself upon the search and trial of God. Well, for a close, though an hypocrite may deceive all the world, like that counterfeit Alexander in Josephus his story, yet Augustus will not be deceived, the great God will not be deceived; for his eyes are quick and piercing into all things, persons, and places.2 Look, as the eyes of a well drawn picture are fastened on thee which way soever thou turnest, so are the eyes of the Lord fastened on thee, O hypocrite,

which way soever thou turnest. It was a worthy saying of one, If thou canst not hide thyself from the sun, which is God's minister of light, how impossible will it be to hide thyself from him whose eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the sun? The eye of God many times is very terrible to an hypocrite, which makes him very shy of venturing upon the trial of God. No hypocrite since the world stood, did ever love or delight to be searched and tried by God.

And thus I have shewed you the several rounds or steps in Jacob's ladder, which no hypocrite under heaven can, whilst he remains an hypocrite, climb up to. And so much for this chapter.

CHAPTER V

Some propositions and directions

Now in this fifth and last chapter, I shall lay down some propositions and directions, that so you may see what a sober use and improvement Christians ought to make of their evidences for heaven; and how, in the use of gracious evidences, they ought to live above their gracious evidences, and how to exalt and lift up Christ above all their graces, evidences, and performances.

[1.] First proposition. It is the wisdom, and ought to be the work of every Christian to own the least measure of grace that is in him, though it be mixed and mingled with many weaknesses and infirmities. Sin is Satan's work, and grace is Christ's work; and therefore Christ's work ought to be eyed and owned, though it be mingled with much of Satan's work. That Christian is much clouded and benighted who hath two eyes to behold his sins, but never an eye to see his graces. Christ gets no glory, nor the soul gets no good, when a Christian is still a-poring upon his sins. How can that

Christian prize a little grace, and bless God for a little grace, and improve a little grace, who won't own a little grace because it is mingled with many weaknesses? Shall the husbandman own a little wheat when mingled with a great deal of chaff? Shall the goldsmith own a little filings of gold when mingled with a great deal of dust; and shall not a Christian own a little grace when mingled with a great many failings? David had a great many infirmities, 1 Sam. 21:13, 14, yet he owns his uprightness: Ps. 18:23, 'I was upright before him.' And Job had a great many weaknesses, Job 3, yet he owns his integrity: Job 27:5, 'Till I die I will not remove my integrity from me.' Ver. 6, 'My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.' The spouse was sensible of her blackness, yet owns her comeliness, Cant. 1:5, 'I am black, but comely.' So Cant. 5:2, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh.' Jeremiah was a man of many failings, yet he owns his hope in God, Jer. 17:17: 'Thou art my hope in the day of evil,' Jer. 20:14, seq. The poor man in the Gospel was very sensible of the sad relics and remains of unbelief that was in him, and yet with a holy boldness and confidence he pleads his faith: Mark 9:24, 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.' Peter miscarried sadly, Mat 26:69, seq., and yet he owns his love to Christ: John 21:15, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.' Ver. 16, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.' Ver. 17, 'Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.' Paul had his infirmities and weaknesses hanging upon him: witness that seventh of the Romans: and yet how frequently and boldly does he own the grace of God that was in him throughout his epistles. Nothing keeps grace more at an under than men's not owning of a little grace because it is mingled with many infirmities. The best way to be greatly good, is to own a little, little good, though in the midst of much evil. But,

[2.] The second proposition is this, It is your wisdom, and should be your work, to look upon all your graces and gracious evidences as

favours given you from above, as gifts dropped out of heaven into your hearts, as flowers of paradise stuck in your bosoms by a divine hand. A man should never look upon his graces or his gracious evidences, but should be ready to say, These are the jewels of glory with which God has bespangled my soul: 1 Cor. 4:7, 'What hast thou that thou hast not received? What gift, what grace, what experience, what evidence hast thou that thou hast not received? All the light, and all the life, and all the love, and all the joy, and all the fear, and all the faith, and all the hope, and all the patience, and all the humility, &c., that thou hast, with all the evidences that arise from the discovery of those graces, are all grace gifts, they are all from above. 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,' James 1:17. Look, as all light flows from the sun, and all water from the sea, so all temporal, spiritual, and eternal good flows from heaven. All your graces, and the greatest excellencies that are in you, do as much depend upon God and Christ, as the light doth upon the sun, or as the rivers do upon the sea, or as the branches do upon the root, John 15:1–5. All my springs are in thee, Ps. 87:7; all the springs of comfort that I have communicated to my soul, and all the springs of grace that I have to quicken me, and to evidence the goodness and happiness of my spiritual estate and condition to me, they are all in thee. When a Christian looks upon his wisdom and knowledge, it concerns him to say, Here is wisdom and knowledge, ay, but it is from above; here is some weak love working towards Christ, but it is from above; here is joy, and comfort, and peace, &c., but these are all such flowers of paradise as never grew in nature's garden. Now, when a Christian looks thus upon all those costly diamonds of grace, of glory, with which his soul is bedecked, he keeps low, though his graces and gracious evidences are high. Where this rule is neglected, the soul will be endangered of being swelled and puffed.

It was a great saying of a very worthy man that is now with God, viz., That as he often got much good by his sins, so he often got much hurt by his graces. Dear hearts, when you look upon the stream, remember the fountain; when you look upon the flower, remember the root; when you look upon the stars, remember the sun; and whenever you look upon your graces, then be sure to remember Christ the fountain of grace, else Satan will certainly be too hard for you. Satan is so subtle, so artificial,2 and so critical, that he can make your very graces to serve him against your graces, conquering joy by joy, sorrow by sorrow, humility by humility, fear by fear, and love by love, if you don't look upon all your graces as streams flowing from the fountain above, and as fruits growing upon the tree of life that is in the midst of the paradise of God. Therefore, when one of your eyes is fixed upon your graces, let the other be always fixed upon Christ the fountain of grace. 'Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace,' John 1:16. Here they eye their graces and the fountain of grace together. So Paul: 'I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me,' Gal. 2:20. Paul eyes Christ and his graces together; so Peter eyes Christ and his graces together: John 21:15, 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.' So those worthies of whom this world was not worthy; they eye Christ and their graces together: Heb. 12:2, 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.' Though grace be a new creature, 2 Cor. 5:17, a noble creature, a beautiful creature, an excellent creature, yet grace is but a creature, and such a creature that is strengthened, maintained, cherished, and upheld in your souls, Philip. 4:12, 13; Cant. 4. ult., in life and power, in beauty and glory, by nothing below the spiritual, internal, and glorious operations of Christ: Col. 1:10, 'That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.' Ver. 11, 'Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious

power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.' Now, whenever you look upon grace as a lovely, beautiful creature, oh then remember that might and glorious power of Christ by which this creature is preserved and strengthened. Christians, your graces are holy and heavenly plants of Christ's own setting and watering, and will you mind the plants more than that noble hand that set them? It is Christ alone that can cause the desires of his people to bud, and their graces to blossom, and their souls to be like a watered garden, green and flourishing, Isa. 58:11, and 35:6, 7; and therefore let the eye of your souls be firstly, mostly, and chiefly fixed upon Christ. But,

[3.] The third proposition is this, When you look upon your graces in the light of the Spirit, it highly concerns you to look narrowly to it, that you do not renounce and reject [y]our graces as weak and worthless evidences of your interest in Christ, and of that eternal happiness and blessedness that comes by Christ. The works of grace, saith my author, which consists in those divine qualities of holiness and righteousness, &c., Gal. 5:22, 23, is a sure mark, a blessed character, whereby men may know whose children they are, even as the Spartans or Lacedæmonians of old are said to know what stock and lineage they were of by a mark that was made upon their bodies by the head of a lance or spear. I readily grant that you must not trust in your graces, nor make a saviour of your graces, but yet you ought to look upon your graces as so many signs and testimonies of the love and favour of God to your souls. What certainty can there be of election, remission of sin, justification, or glorification, if there be not a certainty of your sanctification and renovation? If that persuasion that is in you about your grace or sanctification be false, then that persuasion that is in you concerning remission of sin, predestination, justification, and eternal salvation is false. This highly concerns all them to consider, that would not be miserable in both worlds. I know many cry up revelations, impressions, visions,

yea, the visions of their own hearts, and speak lightly and slightly of the graces of the Spirit, of sanctification, of holiness, as evidences of the goodness and happiness of a Christian's condition. There were some in James his time who cried up faith, and union and communion with Christ, but were destitute of good works, James 2:18. Well, what saith the apostle? 'Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works; for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead,' ver. 26. Look, as the body without the spirit, or without breath,—as the Greek word πνεῦμα primarily signifies,—is dead; so that faith that is without works, which are, as it were, the breathings of a lively faith, is a dead faith. Though it be faith that justifieth the man, yet it is works that justifies a man's faith to be right and real, saving and justifying. So there were some in John's time, viz., the Gnostics, who talked high of fellowship and communion with Christ, and yet walked in darkness; they lived in all impurity, and yet would make the world believe that they were the only people who knew God, and had fellowship with God, but John tells us they were liars: 'If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. What fellowship hath light with darkness?' 2 Cor. 6:14. Such walk in darkness who promise to themselves the future vision of God's face, whilst they go on in the wilful breach of God's royal law. Such who say they know him, and are swallowed up in the enjoyments of him, and yet in the course of their lives walk contrary to him, such are liars: 'He that saith, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar,' 1 John 2:4. Sanctification and justification are both of them benefits of the covenant of grace, and therefore to evidence the one by the other can be no turning aside to the covenant of works, Jer. 33:8, 9; Heb. 8:10, 12. You may run and read in the covenant of grace, that he that is justified is also sanctified, and that he that is sanctified is also justified; and therefore why may not he that knows himself to be really sanctified, upon that very ground,

safely and boldly conclude that he is certainly justified? O sirs! the same Spirit that witnesses to a Christian his justification can shine upon his graces, and witness to him his sanctification as well as his justification; and without all controversy, it is as much the office of the Spirit to witness to a man his sanctification as it is to witness to him his justification, 1 Cor. 2:12, 1 John 4:13, 14. But you will say, Sir, pray what should be the reasons why many men have, and why some do still cry down marks and signs, and deny sanctification to be an evidence of men's justification, &c., and speak disgracefully of this practice that is now under consideration? I conjecture the reasons may be such as follow:

First, Many professors take up in a great name, and in a great profession, and in great parts and gifts, though they have never found a thorough change, though they have never passed the pangs of the new birth, though they have never experienced what it is to be a new creature, a thorough Christian. And hence it comes to pass that they make head against this way of evidencing the goodness and happiness of a man's condition by inward gracious qualifications. Of all men these are most apt to outrun the truth, and to run from one extreme to another, and to be only constant in inconstancy. But,

Secondly, Many professors are given up to spiritual judgments, which are the sorest of all judgments, viz., lukewarmness, dead-heartedness, formality, indifferency, apostasy, blindness, hardness, and to 'strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,' 2 Thes. 2:10–12. Now, is it any wonder to see such men quarrel, and wrangle, and rail against the way and method of evidencing the goodness and happiness of a man's spiritual condition by inherent gracious qualifications?. Of all men these are most apt to outrun the

truth, and to run from one extreme to another, and to be only constant in inconstancy. But,

Thirdly, In some this ariseth from their lusts, which they indulge and connive at, and which they have a mind to live quietly in. They are desirous to keep their peace, and yet unwilling to forsake their lusts; and hence they exclude this witness of water or sanctification to testify in the court of conscience whether they are beloved of God, or whether they are sincere-hearted or no, or whether they have the root of the matter in them or no; for the want of this witness, water or sanctification, is a clear and full witness against them that they are yet in their sins, under wrath, and in the way to eternal ruin; and that they have nothing to do with peace, or comfort, or the promises, or Christ, or heaven, [or] to take God's name into their lips, seeing they secretly hate to be reformed, Isa. 57:20, Ps. 50:16. There are many fair professors that are foul sinners, and that have much of God, and Christ, and heaven, and holiness in their lips, when they have nothing but sin and hell in their hearts and lives. These men's convers[at]ions shame their profession, and therefore they cry out against sanctification as a sure and blessed evidence of a man's justification. Such sinners as live in a course of sin, that make a trade of sin, that indulge their sins, that take up arms in defence of sin, that make provision for sin, that make a sport of sin, that take pleasure in sin, and that have set their hearts upon their sin, 1 Thes. 2:11; such sinners cannot but look upon the witness of sanctification as the handwriting upon the wall, Daniel. 5:5, 6. But,

Fourthly, There are many who are great strangers to their own hearts and the blessed Scriptures, and are ignorant of what may be said from the blessed word to evidence the lawfulness of this practice that is under our present consideration. And hence it comes to pass that they cry down marks and signs, and deny sanctification to be a sure

and blessed evidence of men's justification. Ignorat sane improbus omnis, ignorance is the source of all sin, the very well-spring from which all wickedness doth issue. Ignorance enslaves a soul to Satan, it lets in sin by troops, locks them up in the heart, shuts out the means of recovery, and so plasters up a man's eyes that he cannot see the things that belongs to his own or to others' internal or eternal peace. The Scripture sets ignorant persons below the ox and the ass. Did men either see the deformity of sin, or the beauty and excellency of holiness, they would never delight in the one nor cry down the other, Isa. 1:3. Peter tells you of some that speak evil of the things that they understood not; they did reprehend that which they could not comprehend, 2 Peter 2:12. Ignorance is a breeding sin, a mother sin; all sins are seminally in ignorance. Ignorance is the mother of all the mistakes, and of all the misrule in the world. Christ told the Sadducees that they did 'err, not knowing the Scriptures,' Mat 22:29. And so I may say, many err in crying down such signs and evidences of grace which are bottomed upon Scripture, because they are ignorant of what the Scripture saith in the case. But,

Fifthly, The generality of Christians are but lambs, babes, and children in grace. The springs of grace runs low in them; their fears frequently overtop their faith; and their strong passions and corruptions do often raise such a dust and smoke in their souls, that if they might have all the world, yea, if their salvation lay upon it, they were not able to discern the least measure of grace in their own souls, Isa. 40:11; 2 Peter 2:2, 3; 1 John 2:1. A little grace is next to none. Small things are hardly discerned. He had need to have a clear light and good eyes that is to discern a hair, a mote, or an atom. A little grace is not discoverable but by a shining light from above. There are none so full of fears, and doubts, and questions, and disputes, about the truth of their faith in Christ, and the sincerity of their love to Christ, as those that least believe and least love. The

kingdom of God in most Christians is but as a grain of mustard-seed, which is the least of all seeds; and therefore it is no wonder they see it not, Mark 4:30–32. The root of the matter in most Christians is but small, and that small root is often covered over with many sinful infirmities and weaknesses; and therefore we are not to look upon it as a strange thing if we see such Christians not sensible of the root of the matter that is in them. Weak habits put forth such faint actions, and with so much interruption, that it is not an easy thing to discern whether they are the products of special or of common grace. Now, most Christians having but small measures of grace, holiness, and sanctification in them, and these small measures being much obscured and buried under the prevalency of fears, doubts, and unmortified lusts, can speak but weakly and darkly for them; and upon this ground they are not fond of bringing in this witness of sanctification to speak for them. In civil courts, men are not ambitious to bring such witnesses to the bar as can witness but weakly and faintly in their case. It is so here.

Sixthly, Satan is a grand enemy to the peace, joy, comfort, assurance, settlement, and satisfaction of every poor Christian; and therefore he will leave no stone unturned, nor no means unattempted, whereby he may keep them in a low, dark, unsettled, and uncomfortable condition, Ps. 77, 88. When once a poor soul is brought over to Christ, how does the devil bestir himself to keep such a soul so under fears, doubts, and bondage, as that it may not in the least have an eye to anything that may have a proper tendency to its comfort, joy, assurance, peace, or quiet. The devil will do all he can to furnish such as as are 'begotten again by the resurrection of Christ from the dead' with all sorts of deadly weapons out of his armoury, to fight against those arguments and evidences which make for the peace and comfort of their own souls. He that shall look seriously and impartially upon the subtle, close, strong, and rhetorical arguings of

many distressed Christians, above their own natural parts, against the peace, rest, comfort, and settlement of their own souls, may safely conclude that a hand of Joab, a hand of Satan, yea, a strong hand of Satan, has been with them, 2 Sam. 14:19. He that shall please to read the life of Francis Spira, though he be no great philosopher, yet he may easily discern with what subtlety and wonderful sophistry Satan helped him to argue against the pardonableness of his sins, and the possibility of his salvation. Satan knows how to transform himself into an angel of light, 2 Cor. 11:14. Satan does not always appear in one and the same fashion, but he appears in as many several shapes, fashions, and changes, as Proteus did among the poets. To deceive some, he has assumed a lightsome body, as if he were an angel of heaven, as if he had been a holy one clothed with the brightness of celestial glory; to deceive others, he has appeared as an angel of light, suggesting such things to them, and injecting such things into them, under fair and specious shows and pretences of religion, piety, zeal, and holiness, which have had a direct tendency to the dishonour of God, the wounding of Christ, the grieving of the Spirit, the clouding or denying their evidences for heaven, the strangling of their hopes, and the death of all their comforts and joy. But,

Seventhly and lastly, Some Christians live under high enjoyments and singular manifestations of God's love to them; they have God every day a-shedding abroad of his love into their hearts by the Holy Ghost, Rom. 5:5. God is every day a-filling their souls with life, light, love, glory, and liberty, Ps. 63:2–4. Christ every day takes them up into the mount, Mat. 17:4, and makes such discoveries of himself and his glory to them, that they are ready frequently to cry out, Bonum est esse hic, it is good to be here. Christ often whispers them in the ear with an 'O man, O woman, greatly beloved,' Dan. 9:22, 23; Christ's 'left hand is every day under their heads, and his right hand

doth embrace them,' Cant. 2:6; they sit down every day 'under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet unto their taste;' he makes out every day such sweet and clear manifestations of his admirable favour to their hearts, that their souls are daily satisfied as with marrow and fatness, Ps. 63:2–5. There are some precious Christians,—I say not all, I say not most,—who live daily under singular glances of divine glory, and who are daily under the sensible embracements of God, and who daily lie in the bosom of the Father, and who every night have Christ as a bundle of myrrh lying betwixt their breasts, Cant. 1:13. Now these choice souls who live daily in the glorious manifestations of the Spirit, and enjoy a little heaven on this side heaven, these many times are so taken up with their high communion with God, with their spiritual enjoyments, and with their tastes of the glory of that other world, that they do not much mind such evidences as we have had under our consideration. And thus much for the reasons why some cry down Scripture marks, signs, and evidences of grace, of holiness, of sanctification, and why others don't much mind them, or take any great notice of them. But,

[4.] The fourth proposition is this, If this way of trying our spiritual estates by holy and gracious qualifications, were not both lawful and useful, then certainly the Holy Spirit would never have prescribed it, nor never have pressed men so earnestly upon it, as we find he has done in the blessed Scripture. Take a taste: 2 Cor. 13:5, 'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.' The precept is doubled, to teach us to redouble our diligence in this most needful but much neglected duty of self-examination. The final trial of our eternal estates doth immediately and solely belong to the court of heaven, but the disquisitive part belongs to us. Here are two emphatical words in the Greek: first, πειραζετε, 'examine yourselves.' The word in the general signifies to take an experimental knowledge of anything, that is either uncertain, unknown, or hidden. Most men

are great strangers to God, to Christ, to Scripture, and to themselves; and therefore saith the apostle, 'Examine yourselves.' Now, if there were not sure marks and infallible signs whereby men may certainly know what their present estate is, and how it is like to go with them in another world, the redoubled command of the apostle would be in vain. The second Greek word is δοκιμάζετε, 'prove yourselves.' The original word signifies a severe and diligent inquisition into ourselves, so as to have a full experience of what is in us. Doubtless the apostle would never call again and again upon us, to try and examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, if it were not lawful to come to the knowledge of our faith, or of our being in the state of faithful Christians, in a discursive way, arguing from the effect to the cause. So in that 2 Peter 1:10, 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.' The Greek word διό μᾶλλον, ἀδελφόι, σπουδάσατε, translated 'give diligence,' is very emphatical. It signifies to do a thing, not in an overly, lazy, careless way, but to do a thing with industry, vigilancy, and unweariedness of spirit. Now, it is granted on all hands, that election cannot be made more sure in respect of God or itself, but only in respect of us, that we may be more persuaded of it. Election cannot be made more sure than it is already, for those whom God hath elected shall be certainly glorified; but we must make it sure on our parts; that is, we must labour to have a real bottom and grounded assurance that we are elected by God in his eternal decree, to obtain life and glory by Jesus Christ, Rom. 8:29, 30. There is a double certainty: (1.) There is certitudo objecti, a certainty of the object; so our election is sure with God, for with him both it and all things are unchangeable. (2.) There is certitudo subjecti, the certainty of the subject; and so we must make our election sure to ourselves in our own hearts and consciences. Now, the means whereby we are to come to this assurance, is by adding grace to grace, and by causing those several graces to abound in us. This is the way of ways to make all sure to us.

Now, by these scriptures it is most evident that we stand engaged to make our election sure by holy signs and marks. But,

[5.] The fifth proposition is this, That other precious saints that are now triumphing in glory, have pleaded their interest in God's love, and their hopes of a better life, from graces inherent. I will only point at some of those scriptures among many others, that clearly speak out this truth: the first epistle of John; James 2:17, seq.; Job 23:10–12; and the whole 31st chapter of Job; Ps. 119:6; Isa. 38:2, 3; Neh. 1:1, seq., and 13:14, &c. Now, all these scriptures do evidently prove, that the precious servants of the Lord did take their graces for precious signs and testimonies of God's love, of their interest in Christ, and thereby received much comfort, peace, and satisfaction. And truly, to deny the fruit growing upon the tree to be an evidence that the tree is alive, is to me as unreasonable as it is absurd. Certainly, it is one thing to judge by our graces, and another thing to trust in our graces, to make a saviour of our graces. There is a great deal of difference betwixt declaring and deserving Christians. They may doubtless look to their graces as evidences of their part in Christ and salvation,—and the clearer and stronger they are, the greater will be their comfort and assurance,—but not as causes. No man advanced free grace like Paul; no man debased his own righteousness like Paul—he counted it but dung and dross, Philip. 3:6–9; and no man exalted the righteousness of Christ like Paul, and yet by this way of signs he gathered much comfort and assurance: 2 Tim. 4:7, 8, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.' How plainly, how fully doth he here conclude his right to the crown of life, from his fighting a good fight, his finishing his course, in a way of grace and holiness, and his keeping the faith. By this great instance you may clearly see, that a Christian may greatly exalt Christ, lift up free grace, tread upon his own righteousness, as to justification, and at

the very same time take comfort in his graces, and in his gracious actings. So in that 2 Cor. 1:12, 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of a good conscience, that in godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world. His joy was founded on the testimony of his conscience; but from what did his conscience testify? from his sincere conversation. Again, take that memorable instance of Job; God hid his face from him; the arrows of the almighty stuck fast in him; Satan was let loose upon him; the wife of his bosom proved a tempter to him, a tormentor of him; his most inward acquaintance deserted him, reproached him, and condemned him as a hypocrite; God writ bitter things against him, and made him 'to possess the iniquities of his youth:' all was clouded above him, and he stripped of all the outward comforts that did once surround him, Job. 1:8, and 2:3, so that he had nothing left to stay him, to refresh him, to support him, and to be a comfort and joy to him, but the sense of his integrity, and the evidence he had of his own uprightness, his own righteousness: Job 27:5, 'Till I die I will not remove my integrity from me;' ver. 6, 'My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.' Job was under great afflictions, sore temptations, and deep desertions. Now that which was his cordial, his bulwark, in those sad times, was the sense and feeling of his own uprightness, his own righteousness. The sense and feeling of the grace of God in him kept him from fainting and sinking under all his troubles. So in 1 John 2:3, 'Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments,' &c. In these words two things are observable: First, that where there is a true knowledge of Christ, there is an observation of his commandments. Secondly, that by this observation of his royal law, we may know that our knowledge is sound and sincere. He speaks not of a legal, but of an evangelical, keeping of his commandments. A conscionable and serious endeavour to walk in a holy course of life, according to God's will revealed in his word, is a most certain mark or evidence that we have

a saving knowledge of God, and that we are his children, and heirs of glory. Such who sincerely desire, and unfeignedly purpose, and firmly resolve, and faithfully endeavour, to keep the commandments of God, these do keep the commandments of God evangelically and acceptably in the eye of God, the account of God. So ver. 6, 'He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked.' Here you may observe two things: First, that by faith we are implanted into Christ; secondly, that we discover our implantation into Christ by our imitation of Christ. Such as plead for sanctification as an evidence of justification don't make their graces causes of their implantation into Christ, or of their justification before the throne of Christ, but they make them testimonies and witnesses to declare the truth of their real implantation into Christ, and of their being justified before the throne of Christ. So 1 John 3:14, 'We know we are translated from death to life, because we love the brethren.' The apostle makes this a great sign of godliness, to love another godly man for godliness's sake, and the more godly he is, the more to love him, and to delight in him. Now mark, this love of our brethren is not a cause of our translation from death to life, for the very word translated supposeth such a grace, such a favour of God as is without us, but a sign of our translation from death to life. But of this I have said enough already, as you may see if you will but read from page 189 to page 200 of this book. But,

[6.] The sixth proposition is this: There are many scores of precious promises made over to them that believe, to them that trust in the Lord, to them that set him up as the great object of their fear, to them that love him, to them that delight in him, to them that obey him, to them that walk with him, to them that thirst after him, to them that suffer for him, to them that follow after him, &c. Now all these scores of promises are made for the support, comfort, and encouragement of all such Christians whose souls are bespangled

with grace. But now if we may not lawfully come to the knowledge of our faith, love, fear, delight, obedience, &c., in a discursive way, arguing from the effect to the cause, what support, what comfort, what advantage shall a sincere Christian have by all those scores of promissory places of Scripture? Doubtless all those scores of promises would be as so many suns without light, as so many springs without water, as so many breasts without milk, and as so many bodies without souls, to all gracious Christians, were it not lawful for them to form up such a practical syllogism as this is, viz. the Scripture doth plainly and fully declare that he that believeth, feareth, loveth, obeyeth, &c., is blessed, and shall be happy for ever; But I am such a one that doth believe, fear, love, obey, &c.; Therefore I am blessed, and shall be happy for ever. Now, although it must be granted that the major of this proposition is Scripture, yet the assumption is from experience; and therefore a godly man, being assisted therein by the Holy Ghost, may safely draw the conclusion as undeniable. Oh that you would seriously consider how little would be the difference, should you shut out this discursive way, betwixt a man and a beast: if a man should assent to a thing unknown through an instinct and impression, and should to one who asks him a reason of his persuasion be able to return no other answer but this, I am persuaded because I am persuaded. But,

[7.] The seventh proposition is this, That the Scripture giveth many signs and symptoms of grace; so that if a man cannot find all, yet if he discover some, yea, but one, he may safely conclude that all the rest are there. He who hath but one in truth of the fore-mentioned characters in this book, hath seminally all; he who hath one link of the golden chain, hath the whole chain. Look, as he who hath one grace in truth, hath every grace in truth, though he doth not see every grace shining in his soul; so he that hath in truth any one evidence of grace in his soul, he hath virtually all. And oh that all weak, dark,

doubting Christians would seriously and frequently ponder upon this proposition; for it may be a staff to uphold them, and a cordial to comfort them under all their fears and faintings. But,

[8.] The eighth proposition is this, Without the light of the Holy Ghost our graces shine not. Our graces are only the means by which our condition is known to us, Rom. 9:2. The efficient cause of this knowledge is the Spirit illustrating our graces and making them visible, and so helping us to conclude from them, &c.: 1 Cor. 2:12, 'Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.' Our graces, our sanctification, as well as our election, vocation, justification, and glorification, are freely given to us of God; and the Spirit of God is given as well to discover the one as the other to us. Mark, the things freely given us may be received by us, and yet the receipt of them not known to us; therefore the Spirit for our further consolation doth, as it were, put his hand and seal to our receipts, whence he is said to 'seal us up unto the day of redemption,' Eph. 4:30. The graces of the Spirit are a real 'earnest' of the Spirit, yet they are not always an evidential earnest; therefore an earnest is often superadded to our graces. For ever remember these few hints: (1.) that it is the work of the Spirit to plant grace in the soul; (2.) that it is the work of the Spirit to act and exercise the graces that he has planted there; (3.) that it is the work of the Spirit to shine upon those graces that he has planted in the soul, and to cause the soul to see and feel what he has wrote; (4.) that it is the work of the Spirit to raise springs of comfort and joy in the soul, upon the discovery of that grace which he has wrought in the soul. O Christians! till the Spirit of the Lord shine upon your graces, you will still be in the dark. It is only God's own interpreter that must shew a man his righteousness, Job 33:23. When the Holy Ghost shines upon a Christian's graces, then a Christian finds the springs of comfort to

rise in his soul, and then he finds the greatest serenity and calmness in his spirit. O sirs! no man can, by any natural light or evidence in him, come to be assured of the grace wrought in his soul. Look, as no man can see the sun but in the light of the sun, so no man can see the graces of the Spirit but in the light of the Spirit, 1 John 5:13. A man may have grace and not see it; he may be in a state of grace and not know it; as the child lives in the womb but don't perceive it, is heir to a crown but don't know it. Oh! till the Spirit shines upon his own work, a child of light may walk in darkness and see no light, Isa. 50:10. Look, as no man can subdue his sins but by the power of the Spirit; so no man can see his graces but in the light of the Spirit, Rom. 8:13. The confidence that a believer hath of the truth of grace wrought in him, springs more from the Spirit's removing his slavish fears, and answering his doubts, and shining upon his graces, and supporting his soul, than it does from that excellency and beauty of grace which shines in him. A man may read the promises over and over a thousand times, and yet never be affected, delighted, or taken with them, till the Spirit of the Lord set them home upon his soul. And a man may read the threatenings over and over a thousand times, and yet never startle nor tremble, though he knows himself guilty of those very sins against which the threatenings are denounced, till the Spirit of the Lord sets home the threatenings in power upon his conscience; and then every threatening will be like the hand-writing upon the wall, which will cause his countenance to be changed, and his thoughts to be troubled, and his joints to be loosed, and his knees to be dashed one against another, Dan. 5:6, 7. It is just so in the matter of our graces and gracious evidences; till the Holy Spirit shine upon them, till in the light of the Spirit we come to see them, they won't be witnessing, comforting, and refreshing to us; and therefore let not the pious reader think that, by the strength of his natural light, he shall ever attain to know the certainty of that grace which is in his soul; but let him rather beg hard of God for his

Holy Spirit, and that his Spirit may shine upon that good work which he hath begun in him, that so he may be persuaded, assured, and comforted. Without the light of the Spirit, the work of the Spirit cannot be seen, no more than a book written in the fairest hand or print can be seen without light to see it or read it by. But,

[9.] The ninth proposition is this, Sincere Christians may safely and groundedly rejoice, delight, and take comfort in those graces, or in those divine qualities, which in the light of the Spirit they see and know are wrought in their souls. I do not say that a Christian should build the comfort of his justification upon his graces, or that he should rest on his graces, or trust to his graces, or make a saviour of his graces; for this would be such a piece of pharisaical popery, as is justly to be detested and abhorred by all that love Christ, or are looking towards heaven. But this I say, a Christian may make several uses of his graces; he may safely look upon his graces as so many evidences of Christ's dwelling in him, and he may look upon his graces as so many heavenly bracelets, or as so many love-tokens from God, in which he may safely rejoice. The gracious evidences that I have laid down in this treatise are blessed symptoms of salvation; and therefore to rejoice in them can be no transgression of any royal law of heaven. He that can experimentally subscribe to any of the gracious evidences that are laid down in this book, has such a fair certificate to shew for heaven, that no wicked man or hypocrite under heaven has the like to shew; and why such a man should not rejoice in such a certificate, I cannot at present see. I may and ought to rejoice in the works of creation. Oh how much more then ought I to rejoice in the work of renovation, in the work of sanctification, which does so infinitely transcend the work of creation? I may and ought to rejoice in my natural life, health, strength, beauty; and why then should I not rejoice in grace and holiness, which is the life, health, strength, and beauty of my soul? Christ delights in the graces

of his people. 'Thou hast ravished my heart' (or thou hast behearted me, as the Hebrew runs), 'my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes' (or with one glance of thine eyes, as some read it), 'with one chain of thy neck,' Cant. 4:9. The eye of faith, say some; the eye of love, say others; the chain of obedience, say some; the chain of spiritual graces, say others, ravished Christ's heart. The one eye of faith, the one chain of obedience, unhearted Christ, wounded Christ; this one eye, this one chain, robbed Christ of his heart, and laid the spouse in the room of it. Now, shall Christ's heart be ravished with his children's graces, and shall not their hearts be ravished and delighted with those very graces that ravish Christ's own heart? I may, yea, I ought to rejoice in the graces of others, and why then not in my own? I may, yea I ought to rejoice in others' outward mercies, and in my own outward mercies, 1 Thes. 1:2–5, 2 Thes. 1:3, 4. Oh how much more then ought I to rejoice in the saving and distinguishing graces of the Spirit, especially when I consider, that the least dram of grace is more worth than ten thousand thousand worlds, as every awakened conscience will tell you when they come to die, Hab. 3:18, Gal. 6:14, Philip. 3:3. Mark, firstly, mostly, and chiefly, a Christian is to rejoice in God and Christ; but secondarily and subordinately, he may rejoice in those graces, and in those gracious evidences that God has given into his soul. Firstly, mostly, and chiefly, a wife is to rejoice in the person of her husband; but secondarily, subordinately she may rejoice in the bracelets, in the ear-rings, in the jewels, in the gold chains that are given her by her husband. But,

[10.] The tenth proposition is this, viz., That that assurance that the people of God may rise to by sight of their graces, and upon the sight of their gracious evidences in the light of the Spirit, is not so clear, and bright, and high, and full, as that it utterly excludes all fears, doubtings, conflicts, or spiritual agonies, 1 Cor. 13:12; Philip. 3:12–

14. Our knowledge of God, of Christ, of ourselves, and of the blessed Scripture, which is the rule of trial, is imperfect in this life. And how then can our assurance be perfect? David, a man eminent in grace and holiness, had his up-hills and his down-hills, his summer days and his winter nights. Now you shall have him upon the mountain singing and saying, 'The Lord is my portion,' Ps. 73:25; and presently you shall have him in the valleys, sighing and saying, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul; why art thou disquieted within me?' Ps. 42:5, 11. The same is evident in Job, Heman, and Asaph, Job 3; Ps. 77; Ps. 88. Such an assurance as shall exclude all fears, doubts, conflicts, agonies, is very desirable on earth, but shall never be obtained till we come to heaven. The grievous assaults of Satan, the power of unbelief, and the prevalency of other corruptions in a Christian's heart, may be such as may shake, I do not say overturn, that assurance which a Christian may gather from the sight and evidence of his graces in the light of the Spirit. 'The flesh lusteth as well against the Spirit,' Gal. 5:17, as it is a Spirit of consolation, as it lusteth against the Spirit as it is a Spirit of sanctification; and therefore such an assurance as shall exclude all sorts and degrees of fears and doubts, is not attainable in this life. Whilst we are in this old world we shall have water with our wine, gall with our honey, and some clouds with our brightest sunshiny days, &c. Most Christians think, that as long as they have any doubtings they have no assurance; but they consider not that there are many degrees of infallible certainty, below a perfect or an undoubting certainty. Doubtless some darkness, more or less, will overspread the face of every Christian's soul, and unbelief in one degree or another will be making head against their faith; and hypocrisy in one degree or another will be making head against sincerity, and pride in one degree or another will be making head against humility, and passion in one degree or another will be making head against meekness, and earthly-mindedness in one degree or another will be making head

against heavenly-mindedness, &c., yet as long as a Christian has the sight of his graces or his gracious evidences, he may and ought to walk in much peace, comfort, and joy. Such Christians as are resolved to lie down in sorrow, till they have attained to a perfect assurance, must resolve to lie down in sorrow till they come to lay down their heads in the dust. Our graces are imperfect, and therefore that assurance that arises from the sight and evidence of them must needs be imperfect. Perfect signs of grace can never spring from imperfect grace, 1 Thes. 3:10. Now, if this were seriously apprehended, studied, and minded by many weak Christians, they would not at every turn call their spiritual estates into question, as they do, because they find some seeds and stirrings of pride, hypocrisy, vain-glory, and other sinful humours and passions working in them. But,

[11.] The eleventh proposition is this, viz., When all your signs and evidences of the happiness and blessedness of your condition fails you, and are so clouded, obscured, darkened and blotted that you cannot read them, that you cannot take any comfort from them, then it highly concerns you to keep high, and precious, and honourable thoughts of God, of Christ, of his word, and of his ways in your souls, Ps. 97:2. When Christ was withdrawn from his spouse, Cant. 5:6, 7, and when the watchmen that went about the city had smote her and wounded her, and when the keepers of the walls had took away her veil from her, yet then she keeps up in heart very high, precious, and honourable thoughts of Christ. Ver. 10, 'My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.' Ver. 16, 'His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether lovely;' or his mouth is sweetnesses, and he is altogether desirablenesses, or all of him is desires, or he is wholly desirable. Here she breaks off her praises in a general eulogy, which no words can express enough. Alas! saith the spouse, I want words to express how sweet, how lovely, how comely, how desirable,

how eminent, and how excellent Christ is in my eye, and to my soul! He is the desire of all nations de jure, Hag. 2:8, and all that is perfect in heaven or earth is but a dim shadow of his excellency and glory. Where Christ is there is heaven. Heaven itself, in the spouse's eyes, without Christ, would be but a low little thing. The spouse looks upon Christ as the sparkling diamond in the ring of glory. So David, when he was wofully clouded and benighted, when all was dark within him, and dark about him, and dark over him, Ps. 73:13, 'Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.' Ver. 21, 'My heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.' Ver. 22, 'I was as a beast before thee;' or I was as a great beast, or as many beasts in one, as the Hebrew word Behemoth imports. Ver. 26, 'My flesh and my heart faileth;' that is, my outward man and my inward man faileth me. And yet mark, at this very time, when the psalmist was thus overcast, he keeps up in him very high, precious, and honourable thoughts of God. Ver. 1, 'Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.' Ver. 23, 'Nevertheless, I am continually with thee, thou hast holden me by my right hand.' Ver. 24, 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.' Ver. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.' Ver. 26, 'God is the strength,' or rock, 'of my heart, and my portion for ever.' Ver. 28, 'It is good for me to draw near to God.' So the church in that Micah 7, when God had hid his face from her; ver. 7, when she sat in darkness; ver. 8, when she was under the indignation of the Lord; ver. 9, when the righteous man was perished, and there was none upright among men; ver. 2, and when her enemies rejoiced, insulted and triumphed over her; vers. 8 and 10, yet now, even now, she keeps up in her soul very high, precious, and honourable thoughts of the Lord. Ver. 7, 'My God will hear me.' Ver. 8, 'When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.' Ver. 9, 'He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.' I might give

you twenty more instances, but enough is as good as a feast. Dear Christians, when your graces are not transparent, when your evidences for heaven are blotted, and when the face of God is clouded, oh then, keep up in your hearts high, precious, and honourable thoughts of God and Christ, and of his word and ways, &c. When your sun of righteousness is set in a cloud, when great darkness is upon your spirits, when all moonlight and starlight of your graces and gracious evidences fails you, Acts 27:20, yet then say with David, 'Thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel,' Ps. 22:3; and with Ezra, 'Thou hast punished me less than mine iniquities deserve,' Ezra 9:13; and with Nehemiah, 'Howbeit, thou art just in all that is brought upon us, for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly;' and with the church, 'The Lord is righteous,' Neh. 9:33. In the darkest night, and under your deepest soul-distresses, say, Well, if I perish, if I should miscarry for ever, yet I will maintain and keep up in my heart, high, and precious, and honourable thoughts of God and Christ, Lam. 1:18. Say, Well, though my graces are obscured, and my evidences for heaven are blurred and soiled, yet I shall to my last breath say the Lord is good, and his word is good, and his ways are good; yea, though he should slay me, yet I will trust in him, and entertain noble and glorious thoughts of him, Job 13:15. This is the way of ways to have your graces cleared and strengthened, your evidences brightened, your comforts restored, and your assurance confirmed. But,

[12.] The twelfth proposition is this, viz., That it is the great duty and concernment of Christians to keep the evidences of their gracious and happy condition always bright and shining. Christians should make conscience of blurring and disfiguring the golden characters of grace in their souls. The least character of grace in the soul, is more worth than all the gold of Ophir, yea, more worth than ten thousand thousand worlds; and therefore every gracious Christian should be

marvellous careful, that he does not by wilful omissions or sinful commissions cloud, dim, or darken the least character of grace, Eph. 4:30, Ps. 51:11, 12. Such as blot or lose their evidences for heaven, they lose the comfort of their lives in this world. Satan's masterpiece is first to work Christians to blot and blur their evidences for glory, by committing this or that heinous sin; and then his next work is to rob them of their evidences for glory, that so though at the long run they may get safe to heaven, that yet Jacob-like they may go halting and mourning to their graves. Satan knows, that whilst a Christian's evidences are bright and shining, a Christian is temptation-proof. Satan may tempt him, but he cannot conquer him; he may assault him, but he cannot vanquish him. Satan knows, that whilst a Christian's evidences for heaven are bright and shining, no afflictions can sink him, nor no opposition shake him, nor no persecution discourage him, nor no outward wants perplex him; and therefore he will use all his power and policy, all his arts, crafts, and parts, to draw poor Christians to blot and blur their evidences for glory. Satan knows, that a man may lose one friend, and easily get another, lose his trade in one place, and soon get a trade in another place; lose his health and get it, lose an estate and get an estate, &c. But if he lose his evidences for heaven, he knows it will cost him many a prayer, and many a sigh, and many a groan, and many a tear, and many a sad complaint, before he recovers his lost evidences; and therefore his grand design is to plunder a Christian of his evidences for heaven. O sirs! keep but your evidences for heaven always bright and shining, and then heavy afflictions will be light, and long afflictions will be short, and bitter afflictions will be sweet, 2 Cor. 4:16–18; and then every evidence fairly written in your hearts will be a living comfort to you in a dying hour. When the tokens of death are upon your bodies, and you shall see the lively characters of grace shining in your souls, you will then cry out with old Simeon, 'Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace,' Luke 2:29; and with the spouse, 'Make haste, my

beloved, and be like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices,' Cant. 8:14; and with the bride, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly,' Rev. 22:20; and with Paul, 'I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ,' Philip. 1:23. When a man's evidences for heaven are either lost or blotted and blurred, then he will be ready to cry out with David, 'Oh spare me yet a little, that I may recover strength before I go hence and be seen no more,' Ps. 39:13; and with Hezekiah, to turn his face to the wall and weep, Isa. 38:3. There are four things that above all others a Christian should labour to keep; (1) Christ; (2) his own heart; (3) the word; (4) his evidences for heaven, bright and shining. But,

[13.] The thirteenth proposition is this viz., It is the high concernment of every Christian, either when he is in the dark, or when his graces shine brightest, and when his evidences for heaven are clearest, and his springs of comfort rise highest, then to have his heart and the eye of his faith most firmly fixed upon these three royal forts, or these three cities of refuge. It must be granted, that though our graces are our best jewels, yet they are imperfect, and do not give out their full lustre; they are like the moon, which when it shines brightest hath her dark spots; and therefore a Christian had need have his eye, his heart fixed upon the three following royal forts. You know in time of war there are the outworks, and there are the royal forts. Now, when the soldiers are beaten out of their outworks, they retire to the royal forts, and there they are safe; and then they cast up their caps and bid defiance to their proudest enemies. Now, our graces and our gracious evidences, they are our outworks; and from these we may be beaten in a day of desertion and temptation, &c. Now if we make our retrea to the three following royal forts, we may in a holy sense cast up our caps, and bid defiance to an host of devils, yea, to all the powers of darkness. But,

Quest. But, sir, pray let us know which are these royal forts.

Ans. They are these three that follow.

1. The first is the free, rich, infinite, sovereian, and alorious grace of God. By free grace you are to understand the gracious good will or favour of God, whereby he is pleased of his own free love to choose and accept of some in Christ for his own. This we call first grace, because it is the fountain of all other grace, and the spring from whence they flow; and it is therefore called grace, because it makes a man gracious with God. Now mark, there have been many Christians who have had no assurance of the love of God, no sight of their interest in Christ, no sealing of the Spirit, nor no one clear evidence of grace, that they durst rest the weight of their souls upon; nor no one promise in the whole book of God that they durst apply or rest upon, who yet daily casting or rolling themselves, their souls, and their everlasting concernments, upon the infinite, free, rich, and sovereign grace of God in Christ, have found some tolerable peace, comfort, and refreshment in such a practice all their days. A Christian may lose the sight of his graces, and the evidences of his gracious estate; he may be so much in the dark, he may be so much benighted and bewildered in his spirit, that there may be no way under heaven left to him to enjoy peace, comfort, rest, quiet, settlement, or contentment, but by casting or rolling of his soul upon the free, rich, infinite, and sovereign grace of God in Christ; and here casting anchor, the poor bewildered, deserted, tempted, tossed soul may be safe and at rest, Isa. 1:10. The free love and favour of God will be a lamp to the soul in the darkest night; it will be a sweet lump that will sweeten the bitterest cup; it will be a singular cordial against all faintings; it will be armour of proof against all temptations; it will be an everlasting arm to you under all afflictions; it will be a sun and a shield to you in every condition, Ps. 4:6: Ps. 80:3. 'Cause thy face to

shine, and we shall be saved.' Divine favour is that pearl of price that is most desirable: Dan. 9:17, 'The Lord make his face to shine upon his sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake;' Num. 6:24, 'The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;' Ps. 67:1, 'God be merciful to you, and bless you, and cause his face to shine upon you.' Life is a very desirable thing; 'skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life,' Job 2:4; and yet the loving-kindness of God is better than life: Ps. 63:3, 'Thy loving-kindness is better than life.' The Hebrew word is chajim, lives; to note that the loving-kindness of God is better than many lives, yea, than all lives, and the revenues of life, put many lives together, put all lives together; and yet there is more excellency in the least discovery of divine love than in them all. Many a man has been weary of his life, but who have ever been weary of divine love? Dear Christians, are your graces or gracious evidences shining or sparkling? Oh then solace yourselves mostly in the free love and favour of God; for in his free favour lies the life of your souls, the life of your graces, the life of your comforts, yea, in his free favour your all is bound up. If your graces or evidences are so clouded and darkened, that you are in a stormy day beat out of your outworks, oh now run to the free grace and favour of God, as to your royal fort, as to your strong tower, as to your city of refuge, where you may be safe and happy for ever. In such a day ponder much upon these scriptures, Hosea 14:4, 'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.' God's love is a free love, having no motive or foundation but within itself. All the links of the golden chain of salvation are made up of free grace. The people of God are freely loved: Deut. 7:6–8; and freely chosen, John 15:16–19, Eph. 1:4; and freely accepted, Eph. 1:6; and freely adopted, Eph. 1:5, Gal. 4:5, 6; and freely reconciled, 2 Cor. 5:18–20; and freely justified, Rom. 3:24, 'Being justified freely by his grace;' and freely saved, Eph. 2:5; 'By grace ye are saved,' ver. 8, 'For by grace ye are saved;' Tit. 3:5, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but

according to his mercy he saved us.' Thus you see that all the golden rounds in Jacob's ladder, that reaches from heaven to earth, are all made up of free grace. Free grace is the foundation of all spiritual and eternal mercies; free grace is the solid bottom and foundation of all a Christian's comfort in this world. Were we to measure the love of God to us by our fruitfulness, holiness, humbleness, spiritualness, heavenly-mindedness, or gracious carriages towards him, how would our hope, our confidence every hour, yea, every moment in every hour, bestaggered, if not vanquished! Rom. 4:16. But all is of grace, of free grace, that the promise might be sure, and that our salvation might be safe. O sirs! it is free grace that will strengthen you in all your duties, and that will sweeten all your mercies, Rom. 8:33–36, and that will support you under all your changes, and that will arm you against all temptations, and answer all objections, and take off all Satan's accusations, that may be cast in to disturb the peace and quiet of your souls; aud therefore, whether your graces or gracious evidences do shine or are clouded, yet still have your recourse to the free grace of God, as to your first royal fort, your first city of refuge; and still cry out, Grace, grace. When your gracious evidences are clearest and fullest, then it concerns you to look upon free grace as your choicest and safest city of refuge. But,

2. The second royal fort that Christians should have their eyes, their hearts fixed upon, whether their graces or gracious evidences sparkle and shine, or are clouded and obscured, is the mediatory righteousness of Christ. Beloved, there is a twofold righteousness in Christ. First, there is his essential and personal righteousness as God. Now, this essential personal righteousness cannot be imputed to us; but then there is, secondly, his mediatory righteousness, that is, that righteousness which he wrought for us as mediator, whereby he did subject himself to the precepts, to the penalties, commands, and curses, answering both God's vindictive and rewarding justice.

This is communicated to us and made ours, by virtue of which we stand recti in curia, justified in God's sight. The mediatory righteousness of Christ is the matter of our justification. Now, this mediatory righteousness of Christ includes, first, the habitual holiness of his person in the absence of all sin, and in the rich and plentiful presence of all holy and requisite qualities; secondly, the actual holiness of his life and death by obedience. By his active obedience he perfectly fulfilled the commands of the law, and by his passive obedience, his voluntary sufferings, he satisfied the penalty and commination of the law for transgressions. Mark, that perfect satisfaction to divine justice in whatsoever it requires, either in way of punishing for sin, or obedience to the law, made by the Lord Jesus Christ, God and man, the mediator of the new covenant, as a common head representing all those whom the Father hath given to him, and made over unto them that believe in him: this is that righteousness that is imputed to us in justification. No other righteousness can justify us before the throne of God. Look, as Christ was made sin for us only by imputation, so we are made righteous only by the imputation of his righteousness to us, as the Scripture clearly evidences: 2 Cor. 5:21, 'He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Jer. 23:6, 'The Lord our righteousness.' A soul truly sensible of his own unrighteousness, would not have this sentence, 'The Lord our righteousness,' blotted out of the Bible for ten thousand thousand worlds. 1 Cor. 1:30, 'Christ Jesus is made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness,' &c. And pray, how is Christ made righteousness to the believer? Not by way of infusion, but imputation; not by putting righteousness into him, but by putting a righteousness upon him, even his own righteousness; by the imputing his merit, his satisfaction, his obedience unto them, through which they are accepted as righteous unto eternal life: Rom. 5:19, 'As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by

the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' Christ's righteousness is his in respect of inhesion, but it is ours in respect of imputation; his righteousness is his personally, but ours meritoriously. Look, as there is a true and real union between us and Christ, so there is a real imputation of Christ's righteousness to us. And a gracious soul triumphs more in the righteousness of Christ imputed than he would have done if he could have stood in the righteousness in which he was created. This is the crowning comfort to a sensible and understanding soul, that he stands righteous before a judgment-seat in that full, exact, perfect, complete, matchless, spotless, peerless, and most acceptable righteousness of Christ which is imputed to him. The righteousness of Christ is therefore called 'the righteousness of God,' Rom. 3:21, 22; 10:3; Philip. 3:9, because it is it which God hath designed, and which God doth accept for us in our justification, and for and in which he doth acquit and pronounce us righteous before his seat of justice. That we are freely justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, is the very basis, foundation, and state of [the] Christian religion, whereby it is distinguished from all other religions whatsoever. Jews, Turks, pagans, and papists explode an imputed righteousness; yea, papists jeer it, calling it a putative righteousness. Well, sirs, remember this once for all, viz., that the mediatory righteousness of Christ is the life of your souls, and will afford you these most admirable comforts.

[1.] First, In this righteousness there is enough to satisfy the justice of God to the utmost farthing. The mediatory righteousness of Christ is so perfect, so full, so exact, so complete, and so fully satisfactory to the justice of God, as that divine justice cries out, I have enough, and I require no more; I have found a ransom, and I am fully pacified towards you, Ezek. 16:62, 63. But,

[2.] Secondly, This mediatory righteousness of Christ takes away all our unrighteousness; it cancels every bond, it takes away all iniquity, and answers for all our sins, Isa. 53; Col. 2:12–15. Lord, here are my sins of omission, and here are my sins of commission; but the righteousness of Christ hath answered for them all. Here are my sins against the law, and here are my sins against the gospel, and here are my sins against the offers of grace, the tenders of grace, the strivings of grace, the bowels of grace; but the righteousness of Christ hath answered for them all. When a cordial was offered to one that was sick, Oh, said he, the cordial of cordials which I daily take is this: 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all our sins,' 1 John 1:7. O sirs! it would be high blasphemy for any to imagine that there should be more demerit in sin, in any sin, in all sin, to condemn a believer, than there is merit in Christ's righteousness to absolve him, to justify him, Rom. 8:1, 33–35. But,

[3.] Thirdly, This righteousness of Christ presents us perfectly righteous in the sight of God. It is that pure, fine, white linen garment whereby our nakedness is covered before the face of God: 'And to her was granted' (that is, to the Lamb's wife) 'that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints,' Rev. 19:8; or the righteousnesses or justifications of saints, for the Greek is plural, τὰ δικαιώματα. Some by righteousnesses understand the righteousness of Christ imputed, and the righteousness of Christ imparted; but I rather close with those who say it is an Hebraism; the plural righteousnesses noting that most perfect, complete, absolute righteousness which Christ is pleased to put upon his people, Eph. 5:27. Upon the account of this righteousness of Christ, the church is said to be without spot or wrinkle, and to be all fair: 'Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee,' Cant. 4:7; and to be complete: 'And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power,' Col. 2:10; and to be

without fault: 'They are without fault before the throne of God,' Rev. 14:5. And so Col. 1:21, 'And to present us holy, and unblameable, and unreproveable, in the sight of God.' But,

[4.] Fourthly, This righteousness of Christ will answer to all the fears, doubts, and objections of your souls. How shall I look up to God? The answer is, In the righteousness of Christ. How shall I have any communion with a holy God in this world? The answer is, In the righteousness of Christ. How shall I find acceptance with God? The answer is, In the righteousness of Christ. How shall I die? The answer is, In the righteousness of Christ. How shall I stand before a judgment seat? The answer is, In the righteousness of Christ. Your sure and only way under all temptations, fears, conflicts, doubts, and disputes, is by faith to remember Christ, and the sufferings of Christ, as your mediator and surety, and say, O Christ! thou art my sin, in being made sin for me, and thou art my curse, in being made a curse for me; or rather, I am thy sin, and thou art my righteousness; I am thy curse, and thou art my blessing; I am thy death, and thou art my life; I am the wrath of God to thee, and thou art the love of God to me; I am thy hell, and thou art my heaven. O sirs! if you think of your sins, and of God's wrath; if you think of your guiltiness, and of God's justice, your hearts will fail you, and sink into despair, if you don't think of Christ, if you don't rest and stay your souls upon the mediatory righteousness of Christ. But,

[5.] Fifthly and lastly, The righteousness of Christ is the best title that you have to shew for a kingdom that shakes not, for riches that corrupt not, for an inheritance that fadeth not away, and for an house not made with hands, but one eternal in the heavens. The righteousness of Christ is your life, your joy, your comfort, your crown, your confidence, your heaven, your all; and therefore whether your graces or gracious evidences do sparkle and shine, or are

clouded or blotted, yet still keep a fixed eye and an awakened heart upon the mediatory righteousness of Jesus Christ; for that is the righteousness by which you may happily live, comfortably die, and boldly appear before a judgment-seat. But,

3. The third royal fort, that Christians should have their eyes, their hearts fixed upon, whether their graces or gracious evidences sparkle and shine, or are obscured and clouded, is the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace is a new compact or agreement which God hath made with sinful man out of his own mere mercy and grace, wherein he undertakes both for himself and for fallen man, and wherein he engages himself to make fallen man everlastingly happy. All mankind had been eternally lost, and God had lost all the glory of his mercy for ever, had he not of his own free grace and mercy made such an agreement with sinful man. This covenant is called a covenant of grace, because it flows from the mere grace and mercy of God. There was nothing out of God, nor nothing in God, but his mere mercy and grace, that moved him to enter into covenant with poor sinners. In the covenant of grace there are two things considerable: First, The covenant that God makes for himself to us, which consists of these branches, (1.) that he will be our God; (2.) that he will give us a new heart, a new spirit; (3.) that he will not turn away his face from us from doing of us good; (4.) that he will put his fear into our hearts; (5.) that he will cleanse us from all our filthiness, and from all our idols; (6.) that he will rejoice over us to do us good. Secondly, Here is the covenant which God doth make for us to himself, which consists in these things, (1.) that we shall be his people; (2.) that we shall fear him for ever; (3.) that we shall walk in his statutes, keep his judgments and do them; (4.) that we shall not depart from him. Upon many accounts I may not enlarge on these things; but by these short hints it is evident that the covenant of grace is an entire covenant made by God, both for himself and for us. O sirs! in the

covenant of grace God stands engaged to give whatsoever he requires.

[1.] First, He requires us to know him, and he has engaged himself that we shall know him: 1 Chron. 28:9, Jer. 24:7, 'I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord;' and Jer. 31:34, 'They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' Heb. 8:11. But,

[2.] Secondly, The Lord frequently requires his people to trust in him, Ps. 62:8; Isa. 26:4; 2 Chron. 20:20. And he has engaged himself that his people shall trust in him: Zeph. 3:12, 'I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.' But,

[3.] Thirdly, The Lord frequently commands his people to fear him, Deut. 6:13, chap. 8:6. And he has engaged himself that they shall fear him: Jer. 32:40, 'I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' Hosea 3:5, 'They shall fear the Lord and his goodness.' But,

[4.] Fourthly, The Lord frequently commands his people to love him: Deut 11:1, Ps. 31:23, 'O love the Lord, all ye his saints!' And he has promised and engaged himself that his people shall love him: Deut. 30:6, 'The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul.' But,

[5.] Fifthly, The Lord frequently commands his people to call upon him, and to pray unto him, Ps. 50:15, 1 Thes. 5:17, &c.; and he has promised and engaged himself to pour upon them a spirit of prayer: Zech. 12:10, 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications.' But,

[6.] Sixthly, The Lord frequently commands his people to repent and to turn from their evil ways, Hosea 14:1, Ezek. 14:6, 18:30, Acts 17:30, 26:20; and he has promised and engaged himself that they shall repent and turn from their evil ways, Acts 5:30, 11:18, 2 Tim. 2:25, Isa. 30:22, Jer. 24:7. But,

[7.] Seventhly, The Lord has commanded his people to obey him, and to walk in his statutes, Jer. 24:7; and he has promised and engaged himself that his people shall obey him and walk in his statutes: Ezek. 36:27, 'And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.' So Ezek. 11:19, 20; 37:23, 24. But,

[8.] Eighthly, The Lord commands his people to mourn for their sins, Isa. 22:12, Joel 2:12, James 4:10; and he has promised and engaged himself to give them a mourning frame: Zech. 12:10, 'They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one that mourneth for an only son;' Ezek. 7:16, 'They shall be on the mountains as the doves of the valleys, all of them mourning every one for his iniquity.' But,

[9.] Ninthly, The Lord commands his people to grow in grace, 2 Peter 3:18, &c.; and he has promised and engaged himself that they shall grow in grace: Ps. 92:12–14, 'The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree' (which is always green and flourishing); 'he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.' The cedar of all trees is most durable, and shoots up highest. 'Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.' See Hosea 14:5–7; Mal. 4:2, &c. But,

[10.] Tenthly, The Lord commands his people not to suffer sin to reign in them: Rom. 6:12, 'Let not sin reign in your mortal body;' and

he has promised and engaged himself that sin shall not reign in them: Rom. 6:14, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you;' Jer. 33:8, 'And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity;' Ezek. 36:25, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness; and from all your idols will I cleanse you;' Micah 7:19, 'He will subdue our iniquities.' But,

[11.] Eleventhly, He has commanded his people to loathe their sins, and to loathe themselves for their sins: Ps. 97:10, 'Ye that love the Lord hate evil; Rom. 12:9, 'Abhor that which is evil.' And the Lord hath promised and engaged himself to give them such a frame of spirit: Ezek. 36:13, 'Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations;' Ezek. 6:9, 'And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a-whoring after their idols; and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations;' Ezek. 20:43, 'And there shall ye remember your ways and all your doings wherein you have been defiled, and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils that ye have committed.' But,

[12.] Twelfthly and lastly, for enough is as good as a feast, God has commanded us to hold out, to persevere to the end, 1 Cor. 15:58, Rev. 2:10, Luke 18:1; and the Lord has promised and engaged himself that they shall persevere: Job 17:9, 'The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger;' Isa. 40:31, 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.'

Thus you see by an induction of twelve particulars that whatever God requires of his people, he stands engaged by the covenant of grace to give to his people, to do for his people.

Now mark, the covenant of grace is confirmed to us in the surest and most glorious way that can be imagined, Gen. 17:7; Heb. 13:20; Ps. 89:28; 2 Sam. 23:5. The covenant of grace is so strongly ratified that there can be no nulling of it. For,

[1.] First, It is confirmed to us by his word. 'I will be your God, and you shall be my people,' Jer. 30:22. Now, 'all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us,' 2 Cor. 1:20; that is, they are stable and firm, as the Hebrew word signifies. They will eat their way over all Alps of opposition. In the new covenant God neither makes nor fulfils any promises of salvation but in Christ and by Christ.

[2.] Secondly, God hath ratified the covenant of grace by his oath, Gen. 22:16, Heb. 6:19. His promise is enough, but surely his oath must put all out of question. There is no room for unbelief now God hath sworn to it. Had there been a greater God, he would have sworn by him. But,

[3.] Thirdly, God hath ratified it by the death of his Son, Gal. 3:15, Heb. 9:15, 16. A man's last will and testament, as soon as he is dead, is in force, and cannot then be disannulled. The covenant of grace is a testamentary covenant, which, by the death of the testator, is so settled that there is no altering of it. But,

[4.] Fourthly and lastly, The covenant of grace is ratified by the seals which God hath annexed to it. What was sealed by the king's ring could not be altered, Esther 8. God hath set his seals to the covenant of grace, his broad seal in the sacraments, and his privy seal in the

witness of his Spirit, and therefore it is sure, and cannot be reversed, &c.

Now, whenever you look upon your graces or gracious evidences with one eye, be sure you look upon the covenant of grace, your last royal fort, with the other eye. The whole hinge of a man's comfort and happiness hangs upon the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace is the saint's original title to heaven; it is a saint's best and brightest evidence for life and salvation. There was an eternal design, an eternal plot, if I may so speak, betwixt God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; a bargain, a covenant made between the Father and the Son, for the salvation of his chosen ones; and by this patent and tenure of grace all saints have title to heaven, &c. Dear Christians, many times your gracious evidences are so blotted and blurred that you cannot read them. Oh then, turn to the covenant of grace! When other evidences fail you, the covenant of grace will be a glorious standing evidence to you. It is upon the score of the covenant that you must challenge an interest in all the glory of another world. The covenant of grace is the great charter, the magna charta, of all your spiritual privileges and immunities. Now, in this great charter the Lord declares that sincerity shall go for perfection, Luke 1:5, 6. In this great charter the Lord hath declared that he judges his people by the standing bent and frame of their hearts, and not by what they are under some pangs of passion, or in an hour of temptation, Acts 13:22. In this great charter the Lord declares that his eye is more upon his people's inward disposition than it is upon their outward actions, 2 Chron. 30:18–20; and that his eye is more upon their will than it is upon their work, 2 Cor. 8:12, Philip. 2:13. In this great charter, the covenant of grace, the Lord hath declared that he will not forsake his people, nor cast off his people, because of those failings and weaknesses that may, and do, attend them: 1 Sam. 12:22, 'For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake:

because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people.' Ponder much upon Jer. 31:31–38. He chose you for his love, and he still loveth you for his choice. God will rather pity his people under their weakness than he will reject them for their weakness. The covenant of grace that God hath made with his people is as the covenant that a man makes with his wife. 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever, saith the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you,' Hosea 2:19, 20; Jer. 3:13. Now, a man will never reject his wife; he will never cast off his wife for those common weaknesses and infirmities that daily attends her; no more will the Lord cast off his people because of the infirmities that daily hang upon them. In this great charter—the covenant of grace—the Lord declares that he will require no more than he gives, and that he will give what he requires, and that he will accept what he gives; and what can a God say more? and what can a gracious soul desire more?

O sirs! when all is cloudy overhead, and all dark within doors; when a Christian's graces are not transparent, when his evidences for heaven are soiled and blotted, and when neither heart nor house are as they should be, it is good then to turn to the covenant of grace, and to dwell upon the covenant of grace. Thus David did: 2 Sam. 23:5, 'Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.' Let me give a little light into the words.

'Although my house be not so with God.' Though David in the main had a good heart, yet he had but a wicked house. Absalom had slain his brother, rebelled against his father, and lay with his father's concubines; and Amnon had deflowered his sister, &c. Now David, under a deep sense of all this wickedness, and of his own personal unworthiness, sadly sighs it out, 'Although my house be not so with

God,' &c.; though I have not walked so exactly and perfectly as I should have done, though neither I nor my house have walked answerable to those great mercies and singular kindnesses of God that have been extended to us;

'Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant.' The word everlasting hath two acceptations. It doth denote, (1.) Sometimes a long duration, in which respect the old covenant, clothed with figures and ceremonies, is called everlasting, because it was to endure, and did endure a long time. (2.) Sometimes it denotes a perpetual duration, a duration which shall last for ever. In this respect the covenant of grace is everlasting. It shall never cease, never be broken, nor never be altered. Now, the covenant of grace is an everlasting covenant in a twofold respect:

First, Ex parte fœderantis, in respect of God, who will never break covenant with his people; but is their God, and will be their God for ever and ever: Ps. 48:14, 'For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.' Ay, and after death too; for this is not to be taken exclusivè. He will never leave his people, nor forsake his people, Heb. 13:5, 6.

Secondly, Ex parte confœderatorum, in respect of the people of God, who are brought into covenant, and shall continue in covenant for ever and ever. You have both these expressed in that excellent scripture, Jer. 32:40, 'I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.' Seriously dwell upon the place. It shews that the covenant is everlasting on God's part, and also on our part. On God's part, 'I will never turn away from them, to do them good;' and on our part, 'they shall never depart from me.' How so? 'I will put my fear in their hearts, that they

shall not depart from me' (even that fear spoken of in ver. 39, 'that they may fear me for ever').

'Ordered in all things.' Oh what head can conceive, or what tongue can express that infinite counsel, wisdom, love, care and tenderness, that the blessed God has expressed in ordering the covenant of grace, so as it may most and best suit to all the wants, and straits, and necessities, and miseries, and desires, and longings of poor sinners' souls. The covenant of grace is so well ordered by the unsearchable wisdom of God, that you may find in it remedies to cure all your diseases, and cordials to comfort you against all your faintings, and a spiritual armoury to arm you against all your enemies, viz., the world, the flesh, and the devil, Isa. 40:28, and Ps. 147:5. Dost thou, O distressed sinner, want a loving God, a compassionate God, a reconciled God, a sin-pardoning God? Here thou mayest find him, in the covenant of grace. Dost thou want a Christ to counsel thee by his wisdom, and to clothe thee with his righteousness, and to adorn thee with his grace? Here thou mayest find him in a covenant of grace. Dost thou want the Spirit to enlighten thee, to teach thee, to convince thee, to awaken thee, to lead thee, to cleanse thee, to cheer thee, and to seal thee up to the day of redemption? Eph. 1:13. Here thou mayest find him in a covenant of grace. Dost thou want grace, or peace, or rest, or quiet, or content, or comfort, or satisfaction? Here thou mayest find it in a covenant of grace. God has laid into the covenant of grace, as into a common store, all those things that sinners or saints can either beg or need. Look, as that is a well-ordered commonwealth where there are no wholesome laws wanting to govern a people, and where there are no wholesome remedies wanting to relieve a people; so that must needs be a well-ordered covenant, where there is nothing wanting to govern poor souls, or to relieve poor souls, or to save poor souls; and such a covenant is the covenant of grace.

And sure the covenant of grace is a sure covenant: Deut. 7:9, 'The Lord thy God he is God, the faithful God' (or the God of Amen), 'which keepeth covenant with them that love him;' Ps. 89:33, 'My covenant will I not break' (Hebrew, I will not profane), 'nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. All God's precepts, all God's predictions, all God's menaces, and all God's promises, are the issue of a most just, faithful, and righteous will. God can neither die nor lie: Titus 1:2, 'In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.' There are three things that God cannot do: (1.) He cannot die; nor (2.) he cannot lie; nor (3.) he cannot deny himself: Josh. 23:14, 'And behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth; and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.' O sirs! the covenant of grace is bottomed upon God's everlasting love, upon God's unchangeable love, upon God's free love, John 13:1. Whom God loves once, he loves for ever: 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love,' Jer. 31:3. God can as well cease to be, as he can cease to love those whom he has taken into covenant with himself. And as the covenant of grace is bottomed upon God's everlasting love, so it is bottomed upon God's immutable counsel: 'God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath,' Heb. 6:17. And as the covenant of grace is bottomed upon the immutable counsel of God, so it is bottomed upon the free purpose of God: 2 Tim. 2:19, 'The foundation of God standeth sure;' that is, the decree and purpose of God's election stands firm and sure. Now the purpose of God's election is compared to a foundation, because it is that upon which all our happiness and blessedness is built and bottomed, and because, as a foundation, it abides firm and sure. And as the covenant of grace is bottomed upon the free purpose of God, so it is bottomed upon the glorious power of

God, Isa. 33:11, 41:2; Mal. 4:1; 1 Cor. 1:25. The power of God is an infinite power, it is a supreme power, a power that overtops the power of all mortals. What is the stubble to the flames, the chaff to the whirlwind? No more is all created power to the power of God. The weakness of God is stronger than men; and did not Pharaoh find it so? and Haman find it so? and Sennacherib find it so? and Nebuchadnezzar find it so? and Belshazzar find it so? and Herod find it so? In all the ages of the world the power of God hath bore down all before it. The power of God is an independent power, a matchless power, an incomparable power, an enduring power, an eternal power. And as the covenant of grace is bottomed upon the power of God, so it is bottomed upon the oath of God: Luke 1:72, 'To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant.' Ver. 73, 'The oath which he sware to our father Abraham.' Heb. 6:17, 18; Ps. 89:34, 35. To think that God will break his oath, or be perjured, is an intolerable blasphemy. Once more give me leave to say, the covenant of grace is bottomed not only upon the oath of God, but also upon the precious blood of Christ. The blood of Christ is called 'the blood of the everlasting covenant,' Heb. 13:20, Mat. 26:28. 'This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins,' Heb. 9:15. 'And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first Testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.' Ver. 17, 'A testament is of force after men are dead.' It is called a covenant and a testament. (1.) A covenant in respect of God, and a testament in respect of Christ. (2.) A covenant in respect of the manner of agreement, and a testament in respect of the manner of confirming. Jesus Christ died as a testator, and by his death confirmed the testamentary gift before made of life and salvation. Now, the covenant of grace being thus gloriously bottomed

as you see, it must roundly and undeniably follow, that the covenant of grace is a sure covenant.

'For this is all my salvation and all my desire;' i.e. this is the great ground of all my hope concerning my salvation, and of all the happiness and blessedness which I look for in another world. This everlasting covenant, this sure covenant, is the great charter of charters that I have to shew for eternal bliss. David was drawing near to his eternal home, and whether his graces and gracious evidences for heaven's happiness were bright and shining, or blotted and clouded, I shall not at this time stand to inquire. It is enough that he stays his soul upon the covenant of grace, and that he comforts and solaces his soul in the covenant of grace. And oh that all Christians, when their graces and gracious evidences are either clouded or blotted, or else sparkling and shining, that they would frequently eye these three royal forts, viz., (1.) the free grace and favour of God; (2.) the mediatory righteousness of Christ; (3.) the covenant of grace. Now, that I may the more effectually prevail with you to look upon these royal forts, and to delight in these royal forts, and to prize these royal forts, and to improve these royal forts, give me leave to offer these three things briefly to your consideration:

First, Our best graces and performances are not commensurate and square payment in the eyes of pure justice. All of them as inherent in us, and acted by us, are but imperfect excellencies. No man hath so much grace and holiness as is required, nor doth he so much as he is obliged to do. Every particular grace, though it be of an heavenly and divine original, yet it is like the stars twinkling, though placed in the heavens; so that if God should enter into judgment with the most righteous person, even the righteousness that is in him would not be safety and defence unto him, Ps. 143:2, Job 14:3, 4, Rom. 3:20; for what a deal of pride have we mixed with a little humility! and what a

deal of passion have we mixed with a little meekness! and what a deal of hypocrisy have we mixed with a little sincerity! and what a deal of earthly-mindedness have we mixed with a little heavenly-mindedness! and what a deal of unbelief have we mixed with a little faith! O sirs! in the great business of your access to God, and of your acceptance with God, and of your reconciliation to God, and of your justification before God, it is best, safest, and noblest to bottom your faith, hope, and expectation infinitely rather upon imputed righteousness than inherent righteousness, upon what Christ has done for you than upon what he has done in you, Rom. 3:20–27, Philip. 3:8–10. Inherent righteousness is stained, imperfect, impure; but imputed righteousness is pure and perfect. If there were any stain or any imperfection in that, it could not justify us, it could not save us, it could not secure us from wrath to come. Such evidences as are not fetched from any thing in us, nor from any things done by us, but are fetched by faith from our free justification, and from Christ's full satisfaction which he hath wrought for us, will be found the most full, the most sweet, the most refreshing, the most comforting, and the most satisfying evidences. Christ is all fair, all perfect, all pure; and therefore let him be most in your eye and most upon your hearts. But here take heed that you do not look upon your graces, or your gracious evidences, as poor, low, weak, contemptible things, as too many do; for the least of them is more worth than heaven and earth, and they may yield you much comfort, much support, much refreshing, and much satisfaction, though they cannot yield you that full comfort nor that full satisfaction as Christ himself can yield, as Christ's satisfaction can yield, as free justification can yield. Though children and friends cannot yield to a wife that full comfort, content, delight, and satisfaction as her husband does, yet they may yield her much comfort, much content, much delight, much satisfaction. The application is easy. But,

Secondly, Consider, that Christian that hath free grace, that hath free justification, that hath the mediatory righteousness of Christ, that hath the satisfaction of Christ, that hath the covenant of grace most constantly in his sight, and most frequently warm upon his heart, that Christian, of all Christians in the world, is most free from a world of fears, and doubts, and scruples, which do sad, sink, perplex, and press down a world of other Christians, who affect a life of sense, and who daily eye more what Christ is a-doing in them, and what they are a-doing for Christ, than they do eye either his active or passive obedience. Christ hath done great things for his people, and he has suffered great things for his people, and he has purchased great things for his people, and he has prepared great things for his people; yet many of his own dear people are so taken up with their own hearts, and with their own duties and graces, that Christ is little eyed by them or minded by them; and what is this but to be more taken with the streams than with the fountain? with the leaves, blossoms and fruit, than with the tree itself? with the bracelets, ear-rings, and gold chains, than with the husband himself? with the nobles that wait, than with the king that is waited on? And this is the great reason why so many Christians, who will certainly go to heaven, do walk in darkness, and lie down in sorrow. But,

Thirdly, Trusting in our own duties, and resting on our own righteousness, and not on Christ's solely, is a close, secret, spiritual, dangerous, and unperceivable sin, which the nature of man is exceedingly prone unto, Isa. 58:1–3; Zech. 7:5, 6. The pharisees were mightily given up to trust in their own righteousness, to rest on their own righteousness, and to boast and glory in their own righteousness, Mat. 23, Luke 18; and this proved their mortal disease, their damning sin. Trusting in their own righteousness had so besotted and benumbed them, that they had no mind, no heart to open the gates of their souls, that the King of glory might enter in.

And this was that which undid the Jews, Rom. 10:3, 'For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.' And it is observable, the apostle useth an emphatical word of a Jew, Rom. 2:17, 'Thou restest in the law,' ἐπαναπαύῃ, thou art secure in the law, and in some admirable privilege and signal testimony of God's love. This was Bernard's temptation, when being assisted in duty he could stroke his own head with Bene fecisti, Bernarde, O Bernard, this was gallantly done, now cheer up thyself! It was the saying of a precious saint, that he was more afraid of his duties than of his sins, for the one made him often proud, and the other made him always humble.2 It was good counsel Luther gave, Cavendum est non solum a peccatis, sed a bonis operilus, we must take heed not only of our sins, but of our good works. Duties can never have too much diligence used about them, nor too little confidence placed in them. They are good helps, but bad saviours. It is necessary we do them, but it is dangerous to rely upon them. If the devil cannot dissuade us from performing religious duties, then his next work will be to persuade us all he can to rely upon them, to make saviours of them, because this will as much gratify Satan, and as certainly ruin our souls, as if we had wholly neglected them. O man! thine own righteousness rested in, will as certainly and eternally undo thee as the greatest and foulest enormities. This soul-sickness is that spiritual idolatry that will undo thee, for thou makest thyself a saviour, and thy duties a saviour, and sayest of thy duties as they did of the golden calf, 'These are the gods that brought thee out of the land of Egypt.' Open wickedness, open idolatry, slays her thousands, but secret idolatry, a secret resting upon duties, slays her ten thousands. Multitudes bleed inward by this disease, and die for ever. Open profaneness is the broad dirty way that leads to hell, but religious duties rested in, is as sure a way, though a cleaner way to hell. Profane persons and formal professors

shall meet at last in one hell. Ah, Christians! don't make religious duties your money, lest you and your money perish together. The phœnix gathers sweet odoriferous sticks in Arabia together, and then blows them with her wings and burns with them; so do many shining professors burn themselves with their own duties and services. You know in Noah's flood, all that were not in the ark, though they clamb up the tallest trees, and the highest mountains and hills, yet were drowned: so let men climb up to the highest duties, yet if they be not housed in Christ, and in his righteousness, they will be as certainly damned, as the men in the old world were certainly drowned. Adam and all his posterity was to be saved by doing; 'Do this and live'. And hence it is natural to all the sons and daughters of Adam to rest on duties, and to look for life and happiness in a way of doing; but if salvation were to be had by doing, what need of a Saviour? Well, remember this once for all, such as rest on duties, such as rest on their own righteousness, or on anything on this side Christ, such shall find them as weak as the Assyrian, or as Jareb. They cannot heal them, they cannot cure them of their wounds. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb, yet could they not heal him, nor cure him of his wound, Hosea 5:13. Duties are to Satan as the ark of God was to the Philistines; he trembles to see a soul diligent in the use of them, and yet not daring to rely on them but on Christ; but when he can draw poor souls to confide in their duties, and to rest on their duties, then he has his design, then he claps his hands for joy, then he cries out, Ah! ah! so would I have it. There is no sin that doth so formally and immediately oppose Christ, and reject Christ, and provoke Christ, as this of resting upon self-righteousness; and therefore above all, pray against this, and watch against this, and weep over this. There is no man in his wits that hath a precious lading, that will dare to adventure it in a cracked and broken vessel; so there is no Christian in his wits that will dare to adventure the

everlasting safety of his soul upon the leaking vessels and bottoms of his own holiness or services. O sirs! your duties cannot satisfy the justice of God; they cannot satisfy the law of God; your present duties cannot satisfy for your former sins and rents that be behind. A man that pays his rent honestly every year, does not thereby satisfy for the old rent not paid in ten or twenty years before. Thy new obedience, O Christian, is too weak to satisfy for old debts, and therefore roll thyself on Christ, and Christ alone, for life and for salvasion. Bellarmine could say after all his disputes for relying on works, on saints and angels, Tutius est, &c. The safest way is to rely on Jesus Christ. Now, let all these things work you to renounce your own righteousness, and to take sanctuary alone in the pure, perfect, and most glorious righteousness of Jesus Christ, and in the free grace of God. Paul is called by one [Augustine] the best child of grace in the world; for whatsoever he was, or had, or did, he ascribeth all to free grace, Eph. 3:8; he was the chiefest of the apostles, and yet less than the least of all saints; he was very eminent in grace, and yet what he was, he was by grace. 'By the grace of God I am what I am,' 1 Cor. 15:10. He lived, 'yet not he, but Christ lived in him,' Gal. 2:20. He 'laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not he, but the grace of God which was with him,' 1 Cor. 15:10. He was able to do all things, but still 'through Christ that strengthened him,' Philip. 4:13. Oh that these three last things might work you to be more in love with free grace than ever, and to be more in love with the righteousness of Christ than ever, and to be more in love with the covenant of grace than ever. But,

[14.] The fourteenth proposition is this, The more grace, the more holiness, the more any man has of the Spirit of sanctification, the more clear, the more fair, the more full, the more sweet will his evidences be for heaven, for salvation; and the more comfort, and the more assurance, and the more settlement, and the more of the

witness of the spirit of adoption, such a person will certainly attain unto. That Spirit which is the earnest of our inheritance, and which seals us up to an holy assurance, is an holy Spirit, Eph. 1:13, 14; he is frequently called the Holy Spirit. 'Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me,' Ps. 51:11. 'But they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit,' Isa. 63:10. 'And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption,' Eph. 4:30. 'He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit,' 1 Thes. 4:8. To make a man holy, is more than to create a world; it is a work too high and too hard for angels or men; it becomes none, and it can be done by none but by the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is the Spirit's personal operation; it is the great work of the Spirit to shape, form, and fashion the new-creature holiness in all the vessels of glory, 2 Thes. 2:13, 1 Peter 1:2. The Spirit is the root of all holiness, and therefore the several parts of holiness are called the fruits of the Spirit. Holiness is the very picture of God; and certainly no hand can carve that excellent picture but the Spirit of God. Holiness is the divine nature, and none can impart that to man but the Spirit; the Spirit is the great principle of holiness. Now, the more grace, the more holiness any man hath, the more he is the delight of the Spirit; and the more the Spirit will delight to witness his sonship, his saintship, and his heirship unto him. Scripture and experience will tell you, that commonly men of greatest holiness have been men of greatest assurance. This is certain, the more holiness the more assurance; for so the precious promises runs, Isa. 32:17. 'The work of righteousness shall be peace,' to wit, peace of conscience, Rom. 5:1; 'and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.' Inherent righteousness, for of that he speaks, as is evident by the 15th and 16th verses of the same chapter, is the highway to assurance and peace. So Ps. 50:23, 'To him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God;' that is, declare myself to be

his Saviour, say some; say others, I will give him a prospect of heaven here, and a full fruition of heaven hereafter; say others, I will cause him to see and know that he shall be saved. So John 14:21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him.' Ver. 23, 'If any man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.' Holy Christians shall have most of the spiritual presence of Christ, and of the singular manifestations of the love of Christ to their souls. The great reason of reasons why the springs of comfort, of joy, of inward peace, and of assurance, rises no higher in many Christians' souls, is because the springs of grace and holiness rises no higher in their souls. Had Christians more grace, and more holiness in their hearts and lives, God would quickly bring down more of heaven and assurance into their souls. There is a blessed assurance, as I have told you before, which arises from the discovery of grace in the soul. Now, the more ample, large and full the matter of our assurance is, the more ample, large and full must our assurance be. Methinks the connection of these four verses in Titus 2:11–14, shews this; when 'grace that appears to us, teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,' &c. See what follows; then we are most likely to 'look for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' And that prayer of the apostle for his Ephesians speaks as loudly in the case, Eph. 3:16–18, that God would grant them to be strengthened by the Spirit, &c., to be rooted and grounded in love. And what then? That 'ye may comprehend with all saints, the length and breadth of the love of God.' Suppose in health or sickness, living or dying, a man should labour to support, comfort and cheer up his spirit, in the thoughts or meditations of his eternal election and free justification; and suppose that at that very time the Spirit of God, his own conscience, a faithful minister, or an experienced Christian

should tell him that if he be really justified, he is really sanctified, 2 Thes. 2:13, 14; now, if this man should say, What do you tell me of sanctification? or, I know not whether I am sanctified or no; or, I look not to sanctification, I mind not holiness, I regard not the fruits of the Spirit; will not the Holy Spirit, will not an enlightened conscience, will not a faithful minister, will not an experienced Christian reply, Then certainly thou art not elected, thou art not justified, for it is a truth as clear as the sun, a truth that will admit of no dispute, viz., that none are eternally elected and freely justified but they are sanctified, Rom. 8:1, 13, 19, 30; and that they that are not sanctified are not justified? Mark, there is a close connection of sanctification with justification in the promises of the covenant. Sanctification and justification go hand in hand; they come forth like twins out of the womb of free grace, as you may see in these remarkable Scriptures: Jer. 33:8, 'I will cleanse them from all their iniquity whereby they have sinned against me, and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.' Here you see them both expressed together in the same deed, 'I will cleanse them from all their iniquity;' there is our sanctification promised; 'And I will pardon all their iniquities;' there is justification promised. So Micah 7:19, 'He will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.' Here you find justification and sanctification again in the promise. 'He will subdue our iniquities;' this is sanctifying; 'and he will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea;' this is justifying. Heb. 8:10, 'I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts' (there is the promise of sanctification); ver. 12, 'And I will be merciful to their unrighteousness and their sins, and their iniquities will I remember no more;' there is the promise of justification: 1 John 1:9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;' there is our justification promised; 'and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;' there is the promise of sanctification: Ezek.

36:25, 'From all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you;' there is the promise of sanctification; ver. 29, 'I will also save you from all your uncleannesses;' there is the promise of justification: 1 Cor. 6:11, 'But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified.' Justification and sanctification are inseparable companions; distinguished they must be, but divided they can never be; where sin is pardoned, the gift of sanctity is still conferred. It is weakness, it is wickedness, for a man to conclude that he is in an elected and justified estate when he has nothing, when he has not the least thing to evidence himself to be in a sanctified estate. Both justification and sanctification have a necessary respect to the salvation of all those that shall go to heaven. He that will go to heaven must be sanctified, and he that will go to heaven must be justified. No man can go to heaven without both; no man can go to heaven unless he be justified: Rom. 8:30, 'Whom he called, them also he justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' None are justified but such as are called, and none are glorified but such as are justified. And as no man can go to heaven but he that is justified, so no man can go to heaven but he that is sanctified: John 3:5, 'Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Ver. 5, 'Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;' Heb. 12:14, 'And holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' By these scriptures, it is evident that there is an absolute necessity both of sanctification and justification in reference to salvation. Now as sanctification and justification are linked together, so the more clear, the more full, the more evident, and the more eminent a man's sanctification is, the more clear, the more full, the more evident, and the more eminent, will the evidences of his justification be. The greatest evidences of our sanctification carries with them the greatest assurance of our justification and of our salvation. But,

[15.] The fifteenth proposition is this, When your graces are strongest, and your evidences for heaven are clearest, and your comforts rise highest upon the sight of your graces or gracious evidences, then in a special manner it concerns you to make it your great business and work to act faith afresh, to act faith with a greater strength, upon the free, rich, and glorious grace of God, and upon the Lord Jesus Christ. It is reported of the crystal, that it hath such a virtue in it, that the very touching of it quickens other stones, and puts a lustre and beauty upon them. This is most true of faith. Faith is a grace that gives strength and efficacy to all other graces; it is like a silver thread that runs through a chain of pearl; it hath an influence upon all other graces that are in the soul. Faith is as the spring in the watch, that moves the wheels; not a grace stirs till faith sets it at work. What is said of Solomon's virtuous woman, viz., that she sets all her maidens to work, Prov. 31:15, 27, is most true of faith: faith sets all the graces in the soul at work. We love as we believe, and we obey as we believe, and we hope as we believe, and we joy as we believe, and we mourn as we believe, and we repent as we believe. All graces keep time and pace with faith, &c. Now when your graces are most shining, and your evidences for heaven are most sparkling, oh then give faith elbow-room, give faith full scope to exercise itself upon the Lord Jesus. Adam's obedience in innocency was not more pleasing and delightful to God, than the exercise of your faith on the Lord Jesus will be at such a time pleasing and delightful to him. You are to look upon all your graces and gracious evidences as your highest encouragement to a lively, cheerful, and resolute acting of faith upon the person of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, 1 John 5:13; Rom. 1:17, &c. All a Christian's graces, and all his gracious evidences, should be but as a golden bridge, or as Joseph's waggons, Gen. 45:19, 21, 27, a means to pass his soul over to Christ afresh by a renewed exercise of faith. When your graces and gracious evidences are most splendent, then be sure that Christ be found lying as a

bundle of myrrh between your breasts, and all is well, and will be well, Cant. 1:12. Dear Christians, when your eyes are fixed upon inherent righteousness, and upon your gracious evidences, then let your hearts be firmly fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ and his imputed righteousness. Paul's eye was fixed upon his grace, upon his better part: Rom. 7:22, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man;' ver. 25, 'And with my mind I serve the law of God.' And yet at the very same time his heart was set upon Christ, and taken up with Christ. Ver. 25, 'I thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Though Paul had an eye to his noble part, his better part, his regenerate part, yet at the same time his heart was taken up with the Lord Jesus Christ, as freeing of him from the curse of the law, the dominion of sin, the damnatory power of sin, and as translating of him into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. 'I thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' So in Col 2:2, 3, you have their eyes fixed upon grace, and at the same time their hearts fixed upon Christ. 'That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' Their eyes were upon grace, but their hearts were taken up with Christ. So in Philip. 3:8, the apostle had his eye upon the excellent knowledge of Christ. But, verse 9, his heart is taken up with the righteousness of Christ. 'That I might be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' Though Paul had his eye upon grace, upon inherent righteousness; yet in the very presence of his grace his heart was taken up with Christ, and with his imputed righteousness, as is evident in the text. This is your glory, Christians, in the presence and sight of all your graces and gracious evidences, to see the free grace of Christ, and his infinite, spotless, matchless, and glorious righteousness to be your surest, sweetest, highest, and

choicest comfort and refuge. Look, as Rebekah was more taken with the person of Isaac than she was with his ear-rings, bracelets, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, Gen. 24:30, 52, 64, 65, 66, 67: so it becomes a Christian, in the presence of his graces and gracious evidences, which are Christ's ear-rings, bracelets, and jewels, to be more taken up with Christ than with them. Christ, and his mediatory righteousness, should be more in a Christian's eye, and always lie nearer to a Christian's heart, than inherent righteousness. Grace is a ring of gold, and Christ is the sparkling diamond in that ring. Now, what is the ring to the sparkling diamond? It is not safe to pore more upon inherent righteousness than upon imputed righteousness. It is not wisdom to have our thoughts and hearts more taken up with our gracious dispositions and gracious actings, than with the person of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the life of Christ, the death of Christ, the satisfaction of Christ, &c. Dear Christians, was it Christ, or was it your graces, or your gracious evidences, or your gracious dispositions, or your gracious actings, that trod the wine-press of your Father's wrath, that satisfied divine justice, that pacified divine anger, that did bear the curse, that fulfilled the law, that brought in an everlasting righteousness, that discharged your debts, that procured your pardon, that made your peace, and that brought you into a state of favour and friendship with God? If you answer, as you must, 'None but Christ, none but Christ,' oh then, let your thoughts and hearts be firstly, mostly, chiefly, and lastly taken up with the Lord Jesus. Though inherent grace be a glorious creature, yet it is but a creature. Now, when your thoughts and hearts are more taken up with inherent grace, than they are with Christ, the spring and fountain of all grace; you make an idol of inherent grace, and reflect dishonour upon the Lord Jesus, John 1:16; Col. 2:2, 3. A Christian may lawfully look upon his graces and his gracious evidences, and a Christian ought to be much in blessing and praising of God for his graces and gracious evidences, and a Christian may safely take

comfort in his graces and gracious evidences, as they are the fruits of God's eternal and unchangeable love; but still his work should be to live upon Christ, and to lift up Christ above all, Isa. 38:3, 2 Cor. 1:12. It is Christ, it is his mediatory righteousness, it is free grace, that a Christian ought to make the chief and only ground and bottom of his hope and comforts. Though good old Jacob did really rejoice in the chariots and waggons that Joseph had sent to bring him down to Egypt, yet he did more abundantly rejoice in this, that Joseph was alive, and that shortly he should see and enjoy Joseph himself, Gen. 45:26–28. Though a Christian may really rejoice in his graces and gracious evidences, yet above all he ought to rejoice in Christ Jesus, to triumph in Christ Jesus, and to take up in Christ Jesus as in his great all, Gal. 6:14, Philip. 3:3, 2 Cor. 2:14, Col. 3:11. There is a great aptness and proneness in many (may I not say in most?) gracious Christians, to gaze so much and so long upon their graces, upon their gracious dispositions, upon their gracious evidences, and upon their gracious actings, that too often they neglect the exercise of faith upon Christ, upon the promises; they gaze so much and so long upon what is wrought in them, and done by them, that they forget their grand work, which is immediate closing with Christ, immediate embracing of Christ, immediate relying upon Christ, immediate staying, rolling, and resting upon Christ, for justification and salvation. Now from these frequent miscarriages of Christians, some have taken the liberty and boldness very hotly and peremptorily to cry down the total use of all characters, signs, and marks, the evil of which I have formerly pointed at, and therefore let this touch suffice here. Grace is excellent, yea, very excellent, but Christ is infinitely more excellent than all your graces, and therefore above all let Christ still have the pre-eminence, Col. 1:8. Now, though it must be granted that a Christian may lawfully make use of his graces and gracious evidences, in order to his support, comfort, and encouragement, yet it cannot be denied but that the noblest, purest, highest, and most

excellent acts and exercises of faith, are when a Christian closes with Christ, embraces Christ, hangs upon Christ, and stays himself upon Christ, and upon free and precious promises, when sense and feeling fails, when joy and comfort fails, and when his gracious evidences for heaven fails. Oh now, to turn to Christ, and to turn to the breasts of a promise, and to live upon Christ, and to hang upon a promise, is the way of ways to exalt Christ, and to glorify Christ. There is nothing that pleases Christ, or that delights Christ, or that is such an honour to Christ, as these pure actings of faith are. Signs and evidences are most sweet, comfortable, and pleasing to us; but the pure actings of faith are most eyed and valued by Christ, and therefore many times Christ draws a curtain between him and the soul, and causes a Christian's sun to set at noon, and damps his joy, and mars his peace, and clouds his evidences for heaven, on purpose to train up his children in the pure actings of faith, Cant. 3:1–5 and 5:3–6. It is sad when Christians make such immoderate use of their signs, marks, evidences, as damps and hinders those direct and immediate acts of faith, whereby they should receive Christ, and apply Christ, and rest upon Christ alone for pardon, peace, reconciliation, justification, and salvation. He that pores so long and so much upon his graces or gracious evidences as shall hinder him from the fresh and frequent actings of faith upon Christ, he casts contempt upon Christ. Though the sight of a Christian's graces and gracious evidences be very comfortable and delightful to him, yet the sight of Christ should be ten thousand times more comfortable and delightful to him. O sirs! what are the favourites to the king himself? What are the servants to the lord they wait on? What are the friends of the bridegroom to the bridegroom himself? What are all the bracelets and jewels to the husband that gives them? No more are all a Christian's graces or gracious evidences to the Lord Jesus himself. A Christian should say to all his gifts, graces, evidences, and services, Stand by, make room for Christ, make room for Christ. Oh, none but Christ! Oh, none to

Christ! Living by signs is most natural, pleasing and comfortable to us, but living by faith is most honourable to Christ. It is said, 'the just shall live by his faith,' not by his evidences, Hab. 2:4, Heb. 10:38. When men pride themselves in their evidences, and when men secretly lean upon their evidences instead of leaning upon Christ, and when men bottom their hopes and comforts upon their signs and evidences, when they should he bottoming of all their hopes and comforts upon Christ; on a sudden Christ withdraws, and the soul is immediately filled with clouds, fears, doubts, darkness; and all a man's graces and gracious evidences are eclipsed, and he can see nothing, nor feel nothing, but deadness, hardness, barrenness, hypocrisy, unbelief, self-love, guilt, &c., which makes him a Magor-missabib, a terror to himself. Now the design of Christ in all this is to train up his people in a life of faith, and to teach them, in the want of their signs and evidences, how to live, above their signs and evidences, upon himself, who is their life, their hope, their heaven, their happiness, their all, Col. 3:3, 4, 1:27. Now, Christians, the best way to prevent these sore soul distresses, is in the moderate use of your signs and evidences, to live much in the fresh and frequent actings of faith upon the Lord Jesus, and in so doing, you will neither grieve Christ, nor provoke Christ, nor wrong your own precious and immortal souls. But,

[16.] The sixteenth and last proposition that I shall lay down is this: Whenever any fresh doubts or fears rise in your hearts upon the stirrings of corruptions, or debility of graces, or failing in duties, &c., then keep close to these two rules: First, have recourse to any of the former characters that are laid down in this book; and while you find any of them shining in your souls, nay, though it were but one, never pass any judgment against the happiness and blessedness of your spiritual or eternal estates. Secondly, turn yourselves to such particular promises, and plead such particular promises, and rest

and stay your trembling souls upon such particular promises, and cling fast to such particular promises, that have been comforts, cordials, and supports to many weak, doubting, trembling Christians, who have been always afraid to say they had grace, or to say that God was their Father, or Christ their Redeemer, or the Spirit their sanctifier, or heaven their inheritance, &c. I have read of a woman that was much disquieted in conscience, even to despair, endeavouring to be her own executioner, but was comforted by that blessed promise, Isa. 57:15, 'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of an humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' And I have read of another man, who being ready to die, Lord, saith he, I challenge thee by that promise, Mat. 11:28, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' and so was comforted. And I have read of some others [Uranas and Beza] that were comforted with that promise, John 10:29, 'None shall pluck them out of my Father's hand.' And I have read of another who, having deeply wounded his conscience by subscribing to popish errors, was much comforted by that blessed scripture: 1 Tim. 1:15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' And I have read of another [Mr Bilney the martyr] who was much comforted under sore distresses by that promise: Isa. 26:3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace' (or as the Hebrew runs, shalom, shalom, peace, peace) 'whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee' And many have gone to heaven triumphantly by the refreshing and comfort that they have found in these following scriptures: John 6:37, 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out;' Isa. 55:1, 'Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and wilk

without money and without price;' ver. 3, 'Incline your ear and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.' And so Rev. 22:17, 'And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.' So Hosea 14:4, 'I will heal their backslidings, and love them freely.' So Isa. 43:25, 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins:' chap. 57:18, 'I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners;' ver. 19, 'I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him.' Oh, these have been comforting promises, and upholding promises, and refreshing promises to many doubting, drooping souls. It is impossible that such a soul should ever drop into hell, that can cling fast to any of these promises, that can hang upon any of these promises, that can rest and lay the weight of their souls upon Christ in any of these promises. Doubtless reliance upon Christ in these precious promises hath ferried many poor, doubting, trembling souls to heaven. The promise is the golden cabinet, and Christ is the costly jewel that is laid up in it. The promise is the field, and Christ is the pearl of price that is hid in it.3 All the promises they point to Christ, they lead to Christ, they hang upon Christ: 'All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen,' 2 Cor. 1:20. In the new covenant God neither makes any promises, nor fulfils any promises of salvation, but in Christ and through Christ. Now, when any fears, or darkness, or doubts, or disputes, arises in your souls about your spiritual estates, oh, then, run to Christ in the promise, and plead the promise, and hang upon the breasts of the promise, and let your souls cleave close to the promise; for this is the way of ways to have your evidences cleared, your comforts restored, your

peace maintained, your graces strengthened, and your assurance raised and confirmed

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