

Monergism



APPLES OF GOLD

FOR YOUNG MEN AND OLD MEN

THOMAS BROOKS

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APPLES OF GOLD

by Thomas Brooks, 1660

Apples of Gold for Young Men,
and a Crown of Honor for Old Men

The Young Man's Work,
and the Old Man's Reward

"The hoary head is a crown of glory—if it be found
in a way of righteousness." Proverbs 16:31

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The Epistle Dedicatory

To all young people, especially those who begin to turn their faces towards Zion.

Dear Hearts,

"A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" Proverbs 15:23. "It is" often "like apples of gold in pictures of silver," Proverbs 25:11. Many times such a word is sweet, precious, pleasing, delectable, and strong in its operation. A company of near friends dining together one Sabbath day, one who was at table, to prevent impertinent discourse, said "that it was a question whether they would all go to heaven or not," which struck them all into sober-mindedness, and caused everyone to enter into a serious consideration with themselves. One thought, if any of this company go to hell, it must be I; and so thought another and another, and indeed so thought almost everyone then present; and through the mercy and blessing of God this speech so wrought upon the spirits of most of them, that it proved the first instrumental means of their conversion.

I have my hopes, through grace, that this treatise, though it be sown in weakness, yet by the blessing of the Most High upon it, it may rise in power, and be an instrumental means of the winning of souls to Christ, which is my highest ambition in this world; and therefore I have broken through all difficulties and carnal reasonings that might otherwise have stifled this babe in the womb, and kept it from ever seeing of the light.

I have read of an emperor that delighted in no undertakings so much as those which in the esteem of his counselors and captains were deemed most difficult and impossible. If they said such or such an enterprise would never be accomplished, it was argument enough to

him to make the adventure; and he usually prospered, he seldom miscarried.

I have never found greater and choicer blessings to attend any of my poor weak labors, than those which have been brought forth into the world through the greatest straits and difficulties.

Valerius Maximus reports, that one telling a soldier going to war against the Persians—that they would hide the sun with their arrows, he answered, *We shall fight best in the shade*. Nothing should discourage nor dishearten a soldier of Christ, 2 Tim. 2:3-4. Christ says to all his soldiers (as the Black Prince his father said to him, fighting as it were in blood to the knees, and in great distress), *Either vanquish or die!* Men of no resolution, or of weak resolution, will be but little serviceable to the good of souls. Such watchmen as will be free from the blood of souls, and be serviceable to the interest of Christ in turning sinners from darkness to light, must be men of spirit and resolution.

I remember Austin begins one of his sermons thus: "To you is my speech, O young people, in the flower of age, in the danger of the mind."

So say I, to you, O young people! do I dedicate the ensuing treatise, and that,

First, Because the matter contained therein does primarily and eminently concern you.

And secondly, Because of an earnest desire that I have of your internal and eternal welfare.

And thirdly, Because of some late impulses that have been upon my spirit to leave this treatise in your hands as a legacy of my love, and as a testimony and witness of my great ambition to help forward your everlasting salvation.

And fourthly, Because there is most hope of doing good among you, as I evidence more at large in the following treatise.

And fifthly, To countermine the great underminer of your souls, whose great design is to poison you, and to possess you, in the morning of your days.

Sixthly, To provoke others that are more able and worthy to be more serviceable to you in declaring themselves fully on this very subject, which none yet have done that I know of, though it be a point of as great concern to young people especially, as any I know in all the Scriptures, Eph. 4:14.

Seventhly, and lastly, Because there are very many who lie in wait to deceive, corrupt, and poison your minds with God-dishonoring, Christ-denying, conscience-wasting, and soul-damning opinions, principles, and blasphemies.

I have read of one who boasted and gloried in this, that he had spent thirty years in corrupting and poisoning of youth. Doubtless, many

wretches, many monsters there be among us, who make it their business, their glory, their all—to delude and draw young people to those dangerous errors and blasphemies that lead to destruction. Error and folly, says one very well, are the knots of Satan wherewith he ties children to the stake to be burned in hell.

There is a truth in what the tragedian said long since, "poison is commonly drunk out of a cup of gold." So is an error soonest taken into the judgment and conscience, from people of the fairest carriage and smoothest conversations.

Error is so foul an hag, that if it should come in its own shape, a man would loathe it, and fly from it as from hell.

If Jezebel had not painted her face, she had not gotten so many young doating adulterers to have followed her to their own ruin.

Ah! young men, young men—the blessing of the Lord upon your serious and diligent perusal of this treatise may be a happy means to preserve you from being ensnared and deluded by those monsters "who compass sea and land to make proselytes for hell," Mat. 23:15.

And thus I have given you the reasons of my dedicating this treatise to the service of your souls. I would willingly presume that it will be as kindly taken—as it is cordially tendered. I hope none of you into whose hands it may fall, will say as one Antipater, king of Macedonia, did; when one presented him with a book treating of happiness, his answer was, *I have no time for this.*

Ah! Young men and women, young men and virgins, as you desire the everlasting welfare of your souls; as you would escape hell and come to heaven; as you would have a saving interest in Christ, a pardon in your bosoms; as you would be blessed here and glorious hereafter; find time, make time—to read over and over the following treatise, which is purposely calculated for your eternal good.

But before I go further, I think it needful, in some respects, to give the world some further account of other reasons or motives which have prevailed with me to appear once more in print; and they are these:

First, Having preached a sermon occasionally upon these words, on which this following discourse is built, I was earnestly implored by some worthy friends, to print the sermon. I did as long as in modesty I could, withstand their desires, judging it not worthy of them; but being at last overcome, and setting about the work, the breathings and comings in of God were such as has occasioned that one sermon to multiply into many. Luther tells us, that when he first began to turn his back upon popery, he intended no more but to withstand popish pardons and selling indulgences; yet neither would God or his enemies let him alone until he resolved with Moses not to leave a hoof of popery unopposed, Exod. 10:26, etc. God many times in the things of the gospel, carries forth his servants beyond their intentions, beyond their resolutions. But,

Secondly, The kind acceptance and good quarter that my other pieces have found in the world, and those signal and multiplied blessings that have followed them; to the winning of many over to Christ, and to the building up of others in Christ—has encouraged me to present this treatise to the world, hoping that the Lord has a blessing in store for this also. Gracious experiences are beyond notions and impressions; they are very quickening and encouraging.

Thirdly, That I might in some measure make up other neglects, whose age, whose parts, whose experiences, whose graces—has long called upon them to do something considerable in this way, and that they may be provoked by my weak attempt to do better, and to make up what is lacking through my invincible infirmities and spiritual wants and weaknesses, which are so many as may well make a sufficient apology for all the defects and weaknesses that in this treatise shall appear to a serious judicious eye. But,

Fourthly, The love of Christ and souls has constrained me to it. As there is an *attractive* virtue, so there is a *compulsive* virtue in divine love. Love to Christ and souls will make a man willing to spend and be spent. He who prays himself to death, who preaches himself to death, who studies himself to death, who sweats himself to death—for the honor of Christ and good of souls—shall be no loser in the end. Divine love is like a rod of myrtle, which, as Pliny reports, makes the traveler who carries it in his hand—that he shall never be faint or weary. Divine love is very operative; if it does not work, it is an argument it does not exist at all. Divine love, like fire, is not idle—

but active. He who loves, cannot be barren. Love will make the soul constant and abundant in well-doing. *God admits none to heaven, says Justin Martyr—but such as can persuade him by their works, that they love him.* The heathen Seneca has observed—that God does not love his children with a weak, womanish affection—but with a strong, masculine love; and certainly, those who love the Lord strongly, who love him with a masculine love—they cannot but lay out their *little all* for him and his glory. But,

Fifthly, I observe that Satan and his instruments are exceeding busy and unwearied in their designs, attempts, and endeavors in these days to corrupt and poison, to defile and destroy the young, the tender, the most hopeful, and most flourishing plants among us.

Latimer told the clergy in his time, that if they would not learn diligence and vigilance from the prophets and apostles, they should learn it from the devil, who goes up and down his dioceses, and acts by an untiring power—seeking whom he may destroy. When the wolves are abroad, the shepherd should not sleep—but watch; yes, double his watch, remembering that he had better have all the blood of all the men in the world upon, him than the blood of one soul upon him by his negligence, or otherwise.

Satan is a lion, not a lamb; a roaring lion, not a sleepy lion; not a lion standing still—but a lion going up and down. As not being contented with the prey—the many millions of souls he has got—"he seeks whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8. His greatest design is to fill hell

with souls; which should awaken every one to be active, and to do all that may be done to prevent his design, and to help forward the salvation of souls.

Chrysostom compares good pastors—to fountains that ever send forth waters, or conduits that are always running, though no pail be put under. But,

Sixthly and lastly, I know the whole life of man is but *an hour* to work in; and the more work any man does for Christ on earth, the better pay he shall have when he comes to heaven. Every man shall at last "reap as he sows." Opportunities of doing service for Christ, and souls, are more worth than a world; therefore I was willing to take hold on this, not knowing how soon "I may put off this earthly tabernacle;" and remembering, that as there is no believing nor repenting in the grave, so there is no praying, preaching, writing, nor printing in the grave; we had need to be up and doing, to put both hands to it, and to do all we do with all our might, knowing that "the night is coming, wherein no man can work." *A Christian's dying day is the Lord's pay-day*; that is, a time to receive wages, not to do work.

And thus I have given the world a true account of the reasons that moved me to print the following discourse. Before I close up, I desire to speak a word to young people, and another to aged people, and then I shall take leave of both.

My request to you who are in the primrose of your days is this—If ever the Lord shall be pleased so to own and crown, so to bless and follow this following discourse, as to make it an effectual means of turning you to the Lord, of winning you to Christ, of changing your natures, and converting your souls—for such a thing as that I pray, hope, and believe—that then you would do two things for me.

First, That you would never cease bearing of me upon your hearts when you are in the mount, that I may be very much under the pourings out of the Spirit, that I may be clear, high, and full in my communion with God, and that I may be always close, holy, humble, harmless, and blameless in my walkings with God, and that his work may more and more prosper in my hand.

Secondly, That you would by word of mouth, letter, or some other way, acquaint me with what the Lord has done for your souls—if he shall make me a spiritual father to you. Do not hide his grace from me—but acquaint me how he has made the seed that was sown in weakness, to rise in power upon you, and that

(First) That I may do what I can to help on that work begun upon you; that your penny may become a pound, your mite a million, your drop an ocean.

(Secondly) That I may the better improve some impressions that have been upon my own spirit since I began this work.

(Thirdly), That my joy and thankfulness may be increased, and my soul more abundantly engaged to that God, who has blessed the day of small things to you, 1 Thes. 2:19-20; 2 Cor. 9:2. Ponder these scriptures—2 Cor. 7:3-4, 13; Philip. 2:2; Phil. 4:1; Philem. 7; 2 John 3-4—and then be ashamed to declare what the Lord has done for you, if you can.

(Fourthly) It is better to convert one to Christ, than to civilize a thousand; and will turn more at last to a minister's account in that day, wherein he shall say, "Lo, here am I, and the children that you have given me," Isaiah 8:18. Such a man, with his spiritual children about him, shall look on God with more comfort and boldness, than those that are only able to say, "Lo, here am I, and my many benefices;" "Here am I, and my many ecclesiastical dignities and glories;" "Here am I, and the many hundreds a year that I have given." But,

(Fifthly and lastly) The conversion of others is a secondary and more remote evidence of a man's own renovation and conversion. Paul was converted himself before God made him instrumental for others' conversion. God's usual method is, to convert by those who are converted.

I do not remember any one instance in all the Scripture of God's converting any by such who have not been converted first themselves; yet I know his grace is free, and the wind blows where it wills, when it wills, and as it wills.

To aged people I have a word.

First, To grey-headed saints. Ah, friends! ah, fathers! would you see your honor, your happiness, your blessedness? Then look into this treatise, and there you will find what an unspeakable honor it is to be an old disciple, what a glory it is to be godly early, and to continue so to old age.

Secondly, To white-headed sinners whose spring is past, whose summer is overpast, and who are arrived at the fall of the leaf, and yet have a hell to escape, a Christ to believe in, sins to pardon, hearts to change, souls to save, and heaven to make sure; would such be encouraged from Scripture grounds to repent, believe, and hope, that yet there is mercy for such, let them seriously peruse this treatise, especially the latter part of it, and there they may find enough to keep them from despairing, and to encourage them to adventure their souls upon him who is mighty to save.

There are many things in this treatise that are of use to all, and several things of importance—which are not every day preached nor read. I have made it aspleasurable as timewould permit, that so it might be the more profitable to the reader, and that I might the better take the young man by a holy craft; which is a high point of heavenly wisdom, there being no wisdom to that of winning of souls, 2 Cor. 12:16; Proverbs 11:13. I shall now follow this poor piece with my weak prayers, that it may be so blessed from heaven, as that it

may bring in some—and build up others—and do good to all. And so rest,

Your friend and servant in the Gospel of Christ,

Thomas Brooks

The Explanation of the Verse

*"And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because **in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel** in the house of Jeroboam."* 1Kings 14:13

I shall only stand upon the latter part of this verse, because that affords me matter most suitable to my design.

These words are a commendation of Abijah's life. When Abijah was a *boy*, verse 3, 12, when he was in his young and tender years, he had the seeds of grace in him, he had the image of God upon him, he could discern between good and evil, and he did that which pleased the Lord.

The Hebrew word translated *boy*, verse 3, is very often applied to such as we call youth, or young men; Exod. 24:5; Num. 11:28; 1 Sam. 2:17, etc.

Of such prudence was Abijah, as that he could choose good and refuse evil. He was a Lot in Sodom, he was good among the bad. The bent and frame of his heart was towards that which was good, when the heart both of his father and mother was set upon evil. Abijah began to be good early. He crossed that pestilent proverb, "a young saint and an old devil." It is the glory and goodness of God that he will take notice of the least good that is in any of his. There was but one good word in Sarah's speech to Abraham, and that was this, *she called him Lord; and this God mentions for her honor and commendation, "She called him Lord,"* 1 Peter 3:6. God looks more upon one grain of wheat, than upon a heap of chaff, upon one shining pearl than upon a heap of rubbish.

God finds a pearl in Abijah, and he puts it into his crown, to his eternal commendation, *"in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel."* For the words, *"in him there is **found**,"* the Hebrew word *Matsa*, sometimes signifies finding without seeking: Isaiah 65:1, "I am found of them that sought me not;" so Psalm 116:3, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me, I found trouble and sorrow." I found trouble which I looked not for; I was not searching after sorrow—but I found it. There is an elegance in the original; "The pains of hell got hold upon me," so we read—but the Hebrew is, "The pains of hell found me." One word signifies both. They found me, I did not find them. "There was *found* in Abijah some good thing towards the Lord," that is there was found in him, without searching or seeking, some good thing towards the Lord. It was plain and visible enough.

Men might see and observe it without inquiring or seeking. They might run and read some good thing in him towards the Lord.

Secondly, The word sometimes signifies finding by seeking or inquiry: Isaiah 55:6, "Seek the Lord while he may be found," etc. So upon search and inquiry there was found in Abijah, though young, *"some good thing toward the Lord."*

Thirdly, Sometimes the word notes the obtaining of that which is sufficient: Joshua 17:16; Num. 11:22; Judges 21:14. In Abijah there was that good in him towards the Lord, which was sufficient to evidence the work of grace upon him, sufficient to satisfy himself and others of the goodness and happiness of his condition, though he died in the prime and flower of his days, etc.

*"In him there is found some **good** thing toward the Lord God of Israel."* The Hebrew word *Tob*, that is here rendered good, signifies,

First, That which is right and just: 2 Sam. 15:3, "See your matters are good and right," that is just and right.

Secondly, That which is profitable: Deut. 6:11, "Houses full of all good things," that is houses full of all profitable things.

Thirdly, That which is pleasing: 2 Sam. 19:27, "Do what is good in your eyes," *that is* do what is pleasing in your eyes.

Fourthly, That which is full and complete: Gen. 15:15, "You shall be buried in a good old age," *that is* you shall be buried when your age is

full and complete.

Fifthly, That which is joyful and delightful: 1 Sam. 25:8, "We come in a good day," *that is* we come in a joyful and delightful day.

Now put all together, and you may see that *there was found in Abijah, when he was young, that which was right and just, that which was pleasing and profitable, and that which was matter of joy and delight.*

In the words you have two things that are most considerable.

First, ***That this young man's goodness was towards the Lord God of Israel.*** Many there are that are good, nay, very good towards men, who yet are bad, yes, very bad towards God. Some there are who are very kind to the creature—and yet very unkind to their Creator. Many men's goodness towards the creature is like the rising sun—but their goodness towards the Lord is like a morning cloud, or as the early dew, which is soon dried up by the sunbeams, Hosea 6:4; but Abijah's goodness was *towards the Lord*, his goodness faced the Lord, it looked towards the glory of God.

Two things makes a good Christian, good actions and good aims; and though *a good aim does not make a bad action good*, as in Uzzah, yet *a bad aim makes a good action bad*, as in Jehu, whose justice was approved—but his policy punished, the first chapter of Hosea, and the fourth verse. Doubtless Abijah's actions were good, and his

aims good, and this was indeed his glory, that his goodness was "towards the Lord."

It is recorded of the Catanenses, that they made a stately monument, of kingly magnificence, in remembrance of two sons, who took their aged parents upon their backs, and carried them through the fire, when their father's house was all in a flame. These young men were good towards their parents; but what is this compared to Abijah's goodness "towards the Lord"? etc. A man cannot be good towards the Lord, but he will be good towards others; but a man may be good towards others, who is not good towards the Lord. Oh that men's practices did not give too loud a testimony every day to this assertion! etc.

Secondly, ***He was good among the bad.*** He was good "in the house of Jeroboam." It is in fashion to seem at least to be good among the good; but to be really good among those that are bad, that are eminently bad, argues not only a truth of goodness—but a great degree of goodness. This young man was good in the house of Jeroboam, who made all Israel to sin; who was evil, who was very evil, who was stark evil; and yet Abijah, as the fish which live in the salt sea are fresh—so though he lived in a sink, a sea, of wickedness, yet he retained his "goodness towards the Lord."

They say roses grow the sweeter when they are planted by garlic. They are sweet and rare Christians indeed who hold their goodness,

and grow in goodness, where wickedness sits on the throne; and such a one the young man in the text was.

To be wheat among tares, corn among chaff, pearls among cockles, and roses among thorns—is excellent.

To be a Jonathan in Saul's court, to be an Obadiah in Ahab's court, to be an Ebed-melech in Zedekiah's court, and to be an Abijah in Jeroboam's court—is a wonder, a miracle.

To be a Lot in Sodom, to be an Abraham in Chaldea, to be a Daniel in Babylon, to be a Nehemiah in Damascus, and to be a Job in the land of Uz—is to be a saint among devils; and such a one the young man in the text was.

The poets affirm that Venus never appeared so beautiful as when she sat by black Vulcan's side. Gracious souls shine most clear when they be set by black-conditioned people. Stephen's face never shined so angelically, so gloriously—as before the council where all were wicked and malicious. So Abijah was a bright star, a shining sun, in Jeroboam's court, which for profaneness and wickedness was a very hell.

The words that I have chosen to insist upon will afford us several observations—but I shall only name one, which I intend to prosecute at this time, and that is this, namely: **That it is a very desirable and commendable thing for young men to be really godly early.**

Dear friends! since I yielded to your desires, and set about this work, I begun to consider that I had never heard nor read of any that had treated on this subject; also I seriously considered of the usefulness of it, especially in these times, wherein so many young people have their faces towards Zion; which considerations, with the breaking in of God upon me beyond my expectation, has occasioned that sermon you heard to swell into a little treatise, which in all love I present unto you. The very same things that sounded in your **ears**--I here present to your **eyes**, with enlargements and additions to what I first intended. The pains have been mine; the profit that will redound to you and others, into whose hands it may fall, I hope will be such as will turn to all our accounts in the day of Christ.

I have read of an emperor's son who used to say, *The longer the cooks are preparing the meal--the better will be the cheer*; his meaning was, the longer he waited for the empire, the greater it would be. The longer you have waited for this discourse, the better I desire it may prove. It would have been in your hands long before this, if others that should have made more haste had not been more to blame than myself; yet I know it is not a child so late born, that I need question your fathering of it. And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified, Acts 20:32.

Your servant in the work of Christ,
Thomas Brooks

Chapter 1

Doctrine. That it is a very desirable and commendable thing for young men to be really godly early.

Other scriptures speak out this to be a truth, besides what you have in the text to confirm it. "**Josiah** was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and followed the example of his ancestor David. He did not turn aside from doing what was right. During the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, Josiah began to seek the God of his ancestor David. Then in the twelfth year, he began to purify Judah and Jerusalem, destroying all the pagan shrines, the Asherah poles, and the carved idols and cast images." 2 Chronicles 34:1-3.

It was **Obadiah's** honor that he feared the Lord from his youth, 1 Kings 18:3; and **Timothy's** crown that he knew the Scripture from a child, 2 Tim. 1:1, 5, 15; and John's joy that he found children walking

in the truth, 2 John 4-5; this revived his good old heart, and made it dance for joy in his bosom. To spend further time in the proving of this truth, would be but to light candles to see the sun at noon.

The grounds and reasons of this point, namely, that it is a very desirable and commendable thing for young men to be really godly early, are these that follow:

*Reason 1. First, **Because the Lord commands it; and divine commands are not to be disputed—but obeyed.*** In the 12th chapter of Ecclesiastes, and the first verse, "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, *I find no pleasure in them.*" Remember **now!** I say, *now!* *Now* is an atom which will puzzle the wisdom of a philosopher, the skill of an angel, to divide. *Now* is a monosyllable in all learned languages: "Remember *now* your Creator." Remember him presently, instantly, for you do not know what a day, what an hour—may bring forth! You can not tell what deadly sin, what deadly temptation, what deadly judgment, may overtake you—if you do not now, even *now*, "remember your Creator."

"Remember now your Creator." Remember to know him, remember to love him, remember to desire him, remember to delight in him, remember to depend upon him, remember to get a saving interest in him, remember to live to him, and remember to walk with him. "Remember now your Creator;" the Hebrew is Creators—

Father, Son, and Spirit. To the making of man, a council was called in heaven, in the first of Genesis, and 26th verse. "Remember your Creators:" Remember the *Father*, so as to know him, so as to be inwardly acquainted with him. Remember the *Son*, so as to believe in him, so as to rest upon him, so as to embrace him, and so as to make a complete resignation of yourself to him. Remember the *Spirit*, so as to hear his voice, so as to obey his voice, so as to feel his presence, and so as to experience his influence, etc.

*"Remember now your Creator in **the days of your youth.**"* He does not say in the time of your youth—but "in the **days** of your youth," to note, that our life is but as a few days. It is but as a vapor, a span, a flower, a shadow, a dream; and therefore Seneca says well, that "though death is before the old man's face, yet it may be as near the young man's back," etc.

Man's life is the shadow of smoke, the dream of a shadow. One doubts whether to call it a *dying life*, or a *living death*.

Ah! young men, God commands you to be godly early. Remember, young men, that it is a dangerous thing to neglect any of his commands, who by another command—is able to command you into nothing, or into hell. To act or run cross to God's command, though under pretense of revelation from God, is as much as a man's life is worth, as you may see in that sad story, 1 Kings, 13:24, etc.

Let young men put all their carnal reasons, though ever so many and weighty, into one scale; and God's absolute command in the other,

and then write Tekel upon all their reasons—"they are weighed in the balance and found too light."

Ah, sirs! what God commands must be put in speedy execution, without denying or delaying, or disputing the difficulties which attend it. Most young men in these days do as the heathens: when their gods called for a man, they offered a candle; or, as Hercules, offered up a painted man instead of a living man. When God calls upon young men to serve him with the primrose of their youth, they usually put him off until they are overtaken with trembling joints, clouded eyes, fainting hearts, failing hands, and feeble knees; but this will be bitterness in the end, etc.

Reason 2. Because they have means and opportunities of being godly early.

Never had men better means and greater opportunities of being good, of doing good, and of receiving good—than now. Ah, Lord! how knowing, how believing, how holy, how heavenly, how humble—might young men be, were they true to their own souls. Young men might be godly, very godly, yes, eminently godly, would they but improve the means of grace, the tenders of mercy, and the knockings of Christ, by his word, works, and Spirit.

The ancients painted *opportunity* with a hairy forehead—but bald behind, to signify, that while a man has opportunity before him, he may lay hold on it—but if he allow it to slip away, he cannot pull it back again.

How many young men are now in everlasting chains, who would give ten thousand worlds, had they so many in their hands to give—to enjoy but an opportunity to hear one sermon more, to make one prayer more, to keep one Sabbath more—but cannot! This is their hell, their torment; this is the scorpion that is still biting, this is the worm that is always gnawing. Woe! woe! to us, that we have neglected and trifled away those golden opportunities that once we had to get our sins pardoned, our natures changed, our hearts bettered, our consciences purged, and our souls saved, etc.

I have read of a king, who having no child to succeed him, espying one day a well-favored youth, took him to court, and committed him to tutors to instruct him, providing by his will, that if he proved fit for government, he should be crowned king; if not, he should be bound in chains and made a galley-slave. Now when he grew to years, the king's executors, perceiving that he had sadly neglected those means and opportunities, whereby he might have been fit for government, called him before them, and declared the king's will and pleasure concerning him, which was accordingly performed, for they caused him to be fettered, and committed to the galleys. Now what tongue can express how much he was affected and afflicted, with his sad and miserable state, especially when he considered with himself—that now he is chained, who might have walked at liberty; now he is a slave, who might have been a king. The application is easy.

Ah! young men! young men! shall *Satan* take all opportunities to tempt you? shall the *world* take all opportunities to allure you? shall

wicked men take all opportunities to ensnare you, and to undo you? and shall Christian friends take all opportunities to better you? and shall God's faithful messengers take all opportunities to save you? and will you, will you "neglect so great salvation"? Heb. 2:3. Plutarch writes of Hannibal, that when he could have taken Rome—he would not; and when he would have taken Rome—he could not. Many, in their youthful days, when they might have mercy, Christ, pardon, heaven—they will not; and in old age, when they would have Christ, pardon, peace, heaven—they cannot, they may not. God seems to say, as Theseus said once, 'Go, and tell Creon, Theseus offers you a gracious offer. Yet I am pleased to be friends, if you will submit; this is my first message; but if this offer prevail not, look for me to be up in arms.'

Reason 3. Because, when they have fewer and lesser sins to answer for and repent of—multitudes of sins and sorrows are prevented by being godly early.

The more we number our days—the fewer sins we shall have to number! As a copy is then safest from blotting when dust is put upon it, so are we from sinning when, in the time of our youth, we remember that we are but dust. The *tears of young penitents* do more scorch the devils than all the flames of hell; for hereby all their hopes are blasted, and the great underminer countermined and blown up. The devil's bids us to tarry—*there is time enough to repent*. God bids repent early, in the morning of your youth, for then your sins will be fewer and lesser. Well! young men, remember this:

he who will not at the first-hand buy godly counsel cheap, shall at the second-hand buy repentance ever dear.

Ah! young men! young men! if you do not begin to be godly early, those sins that are now as jewels sparkling in your eyes, will at last be millstones about your necks, to sink you forever! Among many things that Beza, in his last will and testament, gave God thanks for, this was the first and chief, that God, at the age of sixteen years, had called him to the knowledge of the truth, and so prevented many sins and sorrows that otherwise would have overtaken him, and have made his life less happy and more miserable. Young saints often prove old angels—but old sinners seldom prove godly saints, etc.

*Reason 4. **Because TIME is a precious talent which young men must be accountable for.*** The sooner they begin to be godly, the more easy will be their accounts, especially as to *that great talent of time*. Cato and other heathen held that account must be given, not only of our labor—but also of our leisure. At the great day, it will appear that those who have spent their time in mourning over sin, have done better than those who have spent their time in dancing; and those who have spent many days in pious humiliation, than those who have spent many days in idle recreations.

I have read of a devout man who, when he heard a clock strike, he would say, *Here is one hour more past, which I have to answer for!* Ah! young men, as time is very **precious**, so it is very **short**. Time is very swift; it is suddenly gone. In the 9th of Job, and the 25th verse,

"My life passes more swiftly than a runner. It flees away." The Hebrew word translated "more swiftly than a runner," signifies anything that is light, because light things are quick in motion.

The ancients emblemed time with wings, as it were, not running—but *flying*. Time is like the sun, which never stands still—but is continually a-running his race. The sun did once stand still, yes, went back—but time never did. Time is still running and flying! It is a bubble, a shadow, a dream. Can you seriously consider of this, young men, and not begin to be godly early? Surely you cannot. Sirs! if the whole earth whereupon we tread were turned into a lump of gold, it would not be able to purchase one minute of time. Oh! the regrettings of the damned for misspending precious time! Oh! what would they not give to be free, and to enjoy the means of grace one hour! Ah! with what attention, with what intention, with what trembling and melting of heart, with what hungering and thirsting—would they hear the word! Time, says Bernard, would be a precious commodity in hell, and the selling of it most gainful, where for one day a man would give ten thousand worlds, if he had them. Young men, can you in good earnest believe this, and not begin to be godly early?

Ah! young men and women, as you love your precious immortal souls, as you would escape hell—and come to heaven; as you would be happy in life—and blessed in death, and glorious after death; don't spend any more of your precious time in drinking and gabbing, in carding, dicing, and dancing! Don't **trifle** away your time, don't

swear away your time, don't **whore** away your time, do not **lie** away your time—but begin to be godly early, because time is a talent that God will reckon with you for. Ah! young men and women, you may reckon upon **years**, many years yet to come, when possibly you have not so many **hours** to make ready your accounts. It may be *this night* you may have a summons, and then, if your time is done, and your work for eternity to be begun—in what a sad case will you be. Will you not wish that you had never been born?

Seneca was accustomed to jeer the Jews for their ill husbandry, in that they lost one day in seven, meaning their Sabbath. Oh that it were not too true of the most of professors, both young and old, that they lose not only one day in seven—but several days in seven.

Sirs! **Time let slip—cannot be recalled.** The foolish virgins found it so, and Saul found it so, and Herod found it so, and Nero found it so. The Israelites found it so; yes, and Jacob, and Josiah, and David, though godly men, yet they found it so to their cost.

The Egyptians draw *the picture of time with three heads*: the first of a *greedy wolf*, gaping, for time past, because it has ravenously devoured the memory of so many things past recalling; the second of a *crowned lion*, roaring, for time present, because it has the principality of all actions, for which it calls loud; the third of a *deceitful dog*, fawning, for time to come, because it feeds some men with many flattering hopes to their eternal undoing. Ah! young men and women, as you would give your accounts at last with joy,

concerning this talent of time, with which God has trusted you, begin to be godly early, etc.

Reason 5. Because they will have the greater comfort and joy when they come to be old.

The 71st psalm, 5, 17, 18, compared, "For you have been my hope, O Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth. Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come."

Polycarp could say, when old, "Thus many years have I served my Master Christ, and hitherto has he dealt well with me." If early converts live to be old—there is no joy compared to their joy. Their joy will be the greatest joy, a joy like to the joy of harvest, a joy like to their joy who divide the spoil. Their joy will be soundest joy, the weightiest joy, the holiest joy, the purest joy, the strongest joy, and the most lasting joy! Isaiah 9:3. The carnal joy of the wicked, the glistening golden joy of the worldling, and the flashing joy of the hypocrite—is but as the crackling of thorns under a pot—compared to the joy and comfort of such, who, when old, can say with godly Obadiah, that they "feared the Lord from their youth." If, when you are young, your eyes shall be full of tears for sin—when you are old, your heart shall be full of joys. Such shall have the best wine at last!

Oh! that young men would begin to be godly early, that so they may have the greater harvest of joy when they come to be old, etc. It is sad to be sowing your seed—when you should be reaping your harvest; it is best to gather in the summer of youth—to store up for the winter of old age.

Reason 6. Because an eternity of felicity and glory hangs upon those few moments which are allotted to us.

It was a good question, which the young man proposed, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Luke 10:25. I know I shall be eternally happy—or eternally miserable; eternally blessed—or eternally cursed; eternally saved—or eternally damned, etc.

"Oh! what shall I do to inherit eternal life!" My cares, my fears, my troubles—are all about eternity! No time can reach eternity, no age can extend to eternity, no tongue can express eternity. Eternity is that one perpetual day which shall never have end; what shall I do, what shall I not do—that I may be happy to all eternity?

I am now young, and in the flower of my days; but who knows what a day may bring forth? The greatest weight hangs upon the smallest wires, an eternity depends upon those few hours I am to breathe in this world. Oh! what cause have I therefore to be godly early—to know God early—to believe early—to repent early—to get my peace made and my pardon sealed early—to get my nature changed, my conscience purged, and my interest in Christ cleared early—before eternity overtakes me—before my hour-glass of time runs out—

before my sun sets—before my race finishes—lest the dark night of eternity should overtake me, and I made miserable forever!

I have read of one Myrogenes, who, when great gifts were sent unto him, he sent them all back again, saying, *I only desire this one thing at your master's hand—to pray for me that I may be saved for eternity*. Oh! that all young men and women, who make earth their heaven, pleasures their paradise, that eat the fat and drink the sweet, that clothe themselves richly, and crown their heads with rose-buds; that they would seriously **consider** of eternity, so as to **hear** as for eternity, and **pray** as for eternity, and **live** as for eternity, and **provide** as for eternity! Luke 15:12-20. That they might say with that famous painter Zeuxis, *I paint for eternity*. We do all for eternity, we believe for eternity, we repent for eternity, we obey for eternity, etc.

Oh! that you would not make those things eternal for punishment, which cannot be eternal for use.

Ah! young men and women, God calls, and the blood of Jesus Christ calls, and the Spirit of Christ in the gospel calls, and the rage of Satan calls, and your sad state and condition calls, and the happiness and blessedness of glorified saints calls; these all call aloud upon you to make sure a glorious eternity, before you fall into that dreadful ocean of eternal misery! *All your eternal good depends upon the short and uncertain moments of your lives*; and if the thread of your lives should be cut before a happy eternity is made sure, woe to you that

ever you were born! Do not say, O young man, that you are young, and hereafter will be time enough to provide for eternity, for eternity may be at the door, ready to carry you away forever. Every day's experience speaks out eternity to be as near the young man's back as it is before the old man's face.

Oh grasp today the diadem of a blessed eternity, lest you are cut off before the morning comes! **Though there is but one way to come into this world—yet there is a thousand thousand ways to be sent out of this world.** Well! young men and women, remember this, as the motions of the soul are quick, so are the motions of divine justice quick also; and if you will not hear the voice of God today, if you will not provide for eternity today—God may swear tomorrow that you shall never enter into his rest, Heb. 3:7-8, 15-16, 18-19.

It is a very sad and dangerous thing to trifle and dally with God, his word, his offers, our own souls, and eternity. Therefore, let all young people labor to be godly early, and not to let Him who is goodness itself alone—until he has made them godly, until he has given them those hopes of eternity that will both make them godly and keep them godly; that will make them happy, and keep them happy—and that forever.

If all this will not do, then know that before long those fears of eternity, of misery—which beget that monster Despair, which, like Medusa's head, frightens with its very aspect, and strangles hope,

which is the breath of the soul, will certainly overtake you; as it is said, *other miseries may wound the spirit—but despair kills it dead*. My prayer shall be, that none of you may ever experience this sad truth—but that you may all be godly in good earnest, early, which will yield you two heavens—a heaven on earth, and a heaven after death!

Reason 8. Because you do not begin to live, until you begin to be really godly.

Firstly, until you begin to be godly—you are dead God-wards, and Christ-wards, and heaven-wards, and holiness-wards. Until a man begins to be really godly, he is really dead, and that first in respect of *working*; his works are called dead works, Heb. 9:14. The most glittering services of unregenerate people are but dead works, because they proceed not from a principle of spiritual life, and they lead to death, Romans 6:23, and leave a sentence of death upon the soul, until it be washed off by the blood of the Lamb.

Secondly, he is dead in respect of honor; he is dead to all privileges, he is not fit to inherit mercy. Who will set the crown of life upon a dead man? The crown of life is only for living Christians, Rev. 2:10. The young prodigal was dead until he begun to be godly, until he begun to remember his father's house, and to resolve to return home: "My son was dead—but is alive," Luke 15:24; and "the widow that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives," 1 Tim. 5:6.

When Joshaphat asked Barlaam how old he was, he answered, forty-five years old; to whom Joshaphat replied, You seem to be seventy.

True, says he, if you reckon ever since I was born; but I count not those years which were spent in vanity.

Ah, sirs! You never begin to live until you begin to be godly, in good earnest. There is the life of **vegetation**, and that is the life of plants; secondly, there is the life of **sense**, and that is the life of beasts; thirdly, there is the life of **reason**, and that is the life of man; fourthly, there is the life of **grace**, and that is the life of saints; and this life you do not begin to live until you begin to be godly. If "a living dog is better than a dead lion," as the wise man speaks, Eccles. 9:4, and if a fly is more excellent than the heavens, because the fly has life, which the heavens have not, as one says, *what a sad, dead, poor nothing is that person, who is a stranger to the life of grace and goodness—who is dead even while he is alive!*

Most men will bleed, sweat, part with an estate, yes, with a limb, ay, limbs, yes, and many a better thing, namely, the honor of God and a good conscience—to preserve their natural lives; as he cries out, *Give me any deformity, any torment, any misery, so long as you spare my life!* And yet how few, how very few, are to be found who make it their work, their business—to attain to a life of holiness, or to begin to be godly early, or to be dead to the world and alive to God—rather than to be dead to God and alive to the world. This is for a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation—that *natural life is so highly prized, and spiritual life so little regarded*, etc.

Reason 9. Because the promise of finding God, of enjoying God, is made over to an early seeking of God.

Proverbs 8:17, "I love those who love me, and those who seek me early shall find me." or, as the Hebrew has it, "those who seek me in the morning shall find me." By the benefit of the morning light we come to find the things we seek. *Shahhar* signifies to seek inquisitively, to seek diligently, to seek timely in the morning. As the Israelites went early in the morning to seek for manna, Exod. 16:21, and as students rise early in the morning to get knowledge; so says wisdom, those who "seek me in the spring and morning of their youth, shall find me."

Now, to seek the Lord early is to seek the Lord ***firstly***. God has in himself all the good of angels, of men, and universal nature; he has all glories, all dignities, all riches, all treasures, all pleasures, all comforts, all delights, all joys, all beatitudes. God is that one infinite perfection in himself, which is eminently and virtually all perfections of the creatures, and therefore he is firstly to be sought. *Abstracts* do better express him, than *concretes* and *adjectives*; he is being, bounty, power, wisdom, justice, mercy, goodness, and love itself—and therefore worthy to be sought before all other things. *Seek first the good things of the mind*, says philosophy, and does not divinity say as much?

Again, To seek early is to seek ***opportunistically***, to seek while the opportunity does present: Judges 9:33, "You shall rise early, and set

upon the city," that is, "you shall opportunely set upon the city."

Such there have been who, by having a glass of water opportunely, have obtained a kingdom, as you may see in the story of Thaumastus and king Agrippa.

Ah! young men and women, you do not know but that by an early, by an opportune, seeking of God, you may obtain a kingdom that shakes not, and glory that passes not away, Heb. 12:28.

There is a season wherein God may be found: "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call you upon him while he is near," Isaiah 55:6; and if you slip this season, you may seek him and miss him: "Though they cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them;" "When you make many prayers, I will not hear;" "Then shall they cry unto the Lord—but he will not hear;" "Then shall they call upon me—but I will not answer; they shall seek me early—but shall not find me." This was Saul's misery: "The Philistines are upon me, and God will not answer me," 1 Sam. 28:15. It is justice that they should seek and not find at last, who might have found had they but sought seasonably and opportunely, etc.

Again, To seek early is to seek ***earnestly, affectionately***: "With my soul have I desired you in the night; yes, with my spirit within me will I seek you early," Isaiah 26:9. The Hebrew word signifies both an earnest and an early seeking. In the morning the spirits are up, and men are earnest, lively, and affectionate.

Ah! such a seeking shall certainly be crowned with finding: "My voice shall you hear in the morning, O Lord! in the morning will I direct [Heb. *marshal*] my prayer unto you, and will look up" [Hebrew, *look out like a watchman*]. "Let all those who put their trust in you rejoice, let them ever shout for joy; because you defend them" [Hebrew, "*you covered over, or protected them*"]. "Let those also who love your name be joyful in you: for you, Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor will you compass him [Hebrew, "*crown him*"] as with a shield." None have ever thus sought the Lord—but they have, or certainly shall find him: "Seek and you shall find," Mat. 7:7; "your hearts shall live that seek God," Psalm 69:32; "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much," Jas. 5:16, or, as the Greek has it, "The working prayer of a righteous man avails much." That prayer that sets the whole man a-work will work wonders in heaven, in the heart, and in the earth. Earnest prayer, like Saul's sword and Jonathan's bow, never returns empty.

One speaking of Luther, who was a man very earnest in prayer, said, *This man could have what he would of God*, etc.

Again, to seek early is to seek ***chiefly, primarily***, *after* this or that thing. What we first seek, we seek as chief. Now, to seek the Lord early is to seek him primarily, chiefly; in the 63d psalm, and the 1st verse, "You are my God—early will I seek you," that is, I will seek you as my choicest and my chief good. God is *Alpha*, the fountain from whence all grace springs; and *Omega*, the sea to which all glory runs; and therefore early and primarily to be sought. God is a perfect good,

a solid good. That is a **perfect** good—to which nothing can be added; that a **solid** good—from which nothing can be spared. Such a good God is, and therefore early and chiefly to be sought.

God is a **pure** and **simple** good; he is a light in whom there is no darkness, a good in whom there is no evil, 1 John 1:5. The goodness of the creature is mixed, yes, that little goodness that is in the creature is mixed with much evil; but God is an **unmixed** good; he is good, he is pure good, he is all over good, he is nothing but good. God is an **all-sufficient** good: "Walk before me, and be upright: "I am God all-sufficient," in the 17th of Genesis and the first verse. Augustine said, "He has all—who has the haver of all." God has in himself all **power** to defend you, all **wisdom** to direct you, all **mercy** to pardon you, all **grace** to enrich you, all **righteousness** to clothe you, all **goodness** to supply you, and all happiness to crown you.

God is a **satisfying** good, a good that fills the heart and quiets the soul, Cant. 2:3. In the 33d of Genesis, and the 11th verse, "I have enough," says godly Jacob; "I have all," says Jacob, for so the Hebrew has it, *I have all*, I have all comforts, all delights, all contents, etc. "In having nothing, I have all things, because I have Christ; having therefore all things in him, I seek no other reward, for he is the universal reward," says one. As the worth and value of many pieces of silver is to be found in one piece of gold, so all the petty excellencies which are scattered abroad in the creatures—are to be found in God. Yes, all the whole volume of perfections, which is

spread through heaven and earth, is epitomized in him. No good below him that is the greatest good, can satisfy the soul. A good wife, a good child, a good name, a good estate, a good friend, cannot satisfy the soul. These may please—but they cannot satisfy. "All abundance, if it be not my God, is to me nothing but poverty and want," said one. "Whom do I have in heaven but You? And I desire nothing on earth but You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion forever." Psalm 73:25-26.

Ah! that young men and women would but in the morning of their youth seek, yes, seek early, seek earnestly, seek affectionately, seek diligently, seek primarily, and seek unweariedly this God, who is the greatest good, the best good, the most desirable good; who is a suitable good, a pure good, a satisfying good, a total good, and an eternal good.

Reason 10. Because the time of youth is the choicest and fittest time for service.

Now your parts are lively, senses fresh, memory strong, and nature vigorous. The days of your youth are the *spring* and *morning* of your time, they are the first-born of your strength; therefore God requires your youth, as well as your old age; the wine of your times as well as the lees—as you may see typified to you in the first-fruits, which were dedicated to the Lord, and the first-born, Exod. 23:16, Num. 3:13. The time of youth is the time of salvation, it is the acceptable time; it is your summer, your harvest-time. O young man! therefore do not

sleep—but up and be doing; awaken your heart, rouse up your soul, and improve all you have; put out your reason, your strength, your all—to the treasuring up of heavenly graces, precious promises, divine experiences, and spiritual comforts, against the winter of old age. And then old age will not be to you an evil age—but as it was to Abraham, "a good old age," Gen. 15:15; do not put off God with fair promises, and large pretenses, until your last sands are running out, and the days of old age have overtaken you.

That is a sad word of the prophet, "Cursed be the deceiver, which has in his flock a male, and yet offers to the Lord a corrupt thing," Mal. 1:14. Ah! young men and women, who are like the almond tree; you have many males in the flock, your *strength* is a male in your flock, your *time* is a male in the flock, your *reason* is a male in the flock, your *parts* are a male in the flock, and your *gifts* are a male in the flock. Now, if he is cursed who has but one male in his flock, and shall offer to God a corrupt thing, a thing of no worth, of no value, how will you be cursed and cursed—cursed at home, and cursed abroad, cursed temporally, cursed spiritually, and cursed eternally—who has many males in your flock, and yet deals so unworthily, so fraudulently, and false-heartedly with God, as to put him off with *the dregs of your time and strength*, while you spend the primrose of your youth in the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil, Mat. 21:20.

The fig-tree in the Gospel, which did not bring forth fruit timely and seasonably—was cursed, to the amazement of all. The time of youth

is the time and season for bringing forth the fruits of righteousness and holiness; and if these fruits are not brought forth in their season, you may justly fear, that the curses of heaven will secretly and insensibly soak and sink into your souls, and then woe! woe! to you that ever you were born. The best way to prevent this hell of hells, is to give God the *cream* and *flower* of your youth—your strength, your time, your talents. Vessels that are early seasoned with the savor of life never lose it, Proverbs 22:6.

Reason 11. Because death may suddenly and unexpectedly seize upon you; you have no lease of your lives.

Youth is as fickle as old age. The young man will find many graves of his length, in in the graveyard. As green wood and old logs meet in one fire—**so young sinners and old sinners meet in one hell and burn together.** When the young man is in his spring and prime, then he is cut off and dies; "One person dies in prosperity and security, the very picture of good health. Another person dies in bitter poverty, never having tasted the good life. Both alike are buried in the same dust, both eaten by the same worms." Job 21:23-26. David's children die when young, so did Job's and Jeroboam's, etc. Every day's experience tells us—that the young man's life is as much a vapor as the old man's is. "All flesh is grass!" Isaiah 40:6.

I have read of an Italian poet, who brings in a healthy young man, rich and powerful; discoursing with *death* in the likeness of a *mower*, with his scythe in his hand, cutting down the life of man. "*And will*

you not spare a young man?" says the youth. "I spare none!" says death. Man's life is but a day, a short day, a winter's day. Ofttimes the sun goes down upon a man before it be well up. Your day is short, your work is great, your journey long—and therefore you should rise early, and set forward towards heaven early—as that man does, who has a long journey to go in a winter's day.

"You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath." Psalm 39:5. The life of man is absolutely **SHORT**. The life of man is comparatively short, and that if you compare man's life now to what he might have reached had he continued in innocency. Sin brought in death; death is a fall—which came in by a fall. Or if you compare man's life now to what they did reach to before the flood: then people lived six, seven, eight, nine hundred years, Gen. 5; or if you compare men's days with the days of God, which are eternal; or if you compare the days of man to the days of eternity.

Ah! young men, young men! can you seriously consider of the brevity of man's life—and trifle away your time, the offers of grace, your precious souls, and eternity? Surely you cannot, surely you dare not, if you do but in good earnest ponder upon the shortness of man's life. It is recorded of Philip, king of Macedon, that he gave a pension to one to come to him every day at dinner, and to cry to him, ***Remember you are but mortal!***

Ah! young men and old had need be often put in mind of their mortality; they are too apt to forget that day, yes, to put far from them the thoughts of that day. I have read of three that could not endure to hear that bitter word **death** mentioned in their ears; and surely this age is full of such monsters.

And as the life of man is very short, so it is very **UNCERTAIN**: now well, now sick; alive this hour, and dead the next. Death does not always give warning beforehand; sometimes he gives the mortal blow suddenly; he comes behind with his dart, and strikes a man at the heart, before he says, "Have I found you, O my enemy?" 1 Kings 21:20. Eutychus fell down dead suddenly, Acts 20:9; death suddenly arrested David's sons and Job's sons; Augustus died in a compliment, Galba with a sentence, Vespasian with a jest; Zeuxis died laughing at the picture of an old woman which he drew with his own hand; Sophocles was choked with the seed in a grape; Diodorus the logician died for shame that he could not answer a witty question propounded at the table by Stilpo; Joannes Measius, preaching upon the raising of the woman of Nain's son from the dead, within three hours after died himself.

Ah! young men and women, have you not cause, great cause, to be godly early? for death is sudden in his approaches. **Nothing more sure than death! Nothing more uncertain than life!** Therefore know the Lord early, turn from your sins early; lay hold on the Lord, and make peace with him early, that you may never say, as Caesar Borgias said when he was sick unto death, "When I lived,"

said he, "I provided for everything but death; now I must die, and am unprovided to die," etc.

Reason 12. Because it is ten to one, if ever they are converted—they will be converted when they are young.

God usually begins with such early—whom he has had thoughts of love and mercy towards them from everlasting. The instances cited to prove the doctrine confirms this argument; and if you look abroad in the world, you shall hardly find one saint among a thousand but dates his conversion from the time of his youth. It was the young ones who got through the wilderness into Canaan, Num. 26. If the tree does not bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit in the *spring*, it is commonly dead all the year after. If, in the spring and morning of your days, you do not bring forth fruit to God--it is a hundred to one that you shall never bring forth fruit to God when the evil days of old age shall "overtake you, wherein you shall say you have no pleasure," Eccles. 12:1. For, as the son of Sirach observes, if you have gathered nothing in your youth, what can you find in your age? It is rare, very rare, that God sows and reaps in old age. Usually God sows the seed of grace in youth—which yields the harvest of joy in age.

Though true repentance is never too late—yet late repentance is seldom true. Millions are now in hell, who have flattered themselves with the thoughts of repentance in old age. The Lord has made a promise *to* late repentance—but where has he made a promise *of* late repentance? Yes, what can be more just and equal,

that such should seek and not find—who might have found but would not seek; and that he should shut his ears against their late prayers—who have stopped their ears against his early calls? Proverbs 1:24-32. The ancient warriors would not accept an old man into their army, as being unfit for service; and do you think that God will accept of your dry bones—when Satan has sucked out all the marrow? What master, will take such into his service—those who have all their days served his enemies? and will God? will God? The Circassians, a kind of mongrel Christians, are said to divide their life between sin and devotion, dedicating their youth to rapine, and their old age to repentance. If this is your case, I would not be in your case for ten thousand worlds!

I have read of a certain great man that was admonished in his sickness to repent, who answered, that he would not repent yet, for if he should recover, his companions would laugh at him; but growing sicker and sicker, he was again admonished to repent—but then he told them that it was too late, for now, said he, I am judged and condemned.

Reason 13. Because if not converted while young, they will never attain to the honor of being old disciples. (Next chapter)

Chapter 2

The great honor it is to be an old disciple — shown in seven particulars.

Now this honor none reach to—but such as are converted *early*—but such as turn to the Lord in the *spring* and *morning* of their youth. It is no honor for an old man to be in baby clothes; nor for an old man to be a babe in grace. A childish old man is a sad and shameful sight. Oh! but it is a mighty honor to be a man, when he is old, that he can date his conversion from the morning of his youth. Now that it is an honor to be an old disciple, I shall prove by seven particulars. As,

Particular 1. All men will honor an old disciple. Proverbs 16:31, "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." God requires that the aged should be honored: Lev. 19:32, "You shall rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man" (the *old* man here is by some expounded the *wise* man), "and fear your God, I am the Lord." Hoariness is only honorable when found in a way of godliness. A white head, accompanied with a holy heart, makes a man truly honorable. There are two glorious sights in the world: the one is, a **young** man walking in his uprightness; and the other is, an **old** man walking in ways of

righteousness. It was Abraham's honor that he went to his grave in a good old age, or rather, as the Hebrew has it, *with a good grey head*, Gen. 25:8. Many there are, who go to their graves with a grey head—but this was Abraham's crown, that he went to his grave with a *good grey head*. Had Abraham's head been never so grey, if it had not been godly, it would have been no honor to him. A hoary head, when coupled with an unsanctified heart, is rather a curse than a blessing. When the head is as white as snow, and the soul as black as hell, God usually gives up such to the greatest scorn and contempt. "The old men are treated with contempt." Lam. 5:12, and this God had threatened long before. "The Lord will bring a distant nation against you from the end of the earth, and it will swoop down on you like an eagle. It is a nation whose language you do not understand, a fierce and heartless nation that shows no respect for the old and no pity for the young." Deut. 28:49-50.

I have read of Cleanthes, who was accustomed sometimes to chide himself. Ariston wondering thereat, asked him, *Whom are you chiding?* Cleanthes laughed, and answered, *I chide an old fellow, who has grey hairs indeed—but lacks understanding, and prudence worthy of them.* The application I will leave to the grey heads and grey beards of our time, who have little else to commend them to the world but their hoary heads and snowy beards.

Particular 2. God usually reveals himself most to old disciples, to old saints. Job12:12, "With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding." God usually manifests most of

himself to aged saints. They usually pray most and pay most, they labor most and long most after the choicest manifestations of himself and of his grace; and therefore he opens his bosom most to them, and makes them of his cabinet council. Gen. 18:17-19, "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; for I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him." Abraham was an old friend, and therefore God makes him both of his court and council.

We usually open our hearts most freely, fully, and familiarly—to old friends. So does God to his ancient friends. Ah, what a blessed sight and enjoyment of Christ had old **Simeon**, that made his very heart to dance in him! "Now, Lord, let you your servant depart in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation," etc., Luke 2:29. I have seen him, who is my light, my life, my love, my joy, my crown, my heaven, my all; therefore now "Let your servant depart in peace," verses 26-28. So **Anna**, when she was eighty-four years old, was so filled with the discoveries and enjoyments of Christ, that she could not but declare what she had tasted, felt, seen, heard, and received from the Lord. She was ripe and ready to discover the fullness, sweetness, goodness, excellency, and glory of that Christ whom she had long loved, feared, and served. So **Paul** lived in the light, sight, and sweet enjoyments of Christ, when he was aged in years and in grace, Philip. 4:5,7,9. So, when **John** had that glorious vision of Christ among the golden candlesticks, and those discoveries

and manifestations of the ruin of Rome, the fall of antichrist, the casting the beast and false prophet into a lake of fire, the conquest of the kingdoms of the world by Christ's bow and sword, the binding up of Satan, and the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven—when he was old, when he was aged in years and in grace.

The Lord speaks many a secret in the ears of saints, of old Christians, which young Christians are not acquainted with, as that phrase imports, 2 Sam.7:27, "You, O Lord God Almighty, have revealed to your servant;" so you read it in your books—but in the Hebrew it is, "Lord, you have revealed this *to the ear* of your servant." Some wonder how that word "to the ear" comes to be left out in your books, in which indeed the emphasis of the verse lies. We will tell many things in an old friend's ear, which we will not acquaint young ones with. So does God many times whisper to an old disciple in the ear, and acquaints him with such things that he hides from those who are of younger years. And by this you may see what an honor it is to be an old disciple.

Particular 3. An old disciple, an old Christian—he has got the art of serving God, the art of religion; got the art of hearing, the art of praying, the art of meditating, the art of repenting, the art of believing, the art of denying his natural self, his sinful self, his religious self.

All trades have their mystery and difficulty—so has the trade of Christianity. Young Christians usually bungle in pious works—but

old Christians conduct themselves like workmen that need not be ashamed. A young carpenter gives more blows and makes more chips—but an old artist does the most and best work. A young Christian may make most noise in pious duties—but an old Christian makes the best work. A young musician may play more quick and nimble upon an instrument than an old one—but an old musician has more skill and judgment than a young. The application is easy, and by this you may also see what an honor it is to be an old Christian, etc.

Particular 4. An old disciple, an old Christian, is rich in spiritual experiences. Oh! the experiences that he has of the ways of **GOD**, of the workings of God, of the word of God, of the love of God! "I write to you, *fathers*, because you have known him who is from the beginning." 1 John 2:14.

Oh! the divine stories that old Christians can tell of the power of the word, of the sweetness of the **WORD**, of the usefulness of the word! Psalm 119:49-50, as a light to lead the soul, as a staff to support the soul, as a spur to quicken the soul, as an anchor to stay the soul, and as a cordial to comfort and strengthen the soul!

Oh! the stories that he can tell you concerning the love of **CHRIST**, the blood of Christ, the offices of Christ, the merits of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the graces of Christ, and the influence of Christ!

Oh! the stories that an old disciple can tell you of the indwellings of the **SPIRIT**, of the operations of the Spirit, of the teachings of the

Spirit, of the leadings of the Spirit, of the sealings of the Spirit, of the witnessings of the Spirit, and of the comforts and joys of the Spirit!

Oh the stories that an old Christian can tell you of the evil of **SIN**, the bitterness of sin, the deceitfulness of sin, the prevalency of sin, and the happiness of conquest over sin!

Oh! the stories that he can tell you of the snares of **SATAN**, the devices of Satan, the temptations of Satan, the rage of Satan, the malice of Satan, the watchfulness of Satan, and the ways of triumphing over Satan!

As an old soldier can tell you of many battles, many scars, many wounds, many losses, and many victories, even to admiration; so an old saint is able to tell you many divine stories even to admiration.

Pliny writes of the crocodile, that she **grows** to her last day, Hosea 14:5-7. So aged saints, they grow rich in spiritual experiences to the last. An old Christian being once asked if he grew in goodness, answered, Yes, doubtless I do; for God has said, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree," Psalm 92:12-14, (now the palm tree never loses its leaf or fruit, says Pliny); "he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who 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." A fellow to this promise, Isaiah mentions, "Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all you who remain of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age

and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you."
Isaiah 46:3-4

There is nothing more commendable in fullness of age—than fullness of knowledge and experience. Nor is there anything more honorable—than to see ancient Christians very much acquainted with the Ancient of days, Dan. 7:9, 13-22.

It is a brave sight to see ancient Christians like the almond tree. Now the almond tree does flourish and is full of blossoms in the winter of old age; for as Pliny tells us, the almond tree does blossom in the month of January. Experimental religion is far beyond mere notions and impressions. A **sanctified heart is better than a silver tongue**. No man so rich, so honorable, so happy as the old disciple, who is rich in spiritual experiences; and yet there is no Christian so rich in his experiences but he would be richer.

As Julianus said, that when he had one foot in the grave, he would have the other in the school; so, though an old disciple has one foot in the grave, yet he will have the other in Christ's school, that he may still be treasuring up more and more divine experiences. And by this also you see what an honor it is to be an old disciple, etc.

Particular 5. An old disciple is very stout, courageous, firm, and fixed in his resolution. An old Christian is like a pillar, a rock; nothing can move him, nothing can shake him, "My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. He alone is my rock

and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken." Psalm 62:1-2 What is sucked in in infancy—will abide in old age. Old soldiers are stout and courageous; nothing can daunt nor discourage them. When Joshua was a hundred and ten years old, oh how courageous and resolute was he! Joshua 24:15, 29, "But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. Soon after this, Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110."

Ah! none so courageous, none so divinely fearless, none so careless in evil days—as ancient Christians. An old Christian knows that that good will do him no good—which is not made good by perseverance; his resolution is like that of Gonsalvo, who protested to his soldiers, showing them Naples, that he had rather die one foot forwards, than to have his life secured for long, by one foot of retreat. Shall such a man as I am flee? said undaunted Nehemiah, chapter 6:11. He will courageously venture life and limb—rather than by one foot of retreat, discredit profession with the reproach of fearfulness. It was a brave, magnanimous speech of Luther, when dangers from opposers did threaten him and his associates, *Come, says he, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm, and then let them do their worst.*

When Polycarpus was eighty-six years old, he suffered martyrdom courageously, resolutely, and undauntedly.

When one of the ancient martyrs was very much threatened by his persecutors, he replied, *There is nothing of things visible, and nothing of things invisible—which I fear. I will stand to my profession of the name of Christ, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints—come what will.*

Old disciples, old soldiers of Christ—have the heart and courage of Shammah, one of David's worthies, who stood and defended the field when all the rest fled, 2 Sam. 23:11-12. The Hebrews call a young man *Nagnar*, which springs from a root that signifies to *shake off*, or to *be tossed to and fro*, to note how fickle and how *constant in inconstancy* young men are, Mat. 19:20-22. They usually are either of no resolution for good, or of weak resolution; they are too often won with a nut, and lost with an apple. But now, aged Christians in all earthquakes—they stand fast, "like mount Zion, which cannot be removed." And by this also you may see what an honor it is to be an old disciple, an old Christian.

Particular 6. An old disciple, an old Christian, is prepared for death; he has been long a-dying to sin, to the world, to friends, to self, to relations, to all—and no man so prepared to die as he who thus daily dies.

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done." Revelation 22:12

An old disciple has lived sincerely to Christ, he has lived eminently to Christ, he has lived in all conditions, and under all changes, to

Christ; he has lived exemplarily to Christ, he has lived long to Christ—and therefore the more prepared to die and be with Christ. An old disciple has a crown in his eye, a pardon in his bosom, and a Christ in his arms—and therefore may sweetly sing it out with old Simeon, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace," Luke 2:29. As Hilary said to his soul, *Soul, you have served Christ this seventy years, and are you afraid of death? Go out, soul, go out.*

"Many a day," said old Cowper, "have I sought death with tears, not out of impatience, distrust, or perturbation—but because I am weary of sin, and fearful to fall into it." Nazianzen calls upon the king of terrors, *Devour me! Devour me!* And Austin, when old, could say, *Shall I ever die? Or shall I die at all? Yes. Why, then, Lord, if ever—why not now?* So when Modestus, the emperor's lieutenant, threatened to kill holy Basil, he answered, *If that is all, I fear not; yes, your master cannot more pleasure me than in sending me unto my heavenly Father, to whom I now live, and to whom I desire to hasten.*

Said old Stephen Martial a little before his death—*I have not so lived that I should now be afraid to die; but this I can say, I have so learned Christ that I am not afraid to die.* Old Christians are made no more worried to die—than to dine. It is nothing to die when the Comforter stands by, Isaiah 57:1-2.

Old disciples know that to die is but to lie down in their beds; they know that their dying day is better than their birthday; and this

made Solomon to prefer his coffin before his crown; the day of his dissolution before the day of his coronation, Eccles.7:1.

The ancients were accustomed to call the days of their death *Natalia*, not dying days—but *birthdays*.

The Jews to this day, call their graves—the houses or places of the living. Old Christians know that death is but an entrance into life; it is but a Passover, a jubilee; it is but the Lord's gentleman-usher to conduct them to heaven; and this prepares them to die, and makes death more desirable than life. By this you may see that it is an honor to be an old disciple.

Particular 7. An old disciple, an old Christian, shall have a great reward in heaven.

Old Christians have done much and suffered much for Christ; and the more any man does or suffers for Christ here—the more glory he shall have hereafter. It was the saying of an old disciple upon his dying bed, "He is come, he is come"—meaning the Lord—"with a great reward for a little work." Agrippa having suffered imprisonment for wishing Caius emperor, the first thing Caius did when he came to the empire, was to advance Agrippa to a kingdom; he gave him also a chain of gold, as heavy as the chain of iron that was upon him in prison. And will not Christ richly reward all his suffering saints? Surely he will! Christ will at last pay a Christian for every prayer he has made, for every sermon he has heard, for every tear he has shed, for every morsel he has given, for every burden he

has borne, for every battle he has fought, for every enemy he has slain, and for every temptation that he has overcome.

Cyrus, in a great expedition against his enemies, the better to encourage his soldiers to fight, in an oration that he made at the head of his army, promised upon the victory, to make every foot-soldier a horseman, and every horseman a commander, and that no officer that did valiantly should be unrewarded. But what are the rewards of Cyrus compared to the rewards that Christ our General promises to his soldiers? Rev. 3:21, "To him that overcomes, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and have sat down with my Father in his throne." As there is no King compared to Christ, so there are no rewards to Christ's rewards. His rewards are the greatest rewards. He gives kingdoms, crowns, thrones! He gives grace and glory! Psalm 84:11.

It is said of Araunab, renowned for his bounty, that he had only a subject's purse--but a king's heart. But Jesus Christ has a king's purse as well as a king's heart--and accordingly He gives!

And as Christ's rewards are the greatest rewards, so his rewards are the surest rewards: "He is faithful, who has promised," 1 Thes. 5:24.

Antiochus promised often—but seldom gave; upon which he was called, in way of derision, *a great promiser*. But Jesus Christ never made any promise—but he has or will perform it, 2 Cor. 1:20, nay, he is often better than his word, 1 Cor. 2:9, he gives many times more than we ask. The man sick of the palsy asked but health, and Christ

gave him health and a pardon to boot, Mat.9:2. Solomon desired but wisdom, and the Lord gave him wisdom, and honor, and riches, and the favor of creatures, as paper and pack-thread into the bargain, 2 Chron. 1:10-15. Jacob asked him but clothes to wear, and bread to eat, and the Lord gave him these things, and riches, and other mercies into the bargain.

Christ does not measure his gifts by our petitions—but by his own riches and mercies. Gracious souls many times receive many gifts and favors from God that they never dreamt of, nor dared presume to beg, which others extremely strive after and go without.

The prodigal desires no more but the place of a hired servant—but he is entertained as a son, he is clad with the best robe, and fed with the fatted calf, he has a ring for his hand, and shoes for his feet, rich supplies more than he deserved, Luke 15:19-25. Jacob's sons, in a time of famine, desired only grain, and they return with grain and money in their sacks, and with good news too—Joseph is alive, and governor of all Egypt, Gen. 42.

The rewards which men give are like themselves--fickle and inconstant, they are withering and fading. As Christ's rewards are greater and surer than other rewards--so they are more durable and lasting than other rewards. The kingdom which He gives is a kingdom that can never be shaken; the treasures which He gives are incorruptible treasures; and the glory that He gives is glory which never fades away!

Xerxes crowned his statesman in the morning—and beheaded him in the evening of the same day!

And Andronicus, the Greek emperor, crowned his admiral in the morning, and then took off his head in the afternoon!

Rossensis requested that a cardinal's hat be sent him—but his head was cut off before it came to him. Most may say of their crowns as that king said of his, O crown! more *noble* than *happy*. It was a just complaint which long ago was made against the heathen gods—they could give their favorites great gifts—but they could not maintain them in the possession of them. The world may give you great things—but the world cannot maintain you in the possession of them; but the great things, the great rewards that Christ gives his people—he will forever maintain them in the possession of them, otherwise heaven would not be heaven, glory would not be glory. Now by all these things you see that it is a very great honor to be an old disciple, an old Christian; and this honor you will never attain to, except you begin to be really godly early, except in the morning of your youth you return to the Lord, and get a saving interest in him.

I shall now come to make some **USE** and **APPLICATION** of this weighty truth to ourselves.

You see, beloved, that it is the great duty and concernment of young men to be really godly early. If this be so, then,

Use 1. First, ***This truth looks sourly and sadly upon such young men who are only seemingly good, who make some shows of goodness—but are not right towards God at the root.***

As Joash, when he was young, he seemed to have good things in him towards the Lord, while godly Jehoiada lived; but when Jehoiada was dead, Joash's goodness was buried with him, 2 Chron. 24:1-6, 13-16.

Ah! how many in these days, that have been seemingly good, have turned to be nothing, very nothing, yes, stark nothing!

It is said of Tiberius, that while Augustus ruled, he was no ways tainted in his reputation; and that, while Drusus and Germanicus were alive, he feigned those virtues which he had not, to maintain a good opinion of himself in the hearts of the people; but after he had got himself out of public sight, there was nothing in which he was not faulty, no crime to which he was not accessory.

Oh! that this were not applicable to many young people in these days, who have made great shows and taken upon them a great name, who have begun to outshine the stars—but are now gone out like so many candles which had burned out—to the dishonor of God, the reproach of the gospel, the grief of others, and the hazard of their own souls.

It was a custom of old, when any was baptized, the minister delivered a white garment to be put on, saying, *Take this white vestment, and*

see you bring it forth without spot at the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ; whereupon one Maritta baptizing one Elpidophorus, who, when he was grown up, proved a profane wretch, he brings forth the white garment, and holding it up, shakes it against him, saying, This linen garment, Elpidophorus, shall accuse you at the coming of Christ, which I have kept by me as a witness of your apostasy.

Ah! young men and women, your former professions will be a sad witness against you in the great day of our Lord Jesus, except you repent and return in good earnest to the Lord, Proverbs 14:14.

Oh! it had been better that you had never made profession, that you had never set your faces towards heaven, that you had never pretended to love God and Christ, that you had never known the way of righteousness; than, after you have known it, to turn from the holy commandment.

Cyprian, in his sermon *de lapsis*, reports of many who, forsaking the faith, were given over to evil spirits and died fearfully.

Oh! the delusions and the Christ-dethroning, conscience-wasting, and soul-undoing opinions and principles that many young ones, who once were hopeful ones—are given up to! That dreadful scripture seems to be made good in power upon them: "O Lord, the hope of Israel—all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the Lord, the spring of living water." Jer. 17:13. To begin well and not to proceed, is but to aspire to a higher pitch—that the

fall may be the more desperate. *Backsliding is a wounding sin*, Hos. 4:14. You read of no armor for the back, though you do for the chest, Eph.6:11-18. He who is but *seemingly good* will prove at last *exceeding bad*. 2 Tim. 3:13, "They wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

The wolf, though he often disguises and closely hides his nature, yet he will one time or other show himself to be a wolf.

In the days of Hadrian the emperor, there was one *Ben-cosbi*, who, gathering a multitude of Jews together, called himself *Ben-cocuba*—the son of a star, applying that prophecy to himself, Num. 23:17; but his mask was taken off, his hypocrisy discovered, and he found to be *Bar-chosaba*—the son of a lie. This age has afforded many such monsters—but their folly is discovered, and their practices abhorred. This was the young man's commendation in the text, "That there was found in him some real good towards the Lord."

Use 2. This truth looks sourly and sadly upon such young men who are so far from having good things in them towards the Lord—that they give themselves up to those youthful lusts and vanities which are dishonoring, provoking, and displeasing to the Lord—who roar and revel, and gad, and game, and dice, and drink, and carouse, and what not. These make work with a witness for repentance, or hell, or the physician of souls.

I shall but touch upon **the evils of youth** in the next chapter, and then come to my main point.

Chapter 3.

The Evils of Youth

Evil 1. The first evil which mostly attends youth, is PRIDE.

Pride of heart, pride of apparel, pride of parts, 1 Tim. 3:6. Young men are apt to be proud of health, strength, friends, relations, wit, wealth, wisdom. Two things are very rare: the one is, to see a young man humble and watchful; and the other is, to see an old man contented and cheerful.

Bernard says, that pride is the *rich* man's delusion, and experience every day speaks out pride to be the *young* man's delusion. *God, said one, had three sons—Lucifer, Adam, and Christ; the first aspired to be like God in power, and was therefore thrown down from heaven; the second to be like him in knowledge, and was therefore deservedly driven out of Eden when young; the third did altogether*

imitate and follow Him in his goodness, mercy, and humility, and by so doing obtained everlasting inheritance.

Remember this, young men, and as you would get a paradise, and keep a paradise—get humble, and keep humble. Pride is an evil that puts men upon all manner of evil. Accius the poet, though he were a dwarf, yet would be pictured tall of stature.

Psaphon, a proud Lybian, would needs be a god, and having caught some parrots, he taught them to speak and prattle: *'The great god Psaphon!'*

Menecrates, a proud physician, wrote thus to king Philip: *Menecrates is a god, to Philip a king.*

Proud Simon in Lucian, having got a little wealth, changed his name from Simon to Simonides, for that there were so many beggars of his kin; and set the house on fire wherein he was born, that nobody should see it.

What sad evils Pharaoh's pride, and Haman's pride, and Herod's pride, and Belshazzar's pride, put them upon, I shall not now mention.

Ah! young men, young men, had others a window to look into your breasts, or did your hearts stand where your faces do, you would even be afraid of yourselves, you would loathe and abhor yourselves.

Ah! young men, young men, as you would have God to keep house with you, as you would have his mind and secrets made known to you, as you would have Christ to delight in you, and the Spirit to dwell in you, as you would be honored among saints, and attended and guarded by angels—get humble, and keep humble!

Tertullian's counsel to the young converts of those times was excellent: "Clothe yourselves," said he, "with the silk of piety, with the satin of sanctity, and with the purple of modesty; so shall you have God himself to be your suitor."

Evil 2. The second evil that youth is subject to is, sensual PLEASURES and delights.

"Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see; *but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment!*" Ecclesiastes 11:9. The wise man, by an *ironical concession*, bids him to be happy, etc., sin, etc. *You are willful, and resolved upon taking your pleasure—go on, take your fill.* This he speaks by way of mockage and bitter scoff, etc. "*But know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment!*"

So "Samson threw a party at Timnah, as was the custom of the day." Judges 14:10. The hearts of young men usually are much given up to pleasure. I have read of a young man, who was very much given up to pleasures; he standing by the godly Ambrose, and seeing his

excellent death, turned to other young men by him, and said, "Oh, that I might live with you, and die with him."

Sensual pleasures are like to those locusts, Rev.9:7, the crowns upon whose heads are said to be only as it were such, or such in appearance, and *like gold*. Buy in verse 10, it is said there were—not as it were—but really—*stings in their tails*.

Sensual pleasures are but seeming and appearing pleasures—but the pains which attend them are true and real. He who delights in sensual pleasures, shall find his greatest pleasures become his bitterest pains.

The heathens looked upon the back parts of pleasure, and saw it going away from them, and leaving a sting behind.

Pleasures pass away as soon as they have wearied out the body, and leave it as a bunch of grapes whose juice has been pressed out; which made one to say, *I see no greater pleasure in this world than the contempt of pleasure*.

Julian, though an apostate, yet professed that the pleasures of the body were far below a noble man; and Tully says, he is not worthy of the name of *man*—who would entirely spend one whole day in pleasures. It is better not to desire pleasures, than to enjoy them. "I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?"

Ecclesiastes 2:1-2. The interrogation bids a challenge to all the masters of mirth, to produce any one satisfactory fruit which it affords, if they could.

Xerxes, being weary of all pleasures, promised rewards to the inventors of new pleasures, which being invented, he nevertheless remained unsatisfied. As a bee flies from flower to flower and is not satisfied, and as a sick man moves from one bed to another, from one seat to another, from one chamber to another for ease, and finds none; so men given up to sensual pleasures go from one pleasure to another—but can find no contentment, no satisfaction in their pleasures. "Everything is so weary and tiresome! No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content!" Eccles. 1:8. There is a *curse of unsatisfiability*, which lies upon the creature. Honors cannot satisfy the ambitious man, nor riches the covetous man, nor pleasures the voluptuous man. Man cannot take off the weariness of one pleasure by another, for after a few evaporated minutes are spent in pleasures, the body presently fails the mind, and the mind the desire, and the desire the satisfaction, and all the man.

Pleasures seem **solid** in the pursuit; but are mere **clouds** in the enjoyment.

Pleasure is a beautiful harlot sitting in her chariot—The four WHEELS are pride, gluttony, lust, and foolishness. The two HORSES are prosperity and abundance. The two DRIVERS are idleness and

security. Her ATTENDANTS and followers are guilt, grief, shame, and often death and damnation!

Many great men, and many strong men, and many rich men, and many hopeful men, and many young men, have come to their damnation by her; but never any enjoyed full satisfaction and contentment in her. Ah! young men, young men, **avoid this harlot, 'pleasure'**—and come not near the door of her house!

And as for LAWFUL pleasures, let me only say this--it is your wisdom only to *touch* them, to *taste* them, and to use them as you use *medicines*--to occasionally fortify yourselves against maladies.

When Roger Ascham asked Lady Jane Grey how she could forego such pleasurable pastimes, she smilingly answered, *All the sport in the park is but a shadow of that pleasure I find in this book*—having a good book in her hand.

Augustine, before his conversion, could not live without those pleasures which he delighted much in. But after his nature was changed, and his heart graciously turned to the Lord, he said, "Oh! how sweet is it to be without those sweet delights!"

Ah! young men, when once you come to experience the goodness and sweetness that is in the Lord, and in his word and ways, you will then sit down and grieve that you have put more wine in the cup of pleasure, than oil in the lamp of holiness.

There are no pleasures so delighting, so satisfying, so ravishing, so engaging, and so abiding--as those which spring from union and communion with God--as those which flow from a from a humble and holy walking with God!

Evil 3. The third sin of youth is RASHNESS.

They many times know little and fear less, and so are apt rashly to run on, and run out often to their hurt—but more often to their hazard. "Exhort young men to be sober-minded or discreet," Titus 2:6. They are apt to be rash, to be Hotspurs. As you may see in Rehoboam's young counselors, who counseled him to tell the people, 1 Kings 12:8-11, who groaned under their burdens, that "his little finger was thicker than his father's loins, and that he would add to their yoke; and that whereas his father had chastised them with whips, he would chastise them with scorpions." This rash counsel proved Rehoboam's ruin; yes, David himself, though a godly man, yet being in his warm blood and young, how sadly was he overtaken with rashness! "For I swear by the Lord, the God of Israel, who has kept me from hurting you, that if you had not hurried out to meet me, not one of Nabal's men would be alive tomorrow morning." 1 Samuel 25:34. And this he binds with an oath. Because the master was foolishly wilful, the innocent servants must all be harmed; and because Nabal had been niggardly of his bread, David would be prodigal of his blood.

Ah! how unlike a Christian, yes, how below a man does David carry it when his blood is boiling, and he is a captive to rashness and passion! Rashness will admit of nothing for reason—but what unreasonable SELF shall dictate for reason. As sloth seldom brings actions to good birth, so rashness makes them always abortive before well formed. A rash spirit is an ungodlike spirit; a rash spirit is a weak spirit, it is a harmful spirit. "A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit," or as the Hebrew will bear, is of a cool spirit, not rash and hot, ready at every turn to put out his soul in wrath, Proverbs 17:27. Rashness unmans a man, it will put a man upon things below manhood. Erostratus, an obscure base fellow, did in one night by fire destroy the temple of Diana at Ephesus, which was two hundred and twenty years in building, by all Asia, at the cost of so many princes, and beautified with the labors and cunning of so many excellent workmen. The truth is, there would be no end were I to discover the many sad and great evils that are ushered into the world by that one evil, **rashness**, which usually attends youth, etc.; and therefore, young men, decline it, and arm yourselves against it, etc.

Evil 4. The fourth sin that ordinarily attends on youth is, Mocking and scoffing at pious men and pious things.

They were young ones that scoffingly and scornfully said to the prophet, "Go up, you bald-head; go up, you bald-head," 2 Kings 2:23-24. And the young men derided and mocked Job: "But now those who are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would

have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock. Upon my right hand rise the youth; they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction," etc., Job. 30:1, 12-15. And oh! that this age did not afford many such monsters, who are notable, who are infamous in this black art of scoffing and deriding the people of God, and the ways of God!

The Athenians once scoffed at Sylla's wife, and it had well near cost the destruction of their city, he was so provoked with the indignity; and will you think it safe to scoff at the people of God, who are the spouse of Christ, who are as the apple of his eye, who are the signet on his right hand, his portion, his pleasant portion, his inheritance, his jewels, his royal diadem? Ah! young men, young men! will you seriously consider how sadly and sorely he has punished other scoffers and mockers, and by his judgments on them, be warned never more to scoff at the people of God or his ways?

Julian the emperor was a great scoffer of Christians; but at last he was struck with an arrow from heaven, that made him cry out—*O Galilean*, meaning our Savior Christ, *you have overcome me*. Felix, for one malicious scoff, did nothing day and night but vomit blood, until his unhappy soul was separated from his wretched body. Pherecydes was consumed by worms alive, for giving religion but a nickname. Lucian, for barking against religion like a dog, was, by the just judgment of God, devoured by dogs. Remember these dreadful judgments of God on scoffers, and if you like them, then mock on,

scoff on; but know, that justice will at last be even with you, nay, above you.

Evil 5. The fifth and last evil that I shall mention that attends and waits on youth is, LUSTFULNESS and sexual immorality.

Which occasioned aged Paul to caution his young Timothy to "flee youthful lusts," 2 Tim. 2:22. Timothy was a chaste and chastened piece; he was much sanctified and mortified; his graces were high, and corruptions low; he walked up and down this world with dying thoughts, and with a weak, distempered, declining, dying body; his heart was in heaven, and his foot in the grave; and yet youth is such a slippery age, that Paul commands him to flee, to run from, youthful lusts. Though Timothy was a godly man, a weak, sickly man, a marvelous temperate man, drinking water rather than wine, yet he was but a man, yes, a young man; and therefore Paul's counsel and command is, that he "flee youthful lusts."

And Solomon, who had sadly experienced the slipperiness of youth, gives this counsel: "Put away the evils of your flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity, "Eccles. 11:10. He was a young man that followed the harlot to her house; he was young in years, and young in knowledge, Proverbs 7:7-11, etc. Salazer says upon the words: That was a happy age which afforded but one simple young man among many, whereas late times afford greater store. Ah! too many of the

youths of this age, instead of flying from youthful lusts, they eagerly pursue after youthful lusts.

Chrysostom, speaking of youth, says, it is hard to be ruled, easy to be drawn away, apt to be deceived, and standing in need of very strict reins.

The ancients did picture youth like a young man naked, with a veil over his face; his right hand bound behind him, his left hand loose, and Time behind him pulling one thread out of his veil every day; intimating that young men are void of knowledge, and blind, unfit to do good, ready to do evil; until time, by little and little, makes them wiser. Well! young man, remember this, that the least sparklings and kindlings of lusts will, first or last, cost you groans and griefs, tears and terrors enough.

These five are the sins that usually are waiting and attending on youth; but from these the young man in the text was by grace preserved and secured, which is more than I dare affirm of all into whose hand this treatise shall fall. But though these five are the sins of youth—yet they are not all the sins of youth; for youth is capable of and subject to all other sins whatever; but these are the special sins that most usually wait and attend on young men when they are in the spring and morning of their youth.

Chapter 4

An Exhortation to All Young People

I shall now hasten to the main *use* that I intend to dwell upon, and that is as **an EXHORTATION to all young people**.

Ah, sirs! as you regard the glory of God, the good of your bodies, the joy of your Christian friends, and the salvation of your own souls—be exhorted and persuaded to be really godly early. It was the praise and honor of Abijah, that there was found in him some good thing towards the Lord in the primrose of his childhood.

Oh! that it might be your honor and happiness to be really godly early, that it might be to you a praise and a name, that in the morning of your youth you have begun to seek the Lord, and to know and love the Lord, and to get a saving interest and propriety in the Lord. Now that this exhortation may stick and take, I beseech you seriously to weigh and ponder these following motives or considerations:

Motive (1). First consider, ***It is an honor to be godly early***. A young saint is like the morning star; he is like a diamond in a gold ring. It is mentioned as a singular honor to the believing Jews, that

they first trusted in Christ; "that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ," Eph. 1:12. This was their praise, their crown, that they were first converted and turned to Christ and Christianity. So Paul, mentioning Andronicus and Junia, does not omit this circumstance of praise and honor, that they were in Christ "before him," Romans 16:7. "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me."

And so it was the honor of the house of Stephanas, that they were the first-fruits of Achaia, 1 Cor. 16:15. It was their glory that they were the first that received and welcomed the gospel in Achaia. It is a greater honor for a young man to outwrestle sin, Satan, temptation, the world, and lust, than ever Alexander the Great could attain unto. It was Judah his praise and honor, that they were first in fetching home David their king, 2 Sam. 19:15.

Ah, young men and women! it will be your eternal praise and honor if you shall be before others, if you shall be the first among many, who shall know the Lord and seek the Lord; who shall receive the Lord, and embrace him; who shall cleave to the Lord, and serve him; who shall honor the Lord, and obey him; who shall delight in the Lord, and walk with him.

The Romans built *Virtue's* and *Honor's* temple close together, to show that the way to honor was by virtue; and, indeed, there is no crown compared to that which godliness sets upon a man's head: all

other honor is fading and withering. *Adoni-bezek*, a mighty prince, is suddenly made live with with the dogs, Judges 1:7; and *Nebuchadnezzar*, a mighty conqueror, turned a-grazing among the oxen, Dan. 4:28; and *Herod*, reduced from a conceited god to be the most loathsome of men, living carrion, arrested by the vilest of creatures, upon the wish of his affronted Creator, Acts 12:23; and *Haman*, feasted with the king one day, and made a feast for crows the next, Esther. 7:10. I might tell you of *Bajazet* and *Belisarius*, two of the greatest commanders in the world, and many others, who have suddenly fallen from the top of worldly honor and felicity, into the greatest contempt and misery—but I shall not at this time. But that honor that arises from men's being gracious early, is such honor that the world can neither give nor take; it is honor, it is a crown that will still be green and flourishing; it is honor that will bed and board with a man, that will abide with a man under all trials and changes, that will go to the grave, that will go to heaven with a man.

Ah, sirs! it is no small honor to you, who are in the spring and morning of your days, that the Lord has left upon record several instances of his love and delight in young men. He chose *David*, a younger brother, and passes by his elder brothers, 1 Sam. 16:11-13; he frowns upon *Esau*, and passes by his door, and sets his love and delight upon *Jacob* the younger brother, Romans 9:12-13; he kindly and lovingly accepts of *Abel's* person and sacrifice, and rejects both *Cain's* person and sacrifice, though he was the elder brother, Gen. 4:3-6. Among all the disciples, *John* was the youngest and the most and best beloved, John 13:23. There was but one "young man" that

came to Christ, and he came not aright, Mark 10:19-21; and all the good that was in him was but some moral good, and yet Christ loved him with a love of pity and compassion. The Greek word signifies, to speak friendly and deal gently with one; and so did Christ with him, all which should exceedingly encourage young men to be godly early, to be gracious in the morning of their youth. No way to true honor like this—but,

*Motive (2). Secondly, consider, **Christ loved poor sinners and gave himself for them, when he was in the prime of his age (being supposed to be about thirty-three), and will you put him off with the worst of your time?***

Ah! young men, young men, Christ gave himself up to death, he made himself an offering for your sins, for your sakes, when he was in the prime and flower of his age. Why then should you put off Christ to your old age? Did he die *for* sin in the prime of his age? and will not you die *to* sin in the prime of your age? Did he offer himself for you in the spring and morning of his years? and will not you offer up yourselves to him in the spring and morning of your years? Romans 12:1-2. Oh give Christ no cause to say, *"I died for you early—but you have not lived to me early. I was early in my suffering for you—but you have not been early in your returning to me. I made haste to complete your redemption—but you have made no haste to make sure your vocation and election, 2 Pet. 1:10. I stayed not, I lingered not—but soon suffered what I was to suffer, and quickly did what was to be done for your eternal welfare—but you have*

stayed and lingered, like Lot in Sodom, Gen. 19:16, and have not done what you might have done in order to your everlasting good. In the primrose of my days, I sweat for you, I wept for you, I bled for you, I hung on the cross for you, I bore the wrath of my Father for you—but you have not in the primrose of your days sweat under the sense of divine displeasure, nor wept over your sins, nor mourned over me, whom you have so often grieved and pierced, Zech. 12:10. I could not be quiet nor satisfied until I had put you into a capacity, into a possibility of salvation, and yet you are well enough quieted and satisfied, though you do not know whether ever you shall be saved."

Ah, sirs! how sad would it be with you, if Jesus Christ should secretly thus expostulate with your consciences in this your day. Oh! how terrible would it be with you, if Christ should thus visibly plead against you in his great day.

Ah! young men, young men and women, who have souls much left of God, blinded by Satan, and hardened in sin, 2 Cor. 3, 4, can hear Jesus Christ speaking thus to them: *"I suffered for sinners early, I laid down a ransom for souls early, I pacified my Father's wrath early, I satisfied my Father's justice early, I merited grace and mercy for sinners early, I brought in an everlasting righteousness upon the world early, etc."* I say, who can hear Jesus Christ speaking thus, and his heart not fall in love and league with Christ, and his soul not unite to Christ and resign to Christ, and cleave to Christ, and forever be one with Christ—except it be such that are forever left by

Christ? Well, remember this—**the more vile Christ made himself for us, the more dear he ought to be unto us.**

Ah! young men, remember this, when Christ was young, he was tempted and tried; when he was in the morning of his days, his wounds were deep, his burden weighty, his cup bitter, his suffering painful, his agony and torment above conception, beyond expression; when he was young, that blessed **head** of his was crowned with thorns; and those **eyes** of his, which were purer than the sun, were put out by the darkness of death; and those **ears** of his which now hear nothing but hallelujahs of saints and angels, were filled with the blasphemies of the multitude; and that blessed beautiful **face** of his, which was fairer than the sons of men, was spit on by beastly filthy wretches; and that gracious **mouth** and tongue, which spoke as never any man spoke, was slandered and accused of blasphemy; and those **hands** of his, which healed the sick, which gave out pardons, which swayed a scepter in heaven and another on earth, were nailed to the cross; and those **feet**, which were beautiful upon the mountains, which brought the glad tidings of peace and salvation into the world, and which were like unto fine brass, were also nailed to the cross. All these great and sad things did Jesus Christ suffer for you in the prime and flower of his days, and oh! what an unspeakable provocation should this be to all young ones, to give up themselves early to Christ, to serve, love, honor, and obey him early, even in the spring and morning of their youth.

Let the thoughts of a crucified Christ, says one, be never out of your mind, let them be food and drink unto you, let them be your sweetness and consolation, your honey and your desire, your reading and your meditation, your life, death, and resurrection.

Motive (3). The third motive or consideration to provoke you to begin to be godly early, is this, namely, ***That it is the best and choicest way in the world—to be rich in gracious experiences early—which are the best riches in all the world.*** As he who sets up for himself early is in the most hopeful way to be rich early, so he who is godly in good earnest early, he is in the ready way, the highway of being rich in grace and rich in goodness. They usually prove men of great insight and great experience. God loves to show these his "beauty and his glory in his sanctuary." He delights to cause "his glory and his goodness to pass before" such. These shall find all his "paths drop marrow and fatness." For these "the Lord Almighty will make a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." These shall have all kinds of "pleasant fruits" laid up "at their gates for their well-beloved." None have so many choice pledges of Christ's love, nor so many sweet kisses of Christ's mouth, nor so many embraces in Christ's arms—as those souls which are godly early.

Oh the grace, the goodness, the sweetness, the fatness that Christ is still a-dropping into their hearts! Christ will make their hearts his largest treasury, he will lay up most of his heavenly treasure in their

souls. There he will store up mercies new and old; there he will treasure up all plenty, rarity, and variety; there he will lay up all that heart can wish or need require. Oh the many drops of myrrh which fall from Christ's fingers upon their hearts! Oh the many secrets that Christ reveals in their ears! Oh the many love-letters that Christ sends to these! Oh the many visits that he gives to these! Oh the turns, the walks, that he has in paradise with these! There are none in the world for experience and intelligence, compared to these. Ah! young men, young men, as you would be rich in the best riches, begin to be godly early! As there is no riches to spiritual riches, so there is no way to be rich in these riches—but by beginning to be godly, in good earnest, early.

As for worldly riches, the godly have always despised them, and preferred a contemplative life above them! The prophet calls them "thick clay," which will sooner break the back than lighten the heart; they cannot better the soul, they cannot enrich the soul, Hab. 2:6. Ah! how many threadbare souls are to be found under silken cloaks and gowns! How often are worldly riches like hangmen, they hide men's faces with a covering, that they may not see their own end, and then they hang them! And if they do not hang you, they will shortly leave you, they "make themselves wings and fly away!" Proverbs 23:5. When one was a-commending the riches and wealth of merchants, I do not love that wealth, said a heathen, that hangs upon ropes; if they break, the ship miscarries, and all is lost. *He is rich enough, says Jerome, who lacks not bread, and high enough in dignity that is not forced to serve.*

"This world's wealth, that men so much desire,
May well be likened to a burning fire,
Whereof a little can do little harm,
But profit much our bodies well to warm;
But take too much, and surely you shall burn;
So too much wealth, to too much woe does turn."

It was an excellent saying of Lewis of Bauyer, emperor of Germany, Such goods are worth getting and owning—as will not sink or wash away if a shipwreck happens—but will wade and swim out with us. We see such are the spiritual riches that will attend those who, in the spring and morning of their youth, shall know the Lord and serve the Lord, and get an interest in the Lord; and thus much for the third motive.

Motive (4). The fourth motive to provoke young ones to be really godly early is, to consider that ***The present time, the present day, is the only season that you are sure of.***

Time **past** cannot be recalled, and **time to come** cannot be ascertained: "*Today*, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts," Heb. 3:15; "Behold, *now* is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. 6:2. Some there are who trifle away their time, and fool away their souls and their eternal salvation. To prevent this, the apostle beats upon the present opportunity, because if that be once past, there is no recovering of it. Therefore, as the mariner takes the first fair wind to sail, and as the merchant takes his first opportunity

of buying and selling, and as the farmer takes the first opportunity of sowing and reaping—so should young men take the present season, the present day, which is their day, to be godly towards the Lord, to seek him and serve him, and not to put off the present season, for they know not what another day, another hour, another moment, may bring forth.

That *door of grace* which is open today may be shut tomorrow; that *golden scepter of mercy* which is held forth in the gospel this day may be taken in the next day; that love that this hour is upon the bare knee entreating and beseeching young men to break off their sins by repentance, "to return to the Lord, to lay hold on his strength, and be at peace with him," may the next hour be turned into wrath, Isaiah 27:4-5.

Ah! the noble motions that have been lost, the good purposes that have withered, the immortal souls that have miscarried—by putting off the present season, the present day. Paul discoursing before Felix of righteousness and temperance and judgment to come, Acts 24:25, and in this discourse striking at two special vices that Felix was particularly guilty of, he falls a-trembling, and being upon the rack to hear such doctrine, he bids Paul "depart for that time, and he would call for him at a convenient season." Here Felix neglects his present season, and we never read that ever after this he found a convenient time or season to hear Paul make an end of the subject he had begun. So Christ made a very fair offer to the young man in the Gospel, "Go and sell that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have

treasure in heaven," Mat. 19:21-24. Here Christ offers heavenly treasures for earthly treasures, unmixed treasures for mixed treasures, perfect treasures for imperfect treasures, satisfying treasures for unsatisfying treasures, lasting treasures for fading treasures; but the young man slips his opportunity, his season, and goes away sorrowful, and we never read more of him.

Ah! young men, young men, do not put off the present season, do not neglect the present day. There is no time yours but the present time, no day yours but the present day; and therefore do not deceive yourselves and feed yourselves with *hopes of time to come*, and that you will repent—but not yet; and lay hold on mercy—but not yet; and give up yourselves to the Lord next week, next month, or next year, for that God that has promised you mercy and favor upon the day of your return, he has not promised to prolong your lives until that day comes.

Ah! young men, young men, you say you will become godly before you die—but if you are not godly today, you may die tomorrow, nay, justice may leave him to be his own executioner tomorrow, who will not repent, nor seek the Lord today.

I have read of a certain young man, who, being admonished of the evil of his way and course, and pressed to leave his wickedness by the consideration of death, judgment, and eternity that was a-coming, he answered, '*Why do you tell me of these things? I will do well enough; for when death comes, I will speak but three words, and all*

will be fine.' And so still he went on in his sinful ways—but one day while on horseback, coming to a bridge, to go over a deep water, the horse stumbled, and he let go the bridle, and gave up himself and horse to the waters, and was heard to say these three words, *Devil take all!* Here was three dreadful words indeed, and an example, with a witness, for all young men to beware, who think to repent with a three-word repentance at last.

Otho, the emperor, slew himself with his own hands—but slept so soundly the night before, that the grooms of his chamber heard him snore.

Young men, I will suppose you to be good accountants; now if you please to count the number and mark the age of the sacrifices in the Old Testament, you shall find more kids and lambs offered, than goats and old sheep. You have no lease of your lives, you are not sure that you shall live to Isaac's age, to live until your eyes wax dim, Gen. 27:1; you are not sure that you shall live to Jacob's years, and die leaning upon the top of a staff, Heb. 11:21. You read of those who "die in their youth, and whose lives are among the unclean," Job 36:14. Do not the present season slip away, neglect not this day of grace, let not Satan keep your souls and Christ any longer asunder, by telling of you that you are too young, that hereafter will be time enough. Austin tells us, that by this very temptation the devil kept him off from receiving of Christ, from closing with Christ seven years together; he could no sooner think of inquiring after Christ, of getting a saving interest in Christ, of leaving off his sinful courses,

etc.—but Satan would be still a-suggesting, '*You are too young to leave your drunkenness, you are too young to leave your Delilahs, to leave your harlots;*' until at last he cried out, '*Why may I not repent today? and lay hold on Jesus Christ today?*' etc. Ah! young men, this is your day, this is your season; if you will not now hearken and obey, you may perish forever.

Caesar had a letter given him by Artemidorus that morning he went to the senate, wherein notice was given him of all the conspiracy of his murderers, so that with ease he might have prevented his death—but neglecting the reading of it, was slain; he slipped his season, and dies for it. Ah! how many for slipping gracious seasons and opportunities, have died forever! Soul-opportunities are more worth than a thousand worlds; mercy is in them, grace and glory is in them, heaven and eternity is in them.

Motive (5). Fifthly, To provoke you to be godly early, consider, ***How just it is with God to reserve the dregs of his wrath for those who reserve the dregs of their days for him.***

How can a husband embrace that wife in her old age, who has spent all the time of her youth in following after strangers? Will any man receive such into his service, who has all their days served his enemies, and received such wounds, blows, and bruises, that renders them unfit for his service?

Ah! young men, young men, do not thus "foolishly and unwisely requite the Lord," Deut. 32:6, for all his patient waiting, his gracious

wooing, and his merciful dealing with you. Ah! do not put off God to old age; for old, lame, and sick sacrifices rarely reach as high as heaven. Is not old age very unteachable? in old age are not men very unable to take in, and as unable to give out? In old age, oftentimes, men are men—yet not men; they have eyes—but see not; ears—but hear not; tongues—but speak not; feet—but walk not. An aged man is but a living mortuary.

Now how unlovely, how unfitting, how unworthy, nay, how incensing, how provoking a thing must this needs be—when men will dally with God, and put him off until their senile days have overtaken them, until their *spring* is past, their *summer* overpast, and they arrived at the *fall* of the leaf, yes, until *winter* colors have stained their heads with gray and hoary hairs! How provoking this is, you may see in those sad words of Jeremiah: Jer. 22:21-22, "I spoke unto you in your prosperity; but you said, I will not hear: this has been your manner from your youth, that you obey not my voice." But will God tolerate this behavior at their hands? No! Therefore it follows in the next verse, "Surely you shall be ashamed and confounded for all your wickedness."

Oh! that young men would let this scripture lie warm every morning upon their hearts, that so they may not dare to put off God and provoke him to their own eternal misery. Though you are young and in your strength, yet are you stronger than God, can you overcome him? If you will needs be a-provoking, provoke those who are your

matches, and do not contend with him who is mightier than you, who can command you into nothing, or into hell at pleasure!

Motive (6). Sixthly, consider, ***That the sooner you are godly on earth, the greater will be your reward in heaven.***

The sooner you are gracious, the more at last you will be glorious. You read in the Scripture of a reward, of a great reward, and of a full reward. Now those who are godly early—who know, seek, serve, and love the Lord in the spring and morning of their youth, they are in the fairest way of gaining the greatest and the fullest reward.

And this I shall make clear by that which follows.

(1.) *First, **The sooner any man begins to be really godly, the more good he will do in this world.*** Now, the more good any man does on earth, the more glory he shall have in heaven. Therefore, my beloved brethren, "Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord's work, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain," 1 Cor. 15:58.

Man's wages, man's reward—shall be according to his works. He who does most work here—shall have most reward hereafter. God will at last proportion the one to the other—the reward to the work. "He who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall reap bountifully," 2 Cor. 9:6. Though no man shall be rewarded *for* his works, yet God will at last measure out happiness and blessedness to his people *according to* their service,

faithfulness, diligence, and work in this world, Romans 2:5-7. Grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace at the full; glory is nothing else but a bright constellation of graces; happiness is nothing but the quintessence of holiness. Grace and glory differ in degree, not kind. Grace and glory differ very little; the one is the seed, the other is the flower; grace is glory militant, and glory is grace triumphant; and a man may as well plead for equal degrees of grace in this world, as he may plead for equal degrees of glory in the other world. Surely the more grace here, the more glory hereafter; and the more work Christians do on earth, the more glory they shall have in heaven; and the sooner men begin to be godly, the more good they will do in this world; and the more they do here, the more they shall have hereafter. Philosophers seem to weigh our virtues with our vices, and according to the preponderation of either, denominate us godly or bad, and so deliver us up to reward or punishment.

No man can commend good works magnificently enough, says Luther, for one work of a Christian is more precious than heaven and earth; and therefore all the world cannot sufficiently reward one good work. And in another place, says the same author, If I might have my desire, I would rather choose the lowest work of a country Christian or poor maid, than all the victories and triumphs of Alexander the Great, and of Julius Caesar.

And, again, whatever the saints do, though never so small and lowly, it is great and glorious; because they do all in faith and by the word, says the same author. To prevent mistakes, you must remember, that

the works that Jesus Christ will reward at last are supernatural works: they are:

1. works of God;
2. wrought from God;
3. for God;
4. in God;
5. according to God.

They are works which flow from supernatural principles, and they are directed to supernatural ends, and performed in a supernatural way. Now the sooner a man begins to be godly, the more he will abound in these good works; and the more doubtless any man abounds in such good works on earth, the greater reward he shall have in heaven. Yet it must not be forgotten that the best actions, the best works of hypocrites, and all men out of Christ, are but *splendida peccata*, splendid and shining sins, beautiful abominations. And as the phoenix in Arabia gathers sweet odoriferous sticks together, and then blows them with her wings, and burns herself with them, so many a carnal professor burns himself with his own good works, that is, by his expecting and trusting to receive that by his works, which is only to be received and expected from Jesus Christ. Though all that man can do towards the meriting of heaven is no more than the lifting up of a trifle towards the meriting of a kingdom, yet such a proud piece man is, that he is ready enough to say with proud Vega, *I will not have heaven of free cost.*

A proud heart would gladly have that of debt, which is merely of grace, and desires that to be of purchase which God has intended to be of free mercy; which made one to say, that he would swim through a sea of brimstone, that he might come to heaven at last; but he who swims not there through the sea of Christ's blood, shall never come there. Man must swim there, not through brimstone—but through Christ's blood, or he miscarries forever.

(2.) Again, ***the sooner a man begins to be godly, the more serviceable he will be to others, and the more he will arouse others to good.*** Now, all the good that you provoke others to by counsel or carriage, by life or example, shall be put down to your account; just as all the sins that men provoke others to, is put down to their accounts. David did but send a letter concerning the death of Uriah, and the charge comes, "You had slain Uriah with the sword," 2 Sam.12: 8-9. The more I stir up others to sow, the more at last I shall reap, Isaiah 38:3, Neh. 13:14. The sooner a man begins to be godly, the more good he will do, the more serviceable he will be in the town or city where he dwells, in the family where he lives, among his relations, wife, children, kindred, servants, etc., with whom he converses.

The sooner a man begins to be gracious, the sooner and the more useful will his arts, his parts, his gifts, his graces, his mercies, his experiences, his life, his labors, his prayers, his counsels, his examples—be to all who are with him, to all who are about him.

We learn—that we may teach, is a proverb among the Rabbis. And I do therefore lay in and lay up, says the heathen, that I may draw forth again, and lay out for the good of many.

Ah! young men, young men! as you would be useful and serviceable to many, begin to be godly early, and to lay in and lay up and lay out early, for the profit and advantage of others. Augustine accounted nothing his own that he did not communicate to others. The bee does store her hive, out of all sorts of flowers for the common benefit. It is a base and unworthy spirit for a man to make himself the center of all his actions. The very heathen man could say that a man's country, and his friends, and others, challenge a great part of him. And indeed the best way to do ourselves good is to be a-doing good to others; the best way to gather is to scatter. "He who sows liberally shall reap liberally," 2 Cor. 9:6. "The liberal soul shall be made fat," Proverbs 11:25.

It is fabled of Midas, that whatever he touched he turned it into gold. It is certain that a liberal hand, a liberal heart, turns all into gold, into gain, as Scripture and experience do abundantly evidence. Now, if you put all these things together, nothing is more evident than that those who begin to be godly early are in the ready way, the high way, to be high in heaven when they shall cease from breathing on earth. And therefore, young men, as you would be high in heaven, as you would have a great reward, a full reward, a massy, weighty crown—oh labor to be godly early; labor to get acquainted with the Lord, and an interest in the Lord, in the spring and morning of your days!

Motive (7). The seventh motive or consideration to provoke and incite you to be godly early, is to consider, ***That the Lord is very much affected with your seeking of him, and following after him—in the spring and morning of your youth.***

"Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying—I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown," Jer. 2:2.

Ah! how kindly, how sweetly did the Lord take this at their hands, that they followed him in their youth, while their "bones were full of marrow," while they were strong and fit for service, while nature was fresh, lively, and vigorous. In the law, God called for the *first* of all things; he required not only the first-fruits—but the very first of the first: "The first of the first fruits of your land, you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God," Exod. 23:19. God is the first being, the first good, and therefore deserves the first of the first, and the best of the best; the first and the best is not too good for him, who is goodness itself. God, in Leviticus 2:14, is so passionately set upon having the first of the first, that he will not wait until the green ears of corn be ripe—but will have the green ears of corn dried in the fire, lest he should lose his longing.

As many young women and sickly children cannot wait until the fruit is ripe—but must have it while it is green; even so, says God, my heart, my desires, are so vehemently set upon the first-fruits, the first things, that I cannot wait, I cannot satisfy myself without them.

What would God teach us by all this—but to serve him with the first-fruits of our age, the primrose of our childhood, the morning of your youth. God has given you of the best—do not put him off with the worst, with the worst of your time, the worst of your days, the worst of your strength, lest he swear in his wrath that "you shall never enter into his rest," Heb. 3:18.

Motive (8). The eighth motive or consideration to provoke you to be godly early, to seek and serve the Lord in the morning of your youth, is to consider, that ***This may be a special means to prevent many black temptations; and an encouragement to withstand all temptations that you may meet with from a tempting devil and a tempting world.***

An early turning to the Lord will prevent many temptations to despair, many temptations to neglect the means openly, to despise the means secretly; many temptations about the being of God, the goodness, faithfulness, truth and justice of God; temptations to despair, temptations to lay violent hands on a man's self. Temptations to question all that God has said, and all that Christ has suffered, arises many times from men's delaying and putting off of God to the last; all which, with many others, are prevented by a man's seeking and serving of the Lord in the spring and morning of his youth.

It is reported of the deer of Scythia, that they teach their young ones to leap from bank to bank, from rock to rock, from one turf to

another, by leaping before them; by which means, when they are hunted, no beast of prey can ever capture them. Just so, when people exercise themselves in godliness when they are young, when they leap from one measure of holiness to another, when they are in the morning of their days, Satan, that mighty hunter after souls, may pursue them with his temptations—but he shall not overtake them, he shall not prevail over them. As you see in Moses, Joseph, Daniel, and the three Hebrew children, these knew the Lord, and gave up themselves to the Lord in the prime and primrose of their youth, and these were all temptation-proof, Heb. 11, Gen. 39, Dan. 3. Satan and the world pursued them—but could not overtake them. When the devil and the world had done their worst, the young men's bows abode in strength, and their hands were made strong to resist by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, Gen. 49:23-24. Said that young convert when tempted—*I am not the man that I was.*

Luther tells of a young virgin that used to resist all temptations with this—*I am a Christian.* Early converts may say, when tempted, as Luther did—*Tell me not, Satan, what I have been—but what I am and will be.* Or as he in the like case, *Whatever I was, I am now in Christ a new creature, and that is it which troubles you.* Or as he—*The more desperate my disease was, the more I admire the physician.* Yes, you may yet strain it a peg higher, and say, The greater my sins were—the greater is my honor; as the devils which once Mary Magdalene had—are mentioned for her glory. When Pyrrhus tempted Fabricius the first day with an elephant, so huge and monstrous a beast, as before he had not seen, the next day with

money and promises of honor, he answered, *I fear not your **force**; I am too wise for your **fraud**.*

Ah! young men, young men, as you would be free from the saddest and darkest temptations, and as you would be armed against all temptations, oh labor as for life to be godly early! seek and serve the Lord in the morning of your youth. No way like this for the preventing earthquakes, heartquakes, stormy days, and winter nights, etc.

Motive (9). The ninth motive or consideration to stir up young men to be godly early, to seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of their youth, is, ***To consider the worth and excellency of souls.***

A soul is a spiritual, immortal substance; it is capable of the knowledge of God, it is capable of union with God, of communion with God, and of a blessed and happy fruition of God, Mat. 19:28; Acts 7:59-60; Philip. 1:23.

Christ left his Father's bosom for the good of souls; he assumed man's nature for the salvation of man's soul. Christ prayed for souls, he sweat for souls, he wept for souls, he bled for souls, he hung on the cross for souls, he trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath for souls, he died for souls, he rose again from death for souls, he ascended for souls, he intercedes for souls, and all the glorious preparations that he has been a-making in heaven these sixteen hundred years is for souls, Heb. 2:13-16; Isaiah 63:3; John 14:1-3.

Ah! young men, young men, do not play the courtier with your precious souls. The courtier does all things late; he rises late, dines late, sups late, goes to bed late, repents late.

Ah! sirs, the good of your souls is before all, and above all other things in the world; to be first regarded and provided for, and that partly because it is the best and more noble part of man, and partly because therein mostly and properly is the image of God stamped, and partly because it is the first converted, and partly because it shall be the first and most glorified.

Ah! young men, young men, if they be worse than infidels, that make no provision for their families, 1 Tim. 5:8; what monsters are those who make not provision for their own souls! This will be bitterness in the end.

Caesar Borgias being sick to death, lamentably said, "When I lived, I provided for everything but death; now I must die, and am unprovided to die." This was a dart at his heart, and it will at last be a dagger at yours, who feast your bodies—but starve your souls; who make liberal provision for your ignoble part—but no provision for your more noble part.

If they deserve a hanging, who feast their slaves, and starve their wives; who make provision for their enemies—but none for their friend; how will you escape hanging in hell, who make provision for everything, yes, for all your lusts—but make no provision for your immortal souls? James 4:2-3; Hos. 7:13-14. We hate the Turks for

selling Christians for slaves, and what shall we think then, of those who sell themselves, their precious souls—for toys and trifles which cannot profit? who practically say, what once a profane nobleman of Naples verbally said, namely—that he had two souls in his body, one for God, and another for whoever would buy it.

Ah! young men, young men, do not pawn your souls, do not sell your souls, do not exchange away your souls, do not trifle and fool away your precious souls! They are jewels, more worth than a thousand worlds, yes, than heaven and earth. If they are safe—all is safe; but if they are lost—all is lost: God lost, and Christ lost, and the society of glorious angels and blessed saints lost, and heaven lost—and that forever! Granetensis tells of a woman who was so affected with souls' miscarryings, that she besought God to stop up the passage into hell with her soul and body, that none might have entrance.

Ah that all young people were so affected with the worth and excellency of their souls, and so alarmed with the hazard and danger of losing their souls, as that they may in the spring and morning of their days inquire after the Lord, and seek him, and serve him with all their might, that so their precious and immortal souls may be safe and happy forever. But if all this will not do, then in the last place,

Motive (10). Tenthly, Consider, young men, ***That God will at last bring you to a reckoning.*** He will at last bring you to judgment.

"Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and

whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment," Eccles.11:9. In these words you have two things:

(1.) An ironic concession; he bids him "Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see." He yields him what he would have, by an irony, by way of mockage and bitter scoff. Now you are young and strong, lively and lusty, and your bones are full of marrow; you are resolved to be proud and scornful, to indulge the flesh, and to follow your delights and pleasures. Well! take your course if you dare, or if you have a mind to it, if your heart be so set upon it. ""Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see."

(2.) The second is a warning, or a sad and severe premonition: "But know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment." "God **will** bring you;" these words import two things: first, the unwillingness of youth to come to judgment; secondly, the unavoidableness that youth must come to judgment; but how soon you shall be brought to judgment, is only known to God.

Augustine confesses in one of his books, that as long as his conscience was gnawed with the guilt of some youthful lust he was once ensnared with, the very hearing of a day of judgment, was even a hell to him.

Histories tell us of a young man, who being for some capital offence condemned to die, grew grey in one night's space, and was therefore pitied and spared.

Ah! young men, young men—may the serious thoughts of this great day put you upon breaking off the sins of your youth; and the dedicating of yourselves to the knowledge, love, and service of the Lord, in the spring and flower of your days. Ah! young men, consider the errors of your lives, the wickedness of your hearts, the sinfulness of your ways, and that strict account that before long you must be brought to before the judge of all the world.

The heathens themselves had some kind of dread and expectation of such a day; and therefore, when Paul spoke of judgment to come, Felix trembled, though a heathen, Acts 24:25.

The bringing into judgment is a thing which is known by reason, and is clear by the light of nature; therefore, in Austria, one of the nobles dying, who had lived ninety-three years, and had spent all his life in pleasures and delights, never being troubled with any infirmity, and this being told to Frederick the emperor, *From hence, says he, we may conclude the soul's immortality; for if there is a God who rules this world, as divines and philosophers teach, and that he is just no one denies; surely there are other places to which souls after death do go, and receive for their deeds either reward or punishment, for here on earth, we see that neither rewards are given to the good, nor punishments to the evil.*

Ah, young men! "knowing therefore the terror of the Lord," 2 Cor. 5:9-11, and the terror of this day, oh! that you would be persuaded to flee from the wrath to come, to cast away the idols of your souls, to repent and be converted in the primrose of your youth, that your sins may be blotted out when "the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord," Acts 3:19, or else woe! woe! to you that ever you were born!

I have read a story of one who, being risen from the dead, and being asked in what condition he was, he made answer, *No man does believe, no man does believe, no man does believe.* And being further asked what he meant by that repetition, he answered, *No man does believe how exactly God examines, how strictly God judges, how severely he punishes.* Oh that the ways of most young people did not declare to all the world that they do not, and that they will not believe the dread and terror of that day that will admit of no plea, nor place for apology or appeal! The highest and last tribunal can never be appealed from, or repealed.

Now if, for all that has been said, you are resolved to spend the flower of your days, and the prime of your strength—in the service of sin and the world; then know that no tongue can express, no heart can conceive that trouble of mind, that terror of soul, that horror of conscience, that fear and amazement, that weeping and wailing, that crying and roaring, that sighing and groaning, that cursing and howling, that stamping and tearing, that wringing of hands and gnashing of teeth—which shall certainly attend you, when God shall

bring you into judgment—for all your looseness and lightness, for all your wickedness and wantonness, for all your profaneness and baseness, for all your neglect of God, your grieving the Comforter, your trampling under foot the blood of a Savior, for your despising of the means, for your prizing earth above heaven, and the pleasures of this world above the pleasures which are at God's right hand.

Oh! how will you wish in that day when your sins shall be charged on you—when justice shall be armed against you—when conscience shall be gnawing within you—when the world shall be a flaming fire about you—when the gates of heaven shall be shut against you—and the flame of hell ready to take hold of you—when angels and saints shall sit in judgment upon you, and forever turn their faces from you—when evil spirits shall be terrifying of you—and Jesus Christ forever disowning of you; how will you, I say, wish in that day—that you had never been born, or that you might now be unborn, or that your mothers' wombs had been your tombs! Oh, how will you then wish to be turned into a bird, a beast, a stock, a stone, a toad, a tree! How you sill say, *Oh that our immortal souls were mortal! Oh that we were nothing! Oh that we were anything but what we are!*

I have read a remarkable story of a king who was depressed and sad, and wept; which, when his brother saw, he asked him why he was so pensive? Because, says he, I have judged others, and now I must be judged myself. And why, says his brother, are you now so sad about this? it will, happily, be a long time before that day comes, and besides that, it is but a slight matter. The king said little about it for

the present. Now, it was a custom in that country, when any had committed treason, there was a trumpet sounded at his door in the night time, and he was next day brought out to be executed. Now, the king commanded a trumpet to be sounded at his brother's door in the nighttime, who, awakening out of his sleep, when he heard it, arose, and came quaking and trembling to the king. How now? says the king; why are you are so affrighted? I am, says he, accused of treason, and next morning I shall be executed. Why, says the king to him again, are you so troubled at that, knowing that you shall be judged by your brother, and for a matter that your conscience tells you you are clear of? How much more, therefore, may I be afraid, seeing that God shall judge me, and not in a matter that my conscience frees me of—but of that whereof I am guilty? And beside this, if the worst comes—it is but a temporary death you shall die—but I am liable to death eternal, both of body and soul. I will leave the application to those young people that put this day afar off, and whom no arguments will move to be godly early, and to acquaint themselves with the Lord in the morning of their youth.

But now to those young men and women who begin to seek, serve, and love the Lord in the primrose of their days—the day of judgment will be to them like music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart. This day will be to them "a day of refreshing," a "day of redemption," a day of vindication, a day of coronation, a day of consolation, a day of salvation; it will be to them a marriage-day, a harvest-day, a pay-day. Now the Lord will pay them for all the prayers they have made, for all the sermons they have heard, for all the tears they have shed. In this

great day Christ will remember all the individual offices of love and friendship showed to any of his people. Now he will mention many things for their honor and comfort that they never minded, now the least and lowest acts of love and pity towards his shall be interpreted as a special kindness shown to himself. Now the crown shall be set upon their heads, and the royal robes put upon their backs; now all the world shall see that they have not served the Lord for nothing. Now Christ will pass over all their weaknesses, and make honorable mention of all the services they have performed, of all the mercies they have improved, and of all the great things that for his name and glory they have suffered.

Chapter 5

Shall the Sins of Saints be Brought into the Judgement?

Question. But here an apt question may be moved, namely, **Whether at this great day, the sins of the saints shall be brought into the judgment of discussion, and discovery, or not?** *Whether the Lord will in this day publicly manifest, proclaim, and make mention of the sins of his people, or not?*

I humbly judge, according to my present light, that he will not; and my reasons for it are these, namely:

1. The first is drawn from **Christ's judicial proceedings in the last day**, set down largely and clearly in the 25th of Matthew, where he enumerates only the good works they had done, but takes no notice of the spots and blots, of the stains and blemishes, of the infirmities and enormities, of the weaknesses and wickednesses of his people, Deut. 32:4-6.

2. My second reason is taken from **Christ's vehement protestations that they shall not come into judgment**: John 5:24, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, he who hears my word, and believes on him who sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but has passed from death unto life." Those words, "shall not come into condemnation," are not rightly translated; the original is, shall not come into judgment, not into damnation. Further, it is very observable, that no evangelist uses this double asseveration but John, and he never uses it but in matters of the greatest weight and importance, and to show the earnestness of his spirit, and to stir us up to better attention, and to put the thing asserted out of all question, and beyond all contradiction; as when we would put a thing forever out of all question, we do it by a double asseveration, *Truly, truly*, it is so, etc.

3. Thirdly, Because his not bringing their sins into judgment does most and best agree with **many precious expressions that we**

find scattered, asso many shining, sparkling pearls, up and down in Scripture, as,

First, (1.) With those of **God's blotting out the sins of his people**: "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins." "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins," Isaiah 43:25, Isaiah 44:22. Who is this that blots out transgressions? He who has the keys of heaven and hell at his belt, who opens and no man shuts, who shuts and no man opens; he who has the power of life and death, of condemning and absolving, of killing and making alive; he it is who blots out transgressions.

If an under-officer should blot out an indictment, that perhaps might do a man no good, a man might for all that be at last cast by the judge; but when the judge or king shall blot out the indictment with their own hand, then the indictment cannot return. Now this is every believer's case and happiness.

(2.) Secondly, To those glorious expressions of **God's not remembering of their sins any more**: Isaiah 43:25, "And I will not remember your sins." "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more," Jer. 31:34. So the apostle, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," Heb. 8:12. And again the same apostle says, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in

their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," Heb. 10:17.

The meaning is, their iniquities shall quite be forgiven, I will never mention them more, I will never take notice of them more, they shall never hear more of them from me. **Though God has an iron memory to remember the sins of the wicked—yet he has no memory to remember the sins of the righteous.**

(3.) Thirdly, His not bringing their sins into judgment does most and best agree with those blessed expressions of his **casting their sins into the depth of the sea, and of his casting them behind his back**: "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities, and you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," Micah 7:19. Where sin is once pardoned, the remission stands never to be repealed. Pardoned sins shall never come in account against the pardoned man before God any more, for so much does this borrowed speech import. If a thing were cast into a river, it might be brought up again; or if it were cast upon the sea, it might be discerned and taken up again; but when it is cast into the *depths*, the bottom of the sea, it can never be buoyed up again.

By the metaphor in the text, the Lord would have us to know the sins pardoned shall rise no more, they shall never be seen more, they shall never come on the account more; he will so drown their sins, that they shall never come up before him the second time.

And so much that other scripture imports: "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness, but you have in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for *you have cast all my sins behind your back*," Isaiah 38:17. These last words are a borrowed speech, taken from the manner of men, who are accustomed to cast behind their backs such things as they have no mind to see, regard, or remember. A gracious soul has always his sins before his face: "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me;" and therefore no wonder if the Lord cast them behind his back. The father soon forgets and casts behind his back those faults that the child remembers and has always in his eyes; so does the Father of spirits.

(4.) Fourthly, **His not bringing their sins into judgment** does best agree with that sweet and choice expression of God's pardoning the sins of his people: "And 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," Jer. 33:8. So Micah: "Who is a God like unto you, who pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage (as though he would not see it, but wink at it), he retains not his anger forever, because he delights in mercy," Micah 7:18. The Hebrew word which is here rendered *pardons*, signifies a taking away. When God pardons sin, he takes it clean away: that it should be sought for, yet it could not be found, as the prophet speaks: "In those days, at that time," declares the Lord, 'search will be made for Israel's guilt, but there will be none, and for the sins of Judah, but none will be found, for I will forgive the

remnant I spare," Jer. 50:20; and those words, "and passes by," in the afore-cited 7th of Micah, and the 18th, according to the Hebrew is, and "passes over;" God passes over the transgression of his heritage, that is, he takes no notice of it.

As a man in a deep muse, or as one that has haste of business, sees not things before him, his mind being busied about other matters, he neglects all to mind his business; as David, when he saw in Mephibosheth the feature of his friend Jonathan, took no notice of his lameness, or any other defect or deformity; so *God, beholding in his people the glorious image of his Son, winks at all their faults and deformities*, which made Luther say, "Do with me what you will, since you have pardoned my sin;" and what is it to pardon sin but not to mention sin? Isaiah 40:1-2.

(5.) Fifthly, **In his not bringing their sins into the judgment of discussion and discovery**, does best agree to those expressions of forgiving and covering: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," Psalm 32:1. In the original it is in the plural, *blessednesses*. So here is a plurality of blessings, a chain of pearls.

The like expression you have in the 85th psalm, and the 2nd verse: "You have forgiven the iniquity of your people, you have covered all their sin." For the understanding of these scriptures aright, take notice that to "cover" is a metaphorical expression. Covering is such an action which is opposed to disclosure. To be covered is to be so

hidden as not to appear. Some make the metaphor from filthy, loathsome objects, which are covered from our eyes, as dead carcasses are buried under the ground; some from garments, that are put upon us to cover our nakedness; others from the Egyptians, that were drowned in the Red Sea, and so covered with water; others from a great gulf in the earth, that is filled up and covered with earth injected into it; and others make it in the last place an allusive expression to the mercy-seat, over which was a covering. Now, all these metaphors in the general tend to show this, that **the Lord will not look, he will not see, he will not take notice of the sins he has pardoned, to call them any more to a judicial account.**

As when a prince reads over many treasons and rebellions, and meets with such and such which he has pardoned, he reads on, he passes by, he takes no notice of them: the pardoned person shall never hear more of them, he will never call him to account for those sins more; so here, etc. When Caesar was painted, he put his finger upon his scar, his wart. God puts his fingers upon all his people's scars and warts, upon all their weaknesses and infirmities, that nothing can be seen but what is fair and lovely: "You are all fair, my love; and there is no spot in you," Cant. 4:7.

(6.) Sixthly, It best agrees to that expression of **not imputing of sin**: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit," Psalm 32:2. So the apostle in that

Romans 4:6-8. Now, not to impute iniquity is not to charge iniquity, not to set iniquity upon his score, who is blessed and pardoned, etc.

(7.) Seventhly and lastly, It best agrees with that expression that you have in the 103d Psalm, and the 11th and 12th verses: "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy towards those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." What a vast distance is there between the east and the west! Of all visible latitudes, this is the greatest; and thus much for the third argument. The

4. A fourth argument that prevails with me, to judge that Jesus Christ will not bring the sins of the saints into the judgment of discussion and discovery in the great day, is because **it seems unsuitable to three considerable things, for Jesus Christ to proclaim the infirmities and miscarriages of his people to all the world.**

(1.) First, It **seems to be unsuitable to the glory and solemnity of that day**, which to the saints will be a day of refreshing, a day of restitution, a day of redemption, a day of coronation, as has been already proved. Now how suitable to this great day of solemnity the proclamation of the saints' sins will be, I leave the reader to judge.

(2.) Secondly, **It seems unsuitable to all those near and dear relations that Jesus Christ stands in towards his.** He stands in the relation of a father, a brother, a head, a husband, a friend, an

advocate. Now are not all these, by the law of relations, bound rather to hide and keep secret, at least from the world, the weaknesses and infirmities of their near and dear relations? and is not Christ? Is not Christ much more? By how much he is more a father, a brother, a head, a husband, etc., in a spiritual way, than any others can be in a natural way, etc.

(3.) Thirdly, **It seems very unsuitable to what the Lord Jesus requires of his in this world.** The Lord requires that his people should cast a mantle of love, of wisdom, of silence, and secrecy over one another's weaknesses and infirmities. "Hatred stirs up strifes, but love covers all sins," Proverbs 10:12, 1 Pet. 4:8. Love's mantle is very large; love will find a hand, a plaster to clap upon every sore.

Flavius Vespasianus, the emperor, was very ready to conceal his friends' vices, and as ready to reveal their virtues. So is divine love in the hearts of the saints: "If your brother offends you, go and tell him his fault between him and you alone: if he shall hear you, you have gained your brother," Mat. 18:15. As the pills of reprehension are to be gilded and sugared over with much gentleness and softness, so they are to be given in secret; tell him between him and you alone. Tale-bearers and tale-hearers are alike abominable, heaven is too hot and too holy a place for them, Psalm 15:3. Now will Jesus Christ have us carry it thus towards offending Christians, and will he himself act otherwise? Nay, is it an evil in us to lay open the weaknesses and infirmities of the saints to the world? and will it be an excellency, a glory, a virtue in Christ to do it in the great day? etc.

5. A fifth argument is this: **It is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression:** "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense," Proverbs 19:11, or to pass by it, as we do by persons or things we know not, or would take no notice of. Now "it is to his glory to overlook an offense," and will it not much more be the glory of Christ, silently to pass over the transgressions of his people in that great day? The greater the treasons and rebellions are that a prince passes over and takes no notice of—the more is it his honor and glory; and so, doubtless, it will be Christ's in that great day, to pass over all the treasons and rebellions of his people, to take no notice of them, to forget them, as well as to forgive them.

The heathens have long since observed, that in nothing man came nearer to the glory and perfection of God himself, than in goodness and clemency. Surely if it be such an honor to man, "to pass over a transgression," it cannot be a dishonor to Christ to pass over the transgressions of his people, he having already buried them in the sea of his blood. Again, says Solomon, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing," Proverbs 25:2. And why it should not make for the glory of divine love to conceal the sins of the saints in that great day, I know not; and whether the concealing the sins of the saints in that great day will not make most for their joy, and wicked men's sorrow—for their comfort and wicked men's terror and torment—I will leave you to judge, and time and experience to decide. And thus much for the resolution of that great question. Having done with the motives that may encourage and provoke young men to be godly early, to

know, love, seek, and serve the Lord, in the spring and morning of their days.

Chapter 6

Directions and Helps

I shall now come to those **DIRECTIONS and HELPS** that must, by assistance from heaven, be put in practice, if ever you would be godly early, and serve the Lord in the primrose of your days. Now all that I shall say will fall under these two heads.

First, Some things you must carefully and watchfully decline, and arm yourselves against; and

Secondly, There are other things that you must prosecute and follow.

First, ***There are some things that you must watchfully decline***, and they are these.

Direction, (1). First, If ever you would be godly early, if you would be gracious in the spring and morning of your youth, oh! then, ***take***

heed of putting the day of death far from you, Amos 6:3,
"You push away every thought of coming disaster."

Young men are very prone to look upon death afar off, to put it at a great distance from them. They are apt to say to death as Pharaoh said to Moses, "Get away from me, and let me see your face no more," Exod. 10:28. If old men discourse to them of death, they are ready to answer, as the high priest did Judas in a different case, Mat 27:4, "What is that to us? look you unto it." We know sickness will come, and death is a debt that we must all pay, but surely these guests are a great way from us; for does not David say, "The days of a man are threescore years and ten"? Psalm 90:10. We have calculated our nativities, and we cannot abate a day, a minute, a moment, of "threescore and ten;" and therefore it is even a death to think of death; there being so great a distance between our birth-day and our dying-day, as we have cast up the account.

Ah! young men, it is sad, it is very sad, when you are so wittily wicked as to say with those in Ezekiel, "the people of Israel are saying—His visions won't come true for a long, long time." Ezek. 12:27.

Ah! young men, young men, by putting far away this day—you gratify Satan, you strengthen sin, you provoke the Lord, you make the work of faith and repentance more hard and difficult, you lay a sad foundation for the greatest fears and doubts.

Ah! how soon may that sad word be fulfilled upon you, "The Lord of that servant (who says his Lord delays his coming) shall come in a

day when he looks not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder (or cut him off), and appoint him his portion with hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Mat. 24:48-51. When Sodom, when Pharaoh, when Agag, when Amalek, when Haman, when Herod, when Nebuchadnezzar, when Belshazzar, when Dives, when the fool in the Gospel—were all in their prime, their pride, when they were all in a flourishing state, and upon the very top of their glory—how strangely, how suddenly, how sadly, how fearfully, how astonishingly—were they brought down to the grave, to hell!

Ah young man, who are you? and what is your name or fame? what is your power or place? what is your dignity or glory? that you dare promise yourself an exemption from sharing in as sad a portion as ever justice gave to those who were once very high, who were seated among the stars, but are now brought down to the pit of hell, Isaiah 13:10-17. I have read a story of one that gave a young prodigal a ring with a death's head, on this condition, that he should one hour daily, for seven days together, look and think upon it; which bred a great change in his life.

Ah! young men, the serious thoughts of death may do that for you which neither friends, counsel, examples, prayers, sermons, tears, have not done to this very day. Well! remember this; to labor not to die is labor in vain, and to put this day far from you, and to live without fear of death, is to die living. Death seizes on old men, and

lays wait for the youngest. Death is oftentimes as near to the young man's back as it is to the old man's face.

It is storied of Charles the Fourth, king of France, that being one time affected with the sense of his many and great sins, he fetched a deep sigh, and said to his wife, *By the help of God I will now so carry myself all my life long, that I will never offend him more*; which words he had no sooner uttered, but he fell down dead and died.

Do not, young men, put this day far from you, lest you are suddenly surprised, and then you cry out, when too late, "A kingdom for a Christ, a kingdom for a Christ!"

Ah! young men, did you never hear of a young man that cried out, "Oh! I am so sick, that I cannot live, and yet, woeful wretch that I am! so sinful, that I dare not die. Oh that I might live! oh that I might die! oh that I might do neither!" Well! young men, remember this, the frequent, the serious thoughts of death will prevent many a sin, it will arm you against many temptations, it will secure you from many afflictions, it will keep you from doating on the world, it will make you do much in a little time, it will make death easy when it comes, and it will make you look out early for an unshakable kingdom, for incorruptible riches, and for unfading glory. Therefore do not, Oh do not put the day of death far from you. Take heed of crying *tomorrow, tomorrow*, says Luther; for a man lives forty years before he knows himself to be a fool, and by that time he sees his folly, his life is finished. So men die before they begin to live.

*Direction (2). Secondly, If you would be godly early, then **take heed of leaning to your own understanding.***

This counsel wise Solomon gives to his son (or the young men in his time): "My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart. Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not lean on your own understanding," Proverbs 3:1, 5.

Youth is the age of folly, of vain hopes, and overgrown confidence. Ah! how wise might many have been, had they not been wise in their own opinion when young.

Rehoboam's young counselors proved the overthrow of his kingdom. It is brave for youth at all times to be discreet and sober-minded. Three virtues, they say, are prime ornaments of youth, modesty, silence, and obedience.

Ah! young men, keep close in every action to this one principle, namely, in every action resolve to be discreet and wise. Ah! young men, your leaning upon yourselves, or upon others, will in the end be bitterness and vexation of spirit. Young men are very apt to lean on their own wit, wisdom, arts, parts, as old men are to lean on a staff to support them (as the Hebrew word signifies, that is rendered *lean*, in that of Proverbs 3:5). This has been the bane of many a choice wit, the loss of many a brave head, the ruin of many a fine mind.

Ajax thought it was only for cowards and weaklings to lean upon the Lord for support, not for him when he was foiled. Lean not to great

parts, lean not to natural or acquired accomplishments, lest you lose them and yourselves too. Leaning to natural or moral excellencies, is the ready way to be stripped of all. Babylon, who was bold upon her high towers, thick walls, and twenty years' provision laid in for a siege, was surprised by Cyrus.

It was said of Caesar, that he received not his wounds from the swords of enemies, but from the hands of friends; that is, from trusting in them. Ah! how many young men have been wounded, yes slain, by trusting to their own understandings, their own abilities!

It was an excellent saying of Austin, *He who stands upon his own strength, shall never stand*. A creature is like a single drop left to itself, it spends and wastes itself presently, but if like a drop in the fountain and ocean of being, it has abundance of security.

Ah! young men, young men, if you will need be leaning, then lean upon precious promises, 2 Peter 1:4, Psalm 27:1; lean upon the rock that is higher than yourselves, lean upon the Lord Jesus Christ, as John did, who was the youngest of all the disciples, and the most beloved of all the disciples, John 21:20, chapter 13:23. John leaned much, and Christ loved him much. Oh lean upon Christ's wisdom for direction, lean upon his power for protection, lean upon his purse, his fullness, for provision, Cant. 8:5; lean upon his eye for approbation, lean upon his righteousness for justification, lean upon his blood for remission, lean upon his merits for salvation. As the young vine, without her wall to support her, will fall and sink, so will

you, young men—without Christ putting his everlasting arms under you to support you, and uphold you. Therefore, above all leanings, lean upon him. By leaning on him, you will engage him; by leaning on him, you will gain more honor than you can give; by leaning on him, you may even command him, and make him eternally yours, etc.

Direction (3). Thirdly, If you would be godly early, if you would seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days, then ***take heed of flatterers and flattery***. Ah! how many young men might have been very godly, who are now exceeding bad, by hearkening to flatterers, and pretending flattery! Flattery undid young Rehoboam, Ahab, Herod, Nero, Alexander, etc. Flatterers are soul-murderers; they are soul-undoers. They are like evil surgeons, who skin over the wound, but never heal it.

The emperor Anastasius' motto was, *Smooth talk proves often sweet poison*. Flattery is the very spring and mother of all impiety; it blows the trumpet, and draws poor souls into rebellion against God, as Sheba drew Israel to rebel against David. It put our first parents upon tasting the forbidden fruit; it put Absalom upon dethroning of his father; it put Haman upon plotting the ruin of the Jews; it put Korah, Dathan, and Abiram upon rebelling against Moses; it makes men call evil good and good evil, darkness light and light darkness, etc. Flattery puts people upon neglecting the means of grace, upon undervaluing the means of grace, and upon despising the means of grace; it puts men upon abasing God, slighting Christ, and vexing the

Spirit; it unmans a man; it makes him call black white and white black; it makes a man exchange pearls for pebbles, and gold for counters; it makes a man judge himself wise when he is foolish; knowing, when he is ignorant; holy, when he is profane; free, when he is a prisoner; rich, when he is poor; high, when he is low; full, when he is empty; happy, when he is miserable, Rev. 3:17-18.

Ah! young men, young men, take heed of flatterers; they are the very worst of sinners; they are left by God, blinded by Satan, hardened in sin, and ripened for hell! God declares sadly against them, and that in his word and in his works: in his word, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together, Deut. 29:18-20; Psalm 78:36, 36:1, 3; Job 17:5; Ezek. 12:24; Dan. 11:21, 32, 34. Psalm 12:2-3, "They speak vanity everyone with his neighbor: with flattering lips, and with a double heart, do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things." And as God declares sadly against them in his word, so he has declared terribly against them in his works, as you may run and read in his judgments executed upon Ahab's flattering prophets, and upon Haman, and upon Daniel's princely false accusers, etc. And why, then, will not you stop your ears against those wretches, whom the hand and heart of God is so much against?

Again, as God declares against them, so godly men detest them and declare against them, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together, Psalm 5:8-10; Proverbs 2:16, Proverbs 7:21, Proverbs 28:23; Job 32:21-22; 1 Thes. 2:5, 10. Proverbs 20:19, "Meddle not

with him who flatters with his lips." Why so? Why! Because a man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet, Proverbs 29:5. The Hebrew word that is here rendered flatterer, signifies a soft butter-spoken man, because flatterers use smooth, soft speeches. Also the word signifies "to divide," because a flatterer's tongue is divided from his heart. Flatterers have their nets, and those who give ear to them will be taken to their ruin. A lying tongue hates those who are afflicted by it, and "a flattering mouth works ruin," Proverbs 26:28. A flattering mouth ruins name, fame, estate, body, soul, life.

Valerian, the Roman emperor, used to say, *Not bitter words—but flattering words do all the mischief.*

When Alexander the Great was hit with an arrow in the siege of an Indian city, which would not heal, he said to his flatterers, *You say that I am Jupiter's son—but this wound cries that I am but a man.*

Now shall godly men detest them and abhor them, as they are the pest of pests, the plague of plagues; and will you own them, will you take pleasure in them, to your ruin here and hereafter? The Lord forbid! Oh say to all flatterers, as he to his idols, "Get hence, for what have I more to do with you?" Hosea 14:8.

Nay, once more consider, that not only the good—but the bad, not only the best—but some of the worst of men, have manifested their detestation of flatterers and flattery.

When a court parasite praised Sigismund the emperor above measure, the emperor gave him a sound beating.

When Aristobulus the historian presented to Alexander, the great book that he had written of his glorious acts, wherein he had flatteringly made him greater than he was, Alexander, after he had read the book, threw it into the river Hydaspes, and said to the author, *It were a good deed to throw you after it.*

When the flatterers flattered Antigonus, he cried out, *You lie, you lie in your throat; these virtues that you speak of I have not in me—I am like a leopard, that have ten black spots to one white.*

Augustus Caesar and Tiberius Caesar were deadly enemies to flatterers, insomuch that they would not be called *lords* by their own children.

A good saying is attributed to Trebonianus Gallus, namely, *No flatterer can be a true friend.*

Ah! young men, young men, shall God, shall godly men, shall bad men, detest and declare against flatterers and flattery, and will not you turn a deaf ear upon them, yes, fly from them as from a serpent, and shun them as you would shun hell itself? If you do not, the very heathens but now cited will rise in judgment against you.

Flatterers are the very worst of sinners. The flatterers told Caesar, that his freckles in his face were like the stars in the skies. They

bought and sold Aurelius the emperor at pleasure. And Augustus complained, when Varrus was dead, that he had none now left that would deal plainly and faithfully with him.

I have been the longer upon this, out of love to young men's souls, who are so apt to be ensnared in the flatterer's net. If ever you would be good in good earnest, you must abhor flatterers as the first-born of the devil, and as such as are most pernicious to men's happiness both here and hereafter.

It is reported of one Oramazes, that he had *an enchanted egg*, in which, as he boasted himself, he had enclosed all the happiness of the world; but being broken, nothing was found in it but wind. Flatterers are the greatest cheaters, the greatest deceivers in the world.

They say of the crocodile, that when he has killed a man, he will weep over him, as if he were sorry, and did repent for what he had done; the application is easy.

Direction (4). Fourthly, If you would be godly early, if you would seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days, then ***take heed of engaged affections to the things of the world.***

The young man in the Gospel took many a step towards heaven: "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Mat. 19:16-24. Christ makes a very fair offer to him in the next words: "If you will be perfect, go and sell that you have, and give to the poor,

and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." You shall have heaven for earth, a sea for a drop, a treasure for a mite, a crown for a crumb. Ay—but the young man's affections were strongly engaged to the things of the world; and therefore he turns his back upon Christ, and goes away sorrowful, because he had great possessions. Oh the madness, the folly of this young man, who, to enjoy a little temporal felicity, has bid an everlasting farewell to Christ and glory!

In Genesis 13:2, it is said, that Abraham was very *rich* in cattle, in silver, and in gold; the Hebrew word which is here rendered rich, signifies *heavy*; it signifies a burden, to show us that riches are a heavy burden and an hindrance many times to heaven and happiness; and this young man in the Gospel found it so to his eternal undoing. Though the loadstone cannot draw the iron when the diamond is in presence, yet earthly possessions did draw this young man's soul away when Christ the pearl of price was present. The world is a silken net, and this young man found it so; the world is like golden fetters, and this young man found it so; the world is like sweet poison, and this young man found it so; for he had drunk so large a draught of it, that there was no room in his soul for Christ or heaven, for grace or glory.

Some say, that when the serpent Scytale cannot overtake the flying passenger, she does with her beautiful colors so astonish and amaze them, that they have no power to pass away until she have stung them; such a serpent the world proved to the young man in the

Gospel; it did so affect him and take him, so amaze him and amuse him, that he could not stir until it stung him to death.

When the moon is fullest, it is furthest from the sun; so the more men have of the world, the further commonly they are from God; and this the young man in the Gospel demonstrated.

Many have ventured life and limb, and many a better thing, to gain the things of this world; and yet, after all, they have got nothing at all. Achan's golden wedge proved a wedge to cleave him; and his stolen garment—a garment to shroud him.

The whole world is circular, the heart of a man is triangular, and we know a circle cannot fill a triangle; yes, if it is not filled with the Trinity, it will be filled with the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world may be resembled to the fruit that undid us all, which was fair to the sight, smooth in handling, sweet in taste—but deadly in effect and operation.

Ah! young men, young men, have none of you found it so?

The world in all its bravery is no better than the cities which Solomon gave to Hiram, which he called *Cabul*, that is to say, displeasing or dirty, 1 Kings 9:13; the world will afford nothing but trivial flowers, surrounded with many briers. Oh the vanity, the uncertainty, the imperfection of all things below! If a man should weigh his pay and his pains together, his miseries and his pleasures together, his joys and his sorrows together, his mercies and his

crosses together, his good days and his bad days together, will he not conclude, *Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity?*

It was a wise and Christian speech of Charles the Fifth to the Duke of Venice, who, when he had showed him the glory of his princely palace and earthly paradise, instead of admiring it, or him for it, only returned him this grave and serious memento, *These are the things which make us unwilling to die*. It was a good saying of one to a great Lord, upon his showing him his stately house and pleasant gardens, *Sir, you had need make sure of heaven, or else when you die you will be a very great loser*.

Ah! young men, young men, it is only heaven that is above all winds, storms, and tempests; nor has God cast man out of paradise for him to think to find out another paradise in this world. The main reason why many young men doat upon the world is, because they are not acquainted with a greater glory. Men ate acorns until they were acquainted with the use of wheat. The woman had the moon under her feet when she was clothed with the sun, and had a crown of twelve stars upon her head, Rev. 12:1.

Ah! young men, were you but clothed with the Sun of righteousness, and had you a crown set upon your heads by the hand of faith, you would have all the things of this world—which are as low, bespotted, and mutable as the moon—under your feet, Heb.11: 24-27, 35; Heb. 10:34. Well! young men, as ever you would be godly early, sit loose from the things of this world, be no longer worshipers of this golden

calf, and never let the world, that shall be but your servant, become your Lord. Oh! let not the devil and the world have more service for an ounce of gold, than Christ shall have for the kingdom of heaven!

Ah, young men! the world and you must part, or Christ and you will never meet, "you cannot serve God and mammon," Matt. 6:24. The two poles shall sooner meet, than the love of Christ and the love of the world.

Direction (5). Fifthly, If you would be godly early, if you would know, seek, and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your youth, then ***take heed early of carnal reason, take heed of consulting with flesh and blood***, Gal. 1:15-16.

Many a hopeful young man has been undone temporally and undone eternally, by hearkening to those evil counselors.

Carnal reason is an enemy, yes, an utter enemy, nay, it is not only an utter enemy—but it is enmity, yes, enmities, Romans 8:7. An enemy may be reconciled—but enmity can never be reconciled. Carnal reason is not only averse—but it is utterly averse to all goodness; it builds strongholds and arguments against the most glorious gospel truths, and accounts the precious things of Christ as a strange thing. Carnal reason will make God and gospel do homage to it. When carnal reason is on the throne, Christ and his truths must all bow or be judged before its bar.

Ah! young men, young men, as ever you would be godly early, stop your ears against all carnal reasonings within you. Carnal reason judges the choicest things of the gospel to be mere foolishness, 1 Cor. 1:23. It is blind, and cannot see how to make a right judgment of Christ, his word, his ways, and yet will control all.

If you are resolved to be still scholars to this master, then you must resolve to be unhappy here and miserable hereafter. But it is safer and better for you to imitate those young men, who in the morning of their days have graciously, wisely, and resolutely withstood those evil counselors—carnal reason, flesh and blood; Joseph and Moses, Daniel, Shadrach, Mesbach, and Abednego, all these in the primrose of their youth were good at turning the deaf ear to carnal counsel and carnal counselors, Gen. 39:7-11, etc; Heb. 11:24-26; Dan. 1.

Cassianus reports of a young man that had given himself up to a Christian life, and his parents disliking that way, they wrote letters to him to persuade him from it; and when he knew they were letters come from them, he would not open them—but threw them into the fire. This example is worth a following.

Another famous example you have in the story of King Edward the Sixth, when Cranmer and Ridley came to him, and were very earnest to have him give way to his sister to have mass. He stood out and pleaded the case with them, that it was a sin against God, and provoking to the eyes of his glory, etc.—but they still continued to use many carnal arguments to persuade the king, who was but a child

about fifteen years of age—but he withstood them a great while; but at length when he saw he could not prevail with all his pleading against those brave men—but that they still continued their suit, he burst out into bitter weeping and sobbing, desiring them to desist. The motioners seeing his zeal and constancy, being overcome, they went away and told one that the king had more divinity in his little finger, than they had in all their bodies.

Ah! young men, it will be your safety and your glory to write after this princely copy, when you are surrounded with carnal reason and carnal counselors, etc.

Direction (6). Sixthly and lastly, If you would be godly early, then ***take heed of comparing yourselves with those who are worse than yourselves.***

Young men are very apt to compare themselves with those who are worse than themselves, and this proves a snare unto them, yes, oftentimes their bane, their ruin—as it did the young pharisee in the Gospel, who pleaded his negative righteousness. He was not as other men are, "extortioners, unjust, adulterers," and stood on his comparative goodness, "nor as this publican;" he stands not only upon his comparisons—but upon his disparisons, being blind at home, and too quick-sighted abroad; he despises and condemns this poor publican, who was better than himself, Luke 18:11-14, making good that saying of Seneca, "The nature of man," says he, "is very apt to use spectacles to behold other men's faults, rather than looking-

glasses to behold our own." Such pharisees do justly incur the censure which that sour philosopher passed upon grammarians, that they were better acquainted with the evil of Ulysses than with their own.

Ah! young man, young man, you know, he who drinks poison, though he drinks not so much as another, and he who commits treason, though not so great, so high treason as another—shall yet as certainly be poisoned, and hanged—as he who has drunk a greater quantity of poison, and committed higher acts of treason.

Sirs! do not delude and befool your own souls; if you are not as wicked as others, you shall not be as much tormented as others—but yet you shall be as certainly damned as others; you shall as certain to hell as others; you shall as sure be shut out forever from God, Christ, saints, angels, and all the treasures, pleasures, and glories of heaven, as others, except it be prevented by timely repentance on your side, and pardoning mercy on God's side.

Will you count it madness, O young man! in him who is sick, to reason thus? I am not so sick as such and such, and therefore I will not send to the physician; and in the wounded man to say, I am not so desperately wounded as such and such, and therefore I will not send to the surgeon; and in the traitor to say, I am not guilty of so many foul and heinous treasons as such and such, and therefore I will not look after a pardon; and in the necessitous man to say, I am not so poor as such and such, and therefore I will not welcome a

hand of charity? And will you not count it the greatest madness in the world for you to put off your repentance, and your returning to the Lord in the spring and morning of your youth, because that you are not as sinful, as wicked as such and such. If to have a milder punishment in hell than others, will satisfy you, then go on; but if you are afraid of the worm which never dies, and of the fire which never goes out, being like that stone in Arcadia, which being once kindled could not be quenched, oh, then, begin to be godly early! Oh seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days!

To think often of hell, is the best way to be preserved from falling into hell. Ah! young men, young men, that you would often consider of the bitterness of the damned's torments, and of the pitilessness of their torments, and of the diversity of their torments, and of the easelessness of their torments, and of the remedilessness of their torments, the eternity of their torments. The sinner's delight here is momentary, that which torments hereafter is perpetual. When a sinner is in hell, do you think, O young man! that another Christ shall be found to die for him, or that the same Christ will be crucified again for him, or that another gospel should be preached to him? Surely not!

Ah! why then will you not early return and seek out after the things that belong to your everlasting peace? I have read of Pope Clement the Fifth, that when a young nephew of his died, he sent his chaplain to a necromancer, to know of him how it fared with him in the other

world; the conjuror showed him to the chaplain, lying in a fiery bed in hell, which, when the pope understood, he never joyed more, etc.

Ah! young man, that these occasional hints of hell may be a means to preserve you from lying in those everlasting flames.

Bellarmino tells us of a certain advocate of the court of Rome, that being at the point of death, was stirred up by those who stood by, to repent and call upon God for mercy; he, with a constant countenance, and without sign of fear, turned his speech to God, and said, Lord! I have a desire to speak unto you, not for myself—but for my wife and children, for I am hastening to hell, neither is there anything that you should do for me.

Sir Francis Bacon relates how it was a common byword of the Lord Cordes, that he would be content to live seven years in hell, so he might win Calais from the English; but if you, O young man, are given up to such desperate atheism, and carnal apprehensions of hell, I am afraid God will confute you one day by fire and brimstone; but I would willingly hope better things of all those young people, into whose hands this treatise shall fall; and thus you see what things must be declined and avoided—if ever you would be godly early, if ever you would seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days.

Chapter 7

You must labor to be acquainted with four things early

There are things which must carefully and diligently be practiced, if ever you would be godly early. I shall instance only in those who are most considerable and weighty; as,

First, If ever you would be godly early, etc., then ***you must labor to be acquainted with four things early.***

*Duty (1).*First, You must labor to acquaint yourselves with the **SCRIPTURE** early. You must study the word early. *David* studied the word in the morning of his days, in the primrose of his youth; and this made him wiser than his enemies, yes, than his teachers; this made him as much excel the ancients, as the sun excels the moon, or as the moon excels the twinkling stars, Psalm 119:97-103. *Timothy* was godly early; and no wonder, for in the primrose of his days he was acquainted with the Scripture; he was nurtured on the word from his childhood, yes, from his infancy, as the word properly signifies. So in that 119th Psalm, the 9th verse, "How shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to your word." There is no way to a holy heart and a clean life but by acquainting yourselves with the word early. One has long since observed, that God has bowed down the Scriptures to the capacity even of babes and sucklings, that all excuse may be taken away, and that young

men may be encouraged to study the Scripture early. Ah, young men! no histories are comparable to the histories of the Scriptures: 1, for antiquity; 2, rarity; 3; variety; 4, brevity; 5, perspicuity; 6, harmony; 7, verity. All other books cannot equal God's, either in age or authority, in dignity or excellency, in sufficiency or glory.

Moses is found more ancient and more honorable than all those whom the heathens make most ancient and honorable; as Homer, Hesiod, and Jupiter himself, whom the Greeks have seated in the top of their divinity.

The whole of Scripture is but one entire love-letter, despatched from the Lord Christ to his beloved spouse; and who then but would still be a reading in this love-letter? Like Caecilia, a Roman maiden of noble parentage, who carried always about her the New Testament, that she might still be a-reading in Christ's love-letter, and behold the sweet workings of his love and heart towards his dear and precious ones.

Luther found so much sweetness in the word, in Christ's love-letter, that made him say he would not live in paradise, if he might, without the word; but with the word he could live in hell itself.

The word is like the stone *garamantides*, that has drops of gold in itself, enriching of the believing soul. This the martyrs found, which made them willing to give a load of hay for a few leaves of the Bible in English.

Augustine professes that the sacred Scriptures were his whole delight.

And Jerome tells us of one Nepotianus, who, by long and assiduous meditation on the holy Scriptures, had made his heart the library of Jesus Christ.

And *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. That which a papist reports lyingly of their sacrament of the mass, namely, that there are as many mysteries in it as there be drops in the sea, dust on the earth, angels in heaven, stars in the sky, atoms in the sunbeams, or sands on the sea-shore, etc., may be truly asserted of the Holy Scriptures.

Oh! the mysteries, the excellencies, the glories that are in the word! Ah! no book to this book; none so useful, none so needful, none so delightful, none so necessary to make you happy and to keep you happy as this. It is said of Caesar, that he had a greater care of his books than of his royal robes; for, swimming through the waters to escape his enemies, he carried his books in his hand above the waters—but lost his robe. Now, what are Caesar's books to God's books?

Ah! young men, young men! the word of the Lord is a light to guide you, a Counselor to counsel you, a comforter to comfort you, a staff to support you, a sword to defend you, and a physician to cure you. The word is a mine to enrich you, a robe to clothe you, and a crown to crown you. It is bread to strengthen you, and wine to cheer you,

and a honeycomb to feast you, and music to delight you, and a paradise to entertain you.

Oh! therefore, before all and above all, search the Scripture, study the Scripture, dwell on the Scripture, delight in the Scripture, treasure up the Scripture! There is no wisdom like Scripture wisdom, no knowledge like Scripture knowledge, no experience like Scripture experience, no comforts like Scripture comforts, no delights like Scripture delights, no convictions like Scripture convictions, no conversion like Scripture conversion.

Augustine hearing a voice from heaven, which bade him take and read, *tolle et lege*, whereupon, turning open the New Testament, he fell upon that place, "Let us walk with decency, as in the daylight: not in carousing and drunkenness; not in sexual impurity and promiscuity; not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no plans to satisfy the fleshly desires," Romans 13:13-14. This scripture so sunk into his heart, as that it proved the means of his conversion, as he himself reports. This Augustine, as he was once preaching, his memory failing of him, contrary to his purpose, he fell upon reproving the Manicheans, and by a scripture or two, not before thought of, to confute their heresies, he converted Firmus, a Manichean, as he after acknowledged to Augustine, blessing God for that sermon.

It is reported of one Adrianus, who seeing the martyrs suffer such grievous things in the cause of God, he asked what was that which

caused them to suffer such things and one of them named that text, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive—the things which God has prepared for those who love him," 1 Cor. 2:9. And this text was set home with such a power upon him, as that it converted him and made him to profess true religion, and not only to profess it—but to die a martyr for it.

Cyprian was converted by reading the prophecy of Jonah. Junius was converted by reading the first chapter of John the evangelist.

I have read of a scandalous minister that was struck at the heart, and converted, in reading that scripture: "You then, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?" etc., Romans 2:21.

We read that Paphnutius converted Thais and Ephron, two famous strumpets, from uncleanness, only with this scripture argument, "That God sees all things in the dark, when the doors are fast closed, the windows shut, the curtains drawn," Heb. 4:13.

I have read of a poor man who persuaded a young scholar to leave reading of poetry, etc., and fall upon reading of the Scripture, which accordingly he did; and it pleased the Lord, before he had read out Genesis, to change his heart and to turn him to the Lord in the primrose of his days, he being then but twenty years of age.

I have read of a young lady, called Potamia, of a very illustrious family, who endured very much in her martyrdom, by the extreme cruelty of Basilides her executioner, yet, after her death, he

bethinking himself of the holy words and scripture-expressions that were uttered by her, during her cruel torments, became a Christian, and within few days after was himself likewise crowned with martyrdom.

James Andreas, a godly minister, hearing of a Jew that for theft was hanged by the heels, with his head downward; having not seen that kind of punishment, he went to the place where he was hanging between two dogs that were always snatching at him to eat his flesh; the poor wretch repeated in Hebrew some verses of the Psalms, wherein he cried to God for mercy, whereupon Andreas went near to him and instructed him in the principles of Christian religion, about Christ the Messiah, etc., exhorting him to believe in him, and it pleased God so to bless his Scripture exhortations to him, that the dogs gave over tearing of his flesh, and the poor Jew desired him to procure that he might be taken down and baptized, and hung by the neck for the quicker despatch, which was done accordingly.

I might produce other instances—but let these suffice to provoke all young people to a speedy, serious, diligent, and constant study of the Scripture. Ah! sirs, you do not know how soon your blind minds may be enlightened, your hard hearts softened, your proud spirits humbled, your sinful natures changed, your defiled consciences purged, your distempered affections regulated, and your poor souls saved, by searching into the Scriptures, by reading the Scripture, and by pondering upon the Scripture. You should lay up the manna of God's word in your hearts, as Moses laid up the manna in the golden

pot, Heb.9:4. And as Tamar did with the staff and signet that she received from Judah, she laid them up until she came to save her life, and did save her life by it, as you may see in holy story, Genesis 38:18-36. The laying up of the word now, may be the saving of your souls another day.

I have read of little bees, that when they go out in stormy weather, they will carry a little gravel with them, that they may be balanced and not carried away with the wind. Ah! young men, young men, you had need to have your thoughts and hearts balanced with the precious Word, that you may not be carried away with "every wind of doctrine," as many have been in these days, to their destruction and confusion.

Narcissus, a beautiful youth, though he would not love those who loved him, yet afterwards fell in love with his own shadow. Ah, how many young men in these days, who were once lovely and hopeful, are now fallen in love with their own and others' shadows, with high, empty, airy notions, and with strange monstrous speculations—to their own damnation! 2 Thess. 2:10-12.

Holy Melancthon, being newly converted, thought it impossible for his hearers to withstand the evidence of the gospel—but soon after he complained that old Adam was too hard for young Melancthon.

Ah! young men, young men, if you do not in good earnest give up yourselves to the reading, to the studying, to the pondering, to the believing, to the practicing, to the applying, and to the living up to

the Scripture—Satan will be too hard for you, the world will be too hard for you, your lusts will be too hard for you, temptations will be too hard for you, and deceivers will be too hard for you, and in the end you will be miserable; and thus much for the first thing, etc.

Duty (2). Secondly, If you would be godly early, then you must *acquaint yourselves with **YOURSELVES** early.*

If you would be gracious in the spring and morning of your days, then you must see early how bad you are, how vile, how sinful, how wretched you are. No man begins to be good until he sees himself to be bad. The young prodigal never began to mend, he never thought of returning to his father, until he came to himself, until he began to return into his own soul, and saw himself in an undone condition, Luke 15:12-22.

Ah! young men, young men! You must see yourselves to be children of wrath, to be enemies of God, to be strangers from God, to be afar off from God, from Christ, from the covenant, from heaven; to be sin's servants, and Satan's bond-slaves. The ready way to be found, is to see yourselves lost. The first step to mercy, is to see your misery. The first step towards heaven is to see yourselves near to hell. You won't look after the physician of souls, you won't prize the physician of souls, you won't desire the physician of souls, you won't match with the physician of souls, you won't fall in love, in league with the physician of souls, you won't resign up yourselves to the physician of souls—until you come to see your wounds, until you come to feel

your diseases, until you see the symptoms, the plague-sores of divine wrath and displeasure upon you. As the whole do not need the physician, so they do not desire, they do not care for the physician. "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." Matthew 9:12

Ah! young men, as you would be godly early, begin to acquaint yourselves with your sinful selves early, begin to acquaint yourselves early with your natural and undone condition.

There is **a threefold self**.

(1.) There is a *NATURAL self*; as a man's parts, wit, reason, will, affections, and inclinations, etc.

(2.) A *RELIGIOUS self*; and so a man's duties, graces, obedience, righteousness, holiness, are called one's self.

(3.) There is a *SINFUL self*; and so a man's corruptions, lusts, sinful nature, and dispositions, are called one's self. Now, if ever you would be godly early, you must acquaint yourselves with your sinful selves early.

Demonicus being asked at what time he began to be a philosopher, answered, *When I began to know myself*. So a man never begins to be a Christian until he begins to know himself. And indeed, for a man to know himself, to acquaint himself with himself, is one of the hardest works in all the world. For as the eye can see all things but itself, so most can discern all faults—but their own. Henry the

Fourth, emperor of Germany, his usual speech was *many know much—but few know themselves*.

The very heathens did admire that saying as an oracle, *know and be acquainted with your own self*. The main exhortation of Chilo, one of the seven sages, was "Know yourself." And Plato records that this saying of Chilo, "Know yourself," was written in letters of gold upon the portal of Apollo's temple.

Juvenal says that this saying, "Know yourself," came from heaven. Macrobius says that the oracle of Apollo, being demanded what course should be taken for attaining to felicity, answered, *only teach a man to "know himself."*

Thus you see that both divinity and philosophy do agree in this, *that the best and surest way to true felicity is, to know ourselves, to acquaint ourselves with ourselves*.

This duty the apostle charges upon the Ephesians, "Remember that you, being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, that at that time you were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," Eph. 2:11-12.

Here are five ***withouts***: without Christ, without the church, without the promise, without hope, and without God in the world.

Man in his natural state is afar off, in three ways:

(1.) In point of opinion and apprehension.

(2.) In point of fellowship and communion.

(3.) In point of grace and conversion.

As you would be godly early, dwell much upon your corrupt nature early. Ah! such is the corruption of our nature, that propound any divine good to it, it is received as fire by water; propound any evil, then it is like fire to straw. It is like the foolish lecher, who made haste to kiss the fire; it is like that unctuous matter which the naturalists say sucks and snatches the fire to it, with which it is consumed. Until you come to be sensible of this, you will never begin to be godly; you will never look to have your hearts changed, and your souls saved.

The Ethiopians paint angels black, and devils white, in favor of their own complexion; and they say that if the brute creatures could draw a picture of the divine nature, they would make their shape the copy, and thus they flatter and delude themselves. Take heed, young men, take heed that you do not become cheats upon your own souls; take heed that you be not like those painters who, so as they can make a man's picture mirthful and gaudy, care not to draw it so as to resemble him. It is safest and best, O young man! to know the worst of yourself, and to know yourself as you are in yourself, and not as your own flattering heart, or as other flatterers, may represent you to yourself.

Duty (3). Thirdly, If you would be godly early, then you must *acquaint yourselves with **Jesus Christ** early.*

You must know him early. A man never begins to be godly until he begins to know him who is the fountain of all goodness: "This is life eternal, to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent," John 17:3.

The knowledge of Christ is the beginning of eternal life; it is the way to eternal life, it is a taste of eternal life, it is a sure pledge and pawn to the soul of eternal life.

The Spaniards say of Aquinas, that he who knows not him knows not anything—but he who knows him knows all things. He who knows Jesus Christ not notionally only—but practically; not apprehensively only—but affectively, he knows all things that may make him happy; but he who knows not Jesus Christ knows nothing which will stand him in good stead, when he shall lie upon a dying bed, and stand before a judgment seat.

Justin Martyr relates that when, in his discourse with Trypho, he mentioned the knowledge of Christ as conducing to our happiness and perfection, Trypho's friends laughed at it; but I hope better things of all those into whose hands this treatise shall fall.

Sirs! the sun is not more necessary to the world, nor the eye to the body, nor the pilot to the ship, nor the general to the army, etc., than

the knowledge of Christ early is necessary for all those who would be godly early.

Dear hearts, as ever you would be godly early, you must labor, even as for life, to **know and be thoroughly acquainted with these six things concerning Jesus Christ early.**

(1.) *First*, If you would be godly early, then you must know early *that there is everything in Christ that may encourage you to seek him and serve him, to love him and obey him, to believe on him, and to marry with him.*

If you look upon his names, his natures, his offices, his graces, his dignities, his excellencies, his royalties, his glories, his fulnesses—they all speak out as much.

Are you poor? Why, Christ has gold to enrich you, Rev. 3:18. Are you naked? Christ has white raiment to clothe you. Are you spiritually blind? Christ has eye-salve to enlighten you. Are you in straits? He has wisdom to counsel you. Are you unrighteous? He will be righteousness to you? Are you unholy? He will be holiness and sanctification to you, 1 Cor. 1:30. Are you hungry? He is bread to feed you. Are you thirsty? He is wine and milk to satisfy you. Are you weary? He is a bed to rest you. Are you sick? Why, he is a physician to cure you, etc. *Omne bonum in summo bono*, All good is in the chief good.

The creatures have their particular goodness, health has its particular goodness, and wealth has its particular goodness, and learning has its, and the favor of the creature has its, etc.—but now Jesus Christ he is a universal good. All the petty excellencies which are scattered abroad in the creatures are united in Christ; yes, all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth is epitomized in him. One Christ will be to you instead of all things else, because in him are all good things to be found. Abraham's servant brought forth jewels of silver and jewels of gold, to win Rebekah's heart to Isaac; so should you, O young men! be often in presenting to your own view all those amiable and excellent things that be in Christ, to win your hearts over to Christ early.

(2.) *Secondly*, If you would be godly early, then you must know early that ***Jesus Christ is mighty to save***.

He is able to save to the uttermost all those who come unto him, who believe in him, and who cast themselves upon him. The Lord has laid help upon one that is mighty. Christ saves perfectly, thoroughly, perpetually—all who come unto him.

The three tongues that were written upon the cross, in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, to witness Christ to be the king of the Jews, do each of them, in their several idioms, avouch this axiom, that Christ is an all-sufficient Savior; and "a threefold cord is not easily broken." They say of the oil at Rheims, that though it be continually spent in the inauguration of their kings of France, yet it never diminishes. Christ

is that pot of manna, that cruse of oil, that bottomless ocean, which never fails his people. There is in Christ an all-sufficiency for all creatures at all times, in all places.

The great Cham is said to have a tree full of pearls hanging by clusters; but what is the great Cham's tree to Christ, our tree of life, who has all variety and plenty of fruit upon him. The happinesses which come to believers by Christ are so **many**, that they cannot be numbered; so **great**, that they cannot be measured; so **copious**, that they cannot be defined; so **precious**, that they cannot be valued; all which speaks out the fullness and all-sufficiency of Christ.

There is in Christ, a fullness of abundance, and a fullness of redundancy, as well as a fullness of sufficiency.

There is in Christ,

1. The fullness of the Spirit.
2. The fullness of grace.
3. The fullness of the image of God.
4. The fullness of the Godhead.
5. The fullness of glory.

But I must not now open nor dilate on these things, lest I should tire both myself and the reader.

Plutarch, in the life of Phocion, tells us of a certain gentlewoman of Ionia, who showed the wife of Phocion all the rich jewels and precious stones she had. She answered her again, All my riches and jewels is my husband Phocion. So may a penitent sinner say of his blessed Savior—Christ is all my jewels, my riches, my treasures, my pleasures, etc.; his sufficiency is all these, and more than these, to me.

The Spanish ambassador, coming to see the treasury of St. Mark in Venice, which is cried up throughout the world, fell a-groping to find whether it had any *bottom*, and being asked why, answered, *In this among other things, my great Master's treasure differs from yours, in that his has no bottom, as I find yours to have*,—alluding to the mines in Mexico and Potosi. But what are the Spaniard's treasures to Christ's treasures? A man may, without much groping, find the bottom of all earthly treasures—but who can find the bottom of Christ's treasures? Should all created excellencies meet in one glorified bosom, yet they could not enable that glorious God-like creature to sound the bottom of those riches and treasures which are in Christ, Ephes. 3:8; all which speaks out Christ's all-sufficiency; and thus much for the second thing.

(3.) *Thirdly*, If you would be godly early, then you must know early, ***That there is a marvelous willingness and readiness in Christ to embrace, to entertain, to welcome returning sinners, and to show mercy and favor to them.***

The young prodigal did but think of returning to his father, and he ran and met him, and instead of kicking or killing him, his father kissed him and embraced him, his affections enkindled within him, and his compassions flowed out freely to him, Luke 15:20-22. "Ho! everyone who thirsts—come to the waters; and he who has no money—come, buy and eat, yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," Isaiah 55:1. Nazianzen says: Oh, God *gives* more willingly than others *sell*; if you will but accept, that is all the price; though you have no merits, though you have nothing in yourselves to encourage you, yet will you accept? If you will, all is freely yours; the waters shall be yours to cleanse you, and the milk yours to nourish you, and the bread yours to strengthen you, and the wine yours to comfort you. Here poor sinners are called three times to come: Come, says Christ, come, come, to show how marvelous ready and willing he is that poor sinners should taste of gospel delicacies.

So in John 7:37, "Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink." So in Rev. 22:17, "Let him who is athirst come, and whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." So in Rev. 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." So in that Luke 14:21, "The master of the house said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." Here is no man of quality, of dignity, of worldly pomp or glory, or of any self-sufficiency, that is invited to the feast—but a company of poor, ragged, deformed, slighted, neglected,

impoverished, wounded sinners; these are invited to feast with Christ.

Concerning this willingness of Christ, I shall speak more when I come to deal with old sinners in the close of this discourse, and to that I refer you for further and fuller satisfaction concerning the great readiness and willingness of Jesus Christ to entertain returning sinners.

(4.) *Fourthly*, If you would be godly early, then you must know early, ***That Jesus Christ is designed, sealed, and appointed by the Father to the office of a Mediator.***

"Labor not for the food which perishes—but for that doos which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him has God the Father sealed." God the Father has made Christ's commission authentical, as men do theirs by their seal. It is a metaphor, a simile taken from those who give commissions under hand and seal. God the Father has given it under his hand and seal, that Jesus Christ is the only person that he has appointed and sealed, allowed and confirmed, to the office of our redemption. If Jesus Christ was ever so able to save, and ever so willing and ready to save poor sinners—yet if he were not appointed, designed, and sealed, for that work, the awakened sinner would never look out after him, nor desire union with him, nor interest in him; and therefore it is of very great consequence to know that God the Father has sent and sealed Christ to be a Savior to his people.

"Him has God the Father sealed." Sealed by way of destination and sealed by way of qualification, sealed by his doctrine, sealed by his miracles, sealed by his baptism, sealed by his resurrection—but above all, sealed by his glorious unction. "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor." Isaiah 61:1-3, Luke 4:18. Neither saints nor angels are sealed and anointed to the great work of redemption—but the Lord Jesus is. You should always look upon the Lord Jesus as sealed and anointed to the office of a Mediator, and accordingly plead with him.

Ah, Lord! it is your office, as you are a sealed and an anointed Savior and Redeemer—to subdue my sins, to change my nature, to sanctify my heart, to reform my life, and to save my soul; and therefore do it for your name's sake, oh do it for your office' sake, do it for your glory's sake!

"You are anointed with the oil of gladness above your fellows," Psalm 45:7, Heb. 1:9. You have a larger effusion of the Spirit upon you than others; you are anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power after an

extraordinary measure and manner; you are endued with all heroic gifts and excellencies, plentifully, abundantly, transcendently; you are sealed and predestinated; you are invested into this office of Mediatorship under the Father's hand and seal: and therefore where should I go for salvation, for remission, for redemption, for grace, for glory—but to you?

(5.) *Fifthly*, If you would be godly early, then you must know early, ***that there is no way to salvation but by Jesus Christ.***

"Neither is there salvation in any other" (speaking of Christ), "for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved," Acts 4:12. If ever you are saved, you must be saved by him, and him only; you must not look for another Savior, nor you must not look for a co-Savior; you must be saved wholly by Christ and only by Christ, or you shall never be saved; you must cry out, as Lambert did when he was in the fire, and lifted up his hands, and fingers'-ends flaming, "None but Christ, none but Christ!"

When Augustus Caesar desired the senate to join two consuls with him for the better government of the state, the senate answered, that they held it as a diminution of his dignity, and a disparagement of their own judgment, to join any with so incomparable a man as Augustus. Ah! friends, it is a diminution of Christ's dignity, sufficiency, and glory, in the business of your salvation, to join anything with the Lord Jesus; and it is the greatest disparagement in the world to your own judgments, knowledge, prudence, and

wisdom, to yoke any with Christ in the work of redemption, in the business of salvation.

Augustine says, that Marcellina hung Christ's picture and the picture of Pythagoras together; many there are, not only in Rome—but in England (yes, I am afraid in London), who join Christ and their works together, Christ and their prayers together, Christ and their teachers together, Christ and their mournings together, Christ and their hearings together, Christ and their alms together.

Ah, what a poor, what a weak, what an impotent, what an insufficient Savior do these men make Jesus Christ to be! Except these men come off from these things, and come up only to Jesus Christ, in the great business of salvation, they will as certainly and as eternally perish, notwithstanding their hearing, knowing, and talking much of Christ—as those who never heard of Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament, God commands them not to wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together, "neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon you," Deut.22:11. This law was figurative, and shows us that in the case of our justification, acceptance, and salvation—we are not to join our works, our services, with the righteousness of Christ. God abhors a linsey-woolsey righteousness. And as by the letter of this law, in the Hebrews' account, one thread of wool in a linen garment, or one linen thread in a woollen garment, made it unlawful, so the least manner of mixture in the business of justification makes all null and

void. "And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work." He who shall mix his righteousness with Christ's, he who shall mix his puddle with Christ's purple blood, his rags with Christ's royal robes, his copper with Christ's gold, his water with Christ's wine, etc., is in the ready way to perish forever.

On earth kings love no consorts; power is impatient of participation. Christ will be Alexander or *Nemo*, nobody; he will be all in all in the business of justification, or he will be nothing at all. We must say of Christ, as it was once said of Caesar, *He may have a companion, etc. —but he must not have a competitor*, 1 Cor. 1:30, Romans 5:19-20.

Let us say of Christ, as the heathen once said of his petty gods, *so long as he had his Jupiter as his friend, he regarded them not*. So, so long as we have our Jesus as our friend, and his righteousness and blood as ours, we shall despise all other things, and abhor the bringing of anything into competition with him. A real Christian cares not for anything that has not something of Christ in it. *He who holds not wholly with Christ, does very shamefully neglect Christ*, says Gregory Nazianzen. (Eph. 3:9-10, Psalm 61:15-16, 19, compared.)

There is no other name, no other nature, no other blood, no other merits, no other person to be justified and saved by—but Jesus Christ. You may run from creature to creature, and from duty to

duty, and from ordinance to ordinance, and when you have wearied and tired out yourselves in seeking ease and rest, satisfaction and remission, justification and salvation, in one way and another, you will be forced after all to come to Christ, and to cry out, *Ah! none but Christ, none but Christ!* Isaiah 55:2, Rom.10:3. Ah! none to Christ, none to Christ; no works to Christ; no duties, no services to Christ; no prayers, no tears to Christ; no righteousness, no holiness to Christ. Well! friends, remember this, that all the tears in the world cannot wipe off meritoriously one sin, nor all the grace and holiness that is in angels and men buy out the pardon of the least transgression. All remission is only by the blood of Christ.

(6.) *Sixthly* and lastly, If you would be godly early, then you must know early, ***that the heart of Jesus Christ is as much set upon sinners now that he is in heaven, as ever it was when he was upon earth.***

Christ is no less loving, less mindful, less desirous of sinners' eternal welfare now he is heaven in a far country—than he was when he lived on earth. Witness his continuing the ministry of reconciliation among poor sinners in all ages; witness the constant treaties, that by his ambassadors and Spirit he still has with poor sinners, about the things of their peace, the things of eternity; witness his continual knockings, his continual callings upon poor sinners by his word, rod, Spirit—to open, to repent, to lay hold on mercy, and to be at peace with him; witness his continual wooing of poor sinners in the face of all neglects and put-offs, in the face of all delays and denials, in the

face of all harsh entertainment and churlish answers, in the face of all gainsayings and carnal reasonings, in the face of all the scorn and contempt that wretched sinners put upon him, and witness that plain word, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever," Heb. 13:8. Christ is the same afore time, in time, and after time, he is unchangeable in his essence, in his promises, and in his affections: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come," Rev. 1:8, 11; 21:6; 22:13.

The phrase is taken from the Greek letters, whereof Alpha is the first and Omega is the last. *The first and last letter of the Greek alphabet is a description of me*, says Christ, *who am before all and after all, who am above all and in all, who am unchangeable in myself, and in my thoughts and good will to poor sinners*. Therefore do not, poor souls, entertain any hard thoughts concerning Jesus Christ, as if he was less mindful, less pitiful, and less merciful to poor souls now that he is in heaven, than he was when his abode was in this world.

And thus I have gone over those six things that you must know concerning Christ early, if ever you be godly early. When Pope Leo lay upon his death-bed, Cardinal Bembus citing a text of Scripture to comfort him, he replied, "Away with these baubles concerning Christ!" But I hope better things of you, and do desire that you will say of all things below this knowledge of Christ that I have opened to you, as that devout pilgrim, who, traveling to Jerusalem, and by the way visiting many brave cities, with their rare monuments, and meeting with many friendly entertainments, would often say, I must

not stay here, this is not Jerusalem. Ah! so do you, young men and women, in the midst of all your worldly delights and contents, cry out, *Oh! we must not stay here, this is not Jerusalem, this is not that knowledge of Christ that I must have, if ever I am happy here and blessed hereafter.*

Duty (4). Fourthly and lastly, If you would be godly early, then **you must acquaint yourselves with those who are godly early.**

Direction (1). First, If you would be gracious in the spring and morning of your youth, then you must begin early to **be much in with those who are much in with Christ, who lie near his heart and know much of his mind.** "He who walks with wise men shall be wise—but a companion of fools shall be destroyed," or, as the Hebrew has it, shall be broken in pieces, as when an army is broken and routed by an enemy. *Walking with the wise, he shall be wise*, for so the original has it. It is not *talking* with the wise—but *walking* with the wise, which will make you wise; it is not your commending and praising of the wise—but your walking with the wise, which will make you wise; it is not your taking a few turns with the wise which will make you wise—but your walking with the wise which will make you wise. There is no getting much good by those who are godly—but by making them your ordinary and constant companions.

Ah, friends! you should do as Joseph in Egypt, of whom the Scripture says, Psalm 105:22 (according to the Hebrew phrase), that he tied

the princes of Pharaoh's court about his heart. If ever you would gain by the saints, you must bind them upon your souls, you must labor to have very near, close, and intimate communion with them.

The Jews have a proverb, that two dry sticks put to a green one will kindle it. The best way to be in a flame God-ward, Christ-ward, heavenward, and holiness-ward, is to be among the dry sticks, the kindle-coals, the saints; for as live coals kindle those who are dead, so lively Christians will heat and enliven those who are dead God-wards, Christ-wards, heaven-wards, and holiness-wards. "As iron sharpens iron, so does the face of a man his friend," Proverbs 27:17.

Men's wits, parts, and gifts, and industry, commonly grow more strong, vigorous, and quick, by friendly conference and communion.

And as he who comes where sweet spices and ointments are stirring, carries away a sweet savor with him, so he who converses with those who are godly shall carry away that goodness and sweetness with him which shall render him sweet, desirable, and delectable to others. Polemon, whom Augustine speaks of, who was all for wine and play, etc., became a brave man when he came acquainted with the philosopher's school. So many young men, that have been all for wine and women, for playing and toying, for vanity and folly, have become brave men, precious men, by the company, counsel, and example of those who were gracious.

Doctor Taylor, the martyr, rejoiced that ever he came into prison, because he came there to have acquaintance with that angel of God,

John Bradford, as he calls him: so, doubtless, many young people there be that have much cause to rejoice, and forever to bless the Lord, that ever they came acquainted with such and such who fear the Lord, and who walk in his ways, for the good that they have received by them.

Algerius, an Italian martyr, said he had rather be in prison with Cato, than with Caesar in the senate house. Ah! young men, young men, you were better be with the people of God, when they are in the lowest and most contemptible condition, than with the great wicked ones of the world, when they are in all their royalty and glory. In the day of account you will find that they have made the best market, who have rather chosen to keep company with Lazarus, though in his rags, than they would with others keep company with Dives, though in his purple robes.

Well! young men, remember this, *clothes and company do oftentimes tell tales, in a mute but significant language*. Tell me with whom you go, and I will tell you what you are, says the Spanish proverb. Cicero, though a heathen, had rather to have no companion, than a bad one. The Lord grant that this heathen, and others among them, that were of the same mind with him, may never rise up in judgment against any of you, into whose hands this treatise may fall.

And thus I have despatched those four things that you must be acquainted with early, namely, the Scripture, your own hearts and

conditions, the Lord Jesus Christ, and those who fear him, if ever you would be godly early.

Direction (2). Secondly, If you would be godly early, if you would seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days, Then **you must *shun the occasions of sin early***. A man will never begin to be godly, until he begins to decline those occasions that have made him bad: 1 Thes. 5:22, "Abstain from all appearances of evil."

You must shun and be shy of the very appearance of sin, of the very shows and shadows of sin. The word *eidos*, which is ordinarily rendered appearance, signifies kind, or sort; and so the meaning of the apostle seems to be this, "Abstain from all sorts, or the whole kind of evil;" from all that is truly so, be it ever so small.

The least sin is dangerous. Caesar was stabbed with needles, and many have been eaten up by mice and lice.

The least spark may consume the greatest house, the least leak may sink the greatest ship, the least sin is enough to undo your soul; and therefore shun all the occasions that lead unto it.

Job made a covenant with his eyes, Job 31:1; Joseph would not be in the room where his mistress was, Gen. 39:10; and David, when himself, would not sit with vain people, Psalm 26:3-7. As long as there is fuel in our hearts for a temptation, we cannot be secure; he who has gunpowder about him, had need keep far enough off from

sparks; he who is either tender of his credit abroad, or comfort at home, had need shun, and be shy of the very show and shadow of sin; he who would neither wound conscience nor credit, God nor gospel, had need hate "the garment spotted with the flesh," Jude 23.

In the law, 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 affinity with those who worshiped them, and all lest they should be drawn by those occasions to commit idolatry with them. He who would not *taste* of the forbidden fruit, must not so much as *gaze* on it; and he who would not be bitten by the serpent, must not so much as parley with the serpent.

It is very observable, that in the law, the Nazarite was not only commanded to abstain from wine and strong drink—but also he might not eat grapes, whether moist or dry, or anything that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. But why not these small things, in which there could be no danger of drunkenness? Surely, lest by the contentment of these, he might be drawn to desire the wine, and so be brought on to sin, to break his vow, and so make work for hell, or for the physician of souls. God hereby forbidding the most remote occasions, shows how wary and exactly careful men should be to shun and avoid all occasions, provocations, and appearances of evil; and indeed we had need to keep off from slippery places who can hardly stand fast on dry ground.

He who ventures upon the occasion of sin and then prays, "Lord, lead me not into temptation," is like him that thrusts his finger into the fire, and then prays that it may not be burnt; or like him that is resolved to quench the fire with oil, which, instead of quenching it, is as fuel to feed it and increase it. It is a greater miracle not to fall, being among strong temptations, than it is to raise up the dead; he who would not be defiled, must not touch pitch; he who would not be burnt, must not carry fire in his bosom; he who would not eat the meat, must not meddle with the broth; he who would not fall into the pit, must not dance upon the brink: "Keep far from a false matter," *Exod. 23:7*. He who will not fly from the occasions and allurements of sin, though they may seem ever so pleasant to the eye, or sweet to the taste—shall find them in the end more sharp than vinegar, more bitter than wormwood, more deadly than poison.

There is a great truth in that saying of the son of Sirach, "He who loves danger, shall perish therein; he who will not decline danger, shall not be able to decline destruction."

Socrates speaks of two young men that flung away their belts when, being in an idol temple, the lustrating water fell upon them, detesting, says the historian, "the garment spotted by the flesh;" and will you, O young men, play and toy with the occasions of sin? The Lord forbid.

There are stories of several heathens that have shunned and avoided the occasions of sin, and will you dare to venture upon the occasions

of sin?

Alexander would not see the woman after whom he might have lusted.

Scipio Africanus, warring in Spain, took New Carthage by storm, at which time a beautiful and noble virgin fled to him for support to preserve her chastity. He being but twenty-four years old, and so in the heat of youth, hearing of it, would not allow her to come into his sight for fear of temptation—but caused her to be restored in safety to her father.

Livia counseled her husband Augustus, not only not to do wrong—but not to seem to do so, etc.

Caesar would not search Pompey's cabinet, lest he should find new matters of revenge.

Plato mounted upon his horse, and judging himself a little moved with pride, did presently light from his horse, lest he should be overtaken with loftiness in riding.

Theseus is said to cut off his golden locks, lest his enemies should take advantage by taking hold of them.

Ah! young men, young men, shall the very heathens thus shun and fly from the occasion of sin, and will not you? will not you who sit under the sunshine of the gospel? These will in the great day of

account be sad and sore witnesses against those who dally and play with the occasions of sin.

To prevent carnal worry, Christ sends his disciples to school, to the irrational creatures (Matt. 6:26-32). And to prevent your closing with the occasions of sin, let me send you to school to the like creatures, that you may learn by them to shun and avoid the occasions of sin.

The *Sepiae*, a certain kind of fish, perceiving themselves in danger of taking, by an instinct which they have, they do darken the water, and so many times escape the net which is laid for them.

Geese, they say, when they fly over Taurus they keep stones in their mouths, lest by goggling they should discover themselves to the eagles, which are among the mountains waiting for them. Now, if all these considerations put together will not work you to decline the occasions of sin, I know not what will. There is a truth in that old saying—

He who will no evil do,

Must do nothing belongs thereto.

The Israelites must have no leaven in their houses until the Passover be done, lest they should be tempted to eat of it, Exod. 13.

*Direction (3). Thirdly, If you would be godly early, then **you must remember the eye of God early.***

If you would seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days, then you must study **God's omnipresence** early. "Does not he see my ways, and count all my steps?" "For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he sees all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves," Psalm 139:2-14; Job 31:4, 21-22.

I have read that Paphnutius converted two famous young strumpets, Thais and Ephron, from immorality, only with this argument, *that God sees all things in the dark, when the doors are fast, the windows shut, and the curtains drawn*. By this very argument Solomon labors to take off his young men from carnal and sinful courses: "And why will you, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his goings," Proverbs 5:20-21. You may deceive all the world, like that counterfeit Alexander in Josephus his story—but Augustus will not be deceived; he has quicker and sharper eyes.

Ah! young men, young men, you may deceive this man and that, and as easily deceive yourselves—but you cannot deceive him, who is *totus oculus*, **all-eye**. As the eyes of a well-drawn picture are fastened upon you which way soever you turn, so are the eyes of the Lord. I have read of one who, being tempted to adultery, said they could not be private enough, and being carried from room to room, answered, We are not yet private enough, *God is here!*

Ah, friends! His eyes, which are ten thousand times brighter than the sun, compasses your words, your ways, your works, your thoughts, your bed, your table, your bench. The Egyptian hieroglyphic for God was an *eye* on a *scepter*, showing that he *sees* and *rules* all things, Jer. 13:27, 29:23.

Ah, friends! All thoughts, words, hopes, and hearts, are naked, opened, dissected and quartered before that God with whom you have to do. God is very precise and exact in marking and observing what is done by men, that he may render to every man according to his works.

Ah! young men and women, the eye of God should be more to you than all the world besides. Oh that the Scripture might be written with the pen of a diamond upon your hearts. "Should you not fear me? Should you not tremble in my presence?" Jer. 5:22. There is a great truth in that saying of his, *A great necessity of goodness is from hence put into us, because we do all things before the eyes of a judge that sees all things.*

*Direction (4). Fourthly, If you would be godly early, then **you must hearken to the voice of CONSCIENCE early**, 2 Tim. 1:3.*

A man will never begin to be godly until he begins to hearken to what conscience speaks. So long as a man turns a deaf ear to conscience, he is a safe prisoner to Satan, and a sure enemy to God, Psalm 58:4, John 3:20-21. Ah! how godly might many have been had they but begun early to hearken to conscience!

Ah! young men, do not dally with conscience, do not play, do not trifle with conscience, do not stop your ears against conscience. He who will not in his youth give conscience audience, shall at last be forced to hear such lectures from conscience, as shall make his life a very hell. A sleepy conscience is like a sleepy lion, when he awakes, he roars and tears; so will conscience, Mark 9:22. Conscience is a thousand witnesses for or against a man. He who has long turned the deaf ear to conscience, shall at last find his conscience like Prometheus' vulture, that lies ever a-gnawing. Judas found it so, and Spira found it so, and Blair, a great councillor of Scotland, found it so.

I have read of one *John Hofmeister*, who fell sick in his inn, as he was traveling towards Auspurg in Germany, and grew to that horror of conscience, that they had to bind him in his bed with chains, where he cried out, that he was forever cast off by God, and that the promises that were set before him would do him no good, and all because he had wounded his conscience, and turned a deaf ear to conscience.

Well! young men, if you will not early hearken to conscience, you shall at last hear conscience saying to you, as the probationer disciple said to Christ, "Master, I will follow you wherever you go," Mat.8:19; so says conscience, Sinner, I have called upon you many a thousand times, and told you, that I must by commission be your best friend, or your worst enemy—but you would not hear. Therefore now I will follow you where ever you go. Fast, and I will follow you, and fill you

with horrors and terrors. Feast, and I will follow you, and show you such a handwriting upon the wall, as shall cause your countenance to change, your thoughts to be troubled, the joints of your loins to be loosed, and your knees dashed one against another, Dan. 5:5-6. Stay at home, and I will follow you from bed to board. Go abroad, and I will follow you into all places and companies, and you shall know that it is an evil and a bitter thing, that you have so often and so long neglected my calls, and disobeyed my voice, and walked contrary to me. How you shall find a truth in that saying of Luther, *one drop of an evil conscience swallows up the whole sea of worldly joy.*

Well! young men, there is a day coming wherein a good conscience will be better than a good purse, for then the Judge will not be put off with a suit of compliments or fair words, nor drawn aside with hope of reward; and therefore, as you would be able to hold up your heads in that day, make conscience of hearkening to the voice of conscience in this your day.

Direction (5). Fifthly, If you would be godly early, then **you must know early wherein true happiness lies.**

For a man will never begin to be godly until he begins to understand wherein his happiness consists.

The philosophers, speaking of happiness, were divided into two hundred and eighty-eight opinions, everyone intending something, and yet resolving nothing. Therefore the man in Plutarch, hearing them wrangle about man's *summum bonum*, chief good, one placing

it in this, and another in that, he went to the market and bought up all that was good, hoping, among all, he should not miss of it—but he did. Many look for happiness in **sin**, others look for it in the **creatures**—but they must all say, *It is not in us*, Isaiah 56:12, Job 28:14: nothing can give what it has not. If the conduit pipe has no water, it can give no water; if a man has no money, he can give no money; if the creatures have no happiness, they can give no happiness. Now this jewel, this pearl, **happiness**, is not to be found in the bosom, in the bosom of creatures. In a word, because I must hasten to a close, man's happiness lies,

First, In communion with God, as experience and Scripture demonstrates. "Happy is that people who are in such a case (but give me that word again), yes, happy is that people whose God is the Lord," Psalm 144:15. A man whose soul is in communion with God shall find more pleasure in a desert, in a dungeon, in a den, yes, in death—than in the palace of a prince, than in all worldly delights and contents, etc.

Secondly, In pardon of sin. "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit," Psalm 32:1-2. It is not, blessed is the *honorable* man—but blessed is the pardoned man. It is not, blessed is the rich man—but blessed is the pardoned man. It is not, blessed is the *learned* man—but blessed is the pardoned man. It is not, blessed is the *popular* man—but blessed is the pardoned man. It is not, blessed is the *victorious* man

—but blessed is the pardoned man. *Do with me what you will, since you have pardoned my sins*, says Luther.

Thirdly, In a complete fruition and enjoyment of God, when we shall be here no more. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," Mat. 5:8; "Now they see him but darkly—but in heaven they shall see him face to face; they shall know as they are known," 1 Cor. 13:12. But of these things I have spoken largely elsewhere, and therefore shall satisfy myself with these hints.

*Direction (6). Lastly, If you would be godly early, then **you must break your covenant with SIN early.***

You must fall out with your lusts early; you must arm and fence yourselves against sin early, Isaiah 28:15-18. A man never begins to fall in with Christ until he begins to fall out with his sins. Until sin and the soul be two, Christ and the soul cannot be one. Now, to work your hearts to this, you should always look upon sin under these notions:

*Notion (1). First, If you would have the league dissolved between sin and your souls early, then **look upon sin under the notion of an ENEMY.*** "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul," 1 Peter 2:11. As the viper is killed by the young ones in her belly, so are poor sinners betrayed and killed by their own lusts, that are nourished in their bosoms.

Pittacus, a philosopher, challenged Phylon the Athenian captain, to single combat—carried a *net* privily, and so caught him, and overcame him. So does sin with poor sinners—the dangerous, pernicious, malignant nature of sin. You may see in the story of the Italian, who first made his enemy deny God, and then stabbed him to the heart, and so at once murdered both body and soul. Sin betrays us into the hand of the devil—as Delilah did Samson into the hands of the Philistines.

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. Ah! souls, have not you often found it so?

When Phocas the murderer thought to secure himself by building high walls, he heard a voice from heaven telling him, that though he built his bulwarks ever so high, yet sin within would soon undermine all.

Ambrose reports of one Theotimus, that having a disease upon his body, the physician told him, that except he abstained from intemperance, drunkenness, uncleanness, he would lose his eyes; his heart was so desperately set upon his sins, that he cries out, then, *farewell, sweet light!* Ah, how did his lusts war both against body and soul!

The "*old man*" is like a treacherous friend, and a friendly traitor. Though it be a hard thing to fight with a man's lusts, yet you must

fight or die. **If you are not the death of your sins, they will prove the death of your souls.**

The oracle told the Cyrrheans, *they could not be happy, unless they waged war night and day*; no more can we, except we live and die fighting against our lusts.

Ah! young men, can you look upon sin under the notion of an enemy, and not break with it, and not arm against it?

Well! remember this, the pleasure and sweetness which follows victory over sin, is a thousand times beyond that seeming sweetness that is in sin; and as victory over sin is the sweetest victory, so it is the greatest victory. There is no conquest as great as that which is gotten over a man's own corruptions. "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty: and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city," Proverbs 16:32.

It is noble to overcome an enemy without—but it is more noble to overcome an enemy within; it is honorable to overcome fiery flames—but it is far more honorable to overcome fiery lusts.

When Valentinian the emperor was upon his dying-bed, among all his victories only one COMFORTED him, and that was victory over his worst enemy, namely, his own naughty heart.

Ah! young men, young men, your worst enemies are within you, and all their plots, designs, and assaults are upon your souls, your most

noble part. They know if that citadel be won, all is their own, and you are undone, and shall be their slaves forever; and therefore it stands upon you to arm yourselves against these inbred enemies; and if you engage Christ in the quarrel, you will carry the day; and when you shall lie upon your dying-beds, you will then find that there is no comfort to that which arises from the conquests of your own hearts, your own lusts.

Notion (2). Secondly, If you would break covenant with sin, if you would arm and fence yourselves against sin early, then ***look upon sin as the soul's BONDS***, Gal. 3:10, John 8:34.

For as bonds tie things together, so does sin tie the sinner and the curse together. It binds the sinner and wrath together, it links the sinner and hell together: "I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," Acts 8:23. Iniquity is a chain, a bond. Now, bonds and chains gall the body, and so does sin the soul; and as poor captives are held fast in their chains, so are sinners in their sins; they cannot redeem themselves by price, nor by power, 2 Tim. 2:26.

Ah! young men, young men! no bondage like soul bondage, no slavery like soul slavery. The Israelites' bondage under Pharaoh, and the Christians' bondage under the Turks, is but the bondage of the body, of the baser and ignoble part of man; but yours is soul bondage, and soul slavery, which is the saddest and greatest of all.

Ah, friends! you should never look upon your sins but you should look upon them as your bonds; yes, as the worst bonds that ever were. All other chains are golden chains, chains of pearl, compared to those chains of iron and brass, those chains of lust, with which you are bound. Ah! who can thus look upon his chains, his sins, and not loathe them, and not labor for freedom from them? Justinus the emperor's motto was, *liberty is invaluable*. If civil liberty is, surely spiritual liberty is much more. If you ask souls who were once in a state of bondage—but are now Christ's free men, they will tell you so.

It was a good observation of Chrysostom, that Joseph was the free man and his mistress was the servant, when she was at the beck of her own lusts, when she tempted and he refused. Such as live most above sin and temptation, are the greatest freemen; others, who live under the power of their lusts, are but slaves, and in bonds, though they dream and talk of freedom, Titus 3:3.

Notion (3). Thirdly, If you would break league with sin, and arm and fence yourselves against it, then **look always upon sin under the notion of FIRE**.

"And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire," Jude 23. Oh, snatch them out of their sins, as you would snatch a child, a friend, out of the fire, or as the angel snatched Lot out of Sodom—hastily, and with a holy violence. Natural fire may burn the house, the goods, the treasure, the servant, the child, the wife, the body; but this fire burns the soul, it destroys and consumes that noble part which is

more worth than all the treasures of a thousand worlds. Every man has a hand and a heart to quench the fire which burns his neighbor's house—but few men have either hands or hearts to quench the fire that burns their neighbor's souls; this is, and this shall be, for a lamentation.

I have read of one who, upon the violence of any temptation to sin, would lay his hand upon burning coals, and being not able to abide it, would say to himself, '*Oh, how unable shall I be to endure the pains of hell*'—and this restrained him from evil. But what is the fire of hell to the fire of sin? Now, to provoke you to look upon sin under the notion of fire, consider with me the sundry resemblances between material and immaterial fire, between corporeal common fire and between this spiritual fire, sin. As,

[1.] *First, **Fire is terrible and dreadful.*** A ship on fire, a house on fire, oh how dreadful is it! So sin set home upon the conscience is exceeding terrible and dreadful. "My *iniquity* is greater than I can bear." Sin or iniquity is often put for the *punishment* of sin, by a metonymy of the cause for the effect; for sin is the natural parent of punishment. "My iniquity," says Cain, "is so great, and lies so heavy, so terrible and dreadful upon my conscience, that it cannot be forgiven," Gen. 4:13, and thus he stabs two at once—the mercy of God, and his own soul. So Judas, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood; and he went and hanged himself," Mat. 27:3-5.

As there is no fighting with a mighty fire, so there is no bearing up when God sets home sin upon the conscience; a man will then choose strangling or hanging, rather than living under such wounds and lashes of conscience. Histories abound with instances of this nature; but I must hasten to a close.

[2.] *Secondly, **Fire is most dangerous and pernicious*** when it breaks forth of the chimney, or of the house; so it is with sin. Sin is bad in the eye, worse in the tongue, worser in the heart—but worst of all in the life. Fire, when out of its proper place, may do much hurt in the house—but when it flames *abroad*, then it does most mischief to others, 2 Sam. 12:9-15.

Sin in the *heart* may undo a man—but sin in the *life* may undo others as well as a man's self. Set a guard upon the *eye*, a greater upon your *heart*—but the greatest of all upon your *life*, Job 30:1, Proverbs 4:23, Eph. 5:15.

Salvian relates how the heathen did reproach some Christians, who by their lewd lives made the gospel of Christ to be a reproach. "Where," said they, "is that good law which they believe? Where are those rules of godliness which they do learn? They read the holy Gospel—and yet are unclean; they hear the apostles' writings—and yet are drunk; they follow Christ—and yet disobey Christ; they profess a holy law—and yet lead impure lives."

But the lives of other Christians have been so holy, that the very heathens observing them, have said, *Surely this is a good God—*

whose servants are so good.

It is noble when the life of a Christian is a commentary upon Christ's life.

One speaking of the Scripture, says, *they are words to be lived, and practiced, not read only.*

A heathen [Plutarch] advises us to live so circumspectly, as if our enemies did always behold us. And said another [Epictetus], *For shame, either live as Stoics, or leave off the name of Stoics.* Sirs, live as Christians, or lay down the name of Christians.

[3.] Thirdly, ***Fire hardens***, it makes the weak and limber clay to become stiff and strong for the potter's use. So sin hardens: it hardens the heart against the commands of God, the calls of Christ, and the wrestlings of the Spirit. And as you see in Pharaoh, the Jews, and most that are under the sound of the gospel, Jer. 5:3; Jer. 19:15; Isaiah 9:13.

Ah! how many has this fire—sin—hardened in these days, by working them to slight soul-softening means, and by drawing them to entertain hardening thoughts of God, and to fall in with soul-hardening company, and soul-hardening principles, and soul-hardening examples of hardened and unsensible sinners, Jer. 2:25; Jer. 18:12. One long since thus complained, that they did more calmly pass by the injuries done to Christ, than those which are done unto themselves. This age is full of such hardened unsensible souls.

[4.] Fourthly, ***Fire is a lively active element***, so is sin. Ah! how lively and active was this fire in Abraham, David, Job, Peter, Paul, and other saints! Though Christ by his death has given it its mortal wound, yet it lives, and is and will be active in the dearest saints. Though sin and grace were not born together, neither shall they die together; yet while believers live in this world, they must live together.

One speaks of a fig-tree which grew in a stone-wall, and all means were used to kill it. They cut off the branches and it grew again, they cut down the body and it grew again, they cut it up by the root and still it lived and grew, until they pulled down the stone-wall. Until death shall pull down our stone-walls, sin will live, this fire will burn.

We may say of sin as some say of cats, that they have many lives; kill them and they will live again, kill them again and they will live again; so kill sin once and it will live again, kill it again and it will live again, etc. Sin oftentimes is like that monster Hydra, cut off one head and many will rise up in its place.

[5.] Fifthly, ***Fire is of a penetrating nature***, it pierces and winds itself into every corner and chink, and so does sin wind itself into our thoughts, words, and works. It will wind itself into our understandings to darken them, and into our judgments to pervert them, and into our wills to poison them, and into our affections to disorder them, and into our consciences to corrupt them, and into our carriages [walk and conversation; conduct or actions] to debase

them. Sin will wind itself into every duty and every mercy, it will wind itself into every one of our enjoyments and concernments.

Hannibal having overcome some Romans, put their armor on his soldiers, and so by that policy, they being taken for Romans, won a city. But what are Hannibal's wiles to sin's wiles or Satan's wiles? If you have a mind to be acquainted with their wiles, look over my treatise, called, "Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices."

[6,] Sixth and lastly, ***Fire is a devouring, a consuming element***, Psalm 21:9. It turns all fuel into ashes. It is a wolf that eats up all. So sin is a fire that devours and consumes all; it turned Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes; it has destroyed the Chaldean, Persian, and Grecian kingdoms, and will at last destroy the Roman kingdom also. This wolf ate up Samson's strength, Absalom's beauty, Ahithophel's policy, and Herod's glory, etc. It has drowned one world already, and will at last burn another, even this. Oh the hopes, the hearts, the happiness, the joys, the comforts, the souls that this fire, sin, has consumed and destroyed! etc.

Peter Camois, in his *Draught of Eternity*, tells us, that some devout people caused those words of the prophet Isaiah to be written in letters of gold upon their chimney-pieces: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Isaiah 33:14.

Ah! young men, young men, I desire that you may always look upon sin under the notion of fire, yes, as such fire as lays the foundation

for everlasting fire, for everlasting burnings; and this may work when other things will not.

I have read of a chaste woman, who being pressured to commit sin with a lewd Russian—that she called for a pan of burning coals, and requested him for her sake to hold his finger in them but one hour. He said this was an extreme and harsh request. She replied that seeing he would not do so much as to put one finger upon the coals for one hour for her—that she could not yield to do that for which she should be tormented, both body and soul, in hell-fire forever. The application is easy, etc.

Notion (4). Fourthly, If you would break with sin early, if you would arm against sin in the spring and morning of your days, then you should ***look upon sin under the notion of a THIEF.***

And, indeed, sin is the greatest thief, the greatest robber in the world. It robbed the angels of all their glory, 2 Pet. 2:4; it robbed Adam of his paradise and felicity, Gen. 3, and it has robbed all mankind of five precious jewels, the least of which was more worth than heaven and earth.

1. Sin has robbed them of the holy and glorious image of God, which would have been engraved upon them, had Adam not fallen into sin.
2. Sin has robbed them of divine sonship--and has made them slaves of Satan.

3. Sin has robbed them of divine friendship--and made them enemies to God.

4. Sin has robbed them of communion and fellowship with God--and made them strangers and aliens to Him.

5. Sin has robbed them of their glory--and made them vile and miserable.

It has robbed many a oration of the gospel, and many a parish of many a happy guide, and many a Christian of the favor of God, the joys of the Spirit, and the peace of conscience.

Oh! the health, the wealth, the honor, the friends, the relations—which sin has robbed thousands of.

More—It has robbed many of their gifts, their arts, their parts, their memory, their judgment, yes, their very reason, as you may see in Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Ahithophel, Haman, Herod, and those Babylonish princes that accused Daniel.

And so Menippus of Phoenicia, who, having lost his goods, strangled himself. And so Dinarcus Phidon, at a certain loss, cut his own throat. By all which it is most apparent, that sin is the greatest thief in all the world.

Oh! then, who would not break league and covenant with it, and be still in pressing of God to do justice upon it! etc.

*Notion (5). Fifthly, If you would break with sin, and arm and fence yourselves against sin early, then you must look **upon sin under the notion of a BURDEN.***

And indeed, of all burdens—sin is the heaviest burden in all the world: "For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me," Psalm 40:12. "For my sins have flooded over my head; they are a burden too heavy for me to bear." Psalm 38:4. "Sin is a weight which easily besets us," Heb.12:1. Poor souls; sin is a burden that so troubles them and puzzles them, that so curbs them and girds them, that so presses and oppresses them, as that it wrings many bitter tears from their eyes, and many sad and grievous sighs and groans from their hearts. "Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin?" Romans 7:24

Again, as sin is a burden to Christians, so it is a burden to **heaven**. It made heaven weary to bear the angels that fell; no sooner had they sinned but heaven groans to be eased of them, and it never left groaning until justice had turned them a-groaning to hell, Jude 6.

Again, as sin is a burden to heaven, so it is a burden to the **earth**. Witness her swallowing up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, their wives, children, goods, servants, etc., Num. 16:26-35. Ah, sinners! your sins makes the very earth to groan—they make the earth weary of bearing you. Oh, how does the earth groan and long to swallow up those

earthly wretches, whose hopes, whose hearts, are buried in the earth! These shall have none of heaven—but enough of earth, when they come to die.

Cornelius a Lapide tells a story, that he heard of a famous preacher, who, showing the bondage of the creature, Romans 8:19-23, brings in the creature complaining thus: *Oh, that we could serve such as are godly; oh, that our substance might be incorporated into godly people, that so we might rise into glory with them; oh, that our substance might not be incorporated into the flesh of sinners, for if it be, we shall go to hell, and would any creatures go to hell? oh, we are weary of bearing sinners! we are weary of serving of sinners!* Thus the creatures groan, thus the creatures complain, the sinner's sins forcing them to it, etc.

Again, sin is a burden to **God**: "Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves," Amos 2:13. By this plain, pithy, country comparison, God shows how sadly he is pressed and oppressed, how sorely he is wearied and tired with those people's sins. Divine patience is even worn out. Justice has lifted up her hand, and will bear with them no longer. God seems to groan under the pressure of their sins, as a cart seems to do under a heavy load. Of this God complains by the prophet Isaiah: "You have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your faults," Isaiah 43:24. I am as weary of your sins as a travailing woman is weary of her pains, says God. Sin was such a burden to God, that he sweeps it off with a sweeping flood, Gen. 7, etc.

Again, sin is a burden to **Christ**: It made him sweat as never man sweat; it made him sweat great drops of clotted or congealed blood, Luke 22:44. Sin put Christ's whole body into a bloody sweat; it made him groan piteously, when he bore our sins in his body on the tree. Sin made his soul heavy even to the death, and had he not been one who was mighty, yes, that was Almighty, he would have fainted and failed under his burden, 1 Pet. 2:24, Isaiah 9:6. And thus you see what a burden sin is to man, to the creatures, to heaven, to earth, to God, to Christ; and therefore, as you would break with sin early, look always upon it as a burden, yes, as the greatest and heaviest burden in all the world, etc.

Notion (6). Sixthly and lastly, If you would break covenant with sin, and arm and fence yourselves against it early, then you must ***look upon it early under the notion of a TYRANT.***

"At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and **enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.** We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." Titus 3:3. And indeed, sin is the worst and greatest tyrant in the world. Other tyrants can but tyrannize over our bodies—but sin is a tyrant which tyrannizes over both body and soul, as you may see in the sixth and seventh of the Romans. Sin is a tyrant which has a kind of jurisdiction in most men's hearts; it sets up the law of pride, the law of lust, the law of oppression, the law of formality, the law of hypocrisy, the law of carnality, the law of self-love, the law of carnal reason, the law of unbelief—and strictly commands subjection to

them, and proclaims fire and sword to all who will not bow down. This saints and sinners, godly men and bad men, do sufficiently experience.

Sin is a tyrant of many thousand years' standing, and though it has had many a wound, and received much opposition—yet still it plays the tyrant all the world over! Oh, the hearts that this tyrant makes to ache! the souls that this tyrant makes to bleed!

Pharaoh's tyranny was nothing to sin's tyranny. This tyrant will not so much as allow his slaves to sleep. They sleep not, except they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to sin, Proverbs 4:16. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace to the wicked, says my God," Isaiah 57:20-21.

Other tyrants have been brought down and brought under control by a human power—but this cannot but by a divine. The power of man has brought down many of the tyrants of this world—but it is only the power of Christ that can bring down this tyrant, that can cast down his strongholds, 2 Cor.10:3-6, etc. Therefore, engage Christ in the conflict, draw him into the battle, and in the end the conquest will be yours.

Vitellius, who had been emperor of all the world, yet was driven through the streets of Rome stark naked, and thrown into the river Tiber, etc.

Andronicus the emperor, for his cruelty towards his people, was by them at last shamefully deposed, and, after many contumelies, hanged up by his heels.

Ptolemy was put on a cross; Bajazet in an iron cage; Phocas broken on the wheel; Lycaon cast to the dogs, as well as Jezebel; Attalus thrust into a forge; King Gath into a beer barrel, etc. But none of these who have tamed these tyrants, who have brought down these mighty Nimrods—have been able to tame, to bring under control the tyrants, the sins, the lusts—which have been in their own bosoms. Many a man has had a hand in bringing down of worldly tyrants, who, notwithstanding, have died forever by the hand of a tyrant within, etc.

Chapter 8.

Brief Answers to a Young Man's Objections

And thus much for the directions that young men must follow, if they would be godly early, if they would seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of their days. I shall now give some **brief answers to the young man's objections.**

Objection 1. But some young men may object, and say, *You would have us to be godly early, and to seek and serve the Lord in the primrose of our days. But it may be time enough hereafter to follow this counsel; we are young, and it may be time enough for us to mind these things hereafter, when we have satisfied the flesh so and so, or when we have got enough of the world, and laid up something which will stand us in good stead, and which may oil our joints when we are old.* Now,

To this objection I answer,

1. **First,** *That it is the greatest folly and madness in the world to put off God and the great things of eternity with may-bes.* What tradesman, what merchant, what mariner—so mad, so foolish, so blockish—as to put off a present season, a present opportunity of profit and advantage, upon the account of a may-be? *It may be—I have as good a season; it may be—I shall have as golden an opportunity to get, and to enrich myself as this is; and therefore farewell to this.* No men who are in their right minds will argue thus; and why then should you, especially in the things that are of an everlasting concernment to you?

I have read of one monarch, a lunatic Italian, who thought that all the kings of the earth were his vassals; and as delirious are they who willfully neglect present seasons of grace, upon the account of a future may-be, *etc.*

2. **Secondly**, I answer, *It may be if you neglected this present season and opportunity of grace, you may never have another.* It may be mercy may never knock again—if you do not open now; it may be Christ shall never be offered to you again—if now you do not close with him, and accept of him; it may be the Spirit will never strive more with you—if now you do resist him and withstand him; it may be a pardon shall never be offered to you again—if now you will not take it now; it may be the gospel shall never sound again in your ears—if now you will not hear it now. Now set one may-be against another maybe, set God's may-be against your own may-be; but,

3. **Thirdly**, *Doubtless there are many thousand thousands now in hell, who have pleased themselves and put off God and the seasons of grace with a may-be, hereafter may be time enough.* It may be when I have gratified such a lust, and when I have treasured so much of the world—I will return, and seek, and serve the Lord. But before this season or opportunity came, justice has cut the thread of their lives, and they are now miserable forever; and now they are still accursing themselves, because they have slipped their golden opportunities upon the account of a may-be, *etc.* But,

4. **Fourthly**, and lastly, This putting off God and the present seasons of grace with a may-be, is *very provoking to God, as you may see, if you will but read from the 20th verse to the 33rd of the first of Proverbs*. Nothing stirs and provokes a master more than his servants putting off his service or his commands with a may-be: "*it may be I will, it may be I may do this and that*." Nothing puts a master sooner into a heat, a flame, than this; nor nothing puts God more into a flame than this.

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah, as you did that day at Massah in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did. For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways." So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest." Psalm 95:7-11.

"So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" Hebrews 3:7-11.

"As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." Who were they who heard

and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief." Hebrews 3:15-19.

Read the words, and tremble at the thoughts of a may-be, at the thoughts of putting off of God and the seasons of grace.

I have read of two soldiers who cut off each other's right hand, and then made it an excuse—they were lame, and so could not serve in war. But this did so provoke the king that he sent them both to the gallows. I suppose the reader is not so young but knows how to apply it.

Objection 2. *If I should begin to be godly early, and to seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of my days, I would lose my friends, I would lose their favors; for they are carnal and worldly, and had rather I should seek after gold than God, the creature than Christ, earth than heaven. etc.* Now to this I answer, Surely you are wrong, for:

1. **First**, *This is the highway, the ready way, to gain the best, the surest, and the soundest friends.* "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him," Proverbs 16:7. When a man falls in with God, God will work the creatures to fall in with him. Joseph found it so, and Jacob found it so, and Job

found it so, the three children found it so, and Daniel found it so, as you all know, who have but read the Scripture. And many in this age, as bad as it is, have found, that the best way to make friends is, first to make God our friend.

Ah! young men, young men, you shall not lose your friends by seeking and serving of the Lord in the spring and morning of your days—but only exchange bad ones for good ones, the worst for the best. He who gives up himself early to the Lord shall have God for his friend, and Christ for his friend, and the angels for his friends, and the saints for his friends. Christ will be to such, first, an omnipotent friend; secondly, an omniscient friend; thirdly, an omnipresent friend; fourthly, an indeficient friend; fifthly, a sovereign friend; sixthly, an immutable friend; seventhly, a watchful friend; eighthly, a loving friend; ninthly, a faithful friend; tenthly, a compassionate friend; eleventhly, a close friend, "There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother," Proverbs 18:24. Such a friend is Christ, and such a friend is as one's own soul, a rare happiness, hardly to be matched. Twelfthly, an universal friend; a friend in all cases and a friend in all places. Christ is so a friend to everyone of his, as if he were a friend to none besides. Hence it is that they say, not only our Lord, our God—but my Lord, and my God. Christ is such an universal friend, as that he supplies the place, and acts the part of every friend, Thirteenthly, "He is our first friend," Psalm 90:1; before we had a friend in all the world he was our friend, Proverbs 8:21. Lastly, he is a constant friend: "Whom he loves, he loves to the end," John 13:1.

Augustus Caesar would not suddenly entertain a league of friendship with any—but was a constant friend to those he loved, *late before I love, as long before I leave*. Where Christ begins to love, he always loves, Jer. 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." Now who would not venture the loss of all friends in the world to gain such a friend as this is?

Ah! young men and women, let me say to you what Seneca said to his friend Polibius, *never complain of your hard fortune as long as Caesar is your friend*. So say I; never complain of your loss of friends so long as by losing of them you gain Christ to be your friend.

2. Secondly, *You were better be without their friendship and favor, than to enjoy it upon any sinful and unworthy accounts*. You were better run the hazard of losing your friends and their favor by seeking and serving the Lord in the primrose of your days, than to run the hazard of losing God, Christ, heaven, eternity, and your soul forever by neglecting the things of your peace, Matt. 16:26, Mark 8:36.

Well! young men, remember this, the torments of a thousand hells, were there so many, comes far short of this one voice, to be turned out of God's presence with "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" Matt. 7:23.

Ah, young man, young man! you were better ten thousand thousand times to be cast out of the thoughts and hearts of your carnal friends and relations, than to be cast out of God's presence with cursed Cain,

Gen. 4, forever, than to be excommunicated out of "the general assembly of the saints, and congregation of the first-born which are written in heaven," Heb. 12:23; and therefore away with this objection. But,

3. Thirdly, *The favor and friendship of such carnal people is very fickle and inconstant; it is very fading and withering.* Now they stroke, and at another time they strike; now they lift up, and at another time they cast down; now they smile, and at another time they frown; now they kiss, and at another time they kill; now they cry, "Hosanna! Hosanna!" and at another time they cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Haman is one day feasted with the king, and the next day made a feast for crows, Esther 7. The princes of Babylon were highly in king Darius his favor one day, and cast into the lion's den the next, Dan.6. The scribes and pharisees that cried up Judas one day, did in effect bid him go and hang himself the next day, Mat. 27:3-5.

Such men's favor and friendship are as Venice glasses, quickly broken, and therefore not much to be prized or minded. Histories abound with instances of this nature. But I must hasten: only remember this, that every day's experience tells us that wicked men can soon turn tables, and cross their books; their favor and friendship is usually like to a morning cloud, or like to Jonah's gourd: one hour flourishing and the next hour withering; and why then should you set your heart upon that which is more changeable than the moon? But,

4. **Fourthly** and lastly, *Who but a bad man would adventure the loss of the king's favor to gain the favor of his slave? Who but a stark Bedlam would run the hazard of losing the judge's favor upon the bench, to purchase the good will of a prisoner in the dungeon?*

Socrates preferred the king's countenance before his coin; and so must you prefer the favor of God, the countenance of Christ, Psalm 4:6-7, and the things of eternity—above all the favor and friendship of all the men in the world. When your nearest friends and dearest relations stand in competition with Christ, or the things above, you must shake them off, you must turn your backs upon them, and welcome Christ and the things of your peace. He who forsakes all relations for Christ, shall certainly find all relations in Christ; he will be father, friend, husband, child; he will be everything to you, who take him for your great all.

Objection 3. *Yes—but I shall meet with many **reproaches** from one and other, if I should labor to be godly early, if I should seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of my youth.* Now, to this I answer,

1. **First**, *What are reproaches, compared to the great things that others have suffered for Christ his gospel, and the maintaining of a good conscience? What is a prick of a pin compared to a stab at the heart? what is a chiding compared to a hanging, a whipping compared to a burning? No more are all the reproaches you can meet*

with, compared to the great things that others have suffered for Christ's sake.

Ah, young men! you should be like the Scythian that went naked in the snow; and when Alexander wondered how he could endure it, answered, *I am all forehead.*

So should you in the cause and way of Christ; you should not be ashamed, you should be all forehead, you should be stout and bold.

Colonus, the Dutch martyr, under all his reproaches, called to the judge that had sentenced him to death, and desired him to lay his hand upon his heart, and then asked him, Whose heart did beat fastest—his or the judge's? All the reproaches in the world should not so much as make a Christian's heart race; they should not in the least trouble him nor disturb him. But,

2. Secondly, I answer, *That all the reproaches you meet with in the way of Christ, and for the sake of Christ—they do but add pearls to your crown; they are all additions to your happiness and blessedness.* "If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." 1 Peter 4:14. The more you are reproached for Christ's sake on earth, the greater shall be your reward in heaven; those who are most loaded with reproaches here, shall be most laden with glory hereafter, Mat. 5:11-12. Christ has written their names in golden letters in his book of life—who are written in black letters of reproach for his sake on earth. It was a good saying of Chrysostom: *A reproacher, says he, is*

beneath a man—but the reproached who bear it well, are equal to angels. Of all crowns, the reproached man's crown will weigh heaviest in heaven. But,

3. Thirdly, I answer, *the best men have been mostly reproached.* David was, Psalm 69:7, 89:50, 119:22, 31:11, 109:25; and Job was, Job 19:3, 20:3, 16:10; and Jeremiah was, Jer. 20:7, 10. Yes, this has been the common portion of the people of God in all ages of the world. In Nehemiah's time it was so: Neh. 1:3, "And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity, are in great affliction and reproach." In David's time it was so, Psalm 79:4, and Psalm 44:13-14; and in Jeremiah's time it was so: Lam. 5:1, "Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach." And in Daniel's time it was so: Dan. 9:16, "Your people are become a reproach to all that are about us;" and it was so in the apostle's time: 2 Cor. 6:8, "By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers and yet true;" 1 Tim. 4:10, "For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God," etc. And it was so in the primitive times, for when the Christians met together before sunrise to pray, the heathens reported of them that they worshiped the sun, and aspired after monarchy, and committed adulteries and unnatural uncleannesses.

Now, who is troubled, who complains of that which is a common lot—as cold, winter, sickness, death? etc. No more should any complain of reproaches, it being the common lot of the people of God in all ages. Yes, Christ himself was sadly reproached, falsely accused, and

strangely traduced, disgraced, and scandalized. He was called a glutton, a drunkard, a friend of publicans and sinners, and judged to use the black art, casting out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils, Mat. 9:34,12:24. Christ has suffered the greatest and the worst reproaches; why then should you be afraid to wear that crown of thorns, which Christ has worn before you? There is a great truth in what he said, *he who is afraid to suffer cannot be His disciple—who suffered so much*. If the master has been marked with a black coal, let not the servant think to go free. *I am heartily angry*, says Luther, *with those who speak of my sufferings as great—which, if compared with that which Christ suffered for me, are not once to be mentioned in the same day*. But,

4. **Fourthly**, I answer, *That all reproachers shall at last be arraigned at the highest bar of justice, for all the reproaches that they have cast upon the people of God*. "Your former friends are very surprised when you no longer join them in the wicked things they do, and they say evil things about you. But just remember that they will have to face God, who will judge everyone, both the living and the dead," 1 Pet. 4:4-5.

I am in ecstasy, says Picus Mirandula, to think how profane men rail upon those now, whom one day they will wish they had imitated. It was excellent counsel that the heathen orator gave his hearers, *let us live as those who must give an account of all at last*.

Chrysostom brings in Christ comforting his disciples against reproaches, speaking thus unto them, What! is the wrong grievous to you—that they now call you seducers and conjurors? It will not be long before they shall openly call you the saviors and blessings of the whole world; that time that shall declare all things that are now hid, shall rebuke them for their lying words against you, and shall kindle the splendor of your virtue; so they shall be found liars, evil speakers, false accusers of others; but you shall be more clear and illustrious than the sun, and you shall have all men witnesses of your glory. Such as wisely and humbly bear reproaches now, shall judge reproachers at last. But,

5. **Fifthly**, I answer, *That God does many times, even in this life, judge the reproachers of his people.* "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you," Gen. 12:3, and 2 Sam. 16:11-13. God will even in this life curse those, who curse them that he blesses. Pharaoh found it so, and Saul found it so, and Jezebel found it so, and Haman found it so, and the princes of Babylon found it so, and the Jews find it so to this very day.

And oh the dreadful judgments and curses that God has poured out upon the reproachers of his name, of his Son, of his Spirit, of his word, of his ordinances, and of his people—in these days wherein we live! I might give you many sad instances of such in our days, whose feet justice has taken in the snare, men of abstracted conceits and sublime speculations; and indeed such usually prove the great wise fools, who, like the lark, soars higher and higher, peering and

peering, until at length they fall into the net of the fowler; and no wonder, for such people usually are as censorious as they are curious.

6. Sixthly, I answer, *Paul rejoices more in his suffering reproaches for Christ's sake, than he did in his being enrapt up in the third heaven: 2 Cor. 12:10*, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." And therefore you have him often a-singing this song, "I Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ;" not I Paul, enrapt up in the third heaven. He looked upon all his sufferings as God's love-tokens; he looked upon all reproaches as pledges and badges of his sonship; and therefore joys and glories under all. Christ showed his glory to him in taking him up in the third heaven; and he showed his love to Christ, in his joyful bearing of reproaches for his sake. *Paul rattles his chain, which he bears for the gospel, and was proud of it, as a woman of her ornaments*, says Chrysostom.

Now why should that be matter of trouble and discouragement to you, which was matter of joy and rejoicing to him? Shall he look upon reproaches as a crown of honor—and will you look upon reproaches as a crown of thorns?

Oh! look upon reproach as a royal diadem, look upon it as Christ's badge, and count it your highest ambition in this world to wear this badge for his sake, who once wore a crown of thorns for your sakes.

When Babylas was to die, he required this favor, to have his chains buried with him as the ensigns of his honor. But,

7. **Seventhly**, I answer, *That by a wise and gracious behavior under the reproaches you meet with for Christ's sake, you may be instrumental to win others to Christ.*

It was a noble saying of Luther, the church converted the whole world by blood and prayer.

Many have been won to Christ by beholding the gracious carriages of Christians under their sufferings and reproaches for Christ.

We read of Cecilia, a poor virgin, who, by her gracious behavior under all her sufferings and reproaches for Christ, was the means of converting four hundred to Christ.

Adrianus, beholding the gracious, cheerful behavior of the martyrs under all their sufferings and reproaches, was converted to Christ, and afterwards suffered martyrdom for Christ.

Justin Martyr was also converted by observing the holy and cheerful behavior of the saints under all their sufferings and reproaches for Christ. During the cruel persecutions of the heathen emperors, the Christian faith was spread through all places of the empire, because *the oftener they were mown down, says Tertullian, the more they grew.*

And Austin observed, that though there were many thousands put to death for professing Christ, yet they were never the fewer for being slain.

Ah! young men, you may, by a wise and gracious bearing of reproaches for Christ, be instrumental to win others to Christ; and therefore never plead there is a lion in the way. But I must hasten; and therefore,

8. In the **eighth** and last place, consider, *How bravely several of the very heathens have born reproaches; and let that provoke you, in the face of all reproaches, to seek and serve the Lord in the morning of your youth, etc.*

When one came and reproached Xenophon, says he, *You have learned how to reproach, and I have learned how to bear reproach.*

And Aristippus, the philosopher, said, *You are fit to cast reproaches, and I am fit to bear reproaches.*

When one wondered at the patience of Socrates towards one who reviled and reproached him, *If we should meet one, says he, whose body were more unsound than ours, should we be angry with him, and not rather pity him? Why, then, should we not do the like to him whose soul is more diseased than ours?*

Augustus Caesar, in whose time Christ was born, bid Catullus the railing poet to supper, to show that he had forgiven him.

It is a notable example that we find of one Pericles, who, as he was sitting with others in a great meeting, a foul-mouthed fellow bitterly reproached him, and railed all the day long upon him; and at night, when it was dark, the fellow followed him, and railed at him even to his door, and he took no notice of him; but when he came at home, this is all he said, *Friend, it is dark, please let my servant light you home.*

Josephus reports of that Herod that is made mention of in Acts 12:23, that when one Simon, a lawyer, had grievously reproached and scandalized him before the people, he sent for him, and caused him to sit down next to him, and in a kind manner he spoke thus to him: *Tell me, I pray you, what thing you see fault-worthy or contrary to the law in me.* Simon not having anything to answer, besought him to pardon him, which the king did, and was friends with him, and dismissed him, bestowing gifts on him.

Ah! young men, young men, shall the very heathen make nothing of reproaches? shall they bear up so prudently and bravely under the greatest loads of reproaches, and will not you? Will not you, who in your light, in your mercies, and in all gospel engagements, are so highly advanced above them? Oh that none of them may be called to the bar in the great day to witness against any of you into whose hands this treatise shall fall. And so much by way of answer to the third objection. But,

Objection 4. *Fourthly, The young man objects, and says, You press us to be godly early, and to seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of our days; but we observe that most men mind not these things—but rather give liberty to themselves to walk in ways that are most pleasing to the flesh; and why, then, should we be singular and odd? We were better do as the most do, etc.* Now to this I answer,

1. *That though bad examples are dangerous to all, yet usually they prove most dangerous and pernicious to young people, who are more easily drawn to follow examples than precepts, especially those examples which tend most to undo them:* 2 Kings 15:9, it is said of Zachariah, the king of Israel, that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done; he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam;" he would be as his father was, and do as his father did, whatever came of it.

So the Samaritans, of whom it is said, 2 Kings 17:41, "These nations feared the Lord" (that is, they made some kind of profession of the true religion, as the ten tribes had done), "and served their engraved images too; both their children and their children's children did thus; as did their fathers, so do they unto this day." By evil examples they were both drawn to idolatry, and rooted and confirmed in it. So the main reason why the kingdom and church of Judah were so settled in their idolatry, that there was no hope of reclaiming them, was this, that their children remembered their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills, Jer. 17:1-2. **Tinder is not apter to**

take fire, nor wax the impression of the seal, nor paper the ink, than youth is to follow ill examples.

You may see in Radbad, king of Phrisia, who coming to the font to be baptized, asked what was become of his ancestors? answer was made, that they died in a fearful state unbaptized; he replied that he would rather perish with the multitude than go to heaven with a few.

I remember the heathen brings in a young man who, hearing of the adulteries and wickednesses of the gods, said, What! do they so? and shall refuse it? No, I will not. Sinful examples are very drawing and very encouraging; many have found it so to their eternal undoing. Those who have no *ears* to hear what you say—have many *eyes* to see what you do. Bad princes make bad subjects; bad masters make bad servants; bad parents make bad children; and bad husbands make bad wives. *It is easier for the bad to corrupt the good, than for the good to convert the bad! It is easier to run down the hill with company, than to run up the hill alone!*

I would desire all young men often to remember that saying of Lactantius, *he who imitates the bad cannot be good*. Young men, in these professing times, stand between good and bad examples, as Hercules in his dream stood between virtue and vice. Solicited by both, you must choose who to follow. Oh that you were all so wise as to follow the best. As a woman who has many suitors is very careful to take the best, so should you. Life, heaven, happiness, eternity, hangs upon it.

But before I come to the second answer, let me leave this note or notion with those who make no conscience of undoing others by their examples, namely, *That a more grievous punishment is reserved for those who cause others to sin, than for those who sin by their example.* Thus the serpent was punished more than Eve, and Eve more than Adam. So Jezebel felt a greater and sorer judgment than Ahab.

Friends, you have sins enough of your own, to make you forever miserable; why should you, by giving bad examples to others, make yourselves far more miserable? **The lowest, the darkest, the hottest place in hell, will be for those who have drawn others there by their example,** Mat. 23:15. Dives knew that if his brethren were damned—that he would be double damned, because he had largely contributed to the bringing of them to hell by his wicked example. Therefore he desires that they might be kept out of hell—not out of any love or good will to them—but because their coming there would have made his hell more hot, his torments more insufferable, Luke 16:28. "It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck—than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin." Luke 17:2

2. Secondly, I answer, *If you sin with others, you shall suffer with others;* if you will partake of other men's sins, you shall also partake of other men's plagues, Rev. 18:4. Those who have been, like Simeon and Levi, brethren in iniquity—they shall be brethren in misery. Those who have sinned together impenitently shall be sent to hell

jointly—they shall perish together eternally. If you will needs be companions with others in their sins, you shall be sure to be companions with them in their sorrows.

The old world sin together—and are drowned together, Gen. 6; the Sodomites, burning in lusts together—were burnt with fire and brimstone together, Gen. 19. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, they sin together, they murmur and provoke the Lord together—and the earth opens her mouth and swallows them up together, Num. 16:26-34. Pharaoh and his hosts pursue Israel together—and they are drowned in the sea together, Exod. 14. Zimri and Cosbi commit folly, uncleanness together—and Phinehas stabs them both together, Num. 25.

The Hebrew doctors have an insightful parable to this purpose: A man planted an orchard, and, going from home, was careful to leave such watchmen as might both keep it from strangers and not deceive him themselves; therefore he appointed one blind—but strong of his limbs; and the other seeing—but a cripple. These two, in their master's absence, conspired together, and the blind took the lame on his shoulders, and so stole the fruit; their master returning and finding out their subtlety, punished them both together.

So will justice deal with you at last, who sin with others; therefore take heed, young men, of doing as others do. But,

3. **Thirdly**, I answer, *You must not live by examples—but by precepts*. You are not to look so much at what others do, as at what

God requires you to do: Exod. 23:2, "You shall not follow a multitude to do evil." Romans 12:2, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world;" that is, do not fashion and conform yourselves to the corrupt customs and courses of wretched worldlings, who have made gold their God, and gain their glory. The running cross to a divine command cost the young prophet his life, though he did it under pretense of revelation from God, as you may see in that sad story, 1 Kings 13, etc. *The command of God must outweigh all authority and example of men* [Jerome].

And we must be as careful in the keeping of a light commandment as an heavy commandment. Says a Rabbi, *Divine commands must be obeyed against all contrary reasonings, wranglings, and examples.*

Ah! young men, you who doat so much upon examples now, will find that a stinging terrifying question, when put home by God or conscience, *Who has required those things at your hands?* Isaiah 1:12. But,

4. **Fourthly**, I answer, *Company and allurements to sin—will be found no sufficient excuse for sin.*

If Eve lays her fault on the serpent, and Adam lays his fault on Eve—God will lay the curse on both. Saul's provocation by his people, and by Samuel's long stay to offer sacrifice, would not exonerate him; but for his disobedience he must lose both his crown and life, 1 Sam. 15:14-15, 26-27. The young man in the Proverbs, though tempted and solicited by the harlot, yet has a dart struck through his heart,

Proverbs 7:14-15, 21. Though Jonah did plead God's gracious inclinations to show mercy, and his fear of being disproved; yes, and though he might have pleaded his fear of cruel and savage usage from the Ninevites, whose hearts were desperately set upon wickedness, and his despair of ever doing good upon a people so blinded and hardened, and that they were Gentiles and he a Jew; and why should he then be sent with so strange, so terrible a message to such a people, nothing being more hateful and distasteful to a Jewish palate? But all these pleas and excuses will not bear off the blow. Jonah must be thrown into the sea for all this; yes, he must go to "the bottom of hell," as himself phrases it. It is in vain for the bird to complain—that it saw the corn but not the trap; or for the fish to plead—it saw the bait but not the hook. So it will be in vain for sinners at last, when they are taken in an infernal trap, to plead the company and allurements by which they have been enticed to undo their soul forever.

Dionysius, the Sicilian king, to excuse himself from the present delivery of the golden garment he took from his idol Apollo, answered, *that such a robe as that was could not be at any season of the year useful to his idol, for it would not keep him warm in the winter, and it was too heavy for the summer*--and so put off his idol-god. But the God of heaven, the God of all flesh, will not be put off with any excuses or pretenses, when he shall try and judge all men. But,

5. **Fifthly** and lastly, I answer, *That it is a very great judgment to be given up to follow evil examples*, Mat. 18:7. A man given up to evil examples is a man sadly left of God, woefully blinded by Satan, and desperately hardened in sin. It speaks a man ripe for wrath, for ruin, for hell: Jer. 6:21, "Behold, I will put obstacles before this people. Fathers and sons alike will stumble over them; neighbors and friends will perish." Oh! it is a dreadful thing when God shall make the sinful examples of others to be stumbling-blocks to a people, at which they shall stumble, and fall, and perish forever; good had it been for such people that they had never been born, as Christ once spoke concerning Judas, Mat. 26:24.

The Rhodians and Lydians enacted several laws, that those sons which followed not their fathers in their virtues—but followed wicked examples, should be disinherited, and their lands given to the most virtuous of that race, not admitting any impious heir whatever to inherit; and do you think that God will not disinherit all those of heaven and happiness who follow wicked examples? Doubtless he will, 1 Cor. 10:5-12.

Objection 5. The fifth and last objection I shall mention is this, *God is a God of mercy; in him are affections of mercy, yes, a sea, an ocean of mercy; he loves mercy, he delights in mercy, and he is ready to show mercy to poor sinners, when they are even at the last gasp, when there is but a short stride between them and the grave, between them and eternity; as we see in his extending mercy to the thief, and in his giving a pardon into his hand, and the assurance of*

paradise into his bosom, when he was ready to be turned off the ladder of life. Therefore I may spend the primrose of my days in following sin, and the delights, profits, vanities, and amusements of this world, and at my last gasp I may have mercy as well as the thief. God is a God made up of mercy, and surely he will not deny some crumbs of mercy to a poor sinner in misery, etc.

Now to this objection I shall give these following answers.

1. **First**, *God is as **just** as he is merciful*; witness his casting the angels out of heaven, and Adam out of paradise; witness all the threatenings, the curses, the woes, that the Bible is filled with, from one end to the other; witness the hell, the horror, the terror and astonishment that he raises in the consciences of sinners; witness the devastations that he has made of the most stately and flourishing towns, cities, countries, and kingdoms, that have been in all the world; witness the variety of diseases, calamities, miseries, dangers, deaths, and hells, that always attend the inhabitants of the world; but above all, witness Christ's treading the wine-press of his Father's wrath; witness his hiding his face from him, and the pouring out of all his displeasure and vengeance upon him.

Zealeucus, the Locrenian lawgiver, thrust out one of his own son's eyes, for his transgressing of a righteous law which he had enacted—but God the Father thrust out both Christ's eyes for our transgressing of his royal law. Oh! the justice and severity of God. But,

2. Secondly, I answer, *That there is not a greater evidence of blindness, profaneness, hard-heartedness, spiritual madness, and hellish desperateness in all the world, than to make that an argument, an encouragement to sin, namely, the mercy of God, which should be the greatest argument under heaven to keep a man from sin*—as all know that have but read the Scripture. Neither are there any sinners in the world that God delights to rain hell out of heaven upon, as upon such, who by their abuse of mercy, turn the God of mercy into a mere scarecrow, who threatens without punishing; and go on out-daring justice itself.

"Let none of those who hear the warnings of this curse consider themselves immune, thinking, 'I am safe, (God is a God of mercy), even though I am walking in my own stubborn way.' This would lead to utter ruin! The Lord will not pardon such people. His anger and jealousy will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will come down on them." Deuteronomy 29:19-20. In these words you may observe, that God is absolute in his threatening, to show that he will be resolute in punishing: Psalm 11:5-6, "The wicked, and him that loves iniquity, does his soul hate. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."

Ah! that all poor sinners would make these two scriptures their companions, their constant bed-fellows, until they are got above that sad temptation of *turning the mercy of God into an encouragement to sin*.

While Milo Crotoniates was tearing asunder the stock of an oak, his strength failing him,—the cleft suddenly closing,—was held so fast by the hands, that he became a prey to the beasts of the field. All the abusers of mercy will certainly and suddenly become a prey to the justice of God, who will rend and tear them in pieces, as the Psalmist speaks: Psalm 50:22, "Woe, woe, to that soul that fights against God with his own mercies"—who will be bad, because he is good; who will be sinful, because he is merciful; who will turn all the kindness of God—which should be as so many silver cords, to tie him to love and obedience—into arrows, and to shoot them back into the heart of God. ***Abused mercy will at last turn into a lion, a fierce lion; and then woe to the abusers and despisers of it!*** But,

3. **Thirdly**, In answer to that part of the objection concerning the thief on the cross, I offer these things briefly to your thoughts.

(1). First, *That as one was saved to teach sinners not to **despair**; so another was damned to teach them not to **presume**.* A pardon is sometimes given to one upon the gallows—but whoever trusts to that, the hangman's rope may be his end.

(2). Secondly, *It is an example without a promise.* Here is an example of late repentance—but where is there a promise of late repentance? Oh! let not his late and sudden conversion be to you a temptation, until you have found a promise for late and sudden conversion. It is not examples—but promises, which are foundations for faith to rest on. He who walks by an *example of mercy*, without a

precept to guide him, and a promise to support him, walks but by a dark lantern, which will deceive him. Well! young man, remember this, examples of mercy increase wrath, when the heart is not bettered by them. But,

(3). Thirdly, *This was a rare miracle of mercy, with the glory whereof Christ did honor the ignominy of his cross*, and therefore we may as well look for another crucifying of Christ as look for a sinner's conversion, when he has scarce time enough for another breath. But,

(4). Fourthly, I answer, *This thief knew not Christ before; he had not refused, neglected, nor slighted Christ before*. The sermon on the cross was the first sermon that ever he heard Christ preach, and Christ's prayer on the cross was the first prayer that ever he heard Christ make. He knew not Christ until he met him on the cross, which proved to him a happy meeting. His case was as if a Turk or a heathen should now be converted to the faith; and therefore you have little reason, O young man, to plead this example to keep Christ and your soul asunder, who are every day under the call, the entreaties, and wooings of Christ. But,

(5). Fifthly, and lastly, I answer, *The circumstances of time and place are rightly to be considered*. Now when Christ was triumphing on the cross over sin, Satan, and the world; when he had made the devils a public spectacle of scorn and derision; when he was taking his leave of the world and entering into his glory; now he puts a

pardon into the thief's hand, and crowds other favors and kindnesses upon him.

As in the Roman triumphs, the victor being ascended up to the capitol in a chariot of state, used to cast coins among the people for them to pick up, which he used not to do at other times; so our Lord Jesus Christ, in the day of his triumph and solemn inauguration into his heavenly kingdom, scatters some heavenly jewels that this thief might pick up—which He does not, nor will not do every day. Or, as in these days it is usual with princes to save some notorious malefactors at their coronations when they enter upon their kingdoms in triumph, which they do not do afterwards, so did Jesus Christ carry it toward this thief.

But this is not his ordinary way of saving and bringing souls to glory; and therefore do not, O young man! let not the thief's late conversion prove a temptation or an occasion of your delaying your repentance, and trifling away the primrose of your days in vanity and folly. And this much may suffice to have spoken by way of answer to the young man's objections. I shall now speak a few words to old men, and so close up.

Chapter 9:

Brief answers to the old man's scruples

I shall now give some brief answers to the old man's scruples, and so close up this discourse.

Is it so commendable, so desirable, and so necessary for young men to be godly early, to seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of their youth, as has been sufficiently demonstrated in this treatise? Oh, then, that I could so woo aged people as to win them who yet have put off this great work to seek and serve the Lord before their hour-glass be out, their sun set, and their souls lost forever!

Oh, that that counsel of the prophet might take hold upon your hearts! "Give glory to the Lord your God before it is too late. Acknowledge him before he brings darkness upon you, causing you to stumble and fall on the dark mountains. For then, when you look for light, you will find only terrible darkness." Jeremiah 13:16

Ay—but aged sinners may reply, *Is there any hope, any help for us?* Is there any probability, is there any possibility, that ever such as we are should return and find mercy and favor with the Lord? We who have lived so long without him! We who have sinned so much against him! We who to this day are strangers to him, yes, in arms against him! Is there any hope that we white-headed sinners, who have withstood so many thousand offers of grace—and so many thousand motions of the Spirit—and so many thousand checks of conscience—

and so many thousand offers of Christ and heaven—that ever **we** should obtain mercy—that ever we should have our old hearts turned—our millions of sins pardoned—our vile natures changed—and our poor souls saved?

I answer, That there is hope—even for such as you are! All the angels in heaven and all the men on earth cannot tell—but that you, even you, may obtain God's mercy and favor, that your souls be not damned. With the Lord nothing is impossible, and for the grace of the gospel nothing is too hard. Now this I shall make evident by an induction of particulars. Thus,

(1.) **First**, *All were not called nor sent to work in the vineyard at the first hour*; some were called at the third hour, others at the sixth, others at the ninth, and some at the eleventh. God has his several times of calling souls to himself. The eleventh hour was about five in the afternoon, an hour before sunset; when it was even time to leave work; and yet at this hour some were called, employed, and rewarded along with the rest.

Some of the commentators, by the several hours mentioned in this parable, do understand the several ages of man, namely, childhood, youth, middle age, and old age, wherein poor souls are called and converted to Christ. The scope of the parable is to signify the free grace of God in the calling of some in the spring and morning of their days, and in the calling of others in their old age, in the evening of their days. But,

(2.) **Secondly**, *Abraham in the Old Testament, and Nicodemus in the New, were called and converted in their old age*, when there were but a few steps between them and the grave, between them and eternity.

I have read of one Caius Marius Victorius, and had been a pagan all his days, and in his old age he inquired and hearkened after Christ, and said he would be a Christian. Simplicianus hearing him say so, would not believe him—but when the church saw a work of grace indeed upon him, there was shouting and dancing for gladness, and songs were sung in every church, *Caius Marius Victorius is become a Christian!* And this was written for a wonder, that he in his old age, and in his grey hairs, should become a gracious Christian.

Aretius also speaks of a certain man in his time. It is no feigned story, says he, for I saw the man with my own eyes: he was one who had been a most vile and desperate sinner, a drunkard, a swearer, a gamester, a lecherous man—and so he continued to his grey hairs; but at last it pleased God to set his sins in order before him, and the man was so troubled in conscience that he threw himself down upon the ground, calling unto Satan to take him away, provoking Satan to take him away: *Devil, take your own; devil, take your own; I am your own, take your own!* Whereupon, says Aretius, prayer was made for him; Christians prayed, they fasted and prayed, they prayed night and day; and it pleased God at last that this poor aged sinner was converted to God, lived a godly life afterwards, and died comfortably.

Therefore, let not the grey-headed sinner despair, though his spring be past, his summer overpast, and he arrived at the fall of the leaf. But,

(3.) **Thirdly**, *Divine promises shall be made good to returning souls, to repenting souls, to believing souls—be they young or old.* 2 Chron. 30:9, "The Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if you return unto him." Joel 2:13, "Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you." Isaiah 55:7, "Let the wicked one abandon his way, and the sinful one his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, so He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will freely forgive"—or he will multiply to pardon. More of this you may see by reading of the scriptures in the margin. All sorts of sin shall be pardoned—to all sorts of believing and repenting sinners.

The New Jerusalem has twelve gates, to show that there is every way access for all sorts and ranks of sinners to come to Christ. He was born in an inn, to show that he receives all comers, young and old, poor and rich, etc. But,

(4.) **Fourthly**, *The Lord has declared by oath a greater delight in the conversion and salvation of poor sinners, whether they are young or old, than in the destruction and damnation of such.* Ezek. 33:11, "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from

their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?" Two things make a thing more credible.

[1.] The integrity or dignity of the person speaking.

[2.] The manner of the speech. Now here you have the great God, not only speaking, promising—but solemnly swearing that he had rather poor sinners should live than die, be happy than miserable! Therefore, despair not, O aged sinner! but return unto the Lord, and you shall be happy forever. But,

(5.) **Fifthly**, *There is virtue enough in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, to wash and cleanse away all sin!* Not only virtue to cleanse away the young man's sins—but also to cleanse away the old man's sins; not only to cleanse a sinner of twenty years—but to cleanse a sinner of fifty, sixty, yes, a hundred years old! 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin!"—not simply from sin—but from **all sin**. There is such a power and efficacy in the blood of Christ, as is sufficient to cleanse all sorts of sinners from all sorts of sins. There is a virtue in the blood of the Lamb to wash out all the spots that are in the oldest sinners' hearts; and therefore let not old sinners despair, let them not say there is no hope, there is no help, as long as this fountain—the blood of Jesus Christ—is open for all sorts of sinners to wash in. But,

(6.) **Sixthly**, *The call and invitation of Christ in the gospel are general and indefinite, excluding no sort of sinners.* Rev. 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if **any** man" (mark the

indefiniteness of personal admittance) "hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Let the sinner be old or young; a green head, or a grey head—if he will but open the door, Christ will come in and have communion and fellowship with him. So in that Mat. 11:28. Turn to these scriptures, Isaiah 55:1, John 7:37, Rev. 22:17, and dwell upon them; they all clearly evidence the call and gracious invitations of Christ to be to **all** sinners, to every sinner; he excepts not a man, no, though never so old. Nothing shall hinder the sinner, any sinner, the worst and most aged sinner, from obtaining mercy, if he is willing to open to Christ, and to receive him as his Lord and king, John 6:37. But,

(7.) **Seventhly**, *Christ's piteous lamentation over all sorts and ranks of sinners, declares his willingness to show mercy to them.* "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," says Christ, weeping over it, "that you had known in this your day the things that belong to your peace," etc., Luke 19:41-42. "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me!" Psalm 81:13. Christ weeps over Jerusalem; so did Titus, and so did Marcellus over Syracuse, and so did Scipio over Carthage—but they shed tears for them whose blood they were to shed. But **Christ weeps over the necks of those young and old sinners who were to shed his blood!** As a tender-hearted father weeps over his rebellious children, when neither smiles nor frowns, neither counsels nor entreaties, will win them, or turn them from their evil ways—so does Jesus Christ over these rebellious Jews, upon whom nothing would work. But,

(8.) **Eighthly**, and lastly, *Though aged sinners have given Christ many thousand denials, yet he has not yet damned them—but after all, and in the face of all denials, he still re-enforces his suit, and continues to beseech them by his Spirit, by his word, by his wounds, by his blood, by his messengers, and by his rebukes—to turn home to him, to embrace him, to believe in him—that they may be saved eternally by him!* All which bespeaks grey-headed sinners not to despair, nor to dispute—but to repent, return, and believe, that it may go well with them forever. Consider seriously what has been spoken, and the Lord make you wise for eternity!

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