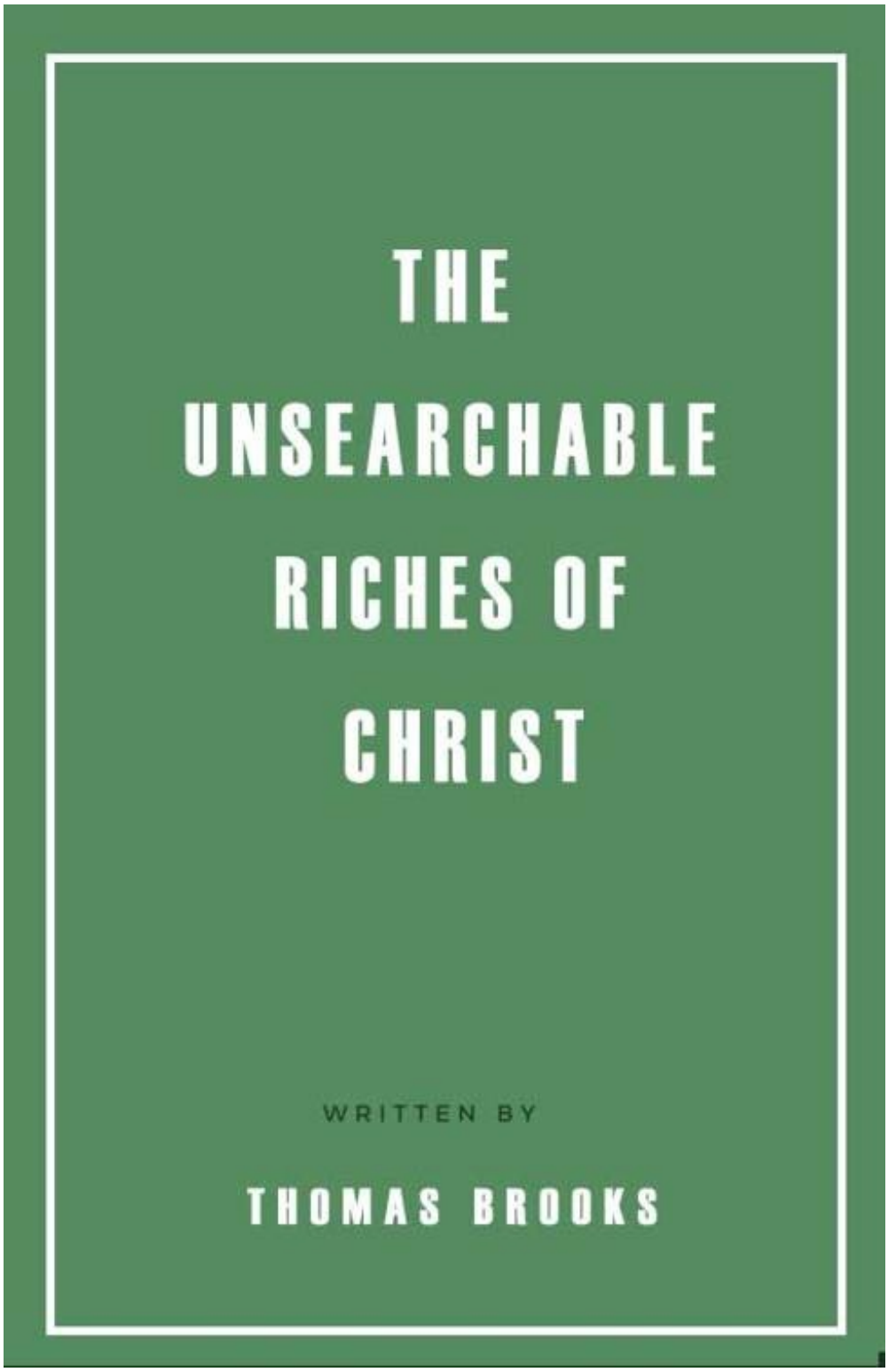
THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST

WRITTEN BY

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The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

by Thomas Brooks

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Epistle Dedicatory

> "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!" Ephesians 3:8
>
> "It pleased the father, that in him should all fullness dwell." Col. 1:19.
>
> "In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Col. 2:3.

To all true Israelites, in whom there is no guile—Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied.

Dear hearts,
My design in appearing once more in print is not to please the captious critic, or the sullen cynic—but to heighten your "fellowship with the Father and the Son," 1 John 1:3-4, and to further you in a closer walking with God, and to ripen you more and more for reigning with God when you shall be here no more.

"Beloved in our Lord," there are two sad and great evils—oh that there were no more!—among the saints this day. The *strong* are very apt, yes, they make little of offending the weak; and the *weak* are as apt, and make as little of judging and condemning the strong, Romans 14:1-10. The serious and conscientious perusal of this treatise may, by the blessing of the Lord, contribute much to the preventing of those sad evils.

You who are **weak** may, in this treatise, as in a mirror, see your weakness, your mercies, your graces, your duties, your privileges, and your comforts. You who are weak in grace, may here find many questions answered and doubts resolved, that tend to the satisfying, quieting, settling, and establishing of your precious souls in peace, joy, and assurance. You who are weak in grace, may here find a staff to support you, a light to direct you, a sword to defend you, and a cordial to strengthen you, etc. And you who are **strong** in grace, may here see what

is your way, what is your work, and what at last shall be your reward. Here you will find that which tends to the discovery of spirits, the sweetening of spirits, the uniting of spirits, the healing of spirits, and the making up of breaches, etc.

Here you will find "meat for strong men," and "milk for babes." Here you will find who is more *motion* than *notion*; more *heart* than *head*; more spirit than flesh; more inside than outside, etc.

Here you will find "the unsearchable riches of Christ"—which of all boxes of precious ointment is the most precious—opened; and oh how sweet must he be, who is the sweetest of sweets! In Christ are riches of *justification*; in Christ are riches of *sanctification*, riches of *consolation*, and riches of *glorification*. And this following treatise may serve as a golden key, to open the door, that you may come where these treasures lie. Christ's riches are like the eternal springs of the earth, which cannot dry up—but are and shall be diffused by his Spirit and gospel, until his whole house be filled with them.

The excellency and usefulness of the riches of Christ, and answers to many weighty queries about his unsearchable riches, is more than hinted at in this tract. In this tract much is spoken concerning the nature, properties, and excellencies of **humility**, which is both the beautifier and preserver of all other graces.

Here you may see that those who are lowest in their own esteem, are highest in God's esteem. Here you may see that humble souls are not so low and contemptible in the eyes of the world, as they are honorable in the eyes of God. [Humility is that which keeps all graces together. Bernard.]

And if ever there were an age since Christ was on earth, wherein it was needful to preach, press, and print this great doctrine of humility, of self-abasement, of soul-abasement, this is the age wherein we live. Oh the pride, the loftiness of the professors of this age! But because this point is largely spoken to in this tract, I shall satisfy myself with this touch.

There are many other weighty things treated on, which for brevity's sake I

shall omit, only give me permission to acquaint you with a few things about this ensuing tract, and then I shall draw to a close.

First, That it is the substance of twenty-two sermons, preached by me about three years ago, on the lecture nights at this place where now I preach.

Secondly, That there are in it several other things of no small concernment to your souls, that I did not then deliver—but have been given in since, from that fountain that fills all in all.

Thirdly, That though I have been much pressed to print these sermons—yet I would never have yielded, had I not been thoroughly convinced and persuaded in my judgment and conscience, that they may, by the blessing of the Lord upon them prove many ways useful and serviceable to all those honest Nathanaels into whose hands they may fall, else they had been buried in the dark, and never come to public light. [A sermon preached serves but one audience; a sermon printed may serve many audiences.]

I have only a few requests to make to you, and then I shall take my leave of you.

And my *first* request is this, that you would **meditate and dwell upon what you read**; otherwise your pains and mine will be lost.

It is a law among the Parsees in India, to use premeditation in what they are to do, that if it be bad, to reject it; if good, to act upon it. The application is easy. The more any man is in the contemplation of truth, the more deep and firm impression is made upon his heart by truth.

Christians must be like the clean beasts, which parted the hoof and chewed the cud; they must by heavenly meditation chew truths, or else they will never taste the sweetness that is in divine truths.

Mary "pondered the sayings of the shepherds in her heart," Luke 2:19. Not those who eat most—but those who digest most, are the most healthful. Not those who get most—but those who keep most, are richest.

So not those who hear most, or read most—but those who meditate most, are most edified and enriched.

My *second* request to you is this, that you will **make conscience of living out those truths you read**. [Your actions, in passing, pass not away; for every good work is a grain of seed for eternal life.]

To read much and practice nothing, is to hunt much and catch nothing.

Suetonius reports of Julius Caesar, "That seeing Alexander's statue, he fetched a deep sigh, because he at that age had done so little."

Ah! what cause have most to sigh, that they have heard so much, and read so much, and yet done so little! Surely it is more honorable to do great things, than to speak or read great things! It is the doer that will be most happy at last, John 13:17. "They are written in the book of life—who do what good they can, though they cannot do as they would." (Bernard.)

I have read of a good man coming from a public lecture, and being asked by one whether the sermon was finished, answered, with a sad sigh, "Ah! it is *preached*—but not *finished*."

My *third* request is this, that you will **pray over what you read**. Many read much, and pray little, and therefore get little by all they read.

Galen writes of a fish called *Uranoscopos*, that has but one eye, which looks continually up to heaven. When a Christian has one eye upon his book, the other should be looking up to heaven for a blessing upon what he reads.

When one heard what admirable victories Scanderbeg's sword had wrought, he would needs see it; and when he saw it, says he, *This is but an ordinary sword; alas! what can this do?* Scanderbeg sent him word, *I have sent you my sword—but I have the arm that did all by it.*

Alas! what can Christ's sword, Christ's word, do without his arm? Therefore look up to Christ's arm in prayer, that so his sword, his word, may do great things in your souls.

Luther professes "that he profited more by prayer in a short space than by study in a longer;" as John, by weeping, got the sealed book open.

My *fourth* request to you is this, That if, by the blessing of the Lord upon my weak endeavors, any leaf or line should drop myrrh or mercy, marrow or fatness, upon your spirits, that you will **give all the glory to the God of heaven, for to him alone it does belong.**

Through grace I know I am a poor worm; I am nothing, I have nothing but what I have received. The crown befits no head but Christ's. Let him who is our all in all have the honor and the glory of all, and I have my end. [Ingratitude, say some, is a monster in nature, a blunder in manners, and a paradox in grace—damming up the course of donations, divine and human.]

Pliny tells of some in the remote parts of India, who have no mouths, and yet live on the smell of herbs and sweet flowers; but I hope better things of you, even such as accompany salvation.

My *fifth* request to you is this, That you would **let me lie near your hearts, when you are in the mount especially.**

Oh pray, pray hard for me, that the Spirit of the Lord may be redoubled upon me; that his word may prosper in my mouth; that it may "run, and be glorified;" and that I may be high in my communion with God, and holy and unblamably in my walkings with God; and that it may be still *day* with my soul; that I may live and die in the joys and comforts of the Holy Spirit; and that when my sun is set, my hour-glass runs out, my work done, my race run—I may rest in the everlasting arms of divine love, etc.

My *last* and least request to you is this, That you will please **cast a mantle of love over the mistakes** of the press, and do me that right, and yourselves the courtesy, as, before you read, to correct any material faults that you shall find pointed at in the errata. [In every pomegranate there is at least one rotten kernel to be found, said Crates the philosopher.]

God's easy passing over the many and daily erratas of your lives, cannot but make you so ingenuous as readily to pass over the erratas in this book.

You are choice jewels in my eye; you lie near unto my heart; I am willing to spend and be spent for your sakes. My earnest and humble desire is, that my service and labor of love may be accepted by you, Romans 15:31, and that it may work much for your internal and eternal welfare; and that "an abundant entrance may be administered to you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. 1:11, and 1:8; and that you may be filled "with joy unspeakable and full of glory," and with that "peace which passes understanding." This is, and by grace shall be, the prayer of him who desires to approve himself faithful to Christ, his truths, his interests, and his people, and who is your souls' servant in all gospel engagements.

Thomas Brooks.

The verse opened and explained

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!" Ephesians 3:8

"Unto me, who am *less than the least* of all saints."

"Less than the least of all saints," is a double diminutive, and signifies lesser than the least, if lesser might be. Here you have the greatest apostle descending down to the lowest step of **humility**. Great Paul is least of saints, last of the apostles, and greatest of sinners. [He who is little in his own account is great in God's esteem.] The choicest buildings have the lowest foundations, the best balsam sinks to the bottom; those ears of corn and boughs of trees which are most filled and best laden—bow lowest. So do those souls who are most laden with the fruits of paradise. "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints."

"Is this *grace* given."

In the Greek, or "was this grace given." The word that is here rendered *grace*, is taken in Scripture not only for the favor of God—but also for his gracious gifts; and so you are to understand it in this place. Grace is taken for the *gifts of grace*; and they are twofold, common or special. Some are common to believers and hypocrites, as knowledge, tongues, a gift of prayer, etc.; some are special and peculiar to the saints, as fear, love, faith, etc. Now Paul had all these, the better to fit him for that high and noble service to which he was called.

"That I should *preach*."

That is, *declare good news or glad tidings*. The Greek word answers to the Hebrew word, which signifies good news, glad tidings, and a joyful message.

"That I should preach *among the Gentiles*."

Sometimes this Greek word is generally used for all men, or for all nations. Sometimes the word is used more especially for the Gentiles—as distinguished from the Jews. So it is used Mat. 6:32, "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek." And so it is used here. Those who are "without God in the world," who stand in arms against God, who are ignorant of those riches of grace which are in Christ; this grace is given to me, that I should preach among the poor heathens, "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

"That I might preach among the Gentiles." What, preach *myself?* No! but "the *unsearchable riches of Christ*." [One Christ will be to you instead of all other things, because in him are all good things to be found. Augustine.]

The Greek word signifies, not to be traced out. Here is rhetoric indeed! Here are riches, unsearchable riches, unsearchable riches of Christ. Riches always imply two things: 1, abundance; 2, abundance of such things as are of worth. Now in the Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest riches, the best riches, the choicest riches; in Christ are riches of justification,

Titus 2:14; in Christ are riches of sanctification, Philip. 4:12, 13; in Christ are riches of consolation, 2 Cor. 12:9; and in Christ are riches of glorification, 1 Pet. 1:2-3. But of these glorious unsearchable riches of Christ, we shall speak hereafter.

I shall begin at this time with the first words, **"Unto me who am *less than the least* of all saints."** There are these two observations which naturally flow from these words.

Observation 1. ***That the most holy men are always the most humble men.***

None so humble on earth, as those who live highest in heaven.

Or if you will, take the observation thus: ***That those who are the most highly valued and esteemed of by God, are lowest and least in their own esteem.***

"Unto *me*, who am *less than the least* of all saints," etc.

Observation 2. The second observation is, ***That there are weak saints as well as strong; little saints as well as great.*** Or thus, ***All saints are not of an equal growth or stature.***

The First Doctrine:

> "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!" Ephesians 3:8

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Doctrine I. I shall begin with the first observation, That **the most holy men are always the most humble men.** Souls that are the most highly esteemed and valued by God, do set the least and lowest esteem upon themselves. "Unto *me* who am *less than the least* of all saints," etc.

In the handling of this point, I shall do these three things:

I. I shall prove that the most holy souls are always the most humble souls.

II. I shall show you the properties of truly humble souls.

III. I shall show you the reasons why those who are the most highly prized and esteemed of God, do set so low a price upon themselves.

IV. And then the use.

I. I shall PROVE that the most holy men are always the most humble men. That this is so, I shall give you most clear proofs, and open them to you.

See it in **JOB**. Job was humble in regard of those perfections and degrees of grace, which he had attained to beyond any other saints on earth. No man ever received a fairer or a more valuable certificate under the hand of God, or the broad seal of heaven, for his being a soul famous in grace

and holiness, than Job, as you may see, Job 1:8, "And the Lord said unto Satan—Have you considered My servant Job? No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil." And yet no man could speak more undervaluingly of himself than Job did. Job 42:5-6, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear—but now my eye sees you, *I abhor myself* in dust and ashes." [Job was high in worth and humble in heart.] This expression is the deepest act of **abhorrency**. Abhorrency strictly taken, is hatred wound up to the height. "I *abhor* myself." The word that is rendered *abhor* signifies to reject, to disdain, to despise, and to cast off. Ah! says Job, I abhor myself, I reject myself, I disdain myself, I cast off myself, I have a vile esteem of myself. [Deliver me, O Lord, from that evil man—myself! Augustine.]

So our blessed apostle **PAUL**, who had been caught up into the third heavens, and had such glorious revelations as could not be uttered—yet he accounted himself less than the least of all saints. [Wordless words, such as words are too weak to utter.] Not that anything can be less than the least; the apostle's holy rhetoric does not cross Aristotle's philosophy; but the original word being a double diminutive, his meaning is that he was as little as could be; therefore he put himself down so little as could not be, less than the least.

Another proof you have in the prophet **ISAIAH** 6:1, 5-6. As Paul among the apostles was the greatest, so Isaiah among the prophets was the clearest and choicest gospel preacher, and holds out more of Christ and of his kingdom and glory, than all the other prophets do. Isaiah 6:1, He sees the glory of the Lord in a vision, and this makes him cry out, verse 5, "Woe is me, for *I am undone*, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!" "I am undone." The Hebrew is, "I am cut off," I am a forlorn man! Why? "For I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!" [The clearest sight and vision of God does always give a man the fullest sight of his own emptiness, sinfulness, and nothingness.] Here you have the highest and choicest among the prophets, as you had Paul before among the apostles, abasing and laying low himself.

So **PETER**. Luke 5:8, "Depart from me, for I am *a sinful man*, O Lord!" That is—*a man, a sinner*—a compound of dirt and sin! When he saw that

glorious miracle wrought by the Lord Jesus, he cries out as one very sensible of his own weakness and sinfulness. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." Ah! I am not worthy to be near such majesty and glory, who am a mere bundle of vice and vanity, of folly and iniquity!

Take another clear instance: Gen. 18:27, "And **ABRAHAM** answered and said, Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but *dust and ashes*." Here you have the father of the faithful, the greatest believer in the world, accounting himself dust and ashes. [Solemnly think that you are dust and ashes, and be proud if you can, Isaiah 6:1-2.] Dust notes the baseness of his original, and ashes notes his deserving to be burnt to ashes, if God should deal with him in justice rather than in mercy. The nearer any soul draws to God, the more humble will that soul lie before God. None so near God as the angels, nor any so humble before God as the angels.

So **JACOB**, Gen. 32:10, "*I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies*, and all the truth which you have showed unto your servant," etc. Jacob, a man eminent in his prevailing with God, a prince that had the honor and the happiness to overcome the God of mercy—yet judges himself unworthy of the least mercy. Ah! how low is that soul in his own eyes—who is most honorable in God's eyes!

DAVID, you know, was a man after God's own heart, 1 Kings 15:5; a man highly honored, much beloved, and dearly prized by the Lord. Yet in 1 Sam. 26:20, he counts himself a *flea*; and what is more contemptible than a flea?

In Psalm 22:6, he says, "I am a *worm*—and no man." The word that is there rendered *worm*, is a word that signifies a very little worm—a worm that is so little that a man can hardly see or perceive it. A worm is the most despicable creature in the world, trampled under foot by everyone. Says David—*I am a despicable worm in my own eyes*. [A humble soul is a little, little nothing in his own eyes.]

And thus you see the point proved, that the most holy men have been always the most humble men.

II. The second thing that I am to do is, to show you **the properties of humble souls.** I confess, when I look abroad in the world, and observe the demeanor of all sorts of men, my heart is stirred to speak as fully and as home to this point, as Christ shall help me. It is very very sad to consider, how few humble souls there are in these days. **Ah! the damnable pride which reigns and rules in the hearts and lives of most men!** I think it is far greater than has been known in the generations before us. Ah, England! England! what folly, what damnable wickedness is this, that you should be a-lifting yourself up in pride, when God is a-staining the pride of all glory, and bringing into contempt the honorable of the earth, and a-setting his feet upon the neck of pride. [God loves to hear this as a parcel of his praise—to spare the lowly and strike down the proud.]

[1.] Now the first property that I shall lay down of a humble soul is this: **A humble soul under the highest spiritual discoveries, and under the greatest outward mercies, forgets not his former sinfulness and his former outward baseness.**

PAUL had been taken up into the third heavens, and had glorious revelations and manifestations of God, 2 Cor. 12:1-4; he cries out, "I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious," 1 Tim. 1:13. Under the choicest discoveries, he remembers his former blasphemies. So Romans 7:23, "I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." He had been at this time about fourteen years converted, as some judge. He was a man who lived at as high a rate in God, as any we read of; a man who was filled with glorious spiritual discoveries and revelations, and yet under all discoveries and revelations, he remembers that body of sin and death that made him cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Who shall ease me of my burden, who shall knock off these chains that make my life a hell? [Chrysostom observes it of Paul, as his greatest honor, that although he had obtained pardon of God for his sins —yet he is not ashamed to admit his personal wretchedness to the world. The spouse of Christ, under all the kisses and embraces of Christ, acknowledges herself to be **black!** Song. 1:2, 5, compared.]

I will by a few instances prove the other branch: Gen. 32:10, "I am not

worthy of the least of all the mercies," says **JACOB**, "When I left home, I owned nothing except a walking stick, and now my household fills two camps!" I remember, says he, when I went over Jordan, I was as a footman that carried all his wealth with him. Under his outward greatness he forgets not his former baseness. A humble soul is good at looking back upon his former low estate, upon his threadbare coat, which was his best and only robe.

So **DAVID**, 1 Chron. 17:16-17, "Then King David went in and sat before the Lord and prayed—Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? And now, O God, in addition to everything else, you speak of giving me a lasting dynasty! You speak as though I were someone very great, O Lord God!" David remembered the baseness of his birth; he remembered his shepherd's crook, as Jacob did his traveling staff. [Iphicrates, that noble captain, cried out, From how small to how great an estate am I raised! So does the humble soul, when God turns his brass into silver, his iron into gold, his pence into pounds. Agathocles, who, of a potter's son, was made king of Sicily, would always be served in earthen vessels.]

God's mercies make a humble soul glad—but not proud. A humble soul is lowest when his mercies are highest; he is least when he is greatest; he is lowest when he is highest; he is most poor when he is most rich. Nothing *melts* like mercy, nothing *draws* like mercy, nothing *humbles* like mercy. Mercy gives the humble soul such excellent counsel, as Plasilla the empress gave her husband Theodosius, "Remember, O husband," says she, "what lately you were—and what now you are; so shall you govern well the empire, and give God his due praise for so great an advancement." The voice of mercy is, "Remember what you once were, and what now you are—and be humble."

Now **proud men** who are lifted up from the ash-heap, who abound in worldly wealth, ah how does their blood rise with their outward good! The more mercies they have, the more proud they are; mercies do but puff and swell such souls. In a crowd of mercies, they cry out in the pride of their hearts: "Depart from us, O God, for we desire not the knowledge of your ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit shall we have, if we pray unto him?" Psalm 73:3-13; Job 21:7-16,

14:15.

[2.] A second property of a humble soul is this, **He overlooks his own righteousness, and lives upon the righteousness of another, to wit, the Lord Jesus.** So the apostle Paul, in Philippians 3:8-10, overlooks his own righteousness, and lives wholly upon the righteousness of Christ: "I desire to be found in him," says he, "not having my own righteousness." Away with it! It is dross, it is dung, it is dog's meat! It is a rotten righteousness, an imperfect righteousness, a weak righteousness, which is of the law. But that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith—that is a spotless righteousness, a pure righteousness, a complete righteousness, an incomparable righteousness! And, therefore, a humble soul overlooks his own righteousness, and lives upon Christ's righteousness.

Remember this—all the sighing, mourning, sobbing, and complaining in the world, does not so undeniably evidence a man to be humble, as his overlooking his own righteousness, and living really and purely upon the righteousness of Christ. Men may *do* much, *hear* much, *pray* much, *fast* much, and *give* much, etc., and yet be as proud as Lucifer, as you may see in the Scribes and Pharisees, Mat. 23, and those in Isaiah 58:3, who in the pride of their hearts made an idol of their own righteousness: "Why have we fasted," say they, "and you see it not? Why have we afflicted our souls, and you take no knowledge?" Oh! but for a man now to trample upon his own righteousness, and to live wholly upon the righteousness of another, this speaks out a man to be humble indeed. There is nothing that the heart of man stands more averse to than this—of discarding his own righteousness. Man is a creature apt to warm himself with the sparks of his own fire, though he does lie down for it in eternal sorrow, Isaiah 50:11. Man is naturally prone to go about to establish his own righteousness, that he might not subject to the righteousness of Christ; he will labor as for life, to lift up his own righteousness, and to make a Savior of it, Romans 10:4.

Ay—but a humble soul disclaims his own righteousness: "All our righteousness is as filthy rags." "Enter not into judgment with your servant, for in your sight shall no man living be justified," Psalm 143:2. So Job, "Though I were righteous—yet I would not answer—but I would

make supplication to my judge," Job 9:15. Proud Pharisees bless themselves in their own righteousness: "I thank God I am not as this publican; I fast twice in the week," etc., Luke 18:11-12. Ay—but now a soul truly humbled blushes to see his own righteousness, and glories in this, that he has the righteousness of Christ to live upon. [A proud heart eyes more his seeming worth than his real needs.] Rev. 4:10-11, the twenty-four elders throw down their crowns at the feet of Christ. By their crowns you may understand their gifts, their excellencies, their righteousness; they throw down these before Christ's throne, to note to us, that they did not put confidence in them, and that Christ was the crown of crowns and the top of all their royalty and glory. A humble soul looks upon Christ's righteousness as his only crown.

[3] Thirdly, ***The lowest and the most despicable good work, is not below a humble soul.*** A humble **DAVID** will dance before the ark: he enjoyed so much of God in it, that it caused him to leap and dance before it; but Michal his wife despised him for a fool, and counted him as a simple vain fellow, looking upon his behavior as vain and light, and not becoming the might, majesty, and glory of so glorious a prince. Well! says this humble soul, *if this be to be vile, I will be more vile!*

Great **PAUL**—yet being humble and low in his own eyes, he can stoop to do service to the least and lowest saint. 1 Cor. 9:19-22, "Though I am free and belong to no man, *I make myself a slave* to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." Ah, says Paul, it is my greatest joy, my greatest delight, to gain souls to Christ. The word *win* signifies craft, or guile Ah! humble Paul will use a holy craft, a holy guile, to win souls. Here you have a humble soul bowing and stooping to the lowest saint, and the lowest services—that he might win souls.

(To convert one soul is greater than to pour out ten thousand talents

into the baskets of the poor. Chrysostom)

So the Lord **JESUS** himself was famous in this, John 13:4. Though he was the Lord of glory, and one who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, one who had all perfection and fullness in himself—yet the lowest work is not below this King of kings. Witness his washing his disciples' feet and wiping them with a towel, 1 Cor. 2:8; Philip. 2:6; Col. 1:19.

Bonaventure, though he was born of great parentage, and a great scholar —yet to keep his mind from swelling, he would often sweep rooms, wash dishes, and make beds.

So that famous Italian marquees, when God was pleased by the ministry of his word to convert him, the lowest work was not below him. Though he might have lived like a king in his own country—yet having tasted of that life and sweetness which are in Jesus, he was so humble that he would go to market, and carry home the cheapest and the poorest things the market yielded. There was nothing below him, when God had changed him, and humbled him. [Proud hearts cannot stoop to low services; they say this work and that is below their abilities, station, parentage, and employments.]

It was recorded to the glory of some ancient generals, that they were able to call every common soldier by his own name, and were careful to provide money, not only for their captains and soldiers—but litter also for the basest animal. [These heathens will rise in judgment against many proud professors in these days, who scorn to stoop to low services, etc. So it is with all that are high in worth and humble in heart. Lev. 10:2- 3, God will be sanctified either actively or passively; either *in* us or *upon* us.] There is not the lowest good work, which is below the humble soul. If the work is good, though ever so low, humility will put a hand to it; but pride will not so much as touch it.

[4.] A fourth property of a humble heart is this, ***A humble heart will submit to every TRUTH of God which is made known to it; even to those divine truths which are most contrary to flesh and blood.*** 1 Sam. 3:17, **Eli** would sincerely know what God had revealed to Samuel concerning him; Samuel tells him that he must break

his neck, that the priesthood must be taken away from him, and his sons must be slain in the war. "It is the Lord," says he, "let him do what seems him good."

So in Lev. 10:3, the Lord by fire from heaven destroys **Aaron's** two sons. "But Aaron remained silent." If God misses of his honor one way, he will rain hell out of heaven—but he will have it another way. This Aaron knew, and therefore he remained silent, when God showed himself to be "a consuming fire." The Hebrew word that is here rendered *silent*, signifies the quietness and silence of his mind. [The word often signifies a modest quietness of mind, the troubled affections being allayed; so here. In Lam. 3:27-29 it signifies to submit unto God, and to be patient in affliction; and so it may be taken here.]

He did not hold his tongue only, for many a man may hold his tongue, and yet his mind and heart may kick and swell against God—but his very mind was quiet and still; there was a heavenly calm in his spirit; he was quiet and silent, because the Lord had done it. So in Acts 10:33, "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded you of God." We are not here to hear what may tickle our ears, or please our fancies, or satisfy our lusts. No; but we are here to hear what God will say. Our hearts stand ready pressed to subject themselves to whatever God shall declare to be his will. We are willing to hear what we may do, that we may obey sincerely and universally the good pleasure of our God, knowing that it is as well our dignity as our duty so to do.

There are three things in a humble soul, which do strongly incline it to duty.

The *first* is divine love.

The *second* is divine presence.

The *third* is divine glory.

The dove made use of her wings to fly to the ark; so does a humble soul of his duties to fly to Christ. Though the dove did use her wings—yet she did not trust in her wings—but in the ark. So though a humble soul does use

duties—yet he does not trust in his duties—but in his Jesus. But now proud hearts they hate the truth, they cry out, "Who is the Lord, that we should obey him?" And what are his commandments, that we should submit to them? Ay—but a humble soul falls under the power of truth, and counts it his greatest glory to be obedient to all truth.

[5.] A fifth property of a humble soul is this: ***A humble soul lives not upon himself, nor upon his own doings—but upon the Lord Jesus, and his doings.*** Poor men, you know, they do not live upon themselves, they live upon others; they live upon the care of others, the love of others, the provision of others. Why thus a humble soul lives upon the care of Christ, the love of Christ, the promise of Christ, the faithfulness of Christ, the discoveries of Christ. He lives upon Christ for his *justification*, Philip. 3:7-10; he lives upon Christ for his *sanctification*. Cant. 4:16, "Awake, O north wind, and come O south wind—blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." And he also lives upon Christ for his consolation: Cant. 2:3, "Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste." And he lives upon Christ for the performance of all holy actions: Philip. 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me;" Gal. 2:20, "I live—yet not I—but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." A humble soul sees in Christ a fullness of abundance, and a fullness of redundancy, and here his soul lives and feeds. A humble soul sees that all his stock of blessings are in the hands of Christ. His stock of graces, his stock of comforts, his stock of experiences are in the hands of Jesus Christ, who is the great Lord and keeper of all a believer's graces, and of all his comforts. And therefore, as children live upon the hand of their parents; so a humble soul sees its stock of blessings are in the hand of the Lord Jesus, and therefore he lives upon Christ—upon his love, and his provision, and his undertakings, etc.

But now proud hearts live not upon the Lord Jesus Christ; they live upon themselves, and upon their own duties, their own righteousness, their own actings, as the Scripture evidences. Christ dwells in that heart most eminently, that has emptied itself of itself. Christ is the humble man's manna, upon which he lives, and by which he thrives, Isaiah 58:2, 7; Luke

7:47.

[6.] A sixth property of a humble soul is this, ***He judges himself to be deserving of the judgments of God.***[A proud heart resists, and is resisted: flint to flint, fire to fire. A humble soul blesses God as well for crosses as mercies, as well for adversity as for prosperity, as well for frowns as for smiles, etc., because he judges himself unworthy of the least rebukes from God.] A humble soul looks upon himself as one not worthy that God should spend a rod upon him, in order to his reformation, edification, or salvation. *As I am unworthy,* says a humble soul, *that God should smile upon me, so I am unworthy that he should spend a frown upon me.* Job 13:25, "Will you break a leaf driven to and fro? And will you pursue the dry stubble?" Why, I am but a leaf, I am but a little dry stubble, I am below your wrath; I am so very, very bad, that I wonder that you should so much as spend a rod upon me. What more weak, worthless, slight, and contemptible than a leaf, than dry stubble? *Why, Lord,* says Job, *I am a poor, weak, and worthless creature, I wonder that you should take any pains to do me good, I can't but count and call everything a mercy—which is less than I deserve—which is less than hell.*

So David, in 1 Sam. 24:14, "After whom has the King of Israel come out? After whom do you pursue? After a dead dog, after a flea." The language of a humble soul, when God begins to be a angry, is this: *Lord, I can bless you who you will take any pains with me; but I humbly acknowledge that I am below the least rod, I am not worthy that you should frown upon me, threaten me, strike me, or whip me, for my internal and eternal good.* But proud hearts think themselves wronged when they are afflicted, they cry out with Cain, "Our punishment is greater than we can bear," Gen. 4:13.

[7.] A seventh property of a humble soul is this, ***A humble soul does highly prize the least of Christ.*** The least smile, the least good word, the least good look, the least truth, the least mercy—is highly valued by a humble soul.

The Canaanite woman in the fifteenth chapter of Matthew sets a high price upon a *crumb* of mercy. [Faith will pick an argument out of a

repulse, and turn discouragements into encouragements. Luther would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible; such a price he set upon it, from the sweet that he found in it.] Ah, Lord, says the humble soul, if I may not have a *loaf* of mercy, give me a *piece* of mercy; if not a piece of mercy, give me a *crumb* of mercy. If I may not have sun-light, let me have moon-light; if not moon-light, let me have star-light; if not star-light, let me have candle-light; and for that I will bless you.

In the time of the law, the lowest things that were consecrated for use in the tabernacle were very highly prized—such as leather or wood. A humble soul looks upon all the things of God as consecrated things. Every *truth* of God is a consecrated truth; it is consecrated to holy use, and this causes the soul highly to prize it; and so every *smile* of God, and every *discovery* of God, and every *drop of mercy* from God—is very highly prized by a soul that walks humbly with God. The name of Christ, the voice of Christ, the footsteps of Christ, the least touch of the garment of Christ, the least-regarded truth of Christ, the lowest and least-regarded among the flock of Christ, is highly prized by humble souls that are savingly interested in Christ, Song 1:3; John 10:4-5; Psalm 27:4; Mat. 9:20-21; Acts 24:14; 1 Cor. 9:22. A humble soul cannot, a humble soul dares not, call anything little—which has Christ in it; neither can a humble soul call or count anything great wherein he sees not Christ, wherein he enjoys not Christ. A humble soul highly prizes the least nod, the least love-token, the least courtesy from Christ; but proud hearts count great mercies small mercies, and small mercies no mercies; yes, pride does so unman them, that they often call mercy misery, etc.

[8.] The eighth property of a humble soul is this, ***It can never be good enough, it can never pray enough, nor hear enough, nor mourn enough, nor believe enough, nor love enough, nor fear enough, nor joy enough, nor repent enough, nor loathe sin enough, nor be humble enough*, etc.**

Humble Paul looks upon his greatness—all as nothing at all; he forgets those things which are behind, and reaches forth to those things which are before, "that if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead," Philip. 3:11-14; that is, that perfection of holiness which the dead shall attain unto in the morning of the resurrection. [It signifies the

straining of the whole body, a stretching out head and hands, as runners in a race do to lay hold on the prize, Psalm 10:17. It signifies so to desire and long after a thing as to have one's teeth water at it; so in Micah 7:1. But proud hearts sit down and pride themselves, and bless themselves, as if they had attained to much, when they have attained to nothing which can raise them above the lowest step of misery.]

No holiness below that matchless, peerless, spotless, perfect holiness that saints shall have in the glorious day of Christ's appearing, will satisfy the humble soul. A humble heart is an aspiring heart; he cannot be contented to get up some rounds in Jacob's ladder—but he must get to the very top of the ladder, to the very top of holiness. A humble heart cannot be satisfied with so much grace as will bring him to glory, with so much of heaven as will keep him from dropping into hell; he is still crying out, *Give, Lord, give; give me more of yourself, more of your Son, more of your Spirit; give me more light, more life, more love, etc.* Caesar in warlike matters minded more what was to conquer than what was already conquered; what was to gain than what was already gained. So does a humble soul mind more what he should be—than what he is; what is to be done—than what has been done. Truly heaven is for that man, and that man is for heaven, that sets up for his mark the perfection of holiness.

Poor men are full of desires; they are often a-sighing it out, *Oh that we had bread to strengthen us, drink to refresh us, clothes to cover us, friends to visit us, and houses to shelter us, etc.* So souls that are spiritually poor they are often a-sighing it out, *Oh that we had more of Christ to strengthen us, more of Christ to refresh us, more of Christ to be a covering and shelter to us, etc.*

I had rather, says the humble soul, *be a poor man and a rich Christian, than a rich man and a poor Christian. Lord,* says the humble soul, *I had rather do anything, I had rather bear anything, I had rather be anything, than to be a dwarf in grace,* Rev. 3:17, Isaiah 65:5, Luke 18:11-12.

The light and glory of humble Christians rises by degrees: Cant. 6:1, (1.) Looking forth as the morning, with a little light; (2.) Fair as the moon, more light; (3.) Clear as the sun—*that is* come up to a higher degree of

spiritual light, life, and glory. Lord, says the humble soul, give me much grace, and then a little gold will serve my turn; give me much of heaven, and little of earth will content me; give me much of the springs above, and a little of the springs below will satisfy me, etc.

[9.] The ninth property of a humble soul is this, ***It will smite and strike at small sins as well as for great; for those things which the world counts no sin, as well as for those who they count gross sins.***

When David had but cut off the hem of Saul's garment, his heart smote him as if he had cut off his head. The Hebrew word signifies to smite, wound, or chastise. [1 Sam. 24:5, A good man's heart, when kindly awakened, may smite him for those actions which at first he judged very prudent and correct. How great a pain, not to be borne, comes from the prick of this small thorn! Little sins have put several to their wits' ends, when they have been set home upon their consciences.] Ah! his heart struck him, his heart chastised him, his heart wounded him for cutting off Saul's skirt, though he did it upon noble grounds, namely, to convince Saul of his false jealousies, and to evidence his own innocency and integrity. And so, at another time, his heart smote him for numbering the people—as if he had murdered the people: 2 Sam. 24:10, "And David's heart smote him, after that he had numbered the people; and David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in what I have done: and now I beseech you, O Lord, take away the iniquity of your servant, for I have done very foolishly."

A humble soul knows that little sins, if I may so call any, cost Christ his blood; and that they make way for greater sins; and that little sins multiplied become great, as a little sum multiplied is great. He knows that little sins—cloud the face of God, wound conscience, grieve the Spirit, rejoice Satan, and make work for repentance, etc. A humble soul knows that little sins are very dangerous. A little leaven leavens the whole lump; a little blow may kill one; a little poison may poison another; a little leak in a ship sinks it; a little fly in the box of ointment spoils it; a little flaw in a good project mars it—so a little sin may at once bar the door of heaven and open the gates of hell; and therefore a humble soul smites and upbraids itself for the least as well as the greatest sins. Though a head of

garlic be little—yet it will poison the leopard, though he be great. Though a mouse is but little—yet it will kill an elephant, if he gets up into his trunk. Though the scorpion be little—yet it will sting a lion to death; and so will the least sin, if not pardoned by the death of Christ.

A proud heart counts great sins small, and small sins no sins—and so disarms conscience for a time of its whipping and wounding power; but at death, or in hell, conscience will take up an iron rod, with which it will lash the sinner forever; and then, though too late, the sinner shall acknowledge his little sins to be very great, and his great sins to be exceeding grievous and odious, etc.

[10.] The tenth property of a humble soul is this, ***It will quietly bear burdens, and patiently take blows and knocks, and make no noise.*** A humble soul sees God through man; he sees God through all the actions and behaviors of men: "I was silent," says the prophet, I opened not my mouth, because You are the one who has done this." A humble soul looks through secondary causes, and sees the hand of God—and then lays his own hand upon his mouth. A humble soul is a mute soul, a tongue-tied soul—when he looks through secondary causes to the supreme cause. So **Aaron**, when he saw his sons suddenly surprised by a dreadful and doleful death, he remained silent, he bridled his passions; he sits silent under a terrible stroke of divine justice, because the fire that devoured them went out from the Lord. So when Samuel had told **Eli** that God would judge his house forever, and that he had sworn that the iniquity of his house should not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever, "It is the Lord," says Eli, "let him do what seems good unto him." Eli humbly and patiently lays his neck upon the block—*it is the Lord; let him strike, let him kill,* etc., says Eli, l Sam. 3:11, 13.

So **David**, when Shimei manifested his desperate fury and folly, malice and madness, in raving and raging at him, in cursing and reproaching of him, says he, "Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him," 2 Sam. 16:5, 10. *God*, says he, *will, by his wise providence, turn his cursing into blessing. I see the justice of God in his cursing, therefore let him alone, let him curse,* says David.

Cassianus reports, that when a certain Christian was held captive by the

infidels, and tormented by many pains and ignominious taunts, being demanded, by way of scorn and reproach, *Tell us what Christ has done for you*, answered—*He has done what you see, that I am not moved at all the cruelties and contumelies you cast upon me.*

So that blessed martyr, Gyles of Brussels, whenever the friars abused him—he ever remained silent, insomuch that those wretches would say abroad that he had a dumb devil in him. Full vessels will bear many a knock, many a stroke, and yet make no noise. So Christians who are full of Christ, who are full of the Spirit—will bear many a knock, many a stroke—and yet make no noise.

A humble soul may *groan* under afflictions—but he will not *grumble* in calms. Proud hearts *discourse* about patience—but in storms humble hearts *exercise* patience. Philosophers have much *commended* patience—but in the hour of darkness it is the humble soul who *acts* patient. I am *afflicted*, says the humble soul—but it is mercy I am not *destroyed*. I am fallen into the pit—but it is free grace that I have not fallen into hell. God is too just to wrong me, and too gracious to harm me; and therefore I will be still and quiet, let him do what he will with me, says the humble soul.

But proud souls resist when they are resisted, they strike when they are stricken, Isaiah 58:1-3: "Who is the Lord," says lofty Pharaoh, "that I should obey him?" and Cain cries out, "My punishment is greater than I am able to bear." Well! remember this: though it be not easy in afflictions and tribulations to remain quiet and silent—yet it is very advantageous; which the heathens seemed to imitate in placing the image of Angerona [goddess of silence], with the mouth bound upon the altar of Volupia [goddess of pleasure], to show that those who do prudently and humbly conceal their sorrows and anxieties by patience, shall attain comfort and refreshment.

[11.] The eleventh property of a humble soul is this: ***in all religious duties and services, he trades with God upon the credit of Christ.*** [John 14:13, and 15:16, and 16:23, 26. *The name of Jesus has a thousand treasures of joy and comfort in it,* says Chrysostom; and is therefore used by Paul five hundred times, as some have reckoned.] Lord, says the humble soul, I need *power* against such and such sins: give it to

me upon the credit of Christ's blood. I need *strength* to such and such services: give it to me upon the credit of Christ's word. I need such and such *mercies* for my cheering, refreshing, quickening, and strengthening: give them into my bosom upon the credit of Christ's intercession. As a poor man lives and deals upon the credits of others, so does a humble soul live and deal with God for the strengthening of every grace, and for the supply of every mercy—upon the credit of the Lord Jesus. A humble soul knows that since he broke with God in innocency, God will trust him no more, he will take his word no more; and therefore when he goes to God for mercy, he brings his *Benjamin*, his Jesus, in his arms, and pleads for mercy upon the account of Jesus.

Plutarch reports that it was accustomed to be the way of the Molossians, when they would seek the favor of their prince, they took up the king's son in their arms, and so went and kneeled before the king, and by this means overcame him. So do humble souls make a conquest upon God with Christ in their arms. The Father will not give that soul the repulse, who brings Christ in his arms. The humble soul knows that outside of Christ—God is incommunicable; that outside of Christ—God is incomprehensible; that outside of Christ—God is very dreadful; and that outside of Christ—God is inaccessible; and therefore he still brings Christ with him, and presents all his requests in his name, and so prevails, etc. Oh! but proud souls deal with God upon the credit of their own worthiness, righteousness, services, prayers, tears, fastings, etc., as the proud Pharisees and those wrangling hypocrites in Isaiah 58:1-3.

It was a very proud saying of one, I will not have heaven but at a price; and therefore vain-glory is well called a pleasant thief, and the sweet spoiler of spiritual excellencies.

[12.] The twelfth property of a humble soul is this: ***it endeavors more how to honor and glorify God in afflictions—than how to get out of afflictions.*** So Daniel, the three children, the apostles, and those worthies of whom this world was not worthy. They were not anxious about getting *out* of affliction—but studious how to glorify God *in* their afflictions. They were willing to be anything, and to bear anything—so that in everything God might be glorified. They made it their business to glorify God in the fire, in the prison, in the den, on the rack, and under

the sword, etc. *Lord*, says the humble soul, *do but keep down my sins, and keep up my heart in a way of honoring of you under all my troubles—and then my troubles will be no troubles, my afflictions will be no afflictions. Though my burdens be doubled, and my troubles be multiplied—yet do but help me to honor you by believing in you, by waiting on you, and by submitting to you—and I shall sing care away, and shall say—It is enough.*

When Valens the emperor sent messengers to win Eusebius to heresy by fair words and large promises, he answered, *Alas, sir! these speeches are fit to catch little children who are concerned about such things—but we who are taught and nourished by the holy Scriptures are readier to suffer a thousand deaths than to allow one syllable or tittle of the Scripture to be altered.* And when the emperor threatened to confiscate his goods, to torment him, to banish him, or to kill him, he answered, *He need not fear confiscation—who has nothing to lose; nor banishment, to whom heaven is his only country; nor torments, when his body will be dashed with one blow; nor death, which is the only way to set him at liberty from sin and sorrow.* [*Happy is that soul, and to be equaled with angels, who is willing to suffer, if it were possible, as great things for Christ—as Christ has suffered for it*, said Jerome.]

Oh! but when a proud man is under troubles and afflictions, his head and heart are full of plots and projects how to get off his chains, and to get out of the furnace, etc. A proud heart will say anything, and do anything, and be anything—to free himself from the burdens which press him, as you see in Pharaoh, etc.; but a humble soul is willing to bear the cross as long as he can get strength from heaven to kiss the cross, to bless God for the cross, and to glorify God under the cross, etc., John 1:20-21.

[13.] The thirteenth property of a humble soul is this: ***it seeks not, it looks not, after great things.*** A little will satisfy **nature**, less will satisfy **grace**; but nothing will satisfy a **proud man's lusts**. *Lord*, says the humble soul, *if you will but give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, you shall be my God,* Gen. 28:20-22. *Let the men of the world,* says the humble soul, *take the world in all its greatness and glory, and divide it among themselves. Let me have much of Christ and heaven in my heart, and food convenient to support my life—and it shall be enough.*

Job 22:29, "When men are cast down, then you shall say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person;" or as the Hebrew has it, *him who has low eyes*, noting to us that a humble soul looks not after high things. So in Psalm 131:1-2, "Lord, my heart is not haughty nor my eyes lofty." But how do you know that, David? *Why*, says he, "I do not exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high, or too wonderful for me. Surely I behaved and quieted myself." "My soul is as a child that is weaned of his mother. My soul is even as a weaned child." As a great shoe fits not a little foot, nor a great sail a little ship, nor a great ring a little finger—so a great estate fits not a humble soul.

It was a prudent speech of that Indian king Taxiles to the invading Alexander: What should we need, said he, to fight and make war one with another, if you come not to take away our water and our necessities by which we must live? As for other goods, if I am richer than you, I am ready to give you what is mine; and if I have less, I will thank you if you will give me some of yours. Oh! but proud Absalom can't be content to be the king's son, unless he may have the crown presently from his father's head. Caesar can abide no superior, nor Pompey an equal. **A proud soul is content with nothing.**

A crown could not content Ahab—but he must have Naboth's vineyard, though he swim to it in blood. Diogenes had more contentment with his hut to shelter him from the weather, and with his wooden dish to eat and drink in—than Alexander had with the conquest of half the world, and the enjoyment of all the treasures, pleasures, and glories of Asia. So a humble soul is more contented and satisfied with Daniel's vegetables and John's clothes made of camel's hair—than proud princes are with their glistening crowns and golden scepters.

[14.] The fourteenth property of a humble soul is this: ***it can rejoice in the graces and gracious actings of others, as well as in its own.*** A humble Moses could say when Eldad and Medad prophesied in the camp, "I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them all!" Num. 11:26-30. So humble Paul in Acts 26:29, "And Paul said, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains." I heartily wish and pray for your own sake, that not only in a low

but in an eminent, degree, both you and all that are here present, were as far Christians as I am; only I would not wish them imprisoned as I am.

A humble soul is no churl. There is no envy in spiritual things; one may have as much of spirituals as another, and all alike. So in 1 Thes. 1:2-3, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." So in the 2 Epistle 1:2-4, "Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring."

Ezekiel can commend Daniel, his contemporary, matching him with Noah and Job, for his power in prayer; and Peter highly praises Paul's epistles, though he had been sharply reproved in one of them, Ezek. 14:14, 2 Peter 3, etc. Oh! but proud souls will be still a-casting disgrace and contempt upon those excellencies in others, which they lack in themselves.

A proud cardinal, in Luther's time, said, Indeed, a reformation is needful, and to be desired—but that Luther, a rascally friar, should be the man should do it, is intolerable. [Attributed to Cardinal Cajetan.] Pride is like certain flies, called *cantharides*, who especially consume the fairest wheat and the most beautiful roses.

Though Licinius was so ignorant that he could not write his own name—yet he called *education* a public poison.

This age is full of such monsters who envy every light which outshines their own, and who throw dirt upon the graces and excellencies of others—that only themselves may shine. Pride is renowned both at subtraction and at multiplication. A proud heart always prizes himself above the market; he reckons his own pence for pounds, and others' pounds for pence; he looks upon his own counters as gold, and upon others' gold as counters. All pearls are counterfeit but those which he wears.

[15.] The fifteenth property of a humble soul is, ***he will rather bear wrongs—than revenge wrongs offered.*** The humble soul knows that vengeance is the Lord's, and that he will repay, etc., Psalm 94:1. The humble soul loves not to take the sword in his own hand, Romans 12:19; he knows the day is a-coming, wherein the Lord will give his enemies two blows for one, and here he rests. A humble soul, when wrongs are offered, is like a man with a sword in one hand and a salve in the other—he could wound, but will heal: Psalm 35:11-16, "Malicious witnesses testify against me. They accuse me of things I don't even know about. They repay me with evil for the good I do. I am sick with despair. Yet when they were ill, I grieved for them. I even fasted and prayed for them, but my prayers returned unanswered. I was sad, as though they were my friends or family, as if I were grieving for my own mother. But they are glad now that I am in trouble; they gleefully join together against me. I am attacked by people I don't even know; they hurl slander at me continually." The Scripture abounds in instances of this nature. [I may truly say of the humble soul what Tully said of Caesar, that he forgot nothing but injuries. Julius Caesar, in whose time Christ was born, bid Catullus, the railing poet, to supper, to show that he had forgiven him.

Dionysius having treated Plato poorly at the court, when he was gone, fearing lest he should write against him, he sent after him to bid him not to write against him. Replied Plato, "Tell Dionysius that I have not so much time as to think of him." So humble wronged souls have no time to think of the wrongs and injuries that others do them.

Mr. Foxe, who wrote the Book of Martyrs, would be sure to do him a kindness—who had done him an injury: so that it used to be a proverb, "If a man would have Mr. Foxe do him a kindness, let him do him an injury." A humble soul is often in looking over the wrongs and injuries that he has done to God, and the sweet and tender treatment of God towards him notwithstanding those wrongs and injuries; and this wins him, and works him to be more willing and ready to bear wrongs, and forgive wrongs, than to revenge any offered wrongs.

[16.] The sixteenth property of a humble soul is this, ***A humble soul, though he be of ever so rare abilities—yet he will not disdain to be taught what he knows not, by the lowest people***, Isaiah

11:6. A child shall lead the humble soul in the way that is good; he cares not how low and contemptible the person is, if a guide or an instructor to him.

Apollos, "an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scripture," a master in Israel, and yet sits by an Aquila, a tent-maker, and Priscilla his wife, to be instructed by them, Acts 18:24-26. Sometimes the poorest and the lowest Christian may, for counsel and comfort, be a good to another, as Moses was to Aaron. As a humble soul knows that the stars have their situation in heaven, though sometimes he sees them by their reflection in a puddle, in the bottom of a well, or in a stinking ditch; so he knows that godly souls, though ever so poor, low, and contemptible, as to the things of this world, are fixed in heaven, in the region above; and therefore their poverty and baseness is no bar to hinder him from learning of them, Eph. 2:6.

Though John was poor in the world—yet many humble souls did not disdain—but rejoice in his ministry. Christ lived poor and died poor, Mat. 8:20. As he was born in another man's house, so he was buried in another man's tomb. Austin observes, when Christ died he made no will; he had no crown-lands, only his coat was left, and that the soldiers parted among them; and yet those who were meek and lowly in heart counted it their heaven, their happiness, to be taught and instructed by him.

[17.] The seventeenth property of a humble soul is this: ***a humble soul will bless God, and be thankful to God, as well under misery as under mercy; as well when God frowns as when he smiles; as well when God takes as when he gives; as well under crosses and losses, as under blessings and mercies.*** [Tully calls gratitude the greatest, yes, the mother of all virtues.] Job 1:21, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes—blessed be the name of the Lord." He does not cry out upon the Sabeans and the Chaldeans—but he looks through all secondary causes, and sees the hand of God; and then he lays his hand upon his own heart, and sweetly sings it out, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes—blessed be the name of the Lord."

A humble soul, in every condition, blesses God, as the apostle commands, in the 1 Thes. 5:18, "In *everything* give thanks to God." So 1 Cor. 4:12,

"Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer." The language of a humble soul is, If it be your will that I should be in darkness—I will bless you; and if it be your will that I should be again in light—I will bless you; if you will comfort me—I will bless you; and if you will afflict me—I will bless you; if you will make me poor—I will bless you; if you will make me rich—I will bless you; if you will give me the least mercy—I will bless you; if you will give me no mercy—I will bless you. A humble soul is quick-sighted; he sees the rod in a *Father's* hand; he sees honey upon the top of every correcting rod—and so can bless God; he sees sugar at the bottom of the bitterest cup which God puts into his hand; he knows that God's house of *correction* is a school of *instruction*; and so he can sit down and bless when the rod is upon his back.

A humble soul knows that the design of God in all is his *instruction*, his *reformation*, and his *salvation*. [The Jews have a proverb, that we must leap up to mount Gerizim, which was a mount of blessings; but creep into mount Ebal, which was a mount of curses: to show that we must be ready to bless—but backward to curse. A humble soul can extract one contrary out of another, honey out of the rock, gold out of iron, etc. Afflictions to humble souls are the Lord's plough, the Lord's harrow, the Lord's flail, the Lord's drawing-plaster, the Lord's pruning knife, the Lord's potion, the Lord's soap; and therefore they can sit down and bless the Lord, and kiss the rod.]

It was a sweet saying of holy Bradford, If the queen will give me my life, I will thank her; if she will banish me, I will thank her; if she will burn me, I will thank her; if she will condemn me to perpetual imprisonment, I will thank her. Ay, this is the temper of a humble heart. A humble soul knows, that to bless God in *prosperity* is the way to increase it; and to bless God in *adversity* is the way to remove it. A humble soul knows, that if he blesses God under *mercies*—he has paid his debt; but if he blesses God under *crosses*—he has made God a debtor. But oh, the pride of men's hearts, when the rod is upon their backs! You have many professors who are *seemingly* humble while the sun shines, while God gives, and smiles, and strokes; but when his smiles are turned into frowns, when he strikes and disciplines—oh the murmurings! the disputings! the frettings! and wranglings of proud souls! they always kick when God strikes.

[18.] The last property of a humble soul is this: ***a humble soul will wisely and patiently bear reproof.***Proverbs 25:12, "As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold—so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear." A seasonable reproof falling upon a humble soul has a redoubled grace with it. It is an earring of gold, and as an ornament of fine gold, or as a diamond in a diadem.

A humble David can say, "Let the righteous smite me—it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me—it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head," Psalm 141:5. David compares the faithful reproof of the righteous, to the excellent oil which they used on their heads. Some translate it, "Let it never cease from my head." That is, let me never lack it, and so the original will bear too, I would never lack reproofs, whatever I lack: "But yet my prayer shall be in their calamities." I will requite their reproofs with my best prayers in the day of their calamity, says David. Whereas a proud heart will neither pray for such as reprove them—but in their calamities will most insult over them. [Oil is here metaphorically taken for words of reproof, which may be said figuratively to break the head.]

Some translate it more emphatically: "The more they do, the more I shall think myself bound unto them." And this was Gerson's disposition, of whom it is recorded, that he rejoiced in nothing more than if he were freely and friendly reproved by any: Proverbs 9:8-9, "Rebuke a wise man—and he will love you; give instruction to a wise man—and he will be yet wiser." Proverbs 19:25, "Reprove one who has understanding—and he will understand knowledge." You know how sweetly David carries it towards Abigail, 1 Sam. 25:32-33; she wisely meets him, and puts him in mind of what he was going about, and he falls a-blessing of her presently: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your advice, and blessed be you which have kept me this day from coming to shed blood." I was resolved in my passion, and in the heat of my spirit, that I would not leave a man alive—but blessed be God, and blessed be your counsel!

A humble soul can sit down and bless God under reproofs. A humble soul is like the Scythian king, who went naked in the snow, and when Alexander wondered how he could endure it, he answered, "I am all

forehead." A humble soul is all forehead—able to bear reproofs with much wisdom and patience. Oh! but a proud heart cannot bear reproofs, he scorns the reprover and his reproofs too. [Manasseh, king of Judah, at the age of eighteen, being reproved by the aged princely prophet Isaiah, caused him to be sawn in half with a wooden saw; for which cruel act, among his other sins, he was sorely punished by God, 2 Chron. 33:11. So Cambyses, king of Persia, hated Praxaspes, one of his nobles, for reproving his drunkenness.]

Proverbs 15:12, "A mocker resents correction; he will not consult the wise." Amos 5:10, "How you hate honest judges! How you despise people who tell the truth!" as Ahab hated good Micaiah, and Herod did John Baptist, and the Pharisees hated our Savior, Luke 16:13. Christ, in his dealings with the covetous Scribes and Pharisees, lays the law home, and tells them plainly that they could not serve God and mammon. Here Christ strikes at their right eye; but how do they hear this? Mark in the 14th verse, "The Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him." The Pharisees did not simply laugh at Christ—but gave also external signs of scorn in their countenance and gestures. They blew their nose at him, for that is the meaning of the original word. By their gestures they demonstrated their horrid deriding of him; they fleared and jeered, when they should have feared and trembled at the wrath to come: Isaiah 28:10, "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." One observes, that that was a scoff put upon the prophet, and is as if they should say, Here is nothing but precept upon precept, line upon line. And, indeed, the very sound of the words in the original carries a taunt, *zau le zau, kau lakau*, as scornful people, by the tone of their voice and rhyming words, scorn at such as they despise. Pride and passion, and other vices, in these days go armed; touch them ever so gently—yet, like the nettle, they will sting you; and if you deal with them openly, roughly, cuttingly, as the apostle speaks, they will swagger with you, as the Hebrew did with Moses: "Who made you a judge over us?" Exod. 2:13-14. And thus much for the properties of a humble soul.

III. I come now to the next thing, and that is, to show you the reasons why the best men are the most humble men.

[1.] First, ***Because they see themselves the greatest debtors to God for what they do enjoy.***

There is no man on earth who sees himself such a debtor to God—as the humble man. Every *smile* makes him a debtor to God, and every *good word* from heaven makes him a debtor to God. He looks upon all his *temporal mercies*, as health, wealth, wife, child, friend, etc., and sees himself deeply indebted for all. He looks upon his *spiritual mercies*, and sees himself a great debtor to God for them; he looks upon his *graces*, and sees himself a debtor for them; he looks upon his *experiences*, and sees himself a debtor for them; he looks upon all his *privileges*, and sees himself a debtor for them; he looks upon all his blessings, and sees himself a debtor for them.

A humble soul sees himself so much in debt for mercies in hand, and mercies in hope—that he cannot sleep without blessing and admiring of God. The more mercy he has received, the more he looks upon himself indebted and obliged to pay duty and tribute to God. Says he, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" I see myself, says he, wonderfully indebted; well, what then? why, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, in the presence of all his people." The same you have in the 16th, 17th, and 18th verses of the same psalm.

So David, "Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Psalms 103:1-5. A humble soul knows, that it is proud of being more in debt than another. It is true, says he, I have this and that mercy in possession, and such and such mercies in reversion; but by all, I am the more a debtor to God. Humble souls cast the pearl of praise into the bosom of God for all his favors towards them.

Caesar wondered at that mindless and careless soldier, who was very much in debt and yet slept so quietly. So does a humble soul wonder to see men that are so much indebted to God for mercies, as many are, and

yet sleep so quietly, and be so mindless and careless in blessing and praising of God. *There is nothing,* says one, *which endures so small a time—as the memory of mercies received; and the more great they are, the more commonly they are recompensed with ingratitude.*

[2.] Secondly, ***It is because in this life they have but a taste of God.***

In the 1 Pet. 2:2-3, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby; if so be you have *tasted* that the Lord is gracious." The best men on this side heaven have but a taste; he is but in a tasting, desiring, hungering, thirsting, and growing condition: Job 26:14, "These are part of his ways—but how little a portion is heard of him!" So in 1 Cor. 13:9-10, 12, "We know but in part, and we prophesy but in part; now we see through a glass darkly—but then face to face." The Lord gives out but little of himself here, we have but a taste of divine sweetness here, we see but the back-parts of God; but the day is not far off when we shall see his face. The best of Christ is reserved until last—as the sweetest honey lies in the bottom. Our greatest knowledge here is to know that we know nothing.

The Rabbis in their comments upon Scripture, when they meet with hard knots that they cannot explain, they solve all with this, "When Elijah comes, he will resolve all things." The best men are in the dark, and will be in the dark—until the Lord comes to shine forth upon them in more grace and glory. The best men on this side heaven are narrow vessels: they are able to receive and take in but little of God. The best men are so full of the world, and the vanities thereof, that they are able to take in but little of God. Here God gives his people *some tastes*, that they may not faint; and he gives them *but a taste*, that they may long to be at their eternal home, that they may keep humble, that they may sit loose from things below, that they may not break and despise bruised reeds, and that heaven may be the more sweet to them at last, etc.

[3.] A third reason why the best men are the most humble, and that is, ***because the best men dwell more upon their worser part, their ignoble part—than they do upon their noble part, their better part.***

In Isaiah 6:5, "I am a man of unclean lips," says that humble soul. So humble Job cries out of the iniquity of his youth, Job 13:26, 40:5. Humble David, Psalm 51:3, sighs it out, "My sin is ever before me." So humble Paul, Romans 7:22-23, complains, that he "has a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and leading him captive to the law of sin;" and that, "when he would do good, evil was present with him." A humble soul sees that he can stay no more from sin than the lungs can from breathing, and the pulse from beating; he sees his heart and life to be fuller of sin, than the sky is of stars; and this keeps him humble. He sees that sin is so bred in the bone, that until his bones, as Joseph's, be carried out of the Egypt of this world, it will remain. He every day finds that these Jebusites and Canaanites are as thorns in his eyes, and as goads in his sides. He finds sin an ill inhabitant, which he cannot get rid of, until the house is destroyed; as the fretting leprosy, in the walls of the house, would remain until the house itself was demolished. [As Hagar would dwell with Sarah until she beat her out of doors, so will sin dwell with grace until death beats it out of doors.] Though sin and grace were never born together, and though they shall not die together; yet while the believer lives, these two must live together; and this keeps them humble.

As the peacock, looking upon his black feet, lets fall his plumes—so the poor soul, when he looks upon his black feet, the vanity of his mind, the body of sin that is in him—his proud spirit falls low.

Epaminondas, an Athenian captain, being asked why he was so sad the day after a great victory, answered, "Yesterday I was tickled with much vain-glory, therefore I correct myself for it today." That is the temper of a humble soul. It is very observable, that the saints are pressed to take notice of their better part: Cant. 1:15, "Behold you are fair my love, behold you are fair." And so, chapter 4:1, "Behold you are fair, behold you are fair." God has much ado to get a gracious heart to mind his spiritual beauty; to take notice of the inward excellency that he has wrought in it. Though "the king's daughter is all glorious within," yet God has much ado to bring her to see and take notice of her inward beauty and glory. **The humble soul is more set to eye and dwell upon its deformity—than it is upon that beauty and glory that God has stamped**

upon it. And this makes the man little and low in his own eyes.

[4.] Fourthly, ***Because they have the clearest sight and vision of God, and have the nearest and highest communion with God.*** None on earth are so near to God, and so high in their communion with God—as humble souls. And as they have the clearest visions of God—so God gives them the fullest sight and knowledge of their own sinfulness and nothingness. So in **Job** 42:5-6, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear—but now my eye has seen you, *I abhor myself* in dust and ashes." **Isaiah** 6:1, 5, In a vision the Lord discovers his glory to the prophet, then verse 5, "Woe is me!" says he, "for *I am undone*;" or "I am cut off," why? "Because I am a man of unclean lips; and have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." Oh, the vision that I have had of the glory of God has given me such a clear and full sight of my own vileness and baseness, that I cannot but loathe and abhor myself. When **Abraham** draws near to God, then he accounts himself but *dust and ashes*, Gen. 18:26-27. The **angels** that are near God, that stand before him, in humility they cover their faces with two wings, as with a double scarf, in the 6th of Isaiah ver. 2.

[5.] The fifth, and last reason why those are most humble that are most holy is, ***because they maintain in themselves a holy fear of sinning.***[As the sunshine puts out fire, so does the fear of God put out the fire of lusts.]

And the more this holy fear of falling is maintained, the more the soul is humbled. Proverbs 14:16, "A wise man fears—and departs from evil;" and chapter 28:14, "Blessed is the man who always fears the Lord, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble." And this keeps the holy soul humble.

I have known a good old man, says Bernard, who when he had heard of any who had committed some notorious offence, was accustomed to say with himself, *He fell today—so may I tomorrow*. Now, the reason why humble souls do keep up in themselves a holy fear of falling, is because this is the best to keep them from falling. Job fears—and conquers on the ash-heap; Adam presumes—and falls in paradise; Nehemiah fears—and stands, Neh. 5:15; Peter presumes—and falls, Mat. 26:69, *seq*.; Mr. Sanders the martyr, in Queen Mary's days, fears and stands; Dr. Pendleton presumes, and falls from a professor to be a papist.

When Agamemnon said, *What should the conqueror fear?* Casander presently answered, *He should fear this most of all, that he fears not at all.*

And so I have done with the reasons of the point. I shall now come to:

IV. The USES of it.

[I.] Is it so, that the most holy souls are the most humble souls? Then this shows you, ***that the number of holy souls is very few***. Oh, how few be there that are low in their own eyes! The number of souls that are high in the esteem of God, and low in their own esteem—are very few. Oh, the pride of England! Oh, the pride of London! Pride in these days has a whore's forehead; yet pride cannot climb so high, but justice will sit above her.

Bernard says, that pride is the *rich* man's cousin. I may add, and the *poor* man's cousin, and the *profane* man's cousin, and the *civil* man's cousin, and the *formal* man's cousin, and the *hypocrite's* cousin; yes, *all men's* cousin; and it will sooner or later cast down and cast out all the Lucifers and Adams in the world.

[2.] Secondly, ***As you would approve yourselves to be high in the account of God, as you would approve yourselves to be not only good—but eminently good, keep humble.*** Since England was England, since the gospel shined among us, there was never such reason to press this duty of humility, as in these days of pride wherein we live; and therefore I shall endeavor these two things:

First, To lay down some **motives** which may work you to be humble. *Secondly*, To propound some **directions** which may further you in this work of humility.

*First, For the **MOTIVES*** which may work you to be humble, Consider,

(1.) *First, **How God singles out humble souls from all others, to pour out most of the oil of grace into their hearts.***

No vessels that God delights to fill—like broken vessels, like contrite

spirits: James 4:6, "He resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble." The Greek word for *resists* signifies, to set himself in battle array. God is in battle array against a proud soul—but he gives grace to the humble. The silver dews flow down from the mountains to the lowest valleys. Abraham was but dust and ashes in his own eyes; ay—but says God, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I will do?" Gen. 18:17. No; I will not. A humble soul shall be both of God's court and his counsel too. Humble Jacob, who was in his own eyes less than the least of all mercies, Gen. 32:10—what a glorious vision he had of God, when the ground was his bed, and the stone his pillow, and the hedges his curtains, and the heavens his canopy; then he saw angels ascend and descend, Gen. 28.

A humble soul who lies low, oh what sights of God has he! What glory does he behold, when the proud soul sees nothing! God pours in grace to the humble, as men pour in liquor into an empty vessel. He does not *drop* in grace into a humble heart—but he *pours* it in. [He who is in the low pits and caves of the earth sees the stars in the sky, when they who are upon the tops of the mountains discern them not.]

The altar under the law was hollow, to receive the fire, the wood, and the sacrifice; so the hearts of men, under the gospel, must be humble, empty of all spiritual pride and self-conceitedness, that so they may receive the fire of the Spirit, and Jesus Christ, who offered himself for a sacrifice for our sins.

Humility is both a grace, and a vessel to receive grace. There are none who see so much need of grace—as humble souls. There are none who prize grace—like humble souls. There are none who improve grace—like humble souls. Therefore God singles out the humble soul to fill him to the brim with grace—when the proud is sent empty away.

(2.) A second motive is, ***of all garments, humility does best befit Christians, and most adorn their profession.***

Faith is the champion of grace, and *love* the nurse grace—but *humility* the beauty of grace: 1 Peter 5:5, "Be clothed with humility." The Greek word imports that humility is the ribbon or string which ties together all those precious pearls—the rest of the graces. If this string breaks—they

are all scattered.

The Greek word that is rendered *clothed*, comes from another Greek word that signifies to *knit*, and *tie knots*, as nimble women used to do, of ribbons, to adorn their heads and bodies—as if humility were the knot of every virtue, the grace of every grace. Chrysostom calls humility the root, mother, nurse, foundation, and "bond of all virtue." Basil calls it "the storehouse and treasury of all good." **For what is the scandal and reproach of religion at this day? Nothing more than the pride of professors.** Is not this the language of most? They are great professors, Oh but very proud! They are great hearers, they will run from sermon to sermon, and cry up this man, and cry up that man, Oh but proud! They are great talkers, Oh but as proud as the devil! etc. Oh that you would take the counsel of the apostle, "Be clothed with humility"; and that Col. 3:12, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." No robes compared to these. [It is reported of the crystal, that it has such a virtue in it, that the very touching of it quickens other stones, and puts a luster and beauty upon them. So does humility put a luster upon every grace.]

(3.) The third motive is this, ***humility is a magnet which draws both the heart of God and man to it.***

In Isaiah 57:15, "Thus says the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." The Lord singles out the humble soul of all others, to make him an habitation for himself. Here is a wonder! God is on high; and yet the higher a man lifts up himself, the farther he is from God; and the lower a man humbles himself, the nearer he is to God. Of all souls, God delights most to dwell with the humble, for they do most prize and best improve his precious presence.

In Proverbs 29:23, "A man's pride shall bring him low—but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit." Proverbs 22:4, "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor," etc. The Hebrew is, "The heel of humility." Riches and honor follow humility at the very heels. One of the ancients used to say that **humility is the first, second, and third**

grace of a Christian. Humility is a very drawing grace; it draws men to think well and speak well of Christ, the gospel, and the people of God; it makes the very world to say, Ay, these are Christians indeed; they are full of light, and yet full of lowliness; they are high in worth, and yet humble in heart. Oh, these are the crown and the glory of religion.

A humble soul is like the violet, which by its fragrant smell, draws the eye and the hearts of others to him. Mat. 18:4, "They are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." He who is least in his own account is always greatest in God's, and in godly men's account.

(4.) The fourth motive is this, ***consider all the world cannot keep him up—who does not humble and keep down his own spirit.***

One asked a philosopher, what God was a-doing? He answered, "That his whole work was to lift up the humble, and to cast down the proud." That man cannot possibly be kept up, whose spirit is not kept down, as you may clearly see in Pharaoh, Haman, Herod, and Nebuchadnezzar; all the world could not keep them up, because their spirit was not kept down.

Proverbs 29:27, "A man's pride shall bring him low;" for it sets God against him, and angels against him, and men against him; yes, even those who are as proud as himself. It is very observable, that whereas one drunkard loves another, one swearer loves another, and one thief loves another, and one unclean person loves another, etc.—yet one proud person cannot endure another—but seeks to undermine him, that he alone may carry the commendations, the praise, the promotion. It is storied of the Romans, that were the proudest people on the earth, that they reckoned it as a parcel of their praise—that they brought down the proud. All the world, sirs, will not keep up those people who do not keep down their spirits. [Dionysius, a proud king of Sicily, fell from a king—to a schoolmaster. Proud Valerian, the Roman emperor, fell from being an emperor to be a footstool to Sapor, king of Persia, as oft as he mounted his horse. Henry the Fourth, emperor, in sixty-two battles, had generally the better—and yet was deposed, and driven to that misery, that he desired only a clerkship in a house at Spira, that he himself had built. History is full of such instances.]

And oh! that professors would think of this in these days in which we live. All the world shall not keep up those who do not keep down their own spirits. **The very design of God is to stain the pride of all human glory, and to bring into contempt the proud of the earth.** Therefore now if men in our days shall grow proud and high, under divine mercies, justice will be above them, and turn their glory into shame, and lay their honor in the dust. If your pride rises with your outward good—you will certainly fall, and great will be your fall.

(5.) The fifth consideration to provoke us to be humble is this: ***let us have always our eye fixed upon the example of Jesus Christ, and his humble and lowly demeanor.***

Christ by his example labors to provoke his disciples to keep humble, and to walk lowly: in John 13:4-5, 12-15 verses compared. He rises and washes his disciples' feet, etc., and mark what he aims at in that behavior of his, verse 12-14: "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." I have given you an example, says Christ, and I would have you to imitate my example. **Example is the most powerful rhetoric**; the highest and noblest example should be very quickening and provoking. Oh! here you have the greatest, the noblest example of humility, that was ever read or heard of. Upon consideration of this great and eminent example of Christ's humility, Guericus, a godly man, cried out, *You have overcome me, O Lord! you have overcome my pride. This example of yours has mastered me!* Oh that we could say with this good man, *You have overcome, O Lord! you have overcome our proud hearts, by this example you have overmastered our lofty spirits!*

This example of Christ's humility you have further set forth, Philip. 2:6-8, "Who being in the form of God," that is, in the nature and essence of God, being truly God, clothed with divine glory and majesty as God, "thought it no robbery," it being his right by nature, "to be equal with God." The Greek words that are rendered, "he thought it no robbery," import that he made it not a matter of triumph or ostentation to be equal with God, it being his right by nature, and therefore the challenging of it could be no

usurpation of another's right, of taking to himself that which was not his own. "He thought it no robbery to be *equal* with God." The Greek is *equals*, that is, every way, equal, not a secondary and inferior God, as the Arians would have him. "But made himself of no reputation," verse 7. The Greek is "emptied himself," that is, he suspended and laid aside his glory and majesty, or dis-robed himself of his glory and dignity, and became a sinner, both by imputation and by reputation, for our sakes.

And verse 8, "he humbled himself." This Sun of righteousness went ten degrees back in the dial of his Father, that he might come to us with healing under his wings. "And became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." In these words there is a kind of gradation; for it is more to become obedient than to humble himself; and more to yield unto death than to become obedient; and yet more to be crucified than simply to die; for it was to submit himself to a most painful, ignominious, and cursed death. "He became obedient." That is, says Beza, "to his dying day," his whole life being nothing but a continual death.

I have read of an earl called Eleazarus, that being given to immoderate anger, was cured of that disordered passion by studying of Christ and his patience; he still dwelt upon Christ and his patience, until he found his heart transformed into the similitude of Jesus Christ. And oh! that you would never leave pondering upon that glorious example of Christ's humility—until your hearts be made humble, like the heart of Christ. Oh! that that sweet word of Christ, Mat. 11:29, might stick upon all your hearts, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me—for I am meek and lowly, and you shall find rest to your souls."

Bonaventure engraved this sweet saying of our Lord, "Learn of me—for I am meek and lowly in heart," in his study; and oh that this saying was engraved upon all your foreheads, upon all your hearts! Oh that it was engraved upon the dishes you eat in, the cups you drink in, the seats you sit on, the beds you lie on, etc. [It was a good law that the Ephesians made, that men should propound to themselves the best patterns, and ever bear in mind some eminent man.]

Jerome having read the pious life and death of Hilarion, folding up the book, said, Well! Hilarion shall be the champion whom I will imitate. Oh!

when you look upon this glorious example of Christ, say, The Lord Jesus' example shall be that that my soul shall imitate.

(6.) Sixthly, consider ***Humility will free a man from perturbations and distempers.***

When there are ever such great storms without—humility will cause a calm within. There are a great many storms abroad, and there is nothing which will put the soul into a quiet condition but humility. A humble soul says, *Who am I, that I may not be despised? Who am I, that I may not be reproached, abused, slighted, neglected?* That which will break a proud man's heart, will not so much as break a humble man's sleep. In the midst of a storm, a humble soul is still in a calm. When proud hearts are at their wit's ends, stamping, swearing, and complaining at God, and man, and providence—a humble soul is quiet and still, like a ship in a harbor. Shimei, 2 Sam. 16:6, 13, comes railing and cursing of David, and calls him a bloody man, and a man of Belial, that is, a renegade, one who being desperately wicked had shaken off the yoke of government, and would be under no law. So the Hebrew word *Jagnat*, signifies men without yoke, or lawless. It signifies most flagitious men, and notorious and desperately wicked, stigmatized villains, even incarnate devils; and yet David remains silent, though urged by his mighty men to revenge himself. Oh! how would this cursing and railing have maddened and broken many a proud man's heart; and yet it stirs not David.

Fulgentius, after he was extremely persecuted, he had an opportunity to seek revenge—but he would not; for, says he, *We must suffer more for Christ than this*. 'What though I am thus and thus wronged? What though I have an opportunity for revenge? yet I must suffer more than this for Christ,' says the humble soul. A humble soul, when wrongs are done to him, is like a man with a sword in one hand and salve in another; he could kill but will cure.

One wondering at the patience and humble demeanor of Socrates, towards one who reviled him, Socrates said, *If we should meet one 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?* A humble soul, when he meets with this

and that wrong from men, he knows that their souls are diseased, and that rather moves him to pity than to revenge wrongs offered. A proud heart swells and grows big, when in the least wronged, and is ready to call for fire from heaven, and to take any opportunity for revenge of wrongs offered. *No man so abused as I, no man thus styled as I, says the proud soul.* Oh—but a humble soul in patience possesses himself in all trials and storms.

Gallasius observes upon Exod. 22:28, the patience and humble demeanor of those three emperors, Theodosius, Honorius, and Arcadius, towards those who spoke evil of them; they would have them subject to no punishment; for they said, *If it comes from lightness of spirit, it is to be despised; if from madness, it is worthy of pity; if from injury, it is to be forgiven; for injuries and wrongs are to be pardoned.* And this is the true temper of a humble soul, and by this he enjoys peace and quiet in the midst of all earthquakes and heartquakes.

(7.) The seventh consideration is this, consider ***humility exalts***.

He who is most humble, is and shall be most exalted and most honored. No way to be high, like this of being low. Moses was the meekest man on earth, and God made him the most honorable, calling of him up unto himself into the mount, making known his glory to him, and making of him the leader of his people Israel. Gideon was very little in his own eyes; he was the least of his father's house in his own apprehension, and God exalts him, making him the deliverer of his Israel.

It was a good saying of one, *Will you be great? begin from below*. As the roots of the tree descend—so the branches ascend. The lower any man is in this sense, the higher shall that man be raised. Mat. 23:12, "And whoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he who shall humble himself shall be exalted." God, who is wisdom itself, has said it, and he will make it good, though you see no ways how it should be made good. The lowest valleys have the blessing of fruitfulness, while the high mountains are barren; Proverbs 18:12, "Before destruction, the heart of man is lofty, and before honor is humility."

David came not to the kingdom until he could truly say, "Lord, my heart

is not haughty, nor my eyes lifted up," Psalm 131:1-2. Abigail was not made David's wife until she thought it honor enough to wash the feet of the lowest of David's servants, 1 Sam. 25. Moses must be forty years a stranger in Midian, before he became king in Jeshurun; he must be struck sick to death in the wilderness, before he goes to Pharaoh on that noble embassage.

It was a sweet observation of Luther, "That for the most part when God set him upon any special service for the good of the church, he was brought low by some fit of sickness or other." Surely, as the lower the ebb—the higher the tide; so **the lower any descend in humility—the higher they shall ascend in honor and glory**. The lower this foundation of humility is laid, the higher shall the roof of honor be overlaid. If you would turn spiritual purchasers of honor, or of whatever else is good—there is no way like this of humility.

We live in times wherein men labor to purchase honor; some by their money, others by their friends; others by making themselves slaves to the lusts of men; others by the shedding of their blood in battle, and many by giving themselves up to all manner of baseness and wickedness, whereby their carnal ends may be attained, and themselves exalted; but these men and their honor will quickly be laid in the dust. Oh! but the readiest, the surest, the safest, the sweetest way to attain to true honor—is to be humble, to lie low. Humility makes a man precious in the eye of God. He who is little in his own account, is great in God's esteem.

(8.) The eighth and last consideration that I shall propound is this, consider that ***humility keeps the soul free from many darts of Satan's casting, and snares of his spreading.***

As you may see in the three children in Daniel, and in those worthies in the 11th of the Hebrews, "of whom this world was not worthy." As the lowest shrubs are freed from many violent gusts and blasts of wind, which shake and rend the tallest cedars; so the humble soul is free from a world of temptations, which proud and lofty souls are shaken and torn in pieces with. The devil has least power to fasten a temptation upon a humble soul. He who has a gracious measure of humility, is neither affected with Satan's temptations—nor terrified with Satan's

threatenings. The golden chain does not allure him—nor does the iron chain daunt him.

I have read of one who, seeing in a vision many snares of Satan spread upon the earth, he sat down and mourned, and said with himself, "Who shall pass through these?" whereunto he heard a voice answering, "Humility shall pass through them." A proud heart is as easily conquered as tempted; as easily vanquished as assaulted. But the humble soul, when tempted, says with that worthy convert, "I am not the man that I once was." There was a time when my heart was proud and lifted up, and then you could no sooner knock but I opened; no sooner call but I answered; no sooner tempt but I did assent. Oh! but now the Lord taught me to be humble; I can resist, though I cannot dispute; I can fight—but not yield.

Katherine Bretterge, a humble precious soul, being once in a great conflict with Satan, said thus to him, "Satan, reason not with me, I am but a weak woman; if you have anything to say, say it to my Christ; he is my advocate, my strength, and my redeemer, and he shall plead for me." A humble soul is good at turning Satan over to the Lord Jesus, and this increases Satan's hell. It is reported of Satan, that he should say thus of a learned man, You do always overcome me; when I would throw you down, you lift up yourself in assurance of faith; and when I would exalt and promote you, you keep yourself in humility; and so you are too hard for me. The only way to avoid cannon-shot, as they say, is to fall down flat; no such way to be freed from temptations as to keep low.

And so I am done with the first head; namely, the motives that should move and provoke us to keep humble, to be meek, to be nothing in our own eyes.

I shall now come to some HELPS and DIRECTIONS that may be useful to keep us humble and low in our own eyes. And the first is this:

[1.] ***Dwell much upon the greatness of God's mercy and goodness to you.***

Nothing humbles and breaks the heart of a sinner like God's mercy and love. Souls who converse much with sin and wrath may be much terrified; but souls who converse much with grace and mercy will be much humbled. Luke 7, the Lord Jesus shows mercy to that notorious sinner, and then she falls down at his feet, and loves much and weeps much, etc. In the 1 Chron. 17, it was in the heart of David to build God a house. God would not have him to do it—yet the messenger must tell David that God would build him a house, and establish his Son upon the throne forever. Look into the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses, and there you shall find that David lets fall such a humble speech, which he never did before God had sent him that message of advancement. "And David the king came, and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that you have brought me hitherto? And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O God; for you have also spoken of your servant's house for a great while to come," etc., 2 Sam. 7:18-19. And this sweetly and kindly melts him, and humbles him, before the Lord.

Oh, if ever you would have your souls kept low, dwell upon the free grace and love of God to you in Christ! [As honey flows naturally from the bee, so does mercy flow naturally from God.] Dwell upon the *firstness* of his love, dwell upon the *freeness* of his love, the *greatness* of his love, the *fullness* of his love, the *unchangeableness* of his love, the *everlastingness* of his love, and the *ardency* of his love. If this does not humble you, there is nothing on earth which will do it. Dwell upon what God has undertaken for you. Dwell upon the choice and worthy gifts which he has bestowed on you; and dwell upon that glory and happiness which he has prepared for you—and then be proud if you can.

[2.] *Keep faith in continual exercise, upon Christ as crucified, and upon Christ as glorified.*

There are two special sights of Christ, that tend much to humble and abase a soul. The one is a sight of Christ in his **misery**, in the 12th of Zech. ver. 10. And the other is a sight of Christ in his **glory** (Rev. 1:7, Isaiah 6:1, 3, 5, compared).

It is dangerous to be more *notion* than *motion*; to have faith in the *head*

and none in the *heart*; to have an idle and not an active faith. It is not enough for you to have faith—but you must look to the acting of your faith, upon Christ as crucified, and upon Christ as glorified. Souls much in this will be very little and low in their own eyes. The great reason why the soul is no more humble is because faith is no more active. [As one scale goes up, the other goes down; so as faith goes up, the heart goes down.]

[3.] *Study your own natures more, and whatever evil you behold in other men's practices, labor to see the same in your own nature.*

There is the seed of all sins, of the vilest and worst of sins—in the best of men. When you see a drunkard—you may see the seed of that sin in your own nature. When you see an immoral man—the seeds of immorality you may see in your own nature. **If you are not as wicked as others**—it is not because of the goodness of your nature—but from the riches of God's grace. Remember this, there is not a worse nature in hell than that which is in you, and it would manifest itself accordingly—if the Lord did not restrain it. It would carry you to those horrid acts that are against the very light of nature. "By the grace of God I am what I am!" 1 Corinthians 15:10. "What makes you better than anyone else? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if all you have is from God, why boast as though you have accomplished something on your own?" 1 Corinthians 4:7

[I have read of an Italian monster, who, capturing his enemy—set his dagger to his heart, and made him to abjure and blaspheme the Lord, that so he might save his life; which being done, he thrust him through, and with a bloody triumph, insulting over him, said, *Oh, this is right noble and heroic revenge, which does not only deprive the body of temporal life—but brings also the immortal soul to endless flames everlastingly.* See what natures you carry with you. It was a good saying of one of the fathers: Other vices are in sins, says he; but pride and high confidence is most apt to creep in upon duties well done.]

There was one who was a long time tempted to three horrid sins: to be drunk, to lie with his mother, and to murder his father. Being a long time

followed with these horrid temptations, at last he thought to get rid of them, by yielding to what he judged the least, and that was to be drunk; but when he was drunk, he did both lie with his mother and murder his father. Why, such a hellish nature is in every soul that breathes! and did God leave men to act according to their natures, men would be all incarnate devils, and this world a total hell.

Such is the corruption of our nature, that propound any divine good to it, it is entertained as fire by water; but propound any evil, and it is like fire to straw. It is like the foolish satyr who made haste to kiss the fire; it is like that unctuous matter, which the naturalists say that it sucks and snatches the fire to it with which it is consumed.

There was a holy man who rarely heard of other men's crimson sins—but he usually bedewed the place with his tears, considering that the seeds of those very sins was in his own nature. In your nature you have that that would lead you with the pharisees to oppose Christ; and with Judas, to betray Christ; and with Pilate, to condemn Christ; and with the soldiers, to crucify Christ, etc. Oh, what a monster, what a devil would you prove, should God but leave you to act suitable to that sinful and woeful nature of yours!

[4.] ***Dwell much upon the imperfection which follows and cleaves to your best actions.***

Oh the wanderings! Oh the deadness, the dullness, the fruitlessness of your spirit in religious duties! Man is a creature apt to hug himself in religious services, and to pride himself in holy duties; and to stroke himself after duties, and to warm himself by the sparks of his own fire, his own performances, Isaiah 50:11. Whenever you come off from holy services, sit down, and look over the spots, blots, and blemishes which cleave to your choicest services. The fairest day has its clouds, the richest jewels their flaws, the finest faces their spots, the fairest copies their blots —and so have our finest and fairest duties. When we have done our best, we have cause to fall down at Jesus' feet, and with tears in our eyes sue out our pardon.

[5.] ***In the day of your prosperity, forget not your former***

poverty.

In the day of your present greatness, forget not your former baseness. Humble Jacob, in the day of his prosperity, remembers his former poverty: "I am not worthy of all the faithfulness and unfailing love you have shown to me, your servant. When I left home, I owned nothing except a walking stick, and now my household fills two camps!" Gen. 32:10. And so David, in his prosperity, remembered that his sheep-hook was changed into a scepter, and his seat of turf into a royal throne, Psalm 78:71, 1 Chron. 17. And when Joseph was a royal favorite, he remembered that he had been an imprisoned slave. And when Gideon was raised to be a savior to Israel, he remembered how God took him from the threshing-floor, Judges 6:11, and how God changed his threshing instrument of wood into one of iron, to thresh the mountains, as God himself phrases it, Isaiah 41:15.

Primislaus, the first king of Bohemia, kept his country shoes always by him, to remember from whence he was raised.

Agathocles, by the furniture of his table, confessed that from a potter he was raised, to be a king of Sicily.

We live in times wherein many a man has been raised from the ash-heap to sit with princes; and oh that such were wise to remember their former low and contemptible beings, and to walk humbly before the Lord! otherwise who can tell but that greater contempt shall be poured forth upon them, than that which they have poured upon princes.

[6.] ***Look upon all that you have received, and all that you shall hereafter receive—as the fruit of free grace.***

Look upon your **adoption** into God's family, and write this motto, 'This is the fruit of free grace!' Look upon your **justification**, and write this motto, 'This is the fruit of free grace!' Look upon all your **graces**, and write, 'These are the fruit of free grace!' Look upon your **experiences**, and write, 'These are the fruits of free grace!' Look upon your **strength** to withstand temptations, and write, 'This is the fruit of free grace!' Look upon divine **power** to conquer corruptions, and write, 'This is the fruit of

free grace!' Look upon the **bread** you eat, the wine you drink, the clothes you wear, etc., and write, 'These are the fruits of free grace!' 1 Cor. 4:7, "Who makes you to differ from another? and what have you who you have not received? and if you have received it, why do you boast as though you had not received it?" Who makes you to differ? Episcopius, a great insolent Arminian, answered, *I make myself to differ—by the improvement of nature.*

This age is full of such proud monsters; but a humble soul sees free grace to be the spring and fountain of all his mercies and comforts; he writes *free grace* upon all his temporals, and upon all his spirituals, etc. "By the grace of God I am what I am!" 1 Corinthians 15:10

[7.] ***Meditate much upon these two things:***

First, ***The great mischief that sin has done in the world.***

It cast angels out of heaven, and Adam out of paradise. It has laid the first corner-stone in hell, and ushered in all the evils and miseries that are in the world. It has threw down Abraham, the best believer in the world; and Noah, the most righteous man in the world; and Job, the most upright man in the world; and Moses, the meekest man in the world; and Paul, the greatest apostle in the world. Oh, the diseases, the crosses, the losses, the miseries, the deaths, the hells—which sin has brought upon the world!

Basil wept when he saw the rose, because it brought to his mind the first sin, from whence it had the prickles, which it had not while man continued in innocency, as he thought! Oh, when he saw the prickles his soul wept; so when we see, hear, or read of the blood, misery, wars, and ruins which sin has brought upon us, let us weep and lie humble before the Lord.

Secondly, Meditate much on this, ***that many wicked men take more pains to damn their souls and go to hell—than you do to save your soul and to get to heaven***, Mat. 22:15.

Oh, what pains do wicked men take to damn their souls and go to hell!

Lactantius says of Lucian, that he spared neither God nor man. He took pains to make himself twice told a child of wrath.

It is said of Marcellus, the Roman general, that he could not be quiet, neither conquered nor conqueror. Such restless wretches are wicked men. The drunkard rises up in the morning, and continues until midnight, until wine inflames him, Isaiah 5:11. The unclean person wastes his time, and strength, and estate—and all to ruin his own soul.

Theotimus, being told by his physician, that if he did not leave his lewd courses, he would lose his sight, answered, *then farewell, sweet light*. What a great deal of pains does the worldling take! He rises up early, and goes to bed late, and leaves no stone unturned—and all to make himself but the more miserable in the close.

Pambus wept when he saw a harlot dressed with much care and cost, partly to see one take so much pains to go to hell, and partly because he had not been so careful to please God—as she had been to please a wanton lover. Oh, sirs! what reason have you to spend your days in weeping? When you look abroad, see what pains most men take to damn their souls and go to hell—and then consider what little pains you take to escape hell, to save your souls, and go to heaven.

[8.] ***Get more internal and experimental knowledge and acquaintance with God.***

If ever you would keep humble, no knowledge humbles and abases like that which is inward and experimental. We live in days wherein there is abundance of *notional* light. Many professors know much of God notionally—but know nothing of God experimentally; they know God in the history—but know nothing of God in the mystery. They know much of God in the letter—but little or nothing of God in the Spirit; and therefore it is that they are so proud and high in their own conceits, where as he who experimentally knows the Lord—is a worm and no man in his own eyes. As the sun is necessary to the world, the eye to the body, the pilot to the ship, the general to the army—so is experimental knowledge to the humbling of a soul. Who more experimental in their knowledge than David, Job, Isaiah, and Paul? And who are more humble than these

worthies? [It is a sad thing to be often eating of the tree of knowledge—but never to taste of the tree of life.]

Seneca observed of the philosophers, that when they grew more learned, they were less moral—so a growth in *mere notions* will bring a great decay in humility and zeal, as it is too evident in these days. Well, remember this, a drop of *experimental* knowledge will more humble a man than a sea of *notional* knowledge.

[9.] ***Look up to a crucified Christ for special power and strength against the pride of your hearts.*** It is sad in these knowing times to think how few there are, who know the right way of bringing under control, the power of any sin. Most men scarcely look so high as a crucified Christ for power against their powerful sins. One soul sits down and complains, *Such a lust haunts me, I will pray it down.* Another says, *Such a sin follows me, and I watch it down, or resolve it down.* And so a crucified Christ is not in all their thoughts. Not but that you are to hear, pray, watch, and resolve against your sins; but above all, you should look to the acting of faith upon a crucified Christ. [Psalm 10:4. It was the blood of the sacrifice and the oil that cleansed the leper in the law, and that by them was meant the blood of Christ and the grace of his Spirit, is agreed by all.]

As he said of the sword of Goliath, "There is none like that," so I say, *There is none like this, for the bringing under the pride of men's hearts.* The weaker the house of Saul grew, the stronger the house of David grew. The weakening of your pride will be the increase and strengthening of your humility, and therefore what the king of Syria said unto his fifty captains, "Fight neither with small nor great—but with the king of Israel," so say I, If you would keep humble, if you will lie low, draw forth your artillery, place your greatest strength against the pride of your souls. The death of pride will be the resurrection of humility. And that this may stick upon you, I shall lay down several propositions concerning pride; and I am so much the more willing to fall upon this work, and to make it the subject of our discourse at this time, because this horrid sin does appear so boldly and impudently, and that not only among profane people—but professors also.

There are **ten propositions that I shall lay down concerning pride**.

[1.] And the first is this, ***Of all sins, pride is most dangerous to the souls of men.***Pride is a sin that will put the soul upon the worst of sins. Pride is a gilded misery, a secret poison, a hidden plague. It is the engineer of deceit, the mother of hypocrisy, the parent of envy, the moth of holiness, the blinder of hearts, the turner of medicines into maladies, and remedies into diseases. It is the original and root of most of those notorious vices that are to be found among men. It was pride which put Herod upon seeking the blood of Christ. It was pride which put the Pharisees upon the persecuting of Christ. It was pride which made Athaliah destroy all the seed-royal of the house of Judah, that she might reign, 2 Chron. 22:10. It was pride that put Joab upon murdering treacherously, under guise of friendship, Abner, 2 Sam. 3:27, and Amasa, 2 Sam. 20:9-10. Zimri, out of ambition to reign, murdered Elah his Lord, 1 Kings 16:8-10. Omri, out of pride and ambition to reign, when he "saw that the city had been taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned it down over himself and died in the flames." 1 Kings 16:18.

It is pride which has ushered in all the contentions that are in towns, cities, countries, families, and pulpits throughout the world. It was pride and ambition to reign, which put Absalom upon pursuing his father's life, from whom he had received life. [A world of instances out of histories might be given, if it were needful, further to evidence this truth.]

It is very remarkable, that the pride and ambition of Nebuchadnezzar did usher in the destruction of the **Assyrian** monarchy; and the ambition and pride of Cyrus that did usher in the overthrow of the **Babylonian** monarchy; and the ambition and pride of Alexander was the cause of the annihilation of the **Persian** monarchy; and it was the pride and ambition of the Roman commanders that was the cause of the utter subversion of the **Grecian** monarchy. There is no tongue which can express, nor heart which can conceive, the horrid sins and miseries which pride has ushered in among the children of men. All sin will fill a proud heart that is resolved to rise. Great sins are no sins with such a soul; he makes nothing of those very sins that would make the very heathen to blush.

[2.] The second proposition that I shall lay down concerning pride is this, ***Where pride has possessed itself thoroughly of the soul, it turns the heart into steel, yes, into a rock.***

As you may see in **Pharaoh**. Pride turned his heart into steel, yes, into a very rock. God strikes again and again; he sends plague upon plague; and yet the more he is plagued, the more he is hardened. His pride turned his soul into a rock: he is no more sensible of the frowns of God, the threatenings of God, the plagues, the strokes of God, than a rock. Pride had hardened his heart; he stirs not, he yields not. [Proud souls are of his mind that said, Though you do convince me—yet will I not be convinced.]

It was the pride of **Saul** that turned his heart into steel: "I have sinned," says he, "yet honor me before the people," 1 Sam. 15:30. God gave him many a blow, many a knock, and many a check, and yet, after all, "Honor me before the people." Oh how desperately was his heart hardened in pride!

In Dan. 5:18, **Nebuchadnezzar's** mind, says the text, "was hardened in pride." He saw the vengeance of the Almighty upon his predecessors, and God took him up, and lashed him until the blood came, and yet he made nothing of it, because his heart was hardened in pride. Pride sets a man in opposition against God. Other sins are aversions from God—but this sin is a coming against God. In other sins a man flies from God—but in this sin a man flies upon God: James 4:6, "God resists the proud." A man does not resist another until he is set upon; the traveler does not resist until such time as the thief attacks him. Says the text, "God resists the proud." It intimates thus much to us, that the proud heart attacks God himself, and therefore God resists him. He places himself in battle array against the proud. God brings forth his battalia against the proud, and they bring forth their battalia against God. A proud heart resists, and is resisted; this is flint to flint, fire to fire; yet in the day of God's wrath the proud shall be burnt up as stubble, both branch and root, Mal. 4:1.

[3.] **The third proposition concerning pride is this**, ***Pride is a sin that shows itself not one way—but many ways.*** For instance,

First, Sometimes it shows itself in the **LOOKS**, Proverbs 6:17: he tells

you of seven things that the Lord hates, and one is a proud look. The Hebrew word there is, "The haughty eye." The haughty eye God hates. **Men's hearts usually show themselves in their eyes:** Psalm 131:1, "My heart is not haughty, nor my eye lofty." There are such who show pride in their very looks—but the Lord looks aloof at them, Psalm 138:6.

Secondly, Sometimes pride shows itself in **WORDS**: Dan. 4:30, "Is not this the great Babylon **I** have built as the royal residence, by **my** mighty power and for the glory of **my** majesty?" and in chapter 15, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" It was a very proud saying of one,"We have not so lived and deserved of God that the enemy should vanquish us." These were the proud ones, that spoke loftily, and that set their mouths against the heavens, as the psalmist speaks, Psalm 73:6, 8, 9, compared. And such a one was Henry the Second. Hearing that his city Mentz was taken, he used this proud blasphemous speech, "I shall never love God any more, who allowed a city so dear to me to be taken away from me." Such a proud wretch, both in words and actions, was Sennacherib, as you may see in Isaiah 37, from ver. 8 to 18.

Thirdly, Sometimes pride shows itself in the **CLOTHING** of the body; so Herod's pride appeared: Acts 12:21, "Herod was arrayed in royal apparel." In cloth of silver, says Josephus, which, being beaten upon by the sunbeams, dazzled the people's eyes, and drew from them that blasphemous acclamation, "It is the voice of God, and not of man." The people being most commonly like the Bohemian curs, that used to fawn upon a good suit. So the rich man, Luke 16:19, was clothed in purple, and in silk. He was commonly so clothed; it was his every-day's wear, as the Greek word implies.

Question. But here a question may be asked, **May not people clothe themselves according to their dignities, ranks, and places** that God has put them in in the world?

Answer. I answer, They may, and ought so to do. If God has lifted them up in the world above others, they may wear better apparel than others, Gen. 41:42, Esther 6:8, Psalm 45:13-14, 2 Sam. 13:18, Lam. 4:5, Mat. 11:8, Gen. 27:15, Isaiah 52:1, Hosea 2:13, Exod. 28:40. I cite these scriptures so much the rather, because some, through weakness and peevishness,

stumble and are not satisfied herein. There is nothing in the law of God or nature against it.

Question. But you may say, **May not people sin in their apparel?**

Answer. I answer, Yes, and that in four cases.

[1.] When it is not modest—but carries with it provocation to lust and immorality: Proverbs 7:10, "A woman came to meet him, dressed like a harlot." The Hebrew word signifies a clothing finely set and fitted to the body; and says the text, "She was subtle of heart," or trussed up about the breasts, with her upper parts naked; so Levi-Ben-Gersom reads the words, "She met him with her naked breasts," at this day too commonly used by such as would not be held harlots. Oh what a horrid shame and reproach is it to religion, the ways of God, and the people of God, that professors should go so! One says "that superfluous apparel is worse than whoredom, because whoredom only corrupts chastity—but this corrupts nature." Another says, "If women adorn themselves so as to provoke men to lust after them, though no ill follow upon it—yet those women shall suffer eternal damnation, because they offered poison to others, though none would drink of it."

[2.] People sin in their apparel when they exceed their degree and rank in costly apparel, which is that which is condemned by the apostle, 1 Tim. 2:9, 1 Pet. 3:3. The apostle does not simply condemn the wearing of gold —but he condemns it in those who go above their degree and rank. The words are rather an admonition than a prohibition.

[3.] It is sinful when it is so expensive as that it hinders works of mercy and charity. Oh how many proud souls are there in these days that lay so expense much upon their backs, that they can spare nothing to fill the poor's bellies. Silk clothing hinders works of charity and mercy. Surely those who put on such costly ornaments upon their backs as close up the hand of charity, will at last share with Dives in his misery.

[4.] When persons habit themselves in strange and foreign fashions, which is the sin, shame, and reproach of many among us in these days. Now that is strange apparel which is not peculiar to the nations where

men live. The Lord threatens to punish such, Zeph. 1:8, that are clothed with strange apparel. There are too many women and men in our days that are like the Egyptian temples, very gypsies, painted without and spotted within; varnish without and vermin within.

Mercury being to make a garment for the moon, as one says, could never fit her—but either the garment would be too big or too little, by reason she was always increasing or decreasing. May not this be applied to the vain curiosity of too too many professors in these days, whose curiosity about their clothes can never be satisfied?

I shall conclude this head with this counsel: Clothe yourselves with the silk of piety, with the satin of sanctity, and with the purple of modesty—and God himself will be a suitor to you. **Let not the ornaments upon your backs speak out the vanity of your hearts.** "I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God." 1 Timothy 2:9-10

Fourthly, Sometimes pride shows itself by the gesture and **DEMEANOR** of the body. Isaiah 3:16, "The daughters of Zion were haughty, and walked with stretched out necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, making a tinkling with their feet." Oh earth! earth! do you not groan to bear such monsters as these?

Fifthly, And sometimes pride shows itself in **contemptuous challenges of God**; as Pharoah, "Who is the God of the Hebrews, that I should obey him?"

Sixthly, Sometimes pride shows itself by **bragging promises**, "I will arise, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, and my lusts shall be satisfied," Exod. 15:9.

[4.] The fourth proposition that I shall lay down is this: ***Pride is a sin which of all sins, makes a person most like Satan.***

Pride is Satan's disease. Pride is so base a disease, that God had rather see his dearest children to be buffeted *by* Satan, than that in pride

they should be *like* Satan. When Paul, 2 Cor. 12:7, under the abundance of revelations, was in danger of being puffed up, the Lord, rather than he would have him proud like to Satan, suffers him to be buffeted by Satan. Humility makes a man like to angels, and pride makes an angel a devil. Pride is worse than the devil, for the devil cannot hurt you until pride has possessed you. If you would see the devil portrayed to the life—look upon a proud soul; for as face answers to face, so does a proud soul answer to Satan. Proud souls are Satan's apes, and none imitate him to the life like these. And oh that they were sensible of it, before it be too late, before the door of darkness be shut upon them!

[5.] A fifth proposition is this: ***Pride cannot climb so high—but justice will sit above her.***

One asked a philosopher what God was a-doing? He answered, That his whole work was to exalt the humble and pull down the proud. **It was pride which turned angels into devils**; they would be above others in heaven, and therefore God cast them down to hell. The first man would know as God, and the Babel-builders would dwell as God—but justice set above them all. This truth you see verified in the justice of God upon Pharaoh, Haman, Herod, Belshazzar, and Nebuchadnezzar; all these would be very high—but justice takes the right hand of them all, and brings them down to the dust.

Yes, pride cannot climb so high in the hearts of saints—but divine justice will be above it. Uzziah his heart was lifted up, 2 Chron. 26:16—but justice smites him with a leprosy, and so he died, out of grief and sorrow, says Josephus. David glories in his own greatness, 2 Sam. 24:1, *seq*., and for this, seventy thousand fall by the hand of justice. Hezekiah's heart was lifted up—but wrath was upon him, and upon all Judah and Jerusalem for it, 2 Chron. 32:25, *seq*. **Pride sets itself against the honor, being, and sovereignty of God**, and therefore justice will in spite of all sit above her. Other sins strike at the word of God, the people of God, and the creatures of God—but pride strikes directly at the very being of God, and therefore justice will be above her.

Nebuchadnezzar was proud, and God smites his reason, and turns him into a beast. Oh! how many young professors are there in our days, who

have been proud of their notions, and proud of their parts and gifts—and justice has so smitten them, that they have lost that life, that sweetness, that spiritualness, which quickness what once they had, and are dried and shriveled up by a hand of justice. They are like the apples of Sodom, splendid on the outside—but rotten and worthless within. Some there are who have been very shining—yet by reason of pride have fallen from a *seeming* excellency to be naught, and from naught to be very naught, and from very naught to be stark naught. Isaiah 23:9, "The Lord Almighty has purposed it to destroy your pride and show his contempt for all human greatness." The Hebrew word that is here rendered *purposed*, signifies to consult, or take counsel. It is consulted and agreed upon in counsel, that he will destroy your pride and show his contempt for all human greatness; and the counsel of the Lord shall stand, Psalm 33:11; Isaiah 2:11-12, "The day is coming when your pride will be brought low and the Lord alone will be exalted. In that day the Lord Almighty will punish the proud, bringing them down to the dust!" Isaiah 2:11-12

Divine justice will take the right hand of all proud ones on the earth. God bears, as I may say, a special hatred against pride. His heart hates it, Proverbs 6:16-17; his mouth curses it, Psalm 119:21; and his hand plagues it, as you have seen in the former instances, and as you may see further in these following instances:

The king of Egypt, which Jeremiah prophesied against, in his forty-fourth chapter, was so puffed up with pride, that he boasted his kingdom was so surely settled, that it could not be taken from him either by God or man. Not long after he was taken in battle by Amasis, one of his own subjects, and hanged.

Dionysius the tyrant said in the pride of his heart, that his kingdom was bound to him with chains of adamant; but time soon confuted him, for he was driven out, and forced to teach a school at Corinth for a poor living.

Cares, a soldier, being proud of his valor, because he had given Cyrus a great wound, shortly after he ran mad. In all ages there are notable instances to prove that pride has not got so high—but justice has set above her.

[6.] The sixth proposition is this, ***Of all sins, spiritual pride is most dangerous, and must be most resisted.***

Spiritual pride is the lifting up of the mind against God; it is a tumor and swelling in the mind, and lies in despising and slighting of God, his word, promises, and ordinances, and in the lifting up of a man's self, by reason of birth, breeding, wealth, honor, place, relation, gifts or graces, and in despising of others. Of this spiritual pride Habakkuk speaks, chapter 2:4, "His heart that is lifted up in him, is not upright." Proverbs 16:5, "The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished." or, who "lifts up his heart against God," or his decrees; as Lewis the Eleventh did, in that proud speech of his, "If I shall be saved, I shall be saved; and if I shall be damned, I shall be damned; and there is all the care that I shall take." Like to this, was that proud and wretched speech of one Rufus, who painted God on the one side of his shield, and the devil on the other, with this mad motto: "If you will not have me, here is one will." Spiritual pride is a white devil, as one calls it, a gilded poison, by which God is robbed of his honor, a man's own soul of his comfort and peace, and others of that benefit and fruit which otherwise they might receive from us.

Satan is subtle; he will make a man proud of his very graces; he will make him proud that he is not proud. Pride grows with the decrease of other sins, and thrives by their decay. Other sins are nourished by poisonous roots, as adultery is nourished by idleness, and gluttony and murder by malice and envy; but this white devil, spiritual pride, springs from good duties and good actions towards God and man. Spiritual pride is a very great enemy to the good and salvation of man. Pride is like a very great *swelling*, which unfits men for any service.

Again, spiritual pride is a very great enemy to the good and salvation of men. The Greek word signifies *swelling*, for pride is like a great swelling in the body, which unfits it for any good service. John 5:40, "You will not come to me, that you may have life;" and ver. 44, "How can you believe in me, who seek honor one of another?" Christ blesses his Father, Mat. 11:25, that he had "hidden those things from the wise and prudent, and had revealed them unto babes and sucklings." It is the pride of men's hearts that makes them throw off ordinances, as poor and low things,

when, alas! in their practices they live below the power, beauty, glory, and holiness of the least and lowest ordinance. There is more holiness, purity, and glory manifested in the lowest administrations of Christ—than is held forth by them, in their highest practices.

[7.] The seventh proposition is this, ***Pride un-mans a man; it makes him do acts which are below a man.***

As you may see in Pharaoh, Haman, Herod, Nebuchadnezzar, etc. It makes men bedlams. It was pride which made Hildebrand to cause Henry the Fourth to stand three days at his gate, with his wife and his child, barefooted. It was pride that made Adonibezek cause seventy kings, with their thumbs and great toes cut off, Judges 1:5-7, to gather their food under his table. Oh! what wretched unmanly acts has the pride of many persons put them upon.

[8.] The eighth proposition is this, ***The poorest are oftentimes the proudest.***

Interesting is the parable of Jotham: the best trees refused to be king—but the bramble wanted it; and did hope and aspire to it, Judges 9:15. So in 2 Kings 14:9, "The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give your daughter to my son to wife." Hagar the kitchen-maid will be proud, and insult over her mistress Sarah, Gen. 21. The poor sons of Zebedee desired to sit at Christ's right hand and left, Mat. 20:20-21. And those who Job disdains to set with the dogs of his flock—despise him in the day of his sorrow, Job 30:1. The foot strives to be equal with the head, the servant as the master, the cobbler as the councillor, and the peasant as the prince, etc.

[9.] The ninth proposition is this, ***Pride is a sure forerunner of a fall.***

"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty mind before a fall," Proverbs 16:18, 18:12. Herod fell from a throne of gold—to a bed of dust. Nebuchadnezzar fell from the state of a mighty king—to be a beast. Adam fell from innocency to mortality. The angels fell from heaven to hell—from felicity to misery.

[10.] The tenth and last proposition is this: ***God will by an invincible power, conquer proud souls.***

You haughty ones, who think to escape—and battle it out, remember this—God will by an almighty and invincible power conquer you; when you think not of it, he will eat you like a moth. Isaiah 47:10-11, "You have trusted in your wickedness and have said, 'No one sees me.' Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me.' Disaster will come upon you, and you will not know how to conjure it away. A calamity will fall upon you that you cannot ward off with a ransom; a catastrophe you cannot foresee will suddenly come upon you."

Impunity oftentimes causes impudency—but God's forbearance is no acquittance. The longer the hand is lifted up, the heavier will be the blow at last. Of all metals, lead is the coldest—but being melted, it becomes the hottest. Humble souls know how to apply this, and proud souls shall sooner or later experience this. [Pope Innocent the Fourth, as he was walking securely in his palace, heard that sorrowful and dreadful summons, *Come, you wretch, receive your judgment!* and soon after he was found dead. Eccles. 8:11.]

The Second Doctrine

II. I shall now proceed to a second doctrine, namely, That all saints are not of an equal size and growth in grace and holiness.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!" Ephesians 3:8

Some are higher, and some are lower; some are stronger and some are weaker—in spiritual graces and heavenly excellencies. "Unto me who am less than the least," etc.

Among true believers, some may be found to be but weak believers. This point flows as natural from the words as the stream does from the fountain, and no point more clear in all the Scripture than this.

In Romans 14:1, you read of some who are **weak** in the faith; "Those who are weak in the faith receive," says the apostle. None are to be rejected in whom is anything of Christ is to be found. And so Mat. 14:31, there is mention made of "little faith." 1 Cor. 9:22, "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak." You read of babes in grace: 1 Pet. 2:2, 3, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if so be that you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." 1 John 2:12-14, there is mention made of "little children, of young men, and of fathers." All are not fathers in grace, nor all are not young men in grace; there are some children in grace. A Christian in this life has his degrees of growth; he is first a child in grace, and then a young man in grace, and then a father in grace. [It is with Christians as it is with planets: the moon goes her course once a month, the sun once a year, the rest not in many years; yet at length they finish their course.]

For the further opening of this point, I shall endeavor these four things.

I. I shall endeavor to decipher to you souls weak in grace.

II. I shall endeavor to lay down those things which may encourage, support, and comfort souls who are weak in grace.

III. I shall speak to the duties which lie upon those who are weak in grace.

IV. I shall speak to the duties which lie upon those who are strong in grace, towards those who are weak in grace.

Of these four we shall speak, as the Lord shall assist.

I. I shall begin with the first, ***To decipher souls weak in grace.***

The first thing by which I shall describe, discover and decipher souls weak in grace is this:

[1.] *Weak Christians are usually much concerned and taken up with the poor low things of this world.*

They are much in carking and caring for them, and in pursuing and hunting greedily after them. That is a clear text for this: Mat. 6:25, to the end. Christ labors by several weighty arguments to fence and fortify his disciples against those uncertain, doubtful, carking worldly cares—which divide, distract, distemper, torture, and tear the heart in a thousand pieces. And yet neither these arguments, nor yet the presence of him who was the great landlord of heaven and earth, and whose love and affections were still yearning towards them, and whose special eye of providence was still over them—could rid their heads and hearts of these worldly cares that do but vex and perplex the souls of men. And it is very observable, that after this stinging lecture which Christ gave them, they did argue three different times, as to who should be greatest and highest in worldly enjoyments. Their hearts should have been only in heaven, and yet they strive for earth, as if there were no heaven, or as if earth were better than heaven. All which does clearly evidence, that their graces were very weak, and their corruptions very strong.

Men who have little of the *upper* springs within, are much concerned after the springs *below*. Baruch was godly—but weak in grace; he had but some sips and tastes of the glory of the eternal world, and that made him,

when God was a-pulling down all worldly glory, to seek for earth as if there were no heaven, Jer. 45:1-5. Certainly there is but little of Christ and grace within—where the heart is so strongly concerned about earthly things. Where there is such strong love and workings of heart after these poor things, it shows our soul's enjoyment of God to be but poor and low.

In the Old Testament, the Jews, being babes and infants in grace and holiness, had a world of temporal promises, and very few spiritual promises. But now in the days of the gospel, the Lord is pleased to double and treble his Spirit upon his people, and now you meet with very few temporal promises in the gospel—but the gospel is filled with spiritual promises. The gospel drops nothing but marrow and fatness, love and sweetness; and therefore God looks in these days that men should grow up to a greater height of holiness, heavenliness, and spiritualness, than what they attained to in those dark days, wherein the sun shined but dimly. Those who are rich and strong in grace, look upon the world with a holy scorn and disdain. As Themistocles, when he saw in the dark a thing like a pearl, he scorned to stoop for it himself, saying to another, "You scoop it up—for you are not Themistocles."

Abraham, a man strong in grace, looked with a holy scorn and with an eye of disdain upon these poor things. When Melchisedec had made him heir of all things, he refused the riches that the king of Sodom offered him, because God was his shield and his exceeding great reward, Gen. 14:21, 15:1. The greatest bargain which a soul rich in grace will make with God for himself is this, "Give me but bread to eat and clothes to wear--and you shall be my God." So it was with that brave soul, Gen. 28:21. Jacob desires but bread and clothing. Mark, he asks bread—not dainties; clothing—not ornaments. A little of this world will satisfy a man who is strong in grace; much will not satisfy a man who is weak in grace; nothing will satisfy a man who is void of grace.

Souls weak in grace, have their hearts much working after these poor base things; as you may see, Mat. 18:1, "Who shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" The question is stated by the disciples, whom one would have thought should have had their hearts and thoughts in heaven; but they dreamed of an earthly kingdom, where honors and offices would be distributed, as in the days of David and Solomon. And it is observable

in Mark 9:33-34, that they are at it again: "And he came to Capernaum; and being in the house, he asked them, What was it that you disputed among yourselves by the way? But they remained silent" (they were ashamed to tell him); "for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be greatest." Says one, I'll have this, and says another, I'll have that, etc.; or as it is in the Greek, "they disputed who was greatest;" so in Luke 9:46. Says one, I am greater than you; No, says another, I am greatest.

It is an argument of a childish disposition—to be concerned more with rattles and baubles, than with jewels and pearls. That Christian has little of the power of grace within him, whose heart is so strongly carried out to these vanities below. Grown men prefer one piece of gold above a thousand new pennies. A soul who is strong in grace, that is high in its spiritual enjoyments, prefers one good word from God, one good look from Christ, above all the dainties of this world. "Lord," he prays, "lift up the light of your countenance upon me." Warm my heart with the beams of your love, and then a little of these things will suffice.

You see Moses and all those worthies in the 11th of the Hebrews, who were men strong in grace—how bravely they trample upon all things below God. They left their families and their countries,where they lived like princes—to wander in a wilderness, upon the bare command of God. So Luther, a man strong in grace, when he had a gown and money given him by the elector, he turned himself about, and said, "I shall not put me off with these poor base things." Souls who know by experience what the bosom of Christ is, what spiritual communion is, what the glory of heaven is, will not be put off by with things which are mixed, mutable, and momentary. And to shame many professors in these days, I might bring in a cloud of witnesses; even from among the very heathen, who never heard of a crucified Christ, and yet were more crucified to things below Christ than many of those who pretend much to Christ. But I shall forbear, only desiring that those who think and speak so scornfully and contemptuously of heathens may not at last be found worse than heathens; yes, be judged and condemned by heathens in the great and solemn day of the Lord.

Secondly, In order to a further deciphering of weak Christians, I shall lay

down this:

[2.] *That weak saints do usually over-fear troubles before they come; yes, those future evils that, forty to one, may never come to pass.*

The very empty thoughts and fears of possible trouble is very terrible and perplexing to a weak saint. When it was told the house of David, saying, "Syria is confederate with Ephraim, the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind," Isaiah 7:2. Their heart quaked and quivered, as we say, like an aspen leaf. It is an elegant expression, showing, in their extremity, the baseness of their fears, arguing no courage or spirit at all in them. The very news and conceit of trouble or calamities, oh how does it perplex, and vex, and grieve, and overwhelm weak Christians! [The chameleon, says Pliny, is the most fearful of all creatures, and does therefore turns into all colors to save itself; and so it is often with weak Christians..... Pray for me, said Latimer in his letter to Ridley; for I am sometimes so fearful, that I would creep into a mouse-hole.]

The very hearing of trouble at a distance makes them to stagger and reel, and ready to say, *Will God now save? Will he now deliver?* It puts them into those shaking fits, that they know not what to do with themselves, nor how to perform the service they owe to God or man. Now tell me, can you call that a stout spirit, a strong spirit—who is daunted with the very report and thoughts of calamity? Or who has immoderate fear of a thousand things that perhaps shall never happen; as fears of foreign invasions, or fears of home-bred confusions, fears of change of religion, or being surprised with such or such diseases, or being ruined in their outward estate by such and such devices or disadvantages, or by falling under the frowns of such a great man, or under the anger and revenge of such and such a man, and a thousand such like things. Now, this speaks out much weakness in grace. Souls strong in grace are carried above these fears; yes, with the leviathan in Job, they can laugh at the shaking of a spear, chapter 41:29. They can say with David, "Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil; for you are with us, your rod and your staff do comfort us," Psalm 23:4. But weak souls are afraid of their own shadow. The very *shadow of trouble* will exceedingly

trouble such souls, and oftentimes make their lives a very hell. [Bucephalus was not afraid of his burden; the shadow only frightened him. So weak Christians are afraid of the *shadow* of the cross.]

[3.] ***Thirdly, Fainting in the day of adversity speaks of a soul to be but weak in grace.***

Weak Christians are overcome with little crosses. The least cross does not only startle them—but it sinks them, and makes them ready to sit down and to cry out with the church, "Behold you who pass by, see whether there be any sorrow like my sorrow," Lam. 1:12. Before trouble comes, weak Christians are apt to think that they can bear much and endure much; but, alas! when the day of trial comes upon them, when they are put to it, they prove but men of poor and impotent spirits, and then they roar, and complain, and lie down in the dust—allowing crosses and losses to bind them hand and foot, and to rob them of all their comforts. And now though they have many comforts, compared to their one cross—yet their one cross does so damp and daunt their hearts, that joy and comfort flies away from them, and they sit down overwhelmed. Certainly this speaks out little of Christ within. All Rachel's comforts were no comforts, because her children were not. This speaks out much weakness within.

Proverbs 24:10, "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small;" if you shrink, if you abate and slacken, in the day of adversity, your strength is small. Man has no trial of his strength until he is in trouble; faintness then reveals the weakness. Afflictions test what strength we have—as hard weather tries what health we have. A weak Christian sinks under a little burden; every frown, every sour word, every puff of wind blows him down, and makes him sink under his burden. But now a soul strong in grace bears up bravely against all winds and weather. That is a wonderful text, and worthy to be written in letters of gold, which you have in Gen. 49:23-24, "Joseph's bow abode in strength, though the archers sorely grieved him, shot at him, and hated him. And the arms of his hands were made strong, by the mighty God of Jacob." The archers that sorely grieved him were his barbarous brethren who sold him; his adulterous mistress who, harlot-like, hunted for his precious life; his injurious master, who without any desert of his, imprisoned him; the tumultuating Hebrews, who perhaps spoke of stoning him; and the

envious courtiers and enchanters spoke evilly of him before Pharaoh, to bring him out of favor. All these shot sorely at him. The word that is rendered *archers* in the Hebrew, is arrow-masters, which term implies skillfulness in shooting. They were cunning and skillful to hit the mark, and they shot at him, as at a mark; but yet "his bow abode in strength."

When God in the midst of weakness makes a soul strong, that soul will not only face enemies and difficulties—but triumph over them. Those who are strong in grace seldom lack courage or counsel when they are in the worst battle. They always find their hope to be an anchor at sea, and their faith a shield upon land; and therefore they triumph in all storms and dangers. They stand firm when they are under the greatest pressures: 2 Cor. 11:23, "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often," etc. And yet he triumphs in 2 Cor. 1:12, "Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace." Strong Paul rejoiced in his sufferings for Christ, and therefore often sings it out: "I, Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ;" not "I Paul, enrapt up in the third heaven." He preferred his crown of thorns before a crown of gold, his prison rags above all royal robes. [*If we perish, Christ perishes with us*, said Luther.]

[4.] ***Fourthly, A weak Christian thinks that little to be much, which he suffers for Christ.***

In Mat. 19:27, then "answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed you; what shall we have?" Their worldly case in following Christ, was little worse than when they only traded in fishing; and yet, "we have forsaken all, and followed you; what shall we have?" This their all was not worth a speaking of, and yet, for this they look for some great worldly reward and recompense. "We have forsaken all."—A few broken boats, and a few tattered and torn nets, and a little old household stuff, and Christ maintained them too, upon his own cost and charge; and yet say they, "We have forsaken all, and followed you." Neither is it without an emphasis, that they begin with a *Behold;* "Behold we have forsaken all," as if Christ were greatly beholding to them. Let their wills be but crossed a little, by servants, children, friends, etc, or let

them but suffer a little in their names or estates, etc., and presently you shall have them a-sighing it out, "No sorrow like our sorrow, no loss to our loss, no cross to our cross," etc. [Weak Christians are like children; they look for a great reward for a little work.] Whereas souls strong in grace suffer much, and yet count that much but little. A soul strong in grace can suffer much, and yet make nothing of it. *I am heartily angry,* says Luther, who suffered very much, *with those who speak of my sufferings, which if compared with that which Christ suffered for me, are not once to be mentioned in the same day, etc.*

[5.] ***Fifthly, Those who are weak in grace dwell more upon what may discourage them in the ways of grace and holiness, than they do upon what may encourage them.***

They dwell more upon their sins—than upon a Savior; more upon their misery—than upon free grace and mercy; more upon that which may feed their fears—than upon that that may strengthen their faith; more upon the cross—than upon the crown; more upon those who are against them—than those who are for them: Isaiah 51:12-13, "I, even I, am the one who comforts you. So why are you afraid of mere humans, who wither like the grass and disappear? Yet you have forgotten the Lord, your Creator, the one who put the stars in the sky and established the earth. Will you remain in constant dread of human oppression? Will you continue to fear the anger of your enemies from morning till night?"

The same is intimated Romans 4:19-20, "Abraham, being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body being dead, nor yet the deadness of Sarah's womb." Mark, "being not weak in faith." Souls weak in faith are very apt to dwell upon discouragements—but strong Christians look above all discouragements. "He considered not." The Greek is, he cared not for his own body, he did not mind that; but in the 20th verse, "he considered him who had promised." Souls strong in grace dwell more upon their encouragements to holiness and believing, than upon their discouragements. "He considered him who had promised." He had an eye fixed upon the faithfulness of God, and the sufficiency and almightiness of God—and this bore up his heart above all discouragements.

So in 2 Cor. 4:16-18, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment,

works for us a far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory; while we look not (mark, they are not doating upon their discouragements) upon things which are seen—but upon things which are not seen: the things which are seen are temporal—but the things which are not seen are eternal." **An eye fixed upon encouragements makes heavy afflictions light, long afflictions short, and bitter afflictions sweet.** Those blessed martyrs found it so—who were cast out all night, in a cold frosty night, naked, and were to be burnt the next day, who thus comforted themselves, *The winter is sharp—but paradise is sweet; here we shiver for cold—but the bosom of Abraham will make amends for all.*

Weak Christians have eyes to behold their discouragements—but none to see their encouragements; they look more upon their corruption than upon their sanctification; upon their disobedience than their obedience; upon their distrust than upon their faith; upon the old man than upon the new—and this keeps them low and weak in spirituals, it causes a leanness in their souls.

[6.] *Sixthly, The zeal of weak Christians usually outstrips their wisdom and knowledge.*

Weak Christians are very zealous—but not according to knowledge: Romans 10:2, "For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God—but not according to knowledge." They were very zealous—but not true zealots, they are very peevish and pettish and censorious; but they lack wisdom and knowledge to manage their zeal, to God's glory and their brethren's good. Such zeal had those two Rabbis who set upon Charles the Fifth, to persuade him to turn Jew, as judging their religion to be the only religion in the world, and for which they were put to a cruel death, in the year 1530. A great zeal they had to the winning over of him to Judaism—but this zeal was their ruin. **Zeal without knowledge is as wild-fire in a fool's hand;** it is like the devil in the demoniac, that sometimes cast him into the fire, and sometimes into the water. So the disciples of Christ were weak in their light, and furious in their zeal: Luke 9:54, "Let fire come down from heaven, and consume them," say they. But mark what Christ says, ver. 55: "You know not what manner of spirits you are of;" that is, you know not what spirit acts you. You think that you are acted by such a spirit as Elijah of old was acted by—but you err, says

Christ; "you have a zeal—but not according to knowledge," therefore it is a human fervidness and not a divine motion.

Zeal is like fire: in the chimney it is one of the best servants—but out of the chimney it is one of the worst masters. Zeal kept by knowledge and wisdom, in its proper place, is a choice servant to Christ and saints; but zeal not bounded by wisdom and knowledge, is the high way to undo all, and to make a hell for many at once. [Josephus, tells of some who imposed the name of *Zelote* upon themselves, as if they were zealous for the honor and service of God, and under this pretense committed all riots and imaginable wickedness. It were well if we had no such monsters among us in these days.]

Weak Christians are usually most zealous about circumstances and things that have least of God and Christ and the power of holiness in them; and most cold about things of value and substance—as woeful experience does evidence in these days. Zeal ordered by wisdom, feeds upon the faults of offenders, not on their persons. It spends itself and its greatest heat principally upon those things that concern a man's self. It is most exercised about substantials: Tit. 2:14—but that which is rash, is most exercised about circumstantials; Gal. 1:14, Paul was, in the days of his ignorance, very zealous for the traditions of his fathers, etc.

[7.] ***Seventhly, Among all saints, the weakest saints act most like carnal sinners.***

No saint is so like a sinner—as a weak saint. "Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as carnal (worldly)--mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?" 1 Corinthians 3:1-3. They were advanced but very little above the imperfections and passions and sins of mere men, of such who had nothing of the Spirit in them, etc. Do wicked men quarrel with their teachers—when they themselves are in fault? So did these babes here. Do wicked men impute their not profiting to the minister, as he who, having a thorn in his foot, complains of the roughness of the way as the cause of his limping, whereas it was the thorn and not the roughness of the way

which hurt him. Or as she, that, being struck with a sudden blindness, bid open the window, whereas it was not the lack of light—but lack of sight, which troubled her. So did these babes in the text lay the fault of their non-proficiency upon their teachers, when the fault was wholly in themselves. [In many things, weak Christians are carnal men's apes.]

Now he calls them *carnal*, partly because the flesh was strong in them, and partly because they followed and relished the things of the flesh, and partly because they did in their actions resemble carnal men. Do carnal and wicked men cry up one godly man, and cry down another? Do they lift up one, and abase another? So did they. Are wicked men full of envy, strife, and divisions? So were they. And these overflowings of the gall and spleen, come from a fullness of bad humours, from that abundance of carnality that was in them.

But now souls strong in grace are higher than carnal men, as Saul was higher than the people by head and shoulders. Souls strong in grace have their feet where carnal men's heads are—they have their feet on the world. Proverbs 15:24, "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." Souls who are strong in grace, do act rather like angels than like carnal men; they do as much resemble the Father of spirits, as carnal men do the Father of lies.

[8.] ***Eighthly, Souls weak in grace are easily drawn aside out of the ways of holiness.***

You know a man who has but a little bodily strength, is easily thrust out of the way; so it is with souls weak in grace: 1 John 3:7, "Little children, let no man deceive you; he who does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." Says the apostle, "Little children, let no man deceive you." Many in these days, under pretenses of high and glorious enjoyments of God, neglect and despise righteousness and holiness, crying up visions and manifestations, when their visions are only the visions of their own hearts and their manifestations are plain delusions. Ah! but says the apostle, "Little children, let none of these deceive you." I tell you he, and only he, who does righteousness, is righteous, as God is righteous. Children, you know, may be easily deceived, and made to take shiny pennies for gold, because they are prettier and brighter. Children in

grace are soon deceived, hence is it that they are so deluded.

Heb. 12:12-13, "Therefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Some think that the apostle alludes to those combats of the heathens, wherein it was a token of yielding, when a man hung down his hands. You are weak, says the apostle, and by reason of trials you are apt to hang down your hands, and to give up all as lost; therefore, says he, lift up your hands to fight, and your feet to run, take heart and courage, faint not, give not over, turn not aside because of the sharpness of afflictions. But souls strong in grace will hold on in the ways of grace and holiness, in the face of all dangers and deaths, Psalm 44.

[9.] *Ninthly, Weak Christians are apt to make sense and feeling, the judge of their spiritual estates and conditions.*

And, therefore, upon every turn they are apt to judge themselves miserable, and to conclude that they have no grace, because they cannot feel it, nor discern it, nor believe it; and so making sense, feeling, and reason, the judge of their estates—they wrong, and perplex, and vex their precious souls, and make their lives a very hell.

The Canaanite woman had strong faith—but no assurance that we read of, Mat. 15:22, *seq*. Gal. 4:6, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Mark, they are first the sons of God, and then the Spirit cries, Abba, Father. 1 John 5:13, "These things have I written unto you who believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life." Mark, they did believe, and they had eternal life, in respect of Christ their head, who, as a public person, was gone to heaven, to represent all his saints. And they had eternal life in respect of the promises, and they had eternal life in respect of the beginnings of it—and yet they did not know it, they did not believe it. "Therefore these things write I unto you who believe on the name of the Son of God," says he, "that you may know that you have eternal life, and that this life is in his Son." Ponder on Micah 7:7-9.

The word shall judge us at last, John 12:48; and therefore strong saints make only the word of God the judge of their spiritual condition now.

[10.] ***Tenthly, Their thoughts and hearts of weak Christians are more taken up with the love-tokens, and the good things they have from Christ—than with Christ himself.***

Oh their graces, their comforts, their enlargements, their meltings, and their warmings, etc., are the things which most absorb them. Their thoughts and hearts are so exercised about these things, that Christ himself is much neglected by them. The child is so absorbed with dolls and rattles, etc., that the mother is not thought of. And such is the behavior of weak Christians towards Christ.

But now souls who are strong in grace are more taken with the person of Christ than they are with the love-tokens of Christ. They bless Christ indeed for every grain of grace, and for every good word from heaven, and for every good look from heaven; ay—but Christ himself is more to them than all these. [Christ is the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory, etc.] This is remarkable in the church, Cant. 5:9-10, "What is your beloved more than another beloved, O you fairest among women? etc. "My beloved is dark and dazzling, better than ten thousand others!" etc. She does not say, My beloved is one that I have got so many thousands by, and heaven by, and pardon of sin by, and peace of conscience by. Oh no! but he dazzling. Her soul was taken most with the person of Christ.

It is an argument of weakness of grace, when the heart is more exercised about the bracelets, and the kisses, and the love-tokens of Christ—than it is about Christ himself. [That wife is but weak in her love, who is more taken up with her husband's presents than with his person.] But now says one strong in grace, My bracelets are precious—but Christ is more precious; the streams of grace are sweet—but the fountain of grace is most sweet; the beams of the sun are glorious—but the sun itself is most glorious. A naked Christ, a despised Christ, a persecuted Christ, is more valued by a strong Christian, than heaven and earth are by a weak Christian. [Christ's himself, to a strong Christian, is the greatest cordial in all the world.]

[11.] ***Eleventhly, Souls weak in grace are easily stopped and taken off from acting graciously and holily, when discouragements face them.***

This you may see in that remarkable instance concerning Peter, in that 26th of Matthew, from the 69th to the end. A silly wench outfaces him; she daunts this self-confident champion; she easily stops and turns him by saying, "You were one of those with Jesus the Galilean," v. 70. "But Peter denied it in front of everyone—I don't know what you are talking about." He makes as if he did neither understand her words or her meaning; and this false dissembling was a true denying of Christ. Now Mark says, chapter 14:68, that upon the very first denial of Christ, the rooster crowed, and yet this fair warning could not secure him—but when another maid saw him, and said, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth," ver. 72, he denied it with an oath, saying, "I do not know the man!" This was fearful and dreadful, and the worse because his Master, whom he forsware, was now upon his trial, and might say with wounded Caesar, "What! and you my son Brutus!" Is this your kindness to your friend, to him who has loved you, and saved you, and owned you? etc. Then ver. 73, "Surely you are one of them, for your speech betrays you." And ver. 74. "He began to curse and to swear, I know not the man!" The Greek word that is rendered *curse*, imports a cursing and a damning of himself, an imprecation of God's wrath, and a separation from the presence and glory of God, if he knew the man." Some writers say, that he cursed Christ. "I know not the man," says he.

Though it were ten thousand times better to bear than to swear, and to die than to lie—yet when discouragement faces him, he is so amazed and daunted, that he tells the most incredible lie that almost could be uttered by the mouth of man. For there was no one more than Peter, who knew Christ. Neither could Peter allege any cause why he came there, if he had not known Christ.

But, ver. 75, "He went out, and wept bitterly." One sweet look of love breaks his heart in pieces, he melts under the beamings forth of divine favor upon him. Once he leapt into a sea of waters to come to Christ, and now he leaps into a sea of tears, because he had so shamefully denied Christ. Clement notes, that Peter so repented, that all his life-time after, every night when he heard the rooster crow, he would fall upon his knees and weep bitterly, begging pardon for this dreadful sin. Others say, that after his lying, cursing, and denying of Christ, he was ever and anon

weeping, and that his face was furrowed with continual tears. He had no sooner taken in poison—but he vomits it up again, before it got to the vitals. He had no sooner handled a serpent—but he turns it into a rod to scourge his soul with remorse.

This truth is further confirmed by the speech and carriage of the disciples: Luke 24:21, *seq*., "We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel." Here their hope hangs the wing extremely. Weak souls find it as hard to wait for God, as it is to bear evil. This weakness Christ checks, ver. 25, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken," etc. And John 16:5, the first news Christ tells them, is of their sufferings and of his leaving of them; and upon the thoughts hereof their hearts were so filled with sorrow, that they could not so much as say, "Master, where are you going?" ver. 6. But now, souls strong in grace will hold on in holy and gracious actings in the very face of the greatest discouragements. And so the three Hebrew children, they hold up in the face of all discouragements. And so those brave worthies, of whom this world was not worthy, Heb. 11, their hearts were strong, notwithstanding all discouragements, to hold on in ways of holiness, and in their actings of faith upon God, in the face of all dangers and deaths which did attend them. Such a spirit shined in Chrysostom when he bid them tell the enraged empress, *I fear nothing but sin!*

When Henry the Eighth had spoken and written bitterly against Luther, says Luther, *Tell the Henries, the bishops, the Turks, and the devil himself—do what they can—we are children of the kingdom, worshiping of the true God, whom they, and such as they, spit upon and crucified.* And of the same spirit and metal were many martyrs. Basil affirms of the primitive saints, that they had so much courage and confidence in their sufferings, that many of the heathens, seeing their heroic zeal and constancy, turned Christians.

[12.] *Twelfthly, Weak saints mind their wages more than their work.*

Their wages are joy, peace, comfort, and assurance, etc.; and their work is waiting on God, believing in God, walking with God, acting for God, etc. Now, weak saints' minds are more carried out, and taken up about their

wages, than they are about their work, as experience does abundantly evidence. [Children mind more play-days than they do working-days, or school-days.] Ah! Christians, if you don't mind your wages more than your work, what means the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen? 1 Sam. 15:14. What means those earnest and vehement cryings out and wrestlings for joy, peace, comfort, and assurance—when the great work of believing, of waiting, and of walking with God—is so much neglected and disregarded?

But now strong saints are more mindful of their work than they are of their wages. *Lord!* says a strong saint, *do but uphold me in a way of believing, in a way of working, in a way of holy walking, etc., and it shall be enough, though I should never have assurance, comfort, peace, or joy, until my dying day. If you will carry me forth so as you may have honor, though I have no comfort; so you may have glory, though I have no peace, I will bless you,* Romans 4:18-20. *I know,* says such a soul, *though a life of comfort be most pleasing to me—yet a life of believing, abstracted from comfort, is most honorable to you, and therefore I will be silent before you. Lord! do but help me in my work, and take your own time to give me my wages—to give me comfort, joy, peace, assurance.* They are not the best servants, who mind their wages more than their work, nor they are none of the best Christians that mind their comforts and their in-comings of the Spirit of graces—more than that homage and duty that they owe to God.

Before I come to the second thing premised, give me permission to give you this hint; namely, that there is no such way to joy, peace, and assurance, as this—to mind your work more than your wages. Ah! had many mourning, complaining Christians done thus—their mourning before this had been turned into rejoicing, and their complaining into singings. Christians, the high way to comfort is to mind comfort less, and duty more; it is to mind more what you should do, than what you would have, as you may see in Eph. 1:13, "In whom you also trusted, after you heard the word of faith, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." The original runs thus—in whom believing, you were sealed. While faith is busied and exercised about Christ, and those varieties of glories and

excellencies which are in him—the Lord comes, and by his Spirit seals up the life, and love, and glory of them.

Thus by divine assistance I have dispatched the first thing, namely, the deciphering of weak Christians.

II. The second thing that I propounded for the further opening and clearing of this point was, ***to hold forth to you those things which tend to support, comfort, and uphold weak Christians.*** And truly I must needs say, that if ever there was a time wherein weak Christians had need of support, I truly believe this is the time wherein we live, for by the horrid profaneness of men on the one hand, and the abominable, loose, and rotten principles of others on the other hand—the hearts of many weak Christians especially are saddened, which God would not have saddened; and their spirits wounded and grieved, which God would have comforted and healed; and therefore I shall dwell the longer upon this second thing,

And the *first* thing that I shall lay down by way of support is this.

Support* 1. *That the weakest Christians have as much interest and property in Christ, and all the fundamental good which comes by Christ—as the strongest saints have. [He who looked upon the brazen serpent, though with a weak sight—was healed as thoroughly as he who looked upon it with a stronger sight. A weak faith is a joint possessor of Christ; though no faith can be a joint purchaser of Christ.]

Weak saints are as much united to Christ, as much justified by Christ, as much reconciled by Christ, and as much pardoned by Christ—as the strongest saints. It is true, weak Christians cannot make so much improvement and advantage of their interest in Christ, as strong saints can; they have not that power, that wisdom, that spiritual skill to make that advantage of their interest and property in Christ as strong saints have; yet have they as much interest and property in the Lord Jesus, and all the fundamental good that comes by him—as the strongest saint who

breathes. The sucking child has as much interest and property in the father, and in what belongs to the father—as the child that is grown up to adulthood; though the young child has not that skill, nor that power, nor wisdom to improve that interest to his advantage, as he who is grown up has. It is just so here; a soul weak in grace has as much interest in the Lord as the strongest saint has—though he has not that skill to improve that interest. And is not this a singular comfort and support? Truly, were there no more to bear up a poor weak saint from fainting under all their sins, and sorrows, and sufferings—yet this alone might do it, etc.

The *second* support and comfort to weak saints is this:

Support 2. That God does with an eye of love, reflect upon the least good that is in them, or done by them. [The least star gives light; the least drop moistens.]

And is not this a glorious comfort and support, that the Lord looks with an eye of love upon the least good that is in you, or done by you? You cannot have a good thought—but God looks upon that thought with an eye of love: Psalm 32:5, "I said I would confess my sin, and you forgave my iniquity." I said it in my thoughts, that I would confess my sin, and you presently meeting me with pardoning mercy, forgave my iniquity. So in Mal. 3:16, "And there was a book of remembrance written for those who feared the Lord, and who *thought* upon his name." They had but some *thoughts* of God—and God reflects upon those thoughts with an eye of love.

Isaiah 38:5, "I have heard your prayers, I have seen your tears." Tears we look upon but as poor things, and yet God looks upon them as pearls, and therefore he puts them into his bottle, as the psalmist speaks. So in Psalm 6:8, one observes that there are two strong things in tears: (1.) They drop downward, and fall to the earth; yet they reach upwards, and pierce the heavens. (2.) They are silent—yet cry very loud. There is not a bit of bread, not a drop of drink which you give—but God casts an eye of love upon it, Mat. 25:35-36.

There is not a desire that arises in your soul—but the Lord takes notice of it: Proverbs 10:17, "You have heard the *desire* of the humble." Weak

saints are full of desires, their whole life is a life of desires, they are still a-breathing out holy desires: *Lord, pardon such a sin; and give me power against such a sin; and strength, Lord, to withstand such a temptation; and grace, Lord, to uphold me under such an affliction,* etc.; and the Lord hears and answers such gracious breathings and longings.

It was holy Jewel's desire, that he might die preaching; and God looked with an eye of love upon his desire, and he had it.

It was Latimer's desire, that he might shed his heart's blood for Christ; and God looked with an eye of love upon the breathings of his heart, and he had it.

The Israelites did but *groan*, and God looked upon their groans with an eye of love; he comes down, he makes his arm bare, he tramples upon their proud enemies, and by miracles he saved them. O weak Christian! is not this a singular comfort, that the Lord reflects with an eye of love upon your thoughts, upon your desires, upon your tears, and upon your groanings, etc. What though others slight you! what though others take no notice of you! yet the Lord casts an eye of love upon you!

Some think it very strange that God should set down in Scripture the story of Jacob, a poor countryman, Gen. 31, that he had a few ewes and lambs, streaked and spotted; and yet take no notice of the great emperors and kings of the earth, nor of their great actions and warlike designs in the world. But this is to show that tender love and respect which God bears to his children, above what he does to the great ones of this world. God is more taken with Lazarus's patched coat, than with Dives's silken robe, etc.

A *third* thing that I shall propound for the support and comfort of weak saints is this:

Support 3. Consider, the Lord looks more upon your graces, than he does upon your weaknesses. Or thus—***The Lord will not cast away weak saints, by reason of the weaknesses which cleaves to their persons or services.***

In 2 Chron. 30:18-20, there came a multitude of people to eat the Passover—but they were not prepared according to the preparation of the sanctuary; therefore Hezekiah puts up a prayer for them, and the text says, that the "Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people." The Lord looked upon their uprightness, and so passed over all their other weaknesses. He did not cast off Peter for his horrid sins—but rather looks upon him with an eye of love and pity: Mark 16:7, "Now go and give this message to his disciples, including *Peter*: Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died!" O admirable love! O matchless mercy! where sin abounds, grace does superabound. This is the glory of Christ, that he behaves sweetly towards his people, when they behave unworthily towards him. Christ looks more upon Peter's sorrow than upon his sin, upon his tears than upon his cursings, etc.

The Lord will not cast away weak saints for their great unbelief, because there is a little faith in them. He will not throw them away for that hypocrisy that is in them, because of that little sincerity which is in them. He will not cast away weak saints for that pride that is in them, because of those rays of humility which shine in them. He will not despise his people for their passions, because of those grains of meekness which are in them. We will not throw away a little gold because of a great deal of dross which cleaves to it, nor a little wheat because mixed with much chaff—and will God? will God?

We will not cast away our garments because of some spots, nor our books because of some blots, nor our jewels because of some flaws—and do we think that the Lord will cast away his dearest ones, because of their spots, and blots, and flaws? Surely not! God looks more upon the bright side of the cloud—than the dark: James 5:11, "Remember the *patience* of Job." It is not, remember the *murmuring* of Job, the *cursing* of Job, the *complainings* of Job, the *impatience* of Job; but, "Remember the *patience* of Job." God looks upon the pearl, and not upon the spot which is in it. So in Heb. 11:30-31, there is mention made of Rahab's faith, love, and peaceable behavior towards the spies—but no mention made of her lie. The Lord overlooks her *weakness*, and keeps his eye upon her *virtues*.

Where God sees but a *little grace*, he does as it were hide his eyes from

those circumstances that might seem to deface the glory of it. So in 1 Pet. 3:6, "Even as Sarah *obeyed* Abraham, calling him Lord." Mark there was but one good word in Sarah's speech to Abraham, she called her husband *Lord;* the speech otherwise was a speech of unbelief—yet the Holy Spirit speaking of her in reference to that speech, conceals all the evil in it, and mentions only the reverent title she gave to her husband, commending her for it.

He who drew Alexander, while he had a scar upon his face, drew him with his finger upon the scar. So when the Lord comes to look upon a poor soul, he lays his finger upon the scar—upon the infirmity—that he may see nothing but grace, which is the beauty and the glory of the soul.

Ah! but weak Christians are more apt to look upon their infirmities than on their graces, and because their little gold is mixed with a great deal of dross, they are ready to throw away all as dross. Well, remember this, the Lord Jesus has as great and as large an interest in the weakest saints, as he has in the strongest. He has the interest of a friend, and the interest of a father, and the interest of a head, and the interest of a husband; and, therefore, though saints are weak, yes, though they are very weak—yet having as great and as large an interest in them as in the strongest saints —he cannot but overlook their weakness, and keep a fixed eye upon their graces.

A *fourth* support is this:

Support 4. That the Lord will graciously preserve and strengthen those weak graces which are in you. [The tallest oak was once an acorn; the most learned doctor was once in his alphabet book.]

Though your graces be as a spark of fire in the midst of an ocean of corruption—yet the Lord will preserve and blow up that spark of fire into a flame. It was the priest's office in the time of the law, to keep the fire in the sanctuary from going out; and it is the office of our Lord Jesus, as he is our high priest, our head, our husband, our mediator—to keep alive that heavenly fire which he has kindled in any of our souls. His honor, his faithfulness, and his goodness is engaged in it, and therefore he cannot

but do it—else he would lose much love and many prayers and praises—did he not nourish, preserve, and strengthen his own work in his own people.

The faith of the disciples was generally weak, as I have formerly showed you, and yet how sweetly does the Lord Jesus react towards them! John 16, Acts 2. He was still a-breathing out light, life, and love upon them; he was still a-turning their water into wine, their bitter into sweet, and their discouragements into encouragements—and all to raise and keep up their spirits. His heart was much in this thing, therefore says he, "It is necessary that I leave you, that I may send the Comforter to be a comfort and guide unto you." I will pour out my Spirit upon you, that a little one may become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation, and that the feeble may be as David, and the house of David as God, as the angel of the Lord, Zech. 12:8.

That is a sweet text, Isaiah 65:8, "But I will not destroy them all,' says the Lord. "For just as good grapes are found among a cluster of bad ones (and someone will say, 'Don't throw them all away—there are some good grapes there!'), so I will not destroy all Israel. For I still have true servants there." Oh, says Christ to the Father, here are a company of weak saints that have some buddings of grace, oh do not destroy it, Father! there is a blessing in it, though it be but weak. The genuine sense of the similitude, I think, is this: when a vine being blasted or otherwise decayed is grown so bad and so barren, that scarce any good clusters of grapes can be discerned on it, whereby it may be deemed to have any life, or of ever becoming fruitful again, and the farmer is about to cut it down to the ground, one standing by sees here a cluster, and there a little cluster, and cries out, Oh do not not cut down the vine, it has a little life, and by good husbandry it may be made fruitful. We may look upon the Lord Jesus as thus pleading with his Father's justice: *Father, I know you see that these souls are dry and barren, and that there is little or no good in them, and therefore you might justly cut them down. But, O my Father! I see here a bunch and there a bunch, here a little grace and there a little grace—surely there is a blessing it. Oh spare it, let it not be destroyed.*

Mat. 12:27, "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory." [It is the custom of

Biblical writers, to use phrases whereby they understand much more than they do express: an example whereof you have in this verse, where Christ's not breaking the bruised reed signifies his great mercy and kindness in repairing, and restoring, and curing the bruised weakling. And so his not quenching the smoking flax is his enlivening, quickening, and inflaming that fire or spark of grace or goodness which was almost quenched, etc.]

"A bruised reed he will not break." The Jewish commentators understand it thus: he shall not tyrannise over—but nourish and cherish the poor, weak, feeble ones, who are accustomed to be oppressed by great ones. But men more spiritual understand it thus: Christ will not behave roughly and rigorously towards poor weak tender souls, whose graces are as a bruised reed and as smoking flax. A reed is a contemptible thing, a fragile thing, it will break sometimes before a man is aware; a *bruised* reed is more fragile, it will be broken with a touch—yet Christ will not break such a bruised reed, that is, a soul weak in grace.

"A smoldering wick he will not snuff out." The wick of a candle is of little worth, and yet less when it smokes, as yielding neither light nor heat—but rather smokes, and offends with an foul smell, which men cannot bear—but will put it out. But the Lord Jesus Christ will not do so. Souls whose knowledge, love, faith, and zeal do as but smoke—the Lord Jesus will not trample under foot; nay, he will cherish, nourish, and strengthen such—to life eternal. Look, what wax is to the wick, or oil is to the lamp—that will the Lord Jesus be to the graces of weak Christians.

"Till he leads justice to victory." That is, until the sanctified frame of grace begun in their hearts be brought to that perfection that it prevails over all opposite corruption.

Thus you see how sweetly the Lord Jesus behaves towards souls weak in grace; therefore let not those who bring forth a hundredfold despise those who bring forth but thirty, nor those who have five talents despise those who have but two.

The *fifth* support is this:

Support 5. That weak saints may be very useful to the strong, and sometimes may do more than strong saints can.

As you may see in 1 Cor. 12:14-28. The apostle in this Scripture discovers the singular use of the weakest saint in the body of Christ, by the usefulness of the weakest and lowest member in the natural body to the strongest: ver. 21, "The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the foot, I have no need of you." By the *head* and by the *eye* he means such saints as were eminent in gifts and graces, who were adorned more richly and who shined more gloriously in grace and gracious abilities than others. Oh these should not despise those who were not so eminent and excellent as themselves; for God has so tempered the inequality of the members in the natural body, that the more excellent and beautiful members cannot do without the more abject and weak members; therefore slight not the weakest saints, for certainly, at first or last, the weakest will be serviceable to the strongest. A dwarf may be useful to a giant, a child to a man; sometimes a little finger shall do that which a limb in the body cannot do; it is so often in Christ's spiritual body. I will give you a very famous instance for this.

Weak Christians may be of singular use to the strongest; those who know most may learn more even from the weakest saints. [A little star has light and influence, though not the glory which is proper to the sun.]

Junius was converted by discoursing with a ploughman. In Acts 18:24-27, Apollos, though he was an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures as the text speaks—yet was he furthered and bettered in the knowledge of Christ's kingdom by Aquila and Priscilla. A poor tent-maker and his wife were instrumental to acquaint him with those things that he knew but weakly, and so communicated their light and knowledge to him.

The *sixth* support is this:

Support 6. Where there is but a little grace, there God expects less, and will accept of less, though it be accompanied with many failings.

You say, Oh! I have but a little grace, a little faith, a little love, a little zeal.

Oh know, where there is but a little grace, there God expects less obedience, and will accept of less service: 2 Cor. 8:12, "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that which a man has, and not according to that which he has not." The two pennies dropped into the treasury, Luke 21:3, by the poor widow, her heart being in the action, were more acceptable than large amounts cast in by the rich people. Noah's sacrifice could not be great, and yet it was greatly accepted by God. In the time of the law, God accepted a handful of meal for a sacrifice, and a parcel of goat's hair for an oblation; and certainly God has lost none of his affections to poor souls in the time of the gospel.

Canticles 2:14, "Let me hear your *voice*, for your voice is sweet, and your countenance is lovely." The Hebrew wordfor *voice* signifies any sound such as birds or brutes make. Their *chattering* is like lovely songs in the ear of God, their *penny* is a sweet offering. Parents, who have but some drops of that love and tender affection that is in God to his people—they accept of a very little service from their weak children; and will not God? In time of strength God looks for much—but in the time of weakness God will bear much, and overlook much, and accept of a little, yes, of a very little. [It is very observable that the eagle and the lion, those brave creatures, were not offered in sacrifice unto God—but the poor lamb and dove: to note that your brave, high, and lofty spirits God regards not; but your poor, meek, lowly spirits God accepts.]

One, writing of the tree of knowledge, says that "it bears many leaves—but little fruit." Though weak saints have a great many leaves, and but little fruit, little grace—yet that little the Lord will kindly accept of.

Artaxerxes, the Persian monarch, was famous for accepting of a little water from the hand of a loving subject; God makes himself famous, and his grace glorious, by his kind acceptance of the weakest endeavors of his people, etc.

The *seventh* support is this:

Support 7. The least measure of grace is as true and as good and sure a pledge of greater measures of grace that the soul shall have here, and of glory that the soul shall have hereafter

—as the greatest measure of grace

"He who has begun a good work, he will perfect it to the day of Christ," Philip. 1:6. Christ is called not only the *author*—but also the *finisher* of our faith, Heb. 12:2. In Mal. 4:2, "But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture." And so in Job 17:9, "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he who has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Zech. 12:8, "On that day the Lord will defend the people of Jerusalem; the weakest among them will be as mighty as King David! And the royal descendants will be like God, like the angel of the Lord who goes before them!" So in Hosea 14:5-7, "I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven. It will blossom like the lily; it will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in Lebanon. Its branches will spread out like those of beautiful olive trees, as fragrant as the cedar forests of Lebanon. My people will return again to the safety of their land. They will flourish like grain and blossom like grapevines. They will be as fragrant as the wines of Lebanon."

The tree in Alcinous's garden always had blossoms, buds, and ripe fruits, one under another. Such a tree, will God make every Christian to be. "The righteous," though ever so weak, "shall flourish like the palm tree," Psalm 92:12-14. Now the palm tree never loses his leaf or fruit, says Pliny.

An old man being asked if he grew in goodness, answered, Yes, doubtless I believe I do, because the Lord has said, "They shall still bring forth fruit *in old age*, they shall be fat, and flourishing."

In the island of St. Thomas, on the back side of Africa, in the midst of it is a hill, and over that a continual cloud, wherewith the whole island is watered. Such a cloud is Christ to weak saints. Though our hearts naturally are like the isle of Patmos, which is so barren of any good as that nothing will grow but on earth that is brought from other places—yet Christ will make them like "a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not," Isaiah 58:11.

The *eighth* support is this:

Support 8. That the least good that is done by the weakest saint shall not be despised by Christ—but highly esteemed and rewarded.

The Lord comes—with a great reward for a little work. As you may see in Mat. 19:27, "Behold we have forsaken *all*, and followed you, and what shall we have?" A great *all!* a great catch indeed, as I have formerly showed you; they left a few old boats and torn nets and poor household stuff—yet Christ reacts very sweetly and lovingly to them, and tells them in verse 28, that they would "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Christ tells them they shall sit as kings. They are here but obscure kings—but kings elected; but in that day they shall be kings crowned, kings glorified, kings acknowledged. Then they shall as far outshine the glory of the sun, as the sun now outshines a twinkling star. In that day they shall be "higher than the kings of the earth," Psalm 89:27.

So in Mat. 10:42, "And whoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, truly I say unto you, he shall never lose his reward, for a cup of cold water." Water, the common element, and cold water, which cost them not so much as fire to warm it; for that, there is a torrent and a very sea of all pleasures provided for you to all eternity. God esteems men's deeds by their minds —and not their minds by their deeds. The least and cheapest courtesy that can be showed shall be rewarded. There is an emphasis in that deep asseveration, "Truly I say unto you, he shall never lose his reward." God is not likely to break his promise; neither will he forget the least good done by the least saint. The butler may forget Joseph, and Joseph may forget his father's house—but the Lord will not forget the least good done by the weakest saint.

Agrippa, having suffered imprisonment for wishing Caligula emperor, the first thing Caligula did when he came to the empire, was to promote Agrippa to a kingdom. He gave him also a chain of gold as heavy as the chain of iron, which was upon him in prison. And will not Christ richly reward for all our well-wishes toward him, and for all our gracious actings for him? Surely he will. He has a king's heart, as well as a king's purse.

The Duke of Burgundy, being a wise and loving man, did bountifully reward a poor gardener, for offering of him a root, being the best present the poor man had; and will not our God, whose very nature is goodness, kindness, and sweetness, etc., do much more? Surely he will reward the least good done by the weakest saint. Therefore be not discouraged, weak Christians, though you should meet with hard measure from the world, though they should reward your weak services with reproaches, etc., for the Lord will reward you; he "will not despise the day of small things," Heb. 6:10. What though, O precious soul, your language is clipped and broken? what though you can but chatter like a crane? what though you can not talk as fluently and eloquently for Christ as others? what though your hand is so weak, that you can not do so much for Christ as others? nor do so well for Christ as others? Yet the Lord, seeing your heart sincere, will reward you. **You shall have an everlasting rest for a little labor, and a great reward for a little work!**

The *ninth* support is this:

Support 9. ***That as your graces are weaker than others—so your temptations shall be fewer—and your afflictions lighter than others.***

God in much wisdom and love will suit your burdens to your backs; he will suit all your temptations and afflictions to your strength. Your burdens shall not be great—if your strength be but little; as you may see, 1 Cor. 10:13, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." The Lord, O weak Christian! will suit your burden to your back—and his strokes to your strength. This is most evident in Scripture, that *the strongest in grace have always been most tempted, afflicted, and distressed.* [When Latimer was at the stake, ready to be burned, he breathed out those sweet words, *God is faithful!*]

If **Abraham** excels others in *faith*, God will test the strength of Abraham's faith to the uttermost, and put him to that test, which he never put man to before, Gen. 20. If **Moses** excels all others in *meekness*, the

Lord will test the strength of that grace, and Moses shall have to do with as proud and as murmuring a generation, as ever man had to do with. If **Job** excels all others in *patience*, he shall be exercised with such strange and unheard of afflictions, as shall try not only the truth—but also the strength of his patience to the uttermost. If **Paul** has more glorious *revelations* than the rest of the apostles, Paul shall be more buffeted and exercised with temptations, than the rest of the apostles. [Num. 12:3; Exod. 16:7-8; Num. 14:27, 36, and 16:11; Exod. 15:24; James 5:11; read the 1st, 6th, and 7th chapters of Job; 2 Cor. 12:1-11.]

And thus you see it clear by all these instances, that the **best and choicest saints have always met with the worst and greatest temptations and afflictions.** So when the disciples were in the lowest form, when they were weak in grace, the Lord Jesus exercises them but with light afflictions; but when they had a greater measure of the Spirit poured upon them, then their troubles were increased and multiplied, and their former troubles, in comparison of the latter, were but as scratches of pins, compared to stabs at the heart, Acts 2:1-21. When the Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon them—then they were greatly afflicted, opposed, and persecuted; when they had a greater measure of the Spirit, to enable them to bear the hatred, frowns, strokes, and blows of the enraged world—then all of them had the honor to suffer a violent death for Christ, as histories do evidence.

That is a very remarkable scripture, Luke 24:49, "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven." The Lord Jesus would not have them go from Jerusalem, until they were endued with power from on high—the gifts and graces of the Spirit that are promised in Isaiah 44:3; Joel 2:28; John 14:16, and 15:26. Says Christ, "Stay here in the city, until you are completely armed and fitted for all encounters, until you be endued with power;" or, as the Greek carries it, "until you are clothed." They were as naked persons; they had but a little of the Spirit, so that they were not complete; they were not *clothed* with the Spirit, until after the ascension of Christ. Now says Christ, "Wait until such time as you are clothed with the Spirit." The Lord Jesus knew well enough that they would meet with bitter opposition, terrible afflictions, and dreadful

persecution for his and the gospel's sake; therefore "stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven," that so nothing may daunt you, nor sink you.

The *tenth* support is this:

Support* 10. *That your persons stand not before God in your own righteousness—but in the perfect, spotless, and matchless righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

Weak hearts are apt to sit down troubled and discouraged, when they look upon that body of sin that is in them, and those imperfections which attend their chief services; they are ready to say, We shall one day perish by the strength of our lusts, or by the defects of our services. Oh but weak souls should remember this, to strengthen them against all discouragements, that their persons stand before God, clothed with the righteousness of their Savior, and so God owns them and looks upon them as persons wrapped up in his royal robe. Hence it is that he is called, Jer. 23:6, "JEHOVAH TSIDKENU, the Lord our righteousness." And so in 1 Cor. 1:30, "He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." [The costly cloak of Alcisthenes, which Dionysius sold to the Carthaginians for a large sum, is a mean and beggarly rag, compared to that embroidered mantle which Christ puts upon the weakest saints.]

Though weak saints have nothing of their own—yet in Christ they have all, for in him is all fullness, Col. 1:19, both repletive and diffusive; both of abundance and of redundance; both of plenty and of bounty. Christ is made to weak saints **wisdom**, by his prophetical office; and he is made to weak saints **righteousness** and sanctification, by his priestly office; and he is made to weak saints **redemption**, by his kingly office. So in Col. 2:10, "And you are complete in him—who is the head of all principality and power."

Varro reports of two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions which were among the philosophers, as to what constituted *happiness*; but they were wrong in them all, one judging his happiness lay in this and another in that. They caught at the shadow of happiness—but could not come at

the tree of life, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is weak saints' complete happiness. Rev. 14:5, "They were without fault before the throne of God." Though men may accuse you, judge and condemn you—yet know for your support, that you are acquitted before the throne of God. However you may stand in the eyes of men, as full of nothing but faults, people made up of nothing but sin—yet are you clear in the eyes of God. So in Cant. 4:7, "You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you." There is no spot in God's account. God looks upon weak saints in the Son of his love, and sees them all lovely; they are as the tree of Paradise, Gen. 3:6, "fair to his eye, and pleasant to his taste." Or as Absalom, in whom there was no blemish from head to foot. Ah, poor souls! you are apt to look upon your spots and blots, and to cry out with the leper not only "Unclean, unclean!" but "Undone, undone!" Well, forever remember this, that your persons stand before God in the righteousness of Christ; upon which account you always appear, before the throne of God, without fault; you are all fair, and there is no spot in you.

The *eleventh* support is this:

Support 11. ***Your sins shall never provoke Christ, nor prevail with Christ so far, as to give you a bill of divorce.*** [Read Jer. 3. Out of the most poisonful drugs God distills his glory and our salvation. Galen speaks of a maid, called Nupella, who was nourished by poison. God can and will turn the very sins of his people, which are the worst poison in all the world, into his children's advantage.]

Oh there is much in it, if the Lord would set it home upon your hearts. Your sins shall never prevail so far with Christ, nor ever so far provoke him, as to work him to give you a bill of divorce. Your sins may provoke Christ to frown upon you, they may provoke Christ to chide with you, they may provoke him greatly to correct you—but they shall never provoke Christ to give you a bill of divorce: Psalm 89:30-34, "But if his sons forsake my law and fail to walk in my ways, if they do not obey my decrees and fail to keep my commands, then I will punish their sin with the rod, and their disobedience with beating. But I will never stop loving him, nor let my promise to him fail. No, I will not break my covenant; I will not take back a single word I said."

That is a great support to a weak saint—that his sin shall never separate him from God nor Christ. You are many times afraid that this deadness, this dullness, this earthliness, and these wandering thoughts, etc., which attend you, will provoke the Lord Jesus to sue a bill of divorce against you. But remember this, your sins shall never so far prevail with Christ, as to work him to give you a bill of divorce.

Mark—There is nothing can provoke Christ to give you a bill of divorce but sin. Now sin is slain; *consequently*, I shall open this to you in three things:

[1.] *First,* ***Sin is slain JUDICIALLY;*** for it is condemned both by Christ and his people, and so it is dead according to law; which is and may be a singular comfort and support to weak saints, that their greatest and worst enemy, sin, is condemned to die, and shall not forever vex and torment their precious souls. It is dead judicially, it is under the sentence of condemnation: 1 Cor. 15:55, 56, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin," etc. The apostle here triumphs over it as a thief condemned to death. Sin is sentenced now; though not fully put to death, it is dead judicially. As when the sentence of death is passed upon a malefactor, you say he is a dead man; why? he is judicially dead; so is sin, sin is judicially dead. When a man who has robbed and wounded another is taken, and sentenced judicially—we say he is a dead man. Sin, O weak soul! is sentenced and judicially slain; and therefore that can never work the Lord Jesus to give you a bill of divorce. The thoughts of which should much refresh you and support you.

[2.] *Secondly,* ***Sin is dead or slain CIVILLY****, as well as judicially*. It is civilly dead, because the power of it is much abated, and its dominion and tyranny overpowered. As when a king or tyrant is whipped and stripped of his power to domineer, reign, and play the tyrant, he is civilly dead, even while he lives; so is sin in this sense dead even while it lives, Romans 6:14. [It is with sin in the saints as it was with those beasts, Dan. 7:12, which had their dominions taken away, though their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.]

Adam died civilly the same day that he sinned. The creatures that before lovingly obeyed him, as soon as he renounced obedience to his God, they

renounced all obedience to him or his sovereignty, so that he civilly died the very same day that he sinned.

That is a sweet word that you have, Romans 6:11, "Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin." Therefore Christ will never divorce you for sin. Oh what a support may this be to a weak saint, that sin, which he fears above all other things in the world, is slain judicially and civilly. The Lord has whipped and stripped it of all its ruling, reigning, domineering, tyrannizing power. Oh, therefore, Christians, look upon sin as dead, that is, as not to be obeyed, as not to be acknowledged, no more than a tyrant who is stripped of all his tyrannizing power. People who are wise, and understand their liberty, look not upon such a one as fit to be obeyed and served—but as one fit to be renounced and destroyed. You must so look upon your sins, and deal accordingly with them. [Where sin sits in the soul, as a king sits upon his throne, and commands the heart, as a king commands his subjects, there is reign of sin; but grace frees the soul from this.]

[3.] *Thirdly,* ***Sin is slain NATURALLY,*** as well as civilly. Christ has given it its death's wound by his death and resurrection. He has given sin such a wound, that it cannot be long-lived, though it may linger a while in a saint. As a tree that is cut at the root with a sore gash or two, must die within a year, perhaps a month, nay, it may be within a week; though for a time it may flourish, it may have leaves and fruit—yet it secretly dies, and will very shortly wither and perish. The Lord Jesus has given sin such a mortal wound, by his death and Spirit, and by the communication of his favor and grace to the soul, that sin shall never more recover its strength —but die a lingering death in the souls of the saints. Christ did not die all at once upon the cross—but little by little; to show us, that his death should extend to the slaying of sin gradually in the souls of the saints.

When our enemy has a mortal wound, we say he is a dead man, his wound is mortal; so when Jesus Christ has given sin such a deadly wound, such a mortal blow, that it shall never more recover its strength and power—we may truly say, it is dead, it is slain. Therefore cheer up, O weak souls, for certainly sin which is thus slain can never provoke Jesus Christ to give you a bill of divorce. Ah! that all weak Christians would, like the bee, abide upon these sweet flowers, and gather honey out of them,

etc.

To proceed. The *twelfth* support is this:

Support 12. Christ and you are sharers. Know this, weak saints, for your support and comfort,

1. That Christ shares with you—and you share with Christ. I shall open this sweet truth to you a little.

[1.] *Christ shares with you in your NATURES.*

In Heb. 2:16, "For truly he took not on him the nature of angels—but he took on him the seed of Abraham." And by this he has advanced fallen man above the very angels. This is the great mystery spoken of, 1 Tim. 3:16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness—God was manifested in the flesh," etc.

[2.] *The Lord Jesus shares with you in your AFFLICTIONS.*

In Isaiah 63:9, "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and he personally rescued them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them. He lifted them up and carried them through all the years." It is between Christ and his church as between two lute strings, no sooner one is struck but the other trembles.

The ancients use to say commonly, that Alexander and Hephastion had but one soul in two distinct bodies, because their joy and sorrow, glory and disgrace, was mutual to them both. It is so between Christ and his saints. *Their names, which are written in red letters of blood in the church's calendar, are written in golden letters in Christ's register in the book of life,* said Prudentius. *In my lifetime,* said a gracious soul, *I have been assaulted with temptations from Satan, and he has cast my sins into my teeth to drive me to despair; yet the Lord gave me strength to overcome all his temptations.*

[3.] *He shares with you in all SUFFERINGS and PERSECUTIONS.*

Acts 9:4-5, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" There is such a near

union between the Lord Jesus Christ and the weakest saints, that a man cannot strike a saint but he must strike through the very heart of Christ. Their sufferings are held his, Col. 1:24; and their afflictions are his afflictions, and their reproaches are his reproaches, Heb. 13:13; and their provocations are his provocations, Neh. 4:4-5; God is provoked more than Nehemiah. So Isaiah 8:18, compared with

Heb. 2:13. "Behold I, and the children whom the Lord has given me, are for signs and wonders in Israel." This the apostle applies to Christ, Heb. 2:13.

[4.] *The Lord Jesus Christ shares with you in all your TEMPTATIONS.* Heb. 2:17-18, and 4:15-16.

Christ was tempted, and he was afflicted as well as you, that he might be able so support you who are tempted. As a poor man who has been troubled with pain and grief, he will share with others who are troubled with pain or grief. Ah, friends! the Lord Jesus Christ has lost none of his affections by going to heaven; he is still full of compassion, though free from personal passion. When he was on earth, oh! how did he sympathize with his poor servants in all their temptations. "Satan," says Christ to Peter, "has desired to winnow you—but I have prayed for you who your faith fail not," Luke 22:32. Luther, in his preaching, addressed every man's temptation, and being once asked how he could do so? answered, *Because I have experienced manifold temptations and experiences myself*. Oh! the manifold temptations that the Lord Jesus has undergone, makes him sensible, as I may say, and willing to share with us in our temptations.

2. As Christ shares with weak saints, so ***weak saints share with Christ***. And this I shall show you briefly in a few particulars.

[1.] Weak saints share with Christ *in his DIVINE NATURE.*

2 Peter 1:4, "Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature." Not of the substance of the Godhead—for that is incommunicable; but by the divine nature we are to understand those divine qualities, called

elsewhere, "the image of God," "the life of God," that whereby we are made like to God in wisdom and holiness, wherein the image of God, after which man was at first created, consists, Eph. 4:24, Col. 3:10. [To be made partakers of the divine nature notes two things: (1.) fellowship with God in his holiness; (2.) a fellowship with God in his blessedness.]

Saints do partake of this divine nature, that is, of those divine qualities before spoken of—they resemble God, not only as a picture does a man, in outward lineaments—but as a child does his father, in countenance and disposition. And well may grace be called "the divine nature," for as God brings light out of darkness, comfort out of sorrow, riches out of poverty, and glory out of shame; so does grace bring day out of night, and sweet out of bitter, and plenty out of poverty, and glory out of shame. Grace turns pennies into gold, pebbles into pearls, sickness into health, weakness into strength, and needs into abundance. "Having nothing—and yet possessing all things," 2 Cor. 6:10, etc.

[2.] Weak saints share with Christ *in his SPIRIT and GRACE*.

In Psalm 45:7, Christ is "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows." They have the anointings of the Spirit, as well as he—though not so richly as he. They have their measure, though not that measure and proportion of the Spirit as the Lord Jesus has. So in John 1:16, "Of his fullness have all we received, grace for grace." There is in Christ not only a fullness of abundance—but also a fullness of redundance. There is an overflowing fullness in Christ, as a fountain overflows, and yet still remains full. "Grace for grace," or, "grace upon grace." Abundance of grace, and the increases of graces, one by another.

"Grace for grace," that is—as the paper from the press receives letter for letter; or as the wax from the seal receives print for print; or as the mirror from the image receives face for face—so does the weakest saint receive from Jesus Christ.

"Grace for grace," that is, for every grace that is in Christ, there is the same grace in us, in some measure. There is not the weakest saint who breathes—but has in him some *wisdom* that answers to the wisdom of Christ, and some *love* that answers to the love of Christ, and some

humility, meekness, and faith, that answers to the humility, meekness, and faith of the Lord Jesus—in truth and reality—though not in degree or quantity, etc.

[3.] Weak saints share with Christ, *in the manifestations and discoveries of his FATHER*.

The Lord Jesus, who lies in the bosom of the Father, has the clearest and the fullest manifestations of the Father that can be, and he comes and opens the love and heart of the Father, he unbosoms God to the weakest saints, as in John 15:15, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his Lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." So in John 17:6-8.

[4.] Weak saints share with Christ *in his honorable TITLES*.

In the title of **sons**, 1 John 3:1, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us—that we should be called the sons of God!" And in that of **heirs**, Romans 8:17. Yes, they are **priests**, and **prophets**, and **kings**, as well as he, as you may see by comparing Rev. 8:5-6, with 1 Peter 2:9, etc. [The wife shares with her husband in all his titles of honor; so does a Christian with his Christ.]

[5.] Weak saints share with Christ *in his CONQUESTS*.

In 1 Cor. 15:55-57, Romans 8:37, Christ has triumphed over sword, famine, death, and devils, etc., and so have they through him also. Over all these we are more than conquerors, we are over and above conquerors. Oh what a blessed thing is this! that weak saints should share with Christ in his conquests. The poor weak soldier shares with his general in all his noble and honorable conquests; so does a poor weak Christian share with his Christ in all his noble and honorable conquests. [See 1 Sam. 18:17-29; Col. 2:14, 15; Eph. 2:13-16; Heb. 2:14,15; Romans 8:37.]

[6.] Lastly, They share with Christ *in his HONOR and GLORY*.

And what would they have more? John 12:26, "If any man serves me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serves me—him will my Father honor." 1 Peter 5:1, Eph. 2:6, "And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Believers are already risen in Christ their head, and they do at this instant sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Christ, as a public person, does represent all believing souls, and they are set down in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. In Romans 8:17, "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." And in John 14:2-3, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also." So in Rev. 3:21, "To him who overcomes will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." [Christ is the believer's precursor, to prepare for them the best mansions, etc.]

Now, what would you have more, weak souls? Christ shares with you, and you share with Christ. You are apt to be discouraged because you do not share with Christ in such measures of grace, comfort, and holiness—as such and such strong saints do. Oh! but remember in how many weighty things Christ and you are sharers—and be dejected if you can! Ah, Christians! what though you do not share in the honors, profits, pleasures, and advantages of the world; yet this should be your joy and crown—that Christ and your souls are sharers in those things which are most eminent and excellent, most precious and glorious. The serious remembrance thereof, should bear up your heads, hopes, and hearts—above all the troubles, temptations, and afflictions that come upon you in this world, etc.

III. The third thing propounded, was *to* ***show you the DUTY of weak saints*****. Who** these weak saints are, you have heard; and what their **supports** and **comforts** are, you have heard; and now I shall show you their **duty** in the following particulars.

And the *first* duty that I shall press upon weak saints is this:

1. *To be thankful for that little grace they have.* [The laws of Persia, Macedonia, and Athens, condemned the ungrateful person to death; and certainly unthankfulness may well be styled the epitome of all vices.]

Will you be thankful, O Christian, for the least courtesy showed you by men? And will you not be thankful for that little measure of grace that is bestowed upon you by God? Do you remember, O weak Christian! that the least measure of grace is more worth than a thousand worlds? that it is more worth than heaven itself? Do you remember, O weak Christian! that the greatest number of men have not the least measure or grain of saving grace? Does free grace knock at *your* door, when it passes by the doors of thousands? And does it cast the pearl of great price into *your* bosom, when others are left to wallow in their blood forever? And will you not be thankful? Oh do but consider, weak souls, how notoriously wicked you would have been if the Lord had not bestowed a little grace upon you! You look, O soul, one way, and there you hear some a-cursing, and a-blaspheming God to his very face. Had not the Lord given you a little grace, ten thousand to one but you had been one in wickedness among these monsters of mankind. And you look another way, and there you see persons dicing, carding, gambling and drunkenning, etc.; why, had not the Lord vouchsafed to you some tastes and sips of grace, you might have been as vile as the vilest among them! Ah, weak saints! you do not think what an awakened conscience would give for a little of that little grace that the Lord has given you. Were all the world a lump of gold, and in their hand to give—they would give it for the least spark of grace, for the least drop of mercy.

I have read of a man who, being in a burning fever, professed that if he had all the world at his dispose, he would give it all for one draught of beer. So would an awakened conscience give for one grain of grace. *Oh!* says such a soul, *when I look up and see God frowning, when I look inward and feel conscience gnawing and accusing, when I look downward and see hell open to receive me, and when I look on my right and left hand, and see devils standing ready to accuse me, oh! had I a thousand worlds I would give them all for a little drop of that grace that such and such souls have, whom I have formerly slighted and despised.*

Oh! what would not a damned soul, that has been but an hour in hell, give for a drop of that grace that you have in your heart! Think seriously of this and be thankful. [One of the kings of England in his straits cried out, "A kingdom for a horse! a kingdom for a horse!" So do awakened consciences cry out, *A kingdom for a Christ! a kingdom for a Christ, or a little grace!*]

Well! remember one thing more, and that is this, namely, that there is no such way to get much grace, as to be thankful for a little grace. He who opens his mouth wide in praises, shall have his heart filled with graces. Ingratitude stops the ear of God, and shuts the hand of God, and turns away the heart of the God of grace, and therefore you had need be thankful for a little grace. Unthankfulness is the greatest injustice that may be; it is a withholding from the great landlord of heaven and earth his due, his debt.

Philip branded his soldier who asked for the land of one that had relieved him and kindly entertained him, with *the ungrateful guest*. Lycurgus among all his laws, made none against the ungrateful; because that was thought a thing so wicked, as not to be committed by man. O weak saints! give not God an occasion by your ingratitude to brand you, and to write upon your foreheads, *ungrateful children*. Had it not been for unthankfulness, Adam had been in paradise, the lapsed angels in heaven, and the Jews in their own land of promise. You know how to apply it, Isaiah 1:3-4.

But that I may in good earnest stir up your souls to thankfulness—will you take home with you these things, that perhaps have never or seldom been thought of by you?

[1.] *First*, Consider, ***that there is more need of praises than there is of prayers.***

Two things do with open mouth proclaim this truth. And the first is this, our mercies greatly outweigh our needs. This is true in temporals—but infinitely more in spirituals and eternals. You lack this and that temporal mercy, and what is your lack, O soul! of this and that single mercy—compared to the multitudes of temporal mercies that you do enjoy? And

as for spirituals, there is nothing more clear than this, that your spiritual mercies do infinitely outweigh your spiritual lacks. You lack this and that spiritual mercy—but what are those lacks to that God, that Christ, and all those spiritual blessings in heavenly places, with which you are blessed in Christ Jesus, Eph. 1:4. [God's favors and mercies seldom or never come single; there is a series or chain of them, and every former draws on a future.]

[2.] *Secondly*, Consider this, ***That all your wants and miseries are deserved and procured by your sins.*** Jer. 4:18, "Your way and your doings have procured these things unto you: this is your wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reaches unto your heart." And chapter 5:25, "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withheld good things from you." But all your mercies are unmerited and undeserved; they all flow in upon you from the free love and favor of God; and therefore there is more need of praises than of prayers. And oh! that the high praises of God were more in your mouths, upon this very account! And oh that, with David, you would summon all the faculties of your souls to praise the Lord, who has filled you, and followed you with the riches of mercy all your days, Psalm 149:2, and 103:1-5. [God and Christ are the sole fountain from whence all these streams of living waters flow.] But,

[3.] *Thirdly*, Consider this, ***Thankfulness is a surer and a better evidence of our sincerity, than praying or hearing, or such like services, are.***

Thanksgiving is a self-denying grace; it is an uncrowning ourselves and the creatures, to set the crown upon the head of our Creator; it is the making ourselves a footstool, that God may be lifted up upon his throne, and ride in a holy triumph over all; it is a grace that gives God the supremacy in all our hearts, thoughts, desires, words, and works. Self-love, flesh and blood, and many low and carnal considerations, may carry men to pray, and hear, and talk, etc. The whip may work a slave to work—but thankfulness is the free-will offering of a child. There is nothing that so clearly and so fully speaks out your sincerity, as thankfulness does. Therefore, weak saints, if you would have a substantial evidence of your sincerity—be thankful for a little grace. The little birds do not sip one

drop of water—but they look up, as if they meant to give thanks, to show us what we should do for every drop of grace, etc. [It is much to be feared that that man is Christless and graceless, who is earnest in craving mercies—but slow and dull in returning praises. It is a sign that the dumb devil has possessed such a man.]

The fourth and last consideration to set this home is this:

[4.] ***A thankful soul holds consort with the music of heaven.***

By thankfulness you are like the angels, who are still a-singing hallelujahs to him who sits upon the throne, and is blessed forever, Rev. 4:6-9, and 5:12-14. **In heaven there are no prayers—but all praises.** I am apt to think, that there cannot be a clearer nor a greater argument of a man's right to heaven, and ripeness for heaven, than this, being much in the work of heaven here on earth. There is no grace but love, nor no duty but thankfulness, which goes with us to heaven. [Epictetus wished he were a nightingale, to be ever singing. And what then should a saint wish?]

Ay—but weak saints may say, Sir! we judge that there is weight in what you say, to provoke us to thankfulness; but did we know that we had true grace, though it were ever so little, though it were but as the grain of mustard seed, we would be thankful. But this is our condition, we live between fears and hopes; one day hoping we shall go to heaven, and be happy forever; another day we are fearing that we shall go to hell, and miscarry forever; and thus we are up and down, backward and forward. Sometimes we believe we have grace, and at other times we doubt we have none; sometimes we have a little light, and suddenly our sun is clouded; one day we are ready to say with David, "The Lord is our portion," and the next day we are ready to complain with Jonah, that we are "cast out" from the presence of the Lord.

Methinks I hear a weak saint saying thus to me, Sir, I would gladly have an end put to this controversy which has been so long in my soul, namely, whether I have grace or not, and if you please, I will tell you what I find, and so humbly desire your judgment and opinion upon the whole.

Well, speak on, poor soul, and let me hear what you have found in your

own soul.

Why, sir, then thus:

[1.] I find, first, *a holy restlessness in my soul—until with old Simeon I have gotten Christ in my arms, yes, until I have gotten Christ in my heart*, Luke 2:25-33. I go from duty to duty, and from ordinance to ordinance, and yet I cannot rest, because "I cannot find him whom my soul loves," Cant. 5:10. I am like Noah's dove, which could not rest until he had gotten into the ark. Oh I cannot be quiet until I know that I am housed in Christ. My soul is like a ship in a storm, which is tossed hither and there, oh! where shall I find him? Oh! how shall I obtain him who is the chief of ten thousand? What Absalom said in another case, I can say in this, says the poor soul; in his banishment he could say, "What is all this to me, so long as I cannot see the king's face?" And truly the language of my soul is this, What is honor to me? and riches to me? and the favor of creatures to me? so long as I go mourning without my Christ, so long as I see not my saving interest in my Christ. [The child is restless until it be in the mother's arms.]

Well, have you anything else to say, O weak Christian?
Yes sir, I have one thing more to say.
What is that?
Why, it is this:

[2.] I can truly say, *that the poorest, the most distressed and afflicted man in the world, is not fuller of desires, nor stronger in his desires than I am*. The poor man desires bread to feed him, and the wounded man desires a plaster to heal him, and the sick man desires cordials to strengthen him, etc. But these are not fuller of desires after those things which are suitable to them, than I am of holy and heavenly desires. Oh that I had more of God! oh that I were filled with Christ! oh that I had his righteousness to cover me, his grace to pardon me, his power to support me, his wisdom to counsel me, his loving-kindness to refresh me, and his happiness to crown me, etc.

Well, is this all, O weak saint?
No, sir, I have one thing more to tell you.

What is that?
Why, that is this:

[3.] *Though I dare not say that Christ is mine—yet I can truly say, that Christ, his love, his works, his grace, his word, are the main objects of my contemplation and meditation.* Oh, I am always best, when I am most a-meditating and contemplating Christ, his love, his grace, etc. Psalm 139:17, "How precious are your thoughts unto me, O God; how great is the sum of them!"

Well, is this all, O weak saint?
No, sir, I have one thing more to say.
What is that?
Why, it is this:

[4.] I can truly say, *That the lack of Christ's love is a greater grief and burden to my soul, than the lack of any outward thing in this world.* I am in a lacking condition, as to temporals; I lack health, and strength, and trading, friends, and money, "which is the answer to all things," as Solomon speaks, Eccles. 10:19. And yet all these lacks do not so grieve me, and so afflict and trouble me, as the lack of Christ, as the lack of grace, as the lack of the discoveries of that favor, which is better than life, Psalm 63:3-4.

Well, is this all, O weak saint?
No, sir, there is one thing more.
What is that?
Why, that is this:

[5.] *That I would not willingly nor resolvedly sin against Christ, for a world.* It is true, I dare not say I have a saving interest in Christ—yet I dare say that I would not willingly and resolvedly sin against Christ for a world. [I will rather leap into a bonfire than willfully to commit wickedness, willfully to sin against God.] I can say, through grace, were I this moment to die, that my greatest fear is of sinning against Christ, and my greatest care is of pleasing Christ. I know there was a time, when my greatest care was to please myself and the creature, and my greatest fear was to displease myself and the creature. I can remember with sorrow

and sadness of heart, how often I have displeased Christ to please myself, and displeased Christ to please the creature. But now it is quite otherwise with me, my greatest care is to please Christ, and my greatest fear is of offending Christ. [*And I*, said Anselm, *had rather go to hell pure from sin than to heaven polluted with that filth*. The primitive Christians chose rather to be thrown to lions without, than left to lusts within.]

Well, is this all, O weak saint?
No, sir, I have one thing more.
What is that?
Why, that is this:

[6.] Though I dare not say that Christ is mine, and that I have an interest in him—yet *I can truly say, I dearly love the people of Christ, for the image of Christ that I see stamped upon them*. It is true, I dare not say Christ is mine, and heaven is mine; I cannot say with such and such, "The Lord is my portion;" yet I can say that I dearly love those who have the Lord for their portion. I can truly say, that the poorest and the most neglected, and the most despised saint in the world, is more precious in my eye, and more dear to my soul, than the greatest and the richest sinner in the world, Psalm 16:3. [It is reported of Bucer and Calvin, that they loved all those in whom they could espy anything of Christ. It is just so with these poor hearts who question their present condition.]

Well, is this all, O weak saint, that you have to say?
No, sir, I have one thing more.
What is that?
Why, that is this:

[7.] Though I dare not say that I have any interest in Christ, or that I love Christ—yet I dare say, *that my soul weeps and mourns in secret for the dishonor that is done to Christ, both by myself and by others also*. I can look the Lord in the face, were I now to die, and say, Lord! you who know all thoughts and hearts, you do know, that "my eyes run down with rivers of tears, because men keep not your law," Jer. 9:1-3; Psalm 119:136.

Well, is this all?
No, sir, I beg your patience to hear me in one thing more.

What is that, O weak Christian?
Why, that is this:

[8.] *That I prize people and things according to the spiritualness and holiness which is in them; and the more spiritual and holy any man or thing is, the more is that man and thing prized by my soul.*

I have often thought of that sweet word, Psalm 119:104, "Your word is very pure, therefore does your servant love it." [Much in the word is wrapped up in a little; it is more to be admired than to have Homer's Illiads comprised in a nutshell. The word is like the stone, *garamantides*, which has golden drops within itself, enriching of the gracious soul.] Other men love it because of the profit they get by it, or because of a name, or this, or that; but I love it for the purity, for the holiness, and the cleanness of it. No preaching, says the weak saint, nor any praying, nor any talking, nor any society is sweet to me—but that which is most spiritual, most holy. It is not an exercise tricked and trimmed up with wit, learning, and eloquence; it is not the hanging of counterfeit pearls on truth's ears, which I prize; but the more plainness, spiritualness, and holiness, I see in an exercise, the more is my heart raised to prize it and love it.

And therefore, says the weak saint, because Christ is perfectly and infinitely holy above all other, I prize Christ above all. Ordinances are sweet—but Christ is more sweet to my soul. Saints are precious—but Christ is far more precious. Heaven is glorious—but Christ is infinitely more glorious. The first thing that I would ask, if I might have it, says the weak saint, is Christ. And the next thing that I would ask, if I might have it, is more of Christ. And the last thing that I would ask, if I might have it, is that I might be satiated and filled with the fullness of Christ. Let the ambitious man take the honors of the world, so I may but have Christ. Let the voluptuous man swim in all the pleasures of the world, so I may have Christ. And let the covetous man tumble up and down in all the gold and silver of the world, so I may have Christ—and it shall be enough to my soul. [None but Christ, none but Christ, said the martyr.]

Well, is this all, O weak saint?
No, sir; I have one thing more to say,

What is that?
Why, it is this:

[9.] *I find the same conflict in my soul that Paul found in his soul, after he was converted nearly fourteen years*, after he was taken up into as clear and choice enjoyments of God, as any soul that ever I read of. The conflict that is mentioned, Romans 7:6, I find in my soul. The whole frame of my soul, understanding, will, and affections, are set against sin. I find that "I hate the evil that I do, and I find that the good which I would do—I do not; and the evil which I would not do—that do I. I find a law in my members, rebelling against the law of my mind, and leading of me captive into the law of sin," and this makes me often to cry out with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? Therefore I sometime hope, that those sins which are now my burden, shall never hereafter be my bane. [The best saints in this world are like the tribe of Manasseh, half on this side Jordan, in the land of the Amorites, and half on that side, in the Holy Land. And though to be kept from sin brings most comfort to a poor soul—yet for a poor soul to oppose sin, and God to pardon sin—that brings most glory to God, 2 Cor. 12:7-9.]

Well, and is this all, O weak saint?
No, sir; I have one thing more to say.
What is that?
Why that is this:

[10.] I can truly say, *when the Lord gives me any strength against sin, and any power to serve him, and walk close with him in his ways—it is a greater joy and comfort to my soul, than all the blessings of this life.* Though I have not yet seen, he has "set me as a seal upon his heart, as a seal upon his arm;" though I have not yet the clear assurance of his love; though his spirit has not yet set up such a light in my soul, whereby I might run and read my right and title to himself and heaven; yet when he does give me but a little light through a crevice, when he does but begin to cause his love to dawn upon me, when he gives me but a little strength against sin, and a little power to walk close with himself, etc.; oh, this does administer more abiding joy, and more sweet peace, and more solid comfort to my soul, than all the riches, honors, friends, and favors of this world. [A gracious soul is as careful that he does not endanger another by

a bad life, as he is careful to save his own life.]

Well, is this all, O weak saint?
No, sir; I have one thing more to say.
What is that?
Why, that is this:

[11.] *Though my interest in Christ be not clear to me—yet I can truly say I would not change my condition with the men of this world, for a thousand worlds*, Psalm 101:3; 139:21-22; 120:6. It is true, I cannot say that I have "the seal and witness of the Spirit," that many talk and boast of, though I fear but a few enjoy; yet I can truly say, that I would not change my estate with men merely civil, nor with the profane men of this world, for ten thousand worlds, etc.

Well, is this all, O soul!
No, sir; I have but one thing more, and then I am done.
Well, what is that?
Why, that is this.

[12.] *I find my soul carried forth to a secret resting, relying, leaning, staying, and hanging upon Christ for life and happiness*. Though I know not how it shall go with me—yet I have thrown myself into his arms; I lean upon him; there I will hang, and there I will rest and stay: "if I must perish, I will perish there," Job 13:15; 2 Kings 7:3-5; Esther 4:16.

And thus, sir, I have opened my state and condition to you; and now I do earnestly desire your judgment upon the whole.

Well, then, this I shall say, as "I must answer it in the day of my appearing before God," that had I as many souls as I have hairs on my head, or as there be stars in heaven, I could freely adventure the loss of them all, if these things do not undeniably speak out, not only the truth—but also the strength of grace, etc. Nay, let me tell you, that he who finds but any of these things really in his soul, though the Lord has not given him a clear and full manifestation of his love and favor, etc.—yet, while breath is in his body, he has eminent cause to bless God, and to walk thankfully and humbly before him.

The second duty is this,

2. *Live up to that little grace you have.*

You say, O weak Christian, you have but a little light, a little love, a little zeal, a little faith, etc. Well, grant it—but know that it is your duty to live up to those measures of grace you have. And this is the second head that I shall press upon you—live up and live out that grace you have. [*To speak well,* says Isiodore Pelusiota, *is to sound like a cymbal; but to live well, is to act like an angel,* etc.] And if ever there were a season to press this point home upon souls, this is the season in which we live. And considering that it is not a flood of words—but weight of argument, which convinces sincere people, I shall therefore propound these following things to their serious consideration.

[1.] *First*, Consider this, ***living up to your graces carries with it, the greatest evidence of the truth of grace.***

That man who lives not up to his grace, let him be strong or weak, lacks one of the best and strongest demonstrations that can be, to evidence the truth of his grace. If you would have a clear evidence that that little love, that little faith, that little zeal you have is true—then live up to that love, live up to that faith, live up to that zeal that you have, and this will evidence it beyond all contradiction, etc. [If Seneca said of his wise man, He is more in heaven than in earth; may not I say this is much more true of the godly? etc.]

[2.] *Secondly*, Consider this, ***God and your own souls will be very great losers, if you live not up to those measures of grace you have.***

God will lose many prayers and many praises; he will lose much honor, and glory, and service, which otherwise he might have; and you will lose much peace, much comfort, much rest, quietness, and content that otherwise your souls might enjoy, etc. [Of all losses, spiritual losses are the saddest and greatest; and re-gained with the greatest difficulty.]

[3.] *Thirdly*, Consider this, ***your not living up to that little light***

and grace you have, will open the mouths of graceless souls against your gracious God, and against his gracious ones, and against his gracious ways. [1 Peter 2:15, "For it is God's will that by doing good you should *silence* the ignorant talk of foolish men." The Greek word signifies to muzzle, to halter up, or button up their mouths, as we say. Oh! there is nothing which will so muzzle and button up the mouths of vain men—as Christians living up to that light and grace they have.]

You think, because of the weakness of your grace—you must be borne with in this, and that, and what not. But remember, it is your duty to live up to the light and grace you have; and nothing below this will effectually stop the mouths of graceless wretches from barking against the ways of God, the truths of God, and the people of God. Vain men will be often a-reasoning thus: though such and such men and women have not such great knowledge, such clear light, such strong love, and such burning zeal as David, Paul, and other worthies—yet they have so much light and knowledge as tells them that they should not live thus and thus as they do. Their light and knowledge tells them that they should be just and righteous in their dealings, and in all their ways and designs, etc. Though they have not such great measures of spiritual enjoyments as such and such—yet that little grace they have, should lead them by the hand to do things worthy of that Christ and the gospel they profess, etc.

Let me a little expostulate the point with you, weak saints; you know that you should not be stirred and heated by every straw that is in your way. Why, then, do you not in this, live up to your light? You know that you should not "be overcome of evil—but overcome evil with good," Romans 12:21. Why, then, do you not in this, live up to your light? You know that you should "do good to those who do hurt to you," Mat. 5:44-48. Why, then, do you not in this, live up to your light? You know that you should do your duties to others, though they neglect their duties to you. It is not the neglect of a husband's duty—which frees the wife from the discharge of hers; nor the neglect of a wife's duty—which frees the husband from the discharge of his. You know this, don't you? Yes! Why don't you then live up to your light? Why do you by your bad lives—open the mouths of others against God and his ways? You know that you should be exemplary

in your relations, in your callings, and in your conversations; you know that you should be examples of holiness, meekness, sweetness, patience, and contentedness—so why then, don't you live up to your knowledge in these things? You know that you should do to others as you would have others to do to you—so why then, in this, don't you live up to your knowledge? Ah! that you who are weak did not cause the mouths of wicked men to be opened against God, his truths and ways—by your living below that light and knowledge which God has given you! I beseech you, as you desire the honor of God, and as you would stop the mouths of vain men—live up to those measures of grace that the Lord has given you! No way to comfort like this, no way to the crown like this. He will not be long a babe in grace—who lives out that little grace he has.

[4.] Fourthly, ***Living up to your light, is the readiest and the only way to recover all that has been lost by your living below your light.***

By your living below your light, God, your own souls, and the gospel have lost much, yes, and others also have lost much light, comfort, strength, and quickness, etc., which they might have had, had you but lived up to that little grace you had. Now, there is no way on earth to recover these losses—but by living up to that grace which you have. Ah, Christians! it is not your running from sermon to sermon—not that I speak against frequent hearing of the word—nor your crying up this man and that man, or this doctrine and that, or this way or that, which will recover and fetch up the honor that God has lost by your living below your graces.

It is only your living up to your graces, which will make up all the breaches that have been made upon his honor and the gospel, and upon the comfort and peace of your own souls and others. Well, remember this, all the honor that God has from you in this life—is from your living up to that light, knowledge, love, fear, and faith that he has given you. There is nothing that will make up all losses but this; therefore I beg of you, upon the knees of my soul, that you would take this one thing home with you, and go into your closets, and lay your hands upon your hearts, and say—Well, the Lord has lost much, and my own soul has lost much, and others have lost much—by my living below that little grace I have; and therefore I will now make it my business, by assisting grace, to live up to those

measures of grace that I have received, more than yet I have done all my days. I will, by the strength of Christ, make it more my duty and my work to live out what God has given me, than ever yet I have done, that so the Lord and the gospel may, be no further losers, but gainers by me.

[5.] The *fifth* and last motive is this, ***the readiest and the surest way to get more grace—is to live up to that little grace you have.***

He who lives up to a little *light* shall have more light; he who lives up to a little *knowledge* shall have more knowledge; he who lives up to a little *faith* shall have more faith; and he who lives up to a little *love* shall have more love, etc. [Job 17:29; Cant. 6:10; Proverbs 4:18. There is a country in Africa where the people's industry has an abundant reward; for every bushel of seed they sow, they receive one hundred and fifty after.The application is easy.] There is no such way to attain to greater measures of grace as for a man to live up to that little grace he has. Truly, the main reason why many are such babes and shrubs in grace—is because they do not live up to their attainments. He who won't improve two talents, shall never have the honor to be trusted with five; but he who improves a little, shall be trusted with much: "The diligent hand makes rich," Proverbs 10:4. He who is active and agile, who works as well as wishes, who adds endeavors to his desires—will quickly be a *cedar* in grace.

Ah, Christians! you have a God who is great, a God who is good, a God who is gracious, and a God who is rich—who does not like to see his children to be always weaklings and striplings in grace. The very babe, by drawing the breasts, gets strength and nourishment. Oh you babes in grace, put out that little strength you have, be you still a-drawing at the breasts of Christ, at the breasts of the promises, and strength will come, nourishment will follow, etc. [Dionysius gave him his money back, after that he heard he employed a little well. And will God be worse than a heathen?]

The third duty that I would press upon weak saints is this:

3. *Be sure that you always reflect upon your graces, and whatever good is in you—with cautions.*

This is a weighty point, and does bespeak your most serious attention. There are six rules or cautions, which weak saints should always observe in their looking upon their graces.

And the *first* is this:

[1.] ***Look upon all your graces as gifts of grace—as favors given you from above—as gifts dropped out of heaven into your hearts—as flowers which are given you out of the garden of paradise.***

A man should never look upon his grace—but he should look upon it as a flower of paradise, as a gift which God has cast into his bosom from heaven. 1 Cor. 4:7, "Who makes you to differ from another? And what have you who you have not received?" etc. "Of your own," says David, "have we given you," 1 Chron. 29:14. You talk of light, of love, of fear, of faith, etc.—but what are all these but pearls of glory which are freely given to you, by the hand of grace? "Every good and perfect gift comes down from above." As all light flows from the sun, and all water from the sea—so all good flows from heaven. The greatest excellencies in us do as much depend upon God, as the light does upon the sun.

When you look upon your wisdom, you must say, Here is wisdom, ay—but it is from above; here is some weak love working towards Christ—but it is from above; here is joy, and comfort, and peace—but these are all the flowers of paradise; they never grew in nature's garden. When a soul looks thus upon all those costly diamonds with which his heart is decked—he keeps low, though his graces are high. Where this rule is neglected, the soul will be endangered of being swelled and puffed.

Mr Foxe used to say, that "as he got much good by his sins—so he also got much hurt by his graces." When you look upon the stream, remember the fountain; when you look upon the flower, remember the root; when you look upon the stars, remember the sun; and when you look upon your graces, remember the fountain of grace, else Satan will be too hard for you. Satan is so artful, so subtle and critical, that he can make your very graces to serve him against your graces; conquering joy by joy, sorrow by sorrow, humility by humility, fear by fear, and love by love—if you do not

look upon all your graces as streams flowing from the fountain above, and as fruits growing upon the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. Therefore, when one eye is fixed upon your graces—let the other be always fixed upon the God of grace.

[2.] Secondly, ***At that time when your eye is upon inherent grace and righteousness, let your heart be fixed upon Christ, and his imputed righteousness.*** [Let us say of Christ, as the heathen once said of his petty gods, *so long as he had Jupiter to friend, he regarded them not*. So, so long as we have our Jesus as our friend, we should not regard others, no, not our very graces, in comparison of Christ.]

Paul's eye was upon his grace: Romans 7:22, 25, "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. And with my mind I serve the law of God." And yet at that very same time, his heart was set upon Christ, and taken up with Christ; ver. 25, "I thank God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." So in Col. 2:2-3, you have one eye fixed upon grace, and at the same time the heart fixed upon Christ. "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." His eye is upon grace, his heart is upon Christ. So in Philip. 3:8, the apostle has his eye upon the excellent knowledge of Christ—but ver. 9, his heart is set upon the righteousness of Christ. "That I might be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law—but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Here you have his eye upon grace, and his heart upon Christ, in the very presence of his grace. This is your glory, Christians, in the presence and sight of all your graces—to see the free grace of Christ, and his infinite, spotless, matchless, and glorious righteousness—to be your surest, sweetest, highest, and choicest comfort and refuge.

Peter was not well skilled in this lesson, and that was the very reason that he fell foulest, when his confidence was highest. Grace is a ring of gold, and Christ is the diamond in that ring; and he who looks more upon the ring than the diamond which is in it—in the hour of temptation, he will certainly fall. When the wife's eye is upon her rings or jewels, then her heart must be set upon her husband. When grace is in my eye, Christ

must at that time be in my arms, yes, he must lie between my breasts: Cant. 1:13, "My beloved is as a bundle of myrrh, he shall lie all night between my breasts." Christ, and not grace, must lie nearest to a Christian's heart.

[3.] A *third* thing is this, ***When you look upon your grace, you must look upon it as a beautiful creature—which is begotten in the soul by Christ, and which is strengthened, maintained, nourished, and upheld in your souls—by nothing below the spiritual, internal, and glorious operations of Christ.*** [Gal. 2:20, Philip. 1:6. When God crowns us, he does but crown his own gifts in us.—Augustine.]

Though grace is a beautiful creature—yet grace is but a creature—and your souls must look upon it only as a creature. Grace is a heavenly offspring, it is the first-born of God, as I may say, and does most represent him to the life. Grace is a bud of glory; it is of the blood royal; it is nobly descended, James 1:17. So in Heb. 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginner and ender. In all other things and arts, the same man cannot begin and finish—but Christ does both. Philip. 1:5, Our graces thrive and are upheld in life and power, in beauty and glory—only by the internal operation of Christ in our souls. So in Col. 1:27, "Christ in you the hope of glory," So ver. 29, "Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working which works in me mightily."

So Philip. 4:13, "I can do all things, through Christ who strengthens me;" I can be high and low, poor and rich, honorable and base, something or nothing, etc., through Christ who strengthens me. [The word *all things*, though it be an universal, is not to be taken in the utmost extent—but according to the use of the like phrases in all languages, wherein the universal sign affixed, either to persons, or times, or places, or things—signifies a great number—but not all without exception, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together: Psalm 14:4, 8-9; John 14:26; 1 Cor. 10:23. So those words are to be understood in Philip. 4:13.]

So in Cant. 4:16, "Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may send forth a fragrant smell." We may puff and blow our hearts out, and yet no

savory smell will flow forth, if Christ does not blow.

So in Psalm 138:3, "In the day when I cried, you answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul." Your graces, Christians, are heavenly plants of God's own planting and watering; and certainly the heavenly farmer will never allow such *plants of renown* to wither, for lack of heavenly sap; he will strengthen, support, and nourish the work of his own hand. He will cause the desires of his people to bud, and their graces to blossom, and their souls to be like a watered garden—green and flourishing: Isaiah 58:11, compared with Isaiah 35:6-7.

[4.] Fourthly, ***When you look upon your graces, you must look upon them as a pledge of more glorious and unspeakable measures of grace and glory—which your souls shall be filled with at last.***

In Eph. 1:13-14, "Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory." That little light and knowledge you have, is a pledge to your soul, that you shall at last know, even as you are known. 1 Cor. 13:12, "For now we see through a glass darkly—but then face to face. Now I know in part—but then shall I know, even as I am known." Christians know but little of what they *should* know, they know but little of what they *might* know, they know but little of what *others* know, they know but little of what they *desire* to know, they know but little of what they *shall* know—when they shall come to know "even as they are known." And yet these weak and imperfect glimpses that they have of God and heaven here, are infallible pledges of that perfect knowledge and full prospect that they shall have of God and heaven hereafter.

So that that little spark of *joy* which you have, is a pledge of those everlasting joys which shall rest upon your head—when all sorrow and mourning shall fly away, Isaiah 35:10, etc. And those sips of *comfort* you have now, are a pledge of your swimming in those everlasting pleasures that are "at God's right hand," Psalm 16:11. The least measures of grace are a pledge of greater measures. God will not lose his pledge, though men often lose theirs. God will not despise "the day of small things;" he

will make those who bring forth but thirty fold, to bring forth sixty fold; and those who bring forth sixty fold, to bring forth a hundred fold, etc.

God, his Son and Spirit, are all **eminently and fully engaged to carry on the work of grace in his children's souls**. Therefore do not sit down and say, My *light* is but dim, and my *love* but weak, and my *joy* but a spark which will quickly go out, etc. But always remember, that those weak measures of grace which you have, are a sure evidence of greater measures which God will confer upon you in his own time and in his own ways.

[5.] Fifthly, ***When you look upon your graces, be sure that you look more at the quality of your graces, than at the quantity of your graces.***

You must rather bring your graces to the *touchstone*—to try their truth and reality; than to the *balance*—to weigh their measures. Many weak Christians are *weighing* their graces, when they should be *a-trying* the truth and reality of their graces—as if the *quantity* of grace were more considerable than the *essence* and *nature* of grace. And this is that which keeps many weak saints in a dark, doubting, questioning, and despairing condition; yes, this makes their lives a very hell. Weak saints, if you will not observe this rule, this caution, when you look upon your graces—you will go sighing and mourning to your graves. Ah! poor hearts, you should not be more cruel to your own souls than God is. When God comes to a judgment of your spiritual estates, he does not bring a pair of *scales* to weigh your graces—but a *touchstone* to try the truth and reality of your graces; and so should you deal by your own souls. If you deal otherwise, you are more cruel to your souls than God would have you. And if you are resolved that in this you will not imitate the Lord, then I dare prophesy that joy and peace shall be none of your guests, and he who should comfort you will "stand afar off," Lam. 1:16.

It is good to own and acknowledge a little grace—though it be mingled with very much corruptions; as that poor soul did, Mark 9:24, "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." He had but a little little faith, and this was mixed with abundance of unbelief, and yet notwithstanding he

acknowledges that little faith he had, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." His faith was so weak, that he accounts it little better than unbelief; yet, says he, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." The least measure of true faith will make you blessed here, and happy hereafter. [Grace is one substance. Every twinkling of light is light; every drop of water is water; every spark of fire is fire; every drop of honey is honey. So every drop of grace is grace; and if the least drop or spark of grace be not worth acknowledging, it is worth nothing.]

Much faith will give us a heaven here on earth. And *any* faith, if true, will give us heaven hereafter. So the church in Cant. 1. 5, "I am black—but lovely." She had nothing to say for her purity—yet she acknowledges her loveliness. "I am black—but lovely." Though she could not say she was fully pure—yet she could say she was lovely. As she was free to confess her blackness, so she was ingenuous to acknowledge her loveliness. "I am black—but lovely."

Ah, Christians! will you deal worse with your own souls, than you deal with your children? When you go to make a judgment of your child's affections, you look more to the *truth* of their affections, than you do to the *strength* of their affections; and will you be less sincere and favorable to your poor souls? If he deserves to be branded, who feasts his child and starves his wife; what do you deserve, who can acknowledge the least natural good that is in a child—and yet will acknowledge none of that spiritual and heavenly good that is in your souls?

[6] Sixthly, and lastly, ***When you look upon your graces, look that you do not renounce and reject your graces, seen in the light of the Spirit, as a weak and worthless evidence of your interest in Christ, and that happiness which comes by Christ.***

I know in these days many cry up revelations and visions—yes, the visions of their own hearts—and make slight of the graces of Christ in the hearts of his people. Yes, they look upon grace as a poor weak thing. Ah, Christians! take heed of this, else you will render null, in a very great measure, many precious scriptures, especially the Epistles of John—which were penned for the comfort and support of weak saints. [Grace, says one, is the foundation of all our felicity, and comprehends all

blessings, as manna is said to have done all good tastes. John's epistles are a rich treasury for Christian assurance.]

But that this may stick and work, be pleased to carry home with you these three things.

(1.) *First*, Other precious saints who are now triumphing in heaven, have pleaded their interest in God's love, and hopes of a better life—from graces inherent.

I will only point at those scriptures that speak out this truth: 1 John 3:14, 2:3-4; Job 23:10-12; and the whole 31st chapter of Job; Psalm 119:6; Isaiah 38:2-3; 2 Cor. 1:12. All these scriptures, with many others which might be produced, do with open mouth proclaim this truth. And surely **to deny the fruit growing upon the tree to be an evidence that the tree is alive—is to me as unreasonable as it is absurd.** Certainly, it is one thing to *judge* by our graces, and another thing to *trust* in our graces, to make a Savior of our graces. There is a great deal of difference between *declaring* and *deserving*; and if this be not granted, it will follow, that the apostle has sent us to a covenant of works, when he exhorts us to "use all diligence to make our calling and election sure," 2 Peter 1:5-10. [Christians may doubtless look to their graces as *evidences* of their part in Christ and salvation; and the clearer and stronger they are, the greater will be their comfort; but not as *causes* of their salvation.]

(2.) *Secondly*, Carry home this with you, If justification and sanctification are both benefits of the covenant of grace—then to evidence the one by the other, is no ways unlawful; nor it this a turning aside to a covenant of works:

But our justification and sanctification are both benefits and blessings of the covenant of grace. *Consequently* in Jer. 33:8, "I will pardon all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me," there is your justification; "and I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me," there is your sanctification. And therefore to evidence the one by the other, can be no ways unlawful, nor it this a turning aside to a covenant of works.

(3.) *Thirdly*, Carry home this with you, Whatever gift of God in man brings him within the compass of God's promise of eternal mercy—that gift must be an infallible evidence of salvation and happiness. But such are those gifts mentioned in those scriptures that prove the first head. Therefore they are infallible evidences of our salvation and eternal happiness.

I confess a man may have many great gifts, and yet none of them bring him within the compass of God's promise of eternal mercy. But I say, whatever gift of God in man brings him within the compass of God's promise of eternal mercy—that gift must be an infallible evidence of his happiness and blessedness. [Covet rather *graces* than *gifts*; as to pray more fervently, though less notionally or eloquently. Stammering Moses must pray—rather than well-spoken Aaron. The Corinthians came behind in no gift, 1 Cor. 1:7; yet were babes and carnal, chapter 3:2-3.]

For the further clearing of this, I will instance in a gift of *waiting*. Where this gift is, it brings a man within the compass of God's promise of eternal mercy. And had a man, as in a deserted state it often happens, nothing under heaven to show for his happiness—but only a waiting frame, this ought to bear him up from fainting and sinking. When the soul says, "My sun is set, my day is turned into night, my light into darkness, and my rejoicing into mourning, etc., oh, I have lost the *comforting* presence of God! I have lost the *quickening* presence of God! I have lost the *supporting* presence of God! I have lost the *encouraging* presence of God! etc., and when I shall recover these sad losses, I know not. All that I can say is this, that God keeps me in a waiting frame, weeping and knocking at the door of mercy." Now, I say, this waiting temper brings the soul within the compass of the promise of eternal mercy. And certainly such a soul shall not miscarry. Take three promises for this.

In Isaiah 40:31, "Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." The mercy is the waiting man's—but the waiting man must give God leave to time his mercy for him. So in Isaiah 30:18, "And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are

all those who wait for him." So in Isaiah 64:4, "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, besides you, what he has prepared for him who waits for him." So in Isaiah 49:23, "They shall not be ashamed, who wait for me."

Men are often ashamed—who wait upon other men. Men high and great often frustrate the expectation of waiting souls, and then they blush, and are ashamed and confounded that they have waited, and been deceived; but "they shall not be ashamed, who wait for me," says God; I will not deceive their expectation, and after all their waiting turn them off, and say, I have no mercy for you. [That is, they shall be advanced by me to great happiness and glory, to great dignity and felicity; for in the Hebrew dialect, adverbs of *denying* signify the contrary to the import of that verb whereunto they are joined, as might be showed by many scriptures.] Now, I say, where this waiting temper is, which is all that many a poor soul has to show for everlasting happiness and blessedness, that soul shall never miscarry. That God who maintains and upholds the soul in this heavenly waiting frame—in the appointed season will speak life and love, mercy and glory, to the waiting soul.

And so I have done with the third use, which was to stir you up to look upon your graces with cautions.

The fourth duty is:

4. ***To persuade weak saints not to turn aside from the ways of God, nor from the service of God, because of any hardships or difficulties that they meet with in his ways or service.***

There is a very great aptness in weak saints to take offence almost at everything, and to be discouraged by the least opposition, affliction, and temptation—and so to turn aside from the good old way. Now that no difficulties nor hardships may turn you out of the way that is called holy, consider seriously of these few things.

[1.] *First*, Consider this, ***the Lord will sweeten more and more his services to you.***

He will make his work to be more and more easy to your souls; he will suit your burden to your back, and your work to your hand. O weak soul! you shall find that his grace will be sufficient to hold you up and carry you on, notwithstanding any difficulties or discouragements that are in the way. He will shed abroad that love that shall constrain your soul, both to keep close to his service, and to delight in his service, 2 Cor. 12:9; ver. 14. He will make all his services to be easy to you; he will give to you that assisting grace which shall keep up your head and heart from fainting and sinking under discouragements, as you may see in Ezek. 36:25-28, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them." So in Psalm 63:8, "My soul follows hard after you," (ay—but how comes this to pass?): "Your right hand upholds me!" I feel your hand under me, drawing of my soul off after you. Oh! were not your gracious hand under me, I would never follow hard after you.

The Lord will put under his everlasting arms, O weak Christian! and therefore though your feet be apt to slide—yet his everlasting arms shall bear you up. Therefore be not discouraged, do not turn aside from those paths that drop marrow and fatness, though there be a lion in the way. [The philosopher told his friends when they came into his little poor cottage, *The gods are here with me*. Surely God, and Christ, and the Spirit are, and will be, with weak saints, to aid and assist them in every gracious work.]

[2.] *Secondly*, Consider this, O weak saint! *that* ***there is less danger and hardship in the ways of Christ, than there is in the ways of sin, Satan, or the world.***

That soul does but leap out of the frying-pan into the fire, that thinks to mend himself by turning out of the way that is called holy. Oh! the horrid drudgery that is in the ways of sin, Satan, or the world. Your worst day in Christ's service—is better than your best days, if I may so speak, in sin or Satan's service, Proverbs 11:18-19, and 21:21. Satan will pay the sinner at last with the loss of God, Christ, heaven, and his soul forever. "But in the way of righteousness is life, joy, peace, honor, and in the pathway thereof there is no death," Proverbs 12:28. "His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace," Proverbs 3:17.

[3.] *Thirdly*, Remember, O weak saint! *that* ***all those hardships that you meet with—do only reach the outward man.***

They only reach the ignoble, the baser part of man; they meddle not, they touch not, the noble part. "With my mind I serve the law of God, though with my flesh the law of sin," Romans 7:22. And verse 25, "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man." And indeed many of the heathen have encouraged themselves in this very consideration, against the troubles and dangers of this life. All the arrows which are shot at a Christian stick in his shield, they never reach his conscience, his soul. The raging waves beat sorely against Noah's ark—but they touched not him. The soul is of too noble a nature to be touched by troubles. Jacob's hard service under Laban, and his being nipped by the frost in winter, and scorched by the sun in summer, did only reach his outward man; his soul had high communion, and sweet fellowship with God, under all his hardships, Gen. 31:40. Ah, Christian! bear up bravely, for whatever hardships you meet with in the ways of God, shall only reach your outward man; and under all these hardships you may have as high and sweet communion with God, as if you had never known what hardships meant, Hosea 2:14.

[4.] *Fourthly, Tell me, O weak saints!* ***have not you formerly enjoyed such sweet refreshings while you have been in the very service of God, as has outweighed all the troubles and hardships that your souls have met with?*** I know you have, and you know that you have often found that scripture made good upon your hearts, Psalm 19:11, "Moreover, by them is your servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward." Mark, he does not say, "*for* keeping of them there is great reward," though that is a truth; but, "*in* keeping of them there is great reward. While the soul is at work, God throws in the reward. Do not you remember, O weak Christians! when you have been in the service and way of God, how he has cast in joy at one time, and peace at another? etc. Oh! the smiles, the kisses, the sweet discoveries that your souls have met with, while you have been in his ways. Ah, poor souls! do not you know that one hour's being in the bosom of Christ will make you forget all your hardships? Heaven at last will make amends for all; and the more hardships you find in the ways of God, the more sweet will heaven be to you when you come there.

[Austin says, If a man should serve the Lord a thousand years, it would not deserve an hour of the reward in heaven, much less an eternity, etc.] Oh, how sweet is a harbor after a long storm, and a sunshine day after a dark and tempestuous night, and a warm spring after a sharp winter! The miseries and difficulties that a man meets with in this world, will exceedingly sweeten the glory of that other world.

[5.] *Lastly*, **consider, *What hardships and difficulties the men of this world run through, to get the world, and undo their own souls.***

They rise early, go to bed late; they go from one end of the world to another, and venture through all manner of dangers, deaths, and miseries —to gain those things which are vain, uncertain, vexing, and dangerous to their souls, Psalm 127:2, Mat. 16:16. And will not you, as "a good soldier of Christ," 2 Tim. 2:3-4, endure a little hardship for the honor of your Captain, and your own internal and eternal good? You are listed under Christ's colors, and therefore you must arm yourself against all difficulties and discouragements. The number of difficulties makes the Christian's conquest the more illustrious. A gracious man should be made up all of fire, overcoming and consuming all oppositions, as fire does the stubble. All difficulties should be but whetstones to his fortitude, as Chrysostom said of Peter.

The fifth duty is this:

5. *You who are weak saints should observe how Christ keeps your wills and affections.*

That man is kept indeed, whose will and affection is kept close to Christ; and that man is lost with a witness, whose will and affections are won away from Christ. Weak saints are more apt to observe their own actions than their wills and affections, and this proves a snare unto them; therefore observe your affections, how they are kept; for if they are kept close to Christ, if they are kept faithful to Christ, though your foot may slide from Christ, all is well. The apostle, Romans 7:17, *seq*., observed, that his will and affections were kept close to Christ even then, when he

was tyrannically captivated and carried by the prevalency of sin from Christ: "With my mind I serve the law of God," says he, "and what I do I allow not; therefore it is no more I that does it—but sin that dwells in me." My will stands close to Christ, and my affections are faithful to Christ, though by the prevalency of corruption I am now and then carried captive from Christ. It is one thing to be taken up by an enemy, and another thing for a man to lay down his weapons at his enemy's feet. I am, says the apostle, a forced man, "I do what I hate;" I do what I never intended. The heart may be sound, when more external and inferior parts are not. The heart of a man may be sound God-ward and Christ-ward and holiness-ward, when yet there may be many defects and weaknesses in his conversation.

Now, a weak Christian should be very studious to observe how his heart stands God-wards; for the man is as his heart is; if that be right with Christ, then all is well; therefore, says Solomon, Proverbs 4:23, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The Hebrew runs more fully thus: "Before all," or, "Above all keepings, keep your heart; for out of it is the goings forth of lives." The heart is the spring and fountain of all natural and spiritual actions, it is the *primum mobile* —the great wheel which sets all other wheels a-going; it is the great monarch in the isle of man; therefore keep it with all custody and caution, or else bid farewell to all true joy, peace, and comfort. When the heart stands right towards Christ, Christ will pardon much, and pass by much. [The heart is the presence-chamber of the king of heaven.]

If the ravished virgin in the time of the law cried out, she was guiltless; so when a poor soul, ravished by the power of corruption, and strength of Satan's temptations, cries out, "Lord, I would not, for all the world, sin against you, I would not distrust you, I would not be impatient under your afflicting hand, I would not be proud under your merciful hand; but, Lord, these sons of Zeruiah, 2 Sam. 3:39, these corruptions, are too hard for me; they commit a rape upon me; they ravish me of my Jesus, and of my joy, and of my peace; Lord, help me, Lord deliver me!" Now these weaknesses shall not be charged upon the soul. The ravished virgin under the law, if she cried out, was guiltless; and certainly God is not, nor will not be, less merciful and gracious to his people under the gospel, who are

still a-crying out against their sins and Satan's assaults. Surely those sins shall never be a Christian's bane—which are now his greatest burden. It is not falling into the water—but lying in the water, that drowns. It is not falling into sin—but lying in sin, that damns. If sin and your heart be two, Christ and your heart are one. If your heart is Christward, you are so happy that nothing can make you miserable.

6. *Sixthly,* ***Take heed of making sense and feeling a judge of your condition.*** Though there is nothing more dangerous—yet there is nothing more ordinary, than for weak saints to make their sense and feeling the judge of their condition. Ah, poor souls! this is dishonorable to God, and very disadvantageous to yourselves. Sense is sometimes opposite to reason—but always to faith; therefore do as those worthies did, 2 Cor. 5:8, 9, "We walk by faith—and not by sight." [Sense and reason in spiritual things, says Luther, is *noxia bestia*—a harmful beast, that will destroy and pull down what faith builds up.]

For a man to argue thus: Surely God is not my God, for I am not enlightened, I am not quickened, I am not melted, I am not raised, I am not enlarged as formerly. Oh! I have not those sweet answers and returns of prayer that once I had! Oh! I cannot find the Lord's quickening presence, nor his enlivening presence, nor his humbling presence, nor his encouraging presence, as once I have; therefore surely my condition is not good. Oh! I am more backward to good than formerly, and more prone to evil than formerly, therefore I am afraid that God is not my God, and that the work of grace is not thorough upon me. Oh! God does not look upon me as in the days of old, nor speak to me as in the days of old, nor behave towards me as in the days of old, and therefore I am afraid that all is naught.

Truly, if you will make sense and feeling the judge of your estate and condition, you will never have peace nor comfort all your days. Your estate, O Christian, may be very good, when sense and feeling says it is very bad. That child cannot but be perplexed, who thinks his father does not love him, because he does not always feel him smoothing and stroking of him. Christians, you must remember that it is one thing for God to love you—and another thing for God to tell you that he loves you. Your happiness lies in the first—your comfort in the second. God has

stopped his ear against the prayers of many a precious soul whom he has dearly loved. [Psalm 80:4; Lam. 3:34; Psalm 119:25, 37, 40, 88, 107, 149, 154, 156, 159; 42:5; Cant. 3:1-3; Isaiah 54:7-8.]

The best of men have at times lost that quickening, ravishing, and comforting presence of God, which once they have enjoyed. And truly, he who makes sense and carnal reason a judge of his condition, shall be happy and miserable, blessed and cursed, saved and lost, many times in a day, yes, in an hour! The counsel that I would give to such a soul that is apt to set up reason in the room of faith is this, Whatever your estate and condition be, never make sense and feeling the judge of it—but only the word of God. Did ever God appoint carnal reason, sense, and feeling, to be a judge of your spiritual estate? Surely not. And why, then, will you subject your soul to their judgments? God will judge you at last by his word: John 12:48, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you in the last day."

Carnal reason is an enemy to faith; it is still a-crossing and contradicting of faith; it fills the mind full of cavils and prejudices, full of pleas and arguments, to keep Christ and the soul asunder, and the soul and the promises asunder, and the soul and peace and comfort asunder. It will never be well with you so long as you are swayed by carnal reason, and rely more upon your five senses than the four evangelists. Remember Job was as famous for his confidence as for his patience: "Though he slays me —yet will I trust in him," Job 13:15. As the body lives by breathing, so the soul lives by believing, etc.

IV. *The duties of strong saints to the weak.*

We come now to the last thing propounded, and that is, *the duties of strong saints to those who are weak*. I intend at this time to finish this point, and therefore shall not speak everything that might be spoken, being not of their minds, who think a man never speaks enough, who speaks not *all* that may be spoken to an argument. I shall, as near as I can, instance in those duties which are most weighty and worthy. And surely those souls who are serious and conscientious in the discharge of these, cannot, nor will not, be negligent in the discharge of the rest. Now

there are eleven duties that strong saints are to perform to those who are weak.

And the *first* is this.

[1.] *Those who are strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak.*

Romans 15:1, "We then who are strong," says the apostle, "ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." The word that is rendered to *bear* signifies to bear as pillars do bear the weight and burden of the house; to bear as porters do bear their burdens, or as the bones do bear the flesh, or rather as parents bear their babes in their arms.

"*Bear the infirmities*." Mark, he does not say the enormities—but the infirmities; he does not say the wickedness—but the weakness. The strong ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak. The Lord bears with the weakness of his children. Peter is weak, and sinful through weakness; he will not let the Lord Jesus wash his feet, John 13; but the Lord Jesus knowing that this was from weakness, and not from wickedness, he passes it over, and notwithstanding his unkind refusal, he washes his feet. Thomas is very weak: "I will not believe," says he, "except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side," John 20:25. Now this Christ bears with much tenderness and sweetness, as you may see in ver. 27, "Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither your fingers, and behold my hands, and reach hither your hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless—but believing." The Lord Jesus does, as it were, open his wounds afresh; he overlooks his weakness. Well, says he, seeing it is so that you will not believe, I will rather bleed afresh than you shall die in your unbelief.

So the three disciples whom Christ had singled out to watch with him one hour, Mat. 26, they showed a great deal of weakness to be sleeping, when their Lord was a-sorrowing; to be snorting when their Savior was sighing, etc. Yet Christ bears this, and reacts sweetly towards them, and excuses their weakness: ver. 41, "The spirit is willing—but the flesh is weak." Oh how sweetly does the Lord behave! Every new man is two men; he has a

contrary principle in him, the flesh and the spirit. The spirit, the noble part, is willing—but the flesh, the ignoble part, is weak and wayward.

Now shall the Lord thus bear with his weak ones, and shall not strong saints bear also? Remember, strong Christians, there was a day when you were as weak as others, as apt to fall as others, as easily conquered as others; and if then the Lord behaved sweetly towards you, let the same spirit be in you towards those who are weak. It will be no grief of heart to you, if in this you act like your Lord and Savior.

If you do not bear with the infirmities of the weak, who shall? who will? This wicked world cannot, nor will not. The world will make them transgressors for a word, and watch for their halting; and therefore you had need to bear with them so much the more, Isaiah 29:21, Jer. 20:10. The world's cruelty should stir up your compassions.

[2.] ***Secondly, As it is your duty to bear with them, so it is your duty to receive them into communion with you.***

Romans 14:1, "*Receive* him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters." That is, him who is not thoroughly persuaded of all things pertaining to Christian liberty, about things indifferent. He does not say, "Those who have *no* faith receive." For there is no rule for the saints or churches to receive them into communion, who have no faith, who have no fellowship with the Father and the Son. But "*Receive* him whose faith is *weak*."

The word that is here rendered *receive*, signifies to receive into our bosom with charitable affection. The Greek word signifies three things.

(1.) It signifies to receive weak saints into our heart; to receive them with the greatest tenderness, affection, pity, and compassion that possibly can be. So the same Greek word is used in the Epistle of Philemon, ver. 12, where Paul entreats Philemon "to receive Onesimus who is my very heart." The word there is the same word with this in the text. So must the strong receive the weak, even as their own heart; receive them with the greatest affection, with the greatest compassion that possibly can be.

(2.) The word signifies *patiently to bear with the weak when they are received;* and not to take them into your bosom, into your communion one day and cast them out the next—but patiently to bear with them, as well as affectionately to receive them.

It was the heathen prince Xerxes, who crowned his steersman in the morning—and beheaded him in the evening of the same day, etc.

(3.) The word signifies *by fatherly instruction to seek to restore him*. It is not the will of Christ that weak saints should be rejected, or that the door of entrance should be shut against them, until they are stronger, or until they have attained to such heights and such perfections of grace and divine enjoyments of God as others have attained. Remember this, as the weakest faith, if true, gives the soul a right to all that internal and eternal worth that is in Christ: so the weakest faith, if true, gives a man a real right unto all the external privileges and favors that come by Christ. In Romans 15:7, "Therefore receive one another—as Christ also received us to the glory of God." This is the standing rule for all the saints and churches in the world to go by. It is not their wills—but these two scriptures last cited, which are the standing rules by which all the churches on earth are to go by, in the admission of members.

"Those who are weak in the faith" are to be received by you, because the Lord Jesus has received them. Christ does not receive the strong—and cast off the weak. No; the Lord Jesus gathers the weak into his bosom, and tenderly dandles them upon his knee. He receives the weak—as well as the strong; therefore says the apostle, "As the Lord has received them —so do you."

Bucer rejected none in whom he saw *aliquid Christi*—anything of Christ—but gave them the right hand of fellowship. Such people and churches can never answer it to Christ—who keep the door of admission shut against souls truly gracious, though they are but weak in grace, though they have not attained to such a measure of light, or degrees of love, or to such perfections in holiness—as such and such have done. No; the standing rule is, "Him whom the Lord has received—receive."

If weak saints shall desire communion, and be willing to walk in the ways

that Jesus Christ has appointed his saints to walk in, the churches ought to give them the right hand of fellowship. And that is the second duty that lies upon the strong, namely, that they are to *receive* the weak into communion and fellowship with them, and that with the greatest affection, love, and compassion, that possibly can be.

A *third* duty that lies upon strong saints to the weak is this:

[3.] *They must look more upon their graces—than upon their weaknesses.*

It is a sad thing when they shall borrow spectacles to behold their weak brethren's weaknesses, and refuse looking-glasses wherein they may see their weak brethren's graces. Saints who are strong ought to look more upon the virtues of weak saints than upon their miscarriages. When Christ saw but a little moral good in the young man, the text says that "He looked upon him, and loved him," Mark 10:12. And shall not we look upon a weak saint and love him, when we see the love of God and the image of God upon him. Shall moral virtue take the eye, and draw the love of Christ? And shall not supernatural grace in a weak Christian, take our eyes and draw our hearts? Shall we eye a little gold in much earth? And shall we not eye a little grace where there is much corruption? [If moral virtue could be seen with mortal eyes, it would soon draw all hearts to itself, says Plato. What, then, should grace do? the least grain of which is of more worth than all the moral virtues in the world.]

It is an unsufferable weakness, I had almost said, for people to allow their affections to run out only to such who are of their judgments; and to love, prize, and value people according as they suit their opinions—and not according to what of the image of God shines in them. But if this be not far from a gospel spirit, and from that God-like spirit which should be in saints, I know nothing. It speaks out much of Christ within, to own where Christ owns, and love where Christ loves, and embrace where Christ embraces, and to be one with everyone that is practically one with the Lord Jesus. Christ cannot but take it very unkindly at our hands—if we should disown any upon whom he has set his royal stamp. And I bless his grace that has drawn out my desires and endeavors to love, own, and honor the people of Christ, according to the appearances of Christ which I

see in them. And, if I am not much mistaken, this is the highway to that joy, peace, and comfort—the lack of which makes a man's life a hell. God looks more on the bright side of the cloud, than he does on the dark—and so should we.

It was the honor of Vespasian that "he was more ready to conceal the vices of his friends, than their virtues." Surely there is much of God in that soul, that is upon a gospel account more careful and skillful to conceal the vices of weak saints, than their virtues. Many in these days 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."

[4.] *Fourthly, it is the duty of strong saints, in things indifferent—to deny themselves, to please the weak.*

1 Cor. 8:13, "If what I eat is going to make another Christian sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don't want to make another Christian stumble." Strong saints must stand unchangeably resolved neither to *give* offence carelessly, nor to *take* offence causelessly. Says the apostle, I will not stand to dispute my Christian liberty—but will rather lay it down at my weak brother's feet, than I will by the use of it offend one for whom Christ has died. 1 Cor. 9:22, "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." That is, I condescended and went to the uttermost that I possibly could, without sin—to win and gain upon the weak; I displeased myself in things which were of an indifferent nature, to please them.

You ought not, O strong Christian, by the use of your Christian liberty, to put a stumbling-block before your weak brother. Romans 15:2, "We then who are strong, ought to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let everyone of us please his neighbor for his good to edification." He does not say, Let everyone of us please the lust of his neighbor—but let everyone of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. Let us in things of an indifferent nature so yield as to please our neighbor. There were some who thought that they might observe days; others thought they might not. Some thought they might eat meat;

others thought they might only eat vegetables. Why, says the apostle, in these things which are of an indifferent nature, I will rather displease and deny myself, to profit my neighbor, than I will, by the use of my liberty, occasion my neighbor to offend. Ay, this is true Christian love indeed, for a man to cross himself to please his neighbor, so it may be for his soul's edification. But this heavenly love is driven almost out of the world, which causes men to dislike those things in others which they flatter in themselves.

A *fifth* duty incumbent upon strong saints is,

[5.] *To support the weak.*

1 Thes. 5:14, "*Support* the weak, be patient towards all men." Look, what the crutch is to the lame, and the beam of the house is to the ruinated house—that ought strong saints to be to the weak. Strong saints are to be crutches to the weak, they are to be, as it were, beams to bear up the weak. Strong saints are to set to their shoulder, to shore up the weak by their counsels, prayers, tears, and examples. Strong saints must not deal with the weak, as the herd of deer do with the wounded deer; they forsake it and push it away. Oh no! When a poor weak saint is wounded by a temptation, or by the power of some corruption, then those who are strong ought to support and support such a one, lest he be swallowed up in sorrow. When you who are strong see a weak saint staggering and reeling under a temptation or affliction, Oh, know it is then your duty to put both your hands underneath, to support him so that he faints not, that he miscarries not in such an hour. Isaiah 35:3, "Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees." [Look, what the nurse is to the child, the oak to the ivy, the house to the vine; that should strong saints be to the weak, etc., 2 Cor. 2:7.]

"Strengthen the weak hands," that is, hands that hang down; "and confirm the feeble knees," that is, such knees that by reason of feebleness are ready to fall. Strengthen such, that is, encourage them, by casting in a promise, by casting in your experiences, or by casting in the experiences of other saints, that so they may be supported. It may be his case was once yours: if so, then tell him what promises did support you, what discoveries of God did uphold you; tell him what tastes, what sights, and

what in-comes you had, and how bravely you did bear up, by the strength of his everlasting arms which were under you, etc.

A *sixth* duty that is incumbent upon strong saints is,

[6.] *To take heed of making weak saints halt and go lame in a way of holiness, or of keeping them off from the ways of God, or of turning them out of the ways of God.*

That is the meaning of that scripture, as I conceive, Luke 17:2. And of that, Mat. 18:10, "Beware that you don't despise a single one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." You are apt to slight them because they are weak in grace and holiness, and so you are apt to cause them to halt; but take heed of this, they have glistening courtiers which attend them; therefore take heed that you do not offend them, for their angels, as so many champions, stand ready to right them and fight for them. A man were better offend and anger all the devils in hell, and all the witches in the world, than to anger and offend the least of Christ's little ones. If Cain despises Abel, God will arraign him for it: "Why is your countenance cast down?" Gen. 4:6. If Miriam does but mutter against Moses, God will spit in her face for it, Num. 12:14.

That is a very dreadful word, Mat. 18:6, "But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." You make nothing of it—but says Christ, take heed, "for it would be better that a millstone," a huge millstone, as the Greek word signifies, such a one as only a donkey can turn about; (this kind of punishment the greatest malefactors among the Jews were put to in those days, says Jerome), "and cast into the middle of the sea;" so it is word for word in the Greek, the middle being deepest and furthest off from the shore, rendering his condition most miserable and irrecoverable.

[7.] *Seventhly, It is the duty of strong saints to suit all things to the capacity of the weak.*

To suit all their prayers and all their discourses to the capacity of the

weak. Paul was good at this: "To the weak became I as weak." Paul was a man as strong in natural and acquired parts as any living, and he knew how to word it, and to carry it in as lofty strains, as any who breathed—yet who more plain in his preaching than Paul? It has many a time made my heart sad, to think how those men will answer it in the day of Christ—who affect lofty strains, high notions, and cloudy expressions—who make the plain things of the gospel dark and obscure.

Many preachers in our days are like Heraclitus, who was called *"the dark doctor;"* they affect sublime notions, obscure expressions, uncouth phrases, making plain truths difficult, and easy truths hard. "They darken counsel with words without knowledge," Job 38:2. Studied expressions and high notions in a sermon, are like Asahel's carcass in the pathway, which did only stop men and make them gaze—but did no ways profit them or better them. It is better to present truth in her native plainness, than to hang her ears with counterfeit pearls.

That is a remarkable scripture, 1 Cor. 3:1-2, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual—but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet now are you able." The apostle did not soar aloft in the clouds, and express the mysteries of the gospel in such a dark obscure way as that poor creatures could not be able to understand the mind of God in it. No; but he suited all his discourses to their capacities; and so must you.

[8.] ***Eighthly, It is your duty to labor to strengthen weak saints against sin, and to draw them to holiness argumentatively.***

When a strong saint comes to deal with one that is weak, and would strengthen him against sin, he must do it argumentatively; and when he would draw to holiness, he must do it argumentatively. 1 John 2:1-2, compared with chapter 1:7, 9, "My little children, these things I write unto you—that you sin not." What things were those he wrote? Mark, chapter 1:7, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses from all sins." Here he fences them against sin, by one of the

strongest and choicest arguments that the whole book of God affords, by an argument which is drawn from the soul's communion with God. And then in verse 9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father." Here the apostle labors to strengthen weak saints argumentatively, even by the strongest arguments that the whole book of God affords. So verses 12-13, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake," etc. So in verse 18, "Little children, it is the last times, and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time." So verse 28, "And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does righteousness is born of him." You see in all these scriptures how the apostle labors to strengthen weak saints in a way of holiness, and to fence them against ways of wickedness argumentatively, and so must you; this being the ready way to convince them, and to make a conquest upon them, etc.

The *ninth* duty that lies upon strong saints is,

[9.] *To cast a mantle over the infirmities of the weak.*

Now there is a three-fold mantle that should be cast over the infirmities of the weak. There is a mantle of *wisdom*, a mantle of *faithfulness*, and a mantle of *compassion*, which is to be cast over all the infirmities of weak saints.

First, Strong saints are to cast a mantle of **wisdom** over the infirmities of weak saints. They are not to present their sins in that ugliness, and with such aggravations, as may terrify, as may sink, as may make a weak saint to despair, or may drive him from the mercy-seat, or as may keep him and Christ asunder, or as may unfit him for the discharge of pious duties. It is more a weakness than a virtue in strong Christians, when a weak saint is fallen, to aggravate his fall to the uttermost, and to present his sins in such a dreadful dress, as shall amaze him, etc. It often proves very prejudicial and dangerous to weak saints, when their infirmities are aggravated beyond Scripture grounds, and beyond what they are able to

bear. He who shall lay the same strength to the rubbing of an glass dish, as he does to the rubbing of a pewter platter, instead of cleaning it, shall surely break it all to pieces. The application is easy, etc. [Parisiensis said sometimes concerning trifles: *It is,* said he, *as if a man should see a fly or a flea on a man's forehead, and for that should presently take a hammer to knock him on the head to kill the fly*.]

Secondly, There is a mantle of **faithfulness** which is to be cast over the infirmities of weak saints. A man should never reveal the infirmities of a weak saint, especially to such that have neither skill nor will to heal and bury them. The world will but blaspheme and blaze them abroad, to the dishonor of God, to the reproach of religion, and to the grief and scandal of the weak, etc. They will with Ham rather call upon others to scoff at them, than bring a mantle to cover them, etc. Ham was cursed because he revealed his father's nakedness to his brethren, when it was in his power to have covered it. He saw it, and might have drawn a curtain over it—but would not; and for this, by a spirit of prophecy, he was cursed by his father, Gen. 9:22. This age is full of such monsters, who rejoice to blaze abroad the infirmities of the saints, and these certainly justice has or will curse.

Thirdly, There is a mantle of **compassion** which must be cast over the weaknesses and infirmities of weak saints. When a weak man comes to see his sin, and the Lord gives him to lie down in the dust, and to take shame and confusion to himself, that he has dishonored God, and caused Christ to bleed afresh, and grieved the Spirit, etc.; oh now you must draw a covering, and cast a mantle of love and compassion over his soul, that he may not be swallowed up with sorrow. Now you must confirm your love to him, and carry it with as great tenderness and sweetness after his fall, as if he had never fallen. This the apostle presses, 2 Cor. 2:7, "Love," says the wise man, "covers all sin." Love's mantle is very large. Love claps a plaster upon every sore; love has two hands, and makes use of both, to hide the scars of weak saints.

Christ, O strong saints, casts the mantle of his righteousness over your weaknesses, and will not you cast the mantle of love over your brother's infirmities? [I have known a good old man, said Bernard, who, when he had heard of any that had committed some notorious offence, was

accustomed to say with himself, *He fell today—so may I tomorrow,* etc.]

[10.] Tenthly, *It is the duty of strong saints to sympathize with the weak; to rejoice with them when they rejoice, and to mourn with them when they mourn.*

2 Cor. 11:29, "Who is weak, and I am weak? who is scandalized, offended —and I am not on fire, burn not?"

Thuanus reports of Lodovicus Marsacus, a knight of France, when he was led with other martyrs that were bound with cords, going to execution, and he for his dignity was not bound, he cried, Give me my chains too, let me be a knight of the same order.

It should be between a strong saint and a weak, as it is between two lute-strings, which are tuned one to another; no sooner one is struck—but the other trembles; no sooner should a weak saint be struck—but the strong should tremble. "Remember those who are in bonds, as bound with them," Heb. 13:3.

The Romans punished one that was seen looking out at his window with a crown of roses on his head, in a time of public calamity; and will not God punish those who do not sympathize with Joseph in his afflictions? Surely he will. Amos 6:1-14.

[11.] *Lastly, It is the duty of the strong to give to the weak the honor which is due unto them.*

1 Peter 3:7: They have the same name, the same baptism, the same profession, the same faith, the same hope, the same Christ, the same promises, the same dignity, and the same glory with you; therefore speak honorably of them, and behave honorably towards them. Let not those be under your feet—whom Christ has laid near his heart, etc. And so much for this second doctrine, **that all saints are not of an equal size and growth in grace and holiness.**

Third Doctrine

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, **is this grace given**, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!" Ephesians 3:8

I shall now proceed to the third doctrine, namely, **Christ gives his best gifts to his best beloved ones.**

We shall speak now to the word **grace**. The Greek word that is here rendered *grace*, has a twofold signification.

First, Sometimes it is taken for the gracious favor and good-will of God, whereby he is pleased of his own free love to accept and own poor sinners in the Son of his love, for his own. This is called the first grace, because it is the fountain of all other graces, and the spring from whence they flow. And it is therefore called grace, because it makes a man gracious with God.

Secondly, This word that is here rendered *grace*, is taken for the gifts of grace, and they are of two sorts, special or common. **Common grace** is that which hypocrites may have, and in which they may excel and go beyond the choicest saints, as in a gift of knowledge, a gift of utterance, a gift of prayer, a gift of tongues, etc. A man may have these, and many other excellent gifts, and yet eternally miscarry, yes, fall as low as hell; witness Judas, Demas, the scribes and pharisees, etc., Mat. 7:21-25.

Secondly, There is **special grace**, as faith, love, humility, meekness, which the apostle reckons up in Gal. 5:22-23.

Now here by grace you may either understand the gracious favor of God, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this choice favor given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ," or else you may take it for the gifts of grace, both saving and common, which the apostle had given him, in order to the discharge of his ministerial office, which, by the special favor of God, he was advanced

to.

The word grace being thus opened, we may from thence observe, ***that the Lord gives his best gifts to his best beloved ones.***

"Unto me," says the apostle, "who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given."

For the opening and clearing of this point, I shall premise these four things.

I. To show you what those best gifts are, which God bestows upon his best beloved ones.

II. I shall show you the manner of his giving the best gifts to his beloved ones, or the difference there is between Christ's giving and the world's giving.

III. And then the excellency of those gifts which Christ gives, above all other gifts which the world gives.

IV. And lastly, The reason why Christ gives his best gifts to his best beloved ones.

I. For the *first*, **What are those best gifts, which Christ bestows upon his best beloved ones?**

I shall not instance in those common gifts which they have in common with others—but rather show unto you those special gifts which God bestows upon them; and of those I shall single out those which are most choice, and which carry most in them of the glory, favor, and "good will of him who dwelt in the bush."

And the *first* is this:

[1.] ***He gives LIGHT to his beloved ones.*** "Light is a pleasant thing to behold," as the wise man speaks, Eccles. 11:7. He gives spiritual light,

which is a mercy of mercies. Eph. 5:14, "Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." [shine upon you. Life without light is but a lifeless life.] So John 1:7-9, "He was not that Light—but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light—which enlightens every man who comes into the world." He gives that light whereby his people are enabled to see **sin** to be the greatest evil, and **himself** to be the chief good. He gives that light which melts the soul, which humbles the soul, which warms the soul, which quickens the soul, which quiets the soul, and which gladdens the soul. Man is not born with heavenly light in his heart, as he is born with a tongue in his mouth. Until Christ comes and sets up a light in the soul, the soul lives in darkness, and lies in darkness, yes, is darkness in the very abstract: Eph. 5:8, "You were once darkness—but now are you light in the Lord." Saints are always in the sunshine, therefore they should be like a crystal glass, with a light in the midst, which appears in every part. "But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings." Mal. 4:2. "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." 2 Corinthians 4:6

A Christian should be like the lamp in the story—which never went out. Were it not for the sun, it would be perpetual night in the world, notwithstanding all starlight, and torchlight, and moonlight. It is not the *torchlight* of natural parts and creature-comforts, nor the *starlight* of civil honesty and common gifts, nor yet the *moonlight* of temporary faith and formal profession—which can make *day* in the soul, until the Sun of righteousness rises and shines upon it. And that is the first thing he gives —light.

Now, the *second* thing he gives is,

[2.] ***REPENTANCE*****.** Repentance is not a flower which grows in nature's garden. Acts 5:31, "Him has God the Father exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, to *give* repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." So in 2 Tim. 2:25, "The servant of the Lord must in meekness instruct those who oppose themselves, if God perhaps will *give* them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." By these scriptures, it is clear that repentance is no flower that grows in nature's garden, though Arminians

teach and print, that if men will put out their power and their strength they may repent, etc. [2 Cor. 3:5. If there be such a power in fallen man to repent and believe, etc., to what purpose was the coming of Christ into the world? 1 John 2:9; 3:8. And why do natural men, when their consciences are awakened, so cry out, that they are as able to stop the sun in his course, to raise the dead, and to make a world, as they are able of themselves to repent? etc.] But several that have been of this opinion, have experienced the falseness of it when it has been too late: "The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots," Jer. 13:23. And certainly, if there were such a power in man to repent, as some would make the world believe, man would never miscarry everlastingly for his not repenting. Oh, is it good dwelling with everlasting burnings, with a burning fire? Is it good being forever shut out from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power? Certainly, if there were such a power in vain man to repent, no man would go to hell for not repenting; and many who have boasted much of their abilities to repent, when they have been upon a dying bed, would have given a thousand worlds, were there so many in their power, that they could but repent.

Luther confesses, that before his conversion, he met not with a more displeasing word in all the study of divinity than this word *repent;* but after the Lord had converted him, and manifested himself to him, he delighted in this work; then he could sorrow for his sins, and rejoice in his sorrow.

Repentance strips the soul stark naked of all the garments of the old Adam, and leaves not so much as the shirt behind. In this rotten building there is not one stone left upon another. As the flood drowned Noah's own friends and servants, as well as strangers, so true repentance drowns all darling lusts. True repentance is the cutting off the right hand, and the pulling out of the right eye; and is this such an easy thing? Surely not! True repentance is a gift that is from above, and if the Lord does not give it, man will eternally perish for the lack of it. You may read much more of this in my treatise called *Heaven on Earth*.

[3.] Christ gives *his SPIRIT*. Romans 5:5, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given unto us." So in 1 John 3:24, "And hereby we know that he abides in us." How? "By the

Spirit whom he has given us." So in chapter 4:13. The Spirit whom the Lord Christ gives—is an **enlightening** Spirit, it is the candle of the Lord set up in the hearts of the saints, to guide them in the way everlasting. It is a **sanctifying** Spirit, a Spirit of burning, Isaiah 4:4. He is a fire to enlighten the soul, and a fire to enliven the soul, and a fire to warm the soul, etc. Whatever is of the Spirit is *spirit*. It is nimble, and lively, and active, and full of life and motion, as the Spirit is. A man without the Spirit of the Lord is a dull, dronish creature. As the Latins call a dull, dronish man, a fireless man, so we may call a man who has not the Spirit, a spiritless man. The Spirit that Christ gives is a **sealing** Spirit, Eph. 1:13; and a **leading** Spirit, "those who are *led* by the Spirit of God are sons of God." Romans 8:14. He leads from sin, he leads from wrath, he leads from the curse; he leads to God, he leads to Christ, he leads to the promises, he leads to glory, etc.

Again, this Spirit is a **comforting** Spirit, John 4:16; and a **pleading** Spirit, Romans 8:26. Every Christian has three advocates pleading for him: the first is, that divine love which is in the bosom of the Father; the second is, the Lord Jesus who is at the right hand of the Father; and the third is, the Holy Spirit who is one with the Father.

[4.] He gives *his BLOOD*. The blood of Christ is a gift of Christ to his beloved ones. Mat 20:28, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto—but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." So in John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for his sheep." His blood was the purest blood, his human nature being most pure. His blood was the noblest blood, and therefore called in Scripture, "the blood of God," Romans 3:25 and Acts 20:28, by reason of the conjunction of the divine nature with the human. It was his life-blood, his heart-blood which he gave. It was not the blood of his *finger*—but the blood of his *heart*; it was precious blood. "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers—but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." 1 Peter 1:18-19

Three things are called precious in the Scripture.

(1.) **Faith** is called precious faith, 2 Peter 1:1.

(2.) The **promises** are called precious promises, ver. 4.

(3.) The **blood of Christ** is called precious blood, 1 Peter 1:19.

All your precious mercies swim to you in precious blood, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together. [Romans 5:9; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:7, 26, 10:19; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5, etc.]

It was an excellent saying of Luther, speaking of this blood of Christ, *One little drop of this blood, is more worth than heaven and earth!* Your pardon swims to you in blood; your peace with God swims to you in blood; your reconciliation is made by blood; your acceptance is wrought by blood, etc. Christ's blood is heaven's key; Christ's blood is a preservative against the greatest evils. Christ's blood, as Pliny says of *polium*, is a preservative against serpents, etc.

[5.] Christ gives *PARDON of sin*. And do you know what a mercy that is? Ask the troubled soul, ask the soul who knows what it is to lie under the wrath of the Almighty, and he will tell you that pardon of sin is a gift more worth than a thousand worlds. Now that pardon of sin is a gift of God, you may see in Acts 5:31, "Him has God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." [To his right hand; that is, to honor and dignity, etc.] So in Acts 26:18. Ah, souls! of all mercies, *pardoning mercy* is the most necessary mercy. I may go to heaven without honors, and without riches, and without the smiles of creatures; but I can never to heaven without pardoning mercy. A man may be great and graceless, he may be rich and miserable, he may be honorable and damnable, etc., [As Ahab, Haman, Dives, etc.] But a pardoned soul must be a very blessed soul.

Psalm 32:1-2. "*Blessed* is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. *Blessed* is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him." [*Blessednesses*. In the plural, pardon of sin includes a plurality of mercies, a chain of pearls, a chain of blessings.] It entitles souls to all blessedness, it puts the royal crown upon their heads. Of all mercies, *pardoning mercy* is the most sweetening mercy; it is a choice

jewel, and swims to the soul in blood, Heb. 9:22. It is a mercy which makes all other mercies to look like mercies, and taste like mercies, and work like mercies; and the lack of it takes off the glory and beauty of all a man's other mercies, and makes his life a very hell. Pardon of sin is a voluminous mercy, a mercy which has many, many precious mercies in its womb! You may well call it *Gad*, Gen. 30:11, for it ushers in *troops* of mercy. When you can number the sands of the sea, and count the stars of heaven, then, and not until then, shall you be able to recount the mercies which attend pardoning mercy. He who has this mercy cannot be miserable, and he who lacks it cannot be happy: get this and get all, miss this and miss all. Pardoning mercy is a gift conferred only upon Christ's favorites: "Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you," Mat. 9:2. No mercy will make a man everlastingly blissful—but pardoning mercy. He has no reason to be sad—who has his pardon in his bosom; nor has he has any reason to be glad, who is upon the last step of the ladder, ready to be turned off without his pardon. And this is the fifth gift that Christ gives to his, namely, pardon of sin.

[6.] Christ gives *precious PROMISES*. 2 Peter 1:4, "He has given unto us exceeding great and precious promises," etc. The promises are a precious book; every leaf drops myrrh and mercy. The promises are golden vessels, which are laden with the choicest jewels which heaven can afford, or the soul can desire. All our spiritual, temporal, and eternal good is to be found in the belly of the promises. [The promises are precious beds of spices; they are bottles filled with those heavenly dews that will never fail, like that of Hagar's—but will uphold and nourish the soul to life eternal, etc.]

Promises are big-bellied mercies. There is nothing you can truly call a mercy—but you will find it in the belly of a promise. Under all changes they are the comfort, support, and relief of the soul: Psalm 119:49-50, "Remember your word unto your servant, upon which you have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for your word has quickened me." If the soul groans under the **power of sin**, then that promise relieves it: Romans 6:14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law—but under grace."

If the soul groans under the **guilt of sin**, then that promise relieves it:

Jer. 33:8, "I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned against me," etc. And that promise, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more." Isaiah 43:25 "I, even I," whom you have offended; "I, even I," whom you have provoked; "I, even I," whose glorious name you have profaned; "I, even I," whose righteous law you have violated; "I, even I," whose holy covenant you have transgressed; "I, even I," whose mercies you have despised; "I, even I, whose chastisements you have slighted," will blot out your transgressions for my own sake." "I, even I," is a passionate and emphatic expression. God's goodness runs over to sinful creatures; and "where sin abounds, there grace does superabound."

If the creditor himself blots out the debt, and crosses the book—surely it shall never more be remembered. [Mat. 6:12, 14-15, and 18:24, 27, 33; Luke 7:41-48.] Our sins are debts, which God, who has the power of life and death, of heaven and hell, of condemning and absolving—has engaged himself to blot out as a thick cloud: Isaiah 44:22, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins." An under-officer may blot out an indictment, and yet the offender may be never the better for it; but if the king, who is the supreme judge, shall blot it out, then the offender is safe. The application is easy.

If the soul is **deserted**, then that promise relieves it: Micah 7:18-19, "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us," etc. If the soul is **slipping and ready to fall**, then that promise supports and upholds it: Psalm 37:24, "Though he stumbles, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand." Deut. 33:26-27. The Hebrew particle notes a continued act of God. God has still his everlasting arms under his people, so that they shall never totally nor finally fall. And the root *samach*, from whence this word is derived, signifies to sustain or uphold, as the tender mother does the little babe. The safety and security of the child lies not so much in the child's hanging about the mother's neck, as in the mother's holding it fast in her arms. So our safety and security lies not so much in our weak holding upon Christ—but in Christ's holding of us fast in his everlasting arms. This is our glory and our safety, that Christ's "left hand is always under us, and his right hand does always embrace us," Cant. 2:6. "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can

snatch them out of my hand." John 10:28

If the soul be forsaken by friends, then that promise relieves it, Heb. 13:5, 6, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." There are five negatives in the Greek to assure God's people that he will never forsake them. Five times this precious promise is renewed in the Scripture, that we might have the stronger consolation, and that we may press and squeeze it until we have gotten all the sweetness out of it. And truly many precious souls have sucked much sweetness out of the breasts of this promise, when their nearest relations and their dearest friends have forsaken them and forgotten them. God loves that his people should plead his promises; and he who does shall find God near him, though friends should leave him, and the world be in arms against him, etc.

If the soul be **tempted**, then that word of promise relieves it, 1 Cor. 10:13, "But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able," etc. The promises are a Christian's *magna charta;* they are his chief evidences for heaven. Men highly prize their charters and privileges, and carefully keep the titles and deeds of their lands. Oh! how should saints then treasure up and keep these precious promises which the Lord has given them, and which are to them, for their protection, maintenance, deliverance, comfort, and everlasting happiness! And thus much for the sixth gift the Lord gives, viz, the promises.

[7.] The Lord gives *GRACE*."Of his fullness we all have received grace for grace," John 1:16. The Lord gives that grace, the least grain of which is worth more than heaven and earth.

It was an excellent saying of one of Jerome, "I had rather have Paul's coat with his heavenly graces, than the purple robes of kings with their kingdoms." Grace is that which truly ennobles the soul; it raises the soul up to converse with the highest and with the noblest objects; and every man is, as the objects are, with which he converses. If the objects are noble—the man is so; if the objects are base with which a man converses —the man is base. [Not race or place—but grace, truly sets forth a man.] A man may better know what he is, by eyeing the objects with which his soul does mostly converse—than by observing his most glorious and

pompous services: "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor," Proverbs 12:26. Abraham was a prince of God among the Hittites, Gen. 23:6. The Jews say that those seventy people who went down with Jacob into Egypt were more worth than the seventy nations of the world. Indeed, it is only grace which makes a man truly noble.

When one heard the king of Persia styled "the Great King," says he, I acknowledge none more excellent than myself, unless more righteous; nor none greater, unless better. Grace, as it is bred by the noblest means, so it is preserved and maintained in the soul by the choicest means—union and communion with God, etc. Grace is glory in the bud—and glory is grace at the full. Grace makes a man all glorious within and without. Grace is a ring of gold, and Christ is the sparkling diamond in that ring.

[8.] He gives *PEACE*.John 14:27, "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world gives, give I unto you." Christ gives peace with God, and peace with conscience, and peace with the creatures. *Dulce nomen pacis*—the very name of peace is sweet, Romans 5:1, Hosea 2:21-23, Job 5:19-25.

The Hebrews, when they wished all happiness to any, used but this one word, "*Peace* be with you!" And the ancients were accustomed to paint peace in the form of a woman, with a horn of plenty in her hand—all blessings. Ask a soul who has been under terrors of conscience, and he will tell you, that of all gifts, inward peace is the most princely gift, etc. [Martinus the emperor's motto was, *Give me peace, and let others quarrel.*]

[**9.] He gives *GLORY*.** John 10:28, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life." Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death—but the gift of God is eternal life."

Now the glory which Christ gives is **real** glory: 2 Tim. 4:7-8, "Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of glory." The Greek word signifies two things: 1, a designation of a crown; 2, a reservation and safe keeping of it for him until the coronation day.

Again, the glory which he gives is **soul-filling** glory; glory which fills the

understanding with the clearest and the brightest light; glory which fills the *will* with the greatest freedom; glory which fills the *affections* with the choicest joy and delight, Psalm 16:11, and 17:15, 2 Cor. 12:1-6.

Again, the glory he gives is **incomparable** glory: Romans 8:18, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." The Greek word that is here rendered *I reckon*, is not a word of doubting—but a word of *concluding*. I conclude by arguments—that our present sufferings are not worthy to be compared to that illustrious and glorious glory "that is ready to be revealed on us," as it is in the Greek. I have cast up the account, says the apostle, as wise merchants cast up theirs, and I find in the balancing of the account—that there is nothing to be compared with that glory which shall be revealed in us.

Again, the glory he gives is **unmoveable** glory. All worldly glory is tottering and shaking. Princes' crowns hang now but upon one side of their heads. "The Lord Almighty has purposed to stain" (or pollute) "the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth," Isaiah 23:9. "The Lord has purposed it," and the counsel of the Lord shall stand! It is agreed upon in heaven, that the pride of all human glory shall be stained and polluted, or thrown down, as some polluted filthy thing that is trampled under foot. Oh! but this glory which Christ gives is unmoveable glory—it is permanent glory; it is glory which cannot be changed, stained, or polluted, Heb. 12:28.

Again, the glory he gives is **suitable** glory. It is glory which is suited to the backs, hearts, hopes, desires, and capacities of his servants, John 14:1-3.

Again, the glory he gives is **never-fading** glory; it is glory which fades not away. When a man has been in heaven as many millions of years as there are stars in heaven, his glory shall be as fresh and as green as it was at his first entrance into heaven. All worldly glory is like the flowers of the field; but the glory that Christ gives is lasting and durable like himself, etc. "And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory." 1 Peter 5:4

[10.] Lastly, He gives *HIMSELF*. And truly this is a gift of gifts indeed, John 6:51, 63; so in Eph. 5:20. A saint may say, Methinks I hear Christ saying to me as Æschines said to Socrates, "Others," said he, "give you silver and gold, and precious jewels—but I give you myself." So the soul may say, One friend gives me bread, and another gives me clothes, and another gives me house-room, etc. Oh! but you give me yourself! Christ put into the balance will outweigh all other gifts which he bestows upon men.

Christ is the **richest** gift. Oh! there are unsearchable riches in Christ, as hereafter I shall show you. [Austin prays: *Lord, whatever you have given, take all away; only give me yourself.*]

Jesus is the **choicest** and the **rarest** gift; he is a gift given but to a few. Rich and rare jewels are not commonlygiven—but more rarely given; so is Christ. Though Israel be "as the sand of the sea—yet a remnant only shall be saved," Romans 9:17. "A garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, is my well-beloved," Cant. 4:12. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom," Luke 12:32.

Christ is a **drawing** gift, a gift which brings all other gifts along with him. "If he has given us his Son, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32. Christ is a drawing gift. When God the Father has cast this incomparable jewel into a man's bosom, he cannot deny him anything. Such a soul may well say, Has he given me a Christ? and will he not give me a crumb? Has he given me his Son, which is the greatest mercy? and will he stand with me for lesser mercies? Surely not!

In a word, Christ is of all gifts the **sweetest** gift. As the tree, Exod. 15:25, sweetened the bitter waters, so this gift, the Lord Jesus, of whom that tree was a type—sweetens all other gifts which are bestowed upon the sons of men. He turns every bitter into sweet, and makes every sweet more sweet.

And so I come to the second thing propounded, and that was,

II. *The difference between Christ's giving and the world's giving*. And this I shall show you in the following particulars:

[1.] First, *The world gives—but they give grudgingly. But when Christ gives, he gives freely.* lsa. 55:1, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, let him come, and buy wine and milk without money, and without price." So in Rev. 21:6, "I will give to everyone that is athirst of the water of life freely." To do good, and not to do it freely, handsomely, is nothing. A benefit given with grudging is a stony loaf, only taken for necessity. [2 Cor. 9:7; 1 Peter 4:9. No offerings compared to free-will offerings.]

[2.] Secondly, *The world gives—but they give poorly, niggardly. But Christ gives plenteously, richly.* 1 Tim. 6:17, "Charge those who are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches—but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy." [Saul had but five-pence to give the seer; the seer, after much good cheer, gives him no less than the kingdom, 1 Sam. 9:8, 10. So God deals with his.]

When Caesar gave one a great reward, "This," says he, "is too great a gift for me to receive;" "But," says Caesar, "it is not too great a gift for me to give." So, though the least gift that Christ gives, in some sense, is too much for us to receive—yet the greatest gifts are not too great for Christ to give.

It is said of Araunah, that noble Jebusite, renowned for his bounty, that "he had but a subject's purse—but a king's heart." But the Lord Jesus has not only a king's heart—but he has also a king's purse, and gives accordingly.

[3.] Thirdly, *The world give—but they give tauntingly, they give upbraidingly; they hit men in the teeth with the gifts they give. But the Lord Jesus Christ gives, and he gives willingly, he upbraids none with the gifts he gives.*James 1:5, "If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask it of God, who gives liberally, and upbraids no man." Where Christ gives, there he won't upbraid, neither with present failings nor former infirmities. Christ is not accustomed to reproach those to whom he gives the best gifts; he will not cast it in their dish, that he has been thus and thus kind to them—but will always "rejoice over them to do them good." But the world gives, and then reproaches the receiver for receiving, and this turns all into gall and wormwood, etc. [Jer. 32:40, 41;

Proverbs 1:20-26; 8:1-13; and 9:1-7.]

[4.] Fourthly, *The world gives—but they give more rarely. But Christ gives, and he gives frequently.* He is every day, every hour, yes, every moment, a-giving of royal favors to his people. Here is peace for you who are in trouble, says Christ; and here is pardon for you who groan under guilt, says Christ; and here is comfort for you who are mourners in Zion, says Christ, etc. His hand is ever in his purse, he is still a-scattering pearls of glory, ay, the very jewels of his crown, among the beloved of his soul. [Augustus, in his solemn feasts, gave gold to some, and trifles to others. The Lord gives the gold, the best things, to his own; but the trifles of this world to the men of the world.]

[5.] Fifthly, *The world gives—but they give the worst, and keep the best. But Christ gives the best, he gives the best of the best.* He gives the best joy; the best comfort, the best peace, the best love, the best assistance, etc., he gives adoption, remission, justification, sanctification, acceptance, reconciliation, and glorification, etc. He gives the best. The world gives groats, ay—but Christ gives gold, 2 Cor. 9:15, 1 Peter 1:8, Philip. 4:7, Psalm 88:10-11.

[6.] Sixthly, *The world gives a little, that they may give no more. But Christ gives—that he may give.* He gives a little grace that he may give grace upon grace. He gives a little comfort—that he may give fullness of comfort, John 1:16. He gives some sips—that he may give full draughts, he gives pence—that he may give pounds, and he gives pounds—that he may give hundreds.

The third particular that I am to show you is,

III. *The EXCELLENCY of those gifts which Christ gives, above all other gifts which the world gives.* In this I shall mind brevity, and,

[1.] First, *The gifts which Christ gives to his people, are SPIRITUAL and HEAVENLY gifts*, as is most clear by what has been already said, and the spirituality of them does demonstrate the excellency of them. And doubtless the more spiritual any gift, any promise, any

truth, any prayer, or any service is, the more excellent is that gift, etc. All Christ's gifts are like himself, spiritual and heavenly.

[2.] Secondly, *They are pure gifts.* Christ gives wine without water, light without darkness, gold without dross, and sweet without bitter, Rev. 22:1, James 3:17. There is much dross and poison in the gifts which the world gives—but there is none in the gifts which Christ gives. The streams are as the fountain is; the fountain is pure, and so are the streams. The branches are as the root is; the root is pure, and so are the branches.

[3.] Thirdly, *The gifts which Christ gives are SOUL-SATISFYING gifts.* They are such as are **suitable** to the soul, and therefore they **satisfy** the soul. Things satisfy as they suit. There is a good—and there is a suitable good. Now, it is only the suitable good which satisfies the soul of man. A pardon is most suitable to a condemned man—and therefore it best satisfies him. Health is most suitable to the sick—and therefore it satisfies when it is attained, etc. As bread satisfies the hungry soul, and drink the thirsty soul, and clothing the naked soul—so do the precious gifts which Christ bestows upon the soul satisfy the soul. The light, the love, the joy, the peace, the fellowship, etc., which Christ gives, does abundantly satisfy the soul, Jer. 31:15-16; Psalm 90:14, 36:8, 63:5, 65:4.

Oh—but the gifts which this world gives can never satisfy the soul: Eccles. 5:10, "He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance with increase." A man may as soon fill a chest with grace, or a quart-pot with virtue, as a heart with wealth. If Alexander conquers one world, he will wish for another to conquer. [The creature is all shadow and vanity; it is like Jonah's gourd; it is now nourishing, and now dying, etc.]

[4.] Fourthly, *The gifts which Christ gives are most PERMANENT and lasting gifts.* The grace he gives is called "an immortal seed," 1 John 3:9; and the glory he gives is called "everlasting glory," Romans 2:7. The gifts of the world are fading, 2 Peter 1:11. A false oath, a spark of fire, a storm at sea, a treacherous friend—brings all to nothing in a moment. Sad experience does every day confirm this.

[5.] Fifthly, and lastly, *The gifts which Christ gives are the most USEFUL gifts.* They are useful to the strengthening of the soul against temptations, and to the supporting of the soul under afflictions, and to the sweetening of all changes; health and sickness, strength and weakness, plenty and poverty, honor or disgrace, life or death. Oh—but worldly gifts cannot bear up the spirits of men from fainting and sinking when trials come, when troubles come. [The golden crown cannot cure the headache, nor the chain of pearl cannot cure the toothache. The monk rolled his hands up and down in a basin full of coins, thinking to cure his gout—but it would not do.]

The precious gifts which Christ gives his, will bear up their heads above all waters, etc. Of all gifts, they are the most useful for the producing of the most noble effects. There are no gifts which produce such effects—as the precious gifts which Christ gives. They raise men up to much life and activity; they make souls strong to do for God, to bear for God, to suffer for God; to be anything, to be nothing, that God may be "all in all." They raise the strongest joy, the most lasting comfort, and the purest peace. There are no gifts which draw out that thankfulness, and raise up to that fruitfulness, as the gifts which Jesus Christ gives. And so much for that third head, namely, the excellency of those gifts which Christ gives above all other gifts whatever.

I come now to the fourth head, and that is,

IV. *The REASONS why God gives his best gifts to his dearest ones.*

I shall only give you these six:

[1.] First, *Because he loves them with the dearest, with the choicest, and with the strongest love; therefore he gives them the best gifts.*

Christ does not love believers with a low, flat, dull, common love, with such a love as most men love one another with—but with a love that is like himself. Now, men will give as they love: 1 Sam. 1:4-5, "And Elkanah

gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all his sons and daughters, portions—but unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion, for he loved her." In the Hebrew it is, "he gave her a gift of the face;" that is, a great, an honorable gift. Men look upon great and honorable gifts with a sweet and cheerful countenance; so the gifts which Jesus Christ gives to believers are the gifts of the face, that is, they are the greatest gifts, the honorablest gifts, the choicest gifts—gifts fit for none but a king to give.

Augustus, in his solemn feasts, gave trifles to some—but gold to others. The Lord Jesus scatters the trifles of this world up and down; as Luther well speaks, "The whole Turkish empire is but a crust that God throws to a dog." God scatters *giftless gifts*, namely, the honors, riches, and favors of this world, up and down among the worst of men; [The world is a carcass, and those who hunt after it are dogs.] but as for his gold—his Spirit, his grace, his Son, his favor—these are jewels which only casts into the bosom of saints, and that because he dearly loves them.

[2.] ***Secondly, Christ gives the best gifts to his people, because they are best principled and fitted to make a divine improvement of them.***

There are no men on earth who are principled and fitted for the improvement of the special gifts which Christ gives, but his own people. [Wicked men are only principled to abuse mercy, which occasions God so often to rain hell out of heaven upon them, as he did once upon Sodom and Gomorrah for abusing of mercy.] None have such principles of wisdom, love, holiness, and faithfulness to make an improvement of the joy, the peace, the comfort, that the Lord gives as his people. Abraham gave unto "the sons of the concubines gifts, and sent them away; but unto Isaac he gave all that he had," Gen. 25:5. As Isaac was better beloved than the concubines' sons, so Isaac was better principled to improve love than they were. The application is easy.

[3.] Thirdly, ***He does it upon this account, that he may the more endear the hearts of his people to him.***

The greatest design of Christ in this world is mightily to endear the hearts of his people; and indeed it was that which was in his eye and upon his

heart from all eternity. It was this design which caused him to lay down his crown—and to take up our cross, to put off his robes—and to put on our rags, to be condemned—that we might be justified, to undergo the wrath of the Almighty—that we might forever be in the arms of his mercy. He gives his Spirit, his grace, yes, and his very self—and all to endear the hearts of his people to himself.

When Isaac would endear the heart of Rebekah, then the bracelets, the jewels, and the earrings are cast into her lap, Gen. 24:53. So the Lord Jesus casts his heavenly bracelets, jewels, and earrings into the laps of his people, out of a design to endear himself unto them. Proverbs 17:8, "A gift is a precious stone in the eyes of him who has it; whithersoever it turns, it prospers." In the Hebrew it is thus, "a gift is as a stone of grace," that is, it makes a man very acceptable and gracious in the eyes of others. A gift is like that precious stone *pantarbe*, which has a marvelous conciliating property in it; or like the wonder-working loadstone, which, as some writers observe, has among other properties this—that it makes these that have it well-spoken men and well accepted of princes. Certainly the gifts which Jesus Christ gives to his do render him very acceptable and precious in their eyes.

Christ to them is the crown of crowns, the heaven of heavens, the glory of glories; he is the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory! Proverbs 18:16, "A man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men." The gifts which Jesus Christ gives widen the heart and enlarge the soul of a believer to take in more of himself. Naturally we are narrow-mouthed heavenward, and wide-mouthed earthward; but the Lord Jesus, by casting in his jewels, his pearls, his precious gifts, into the soul, does widen the soul, and enlarge the soul, and make it more capacious to entertain himself. Christ by his gifts causes all doors to stand open, that "the King of glory may enter in," Psalm 24:7-10.

[4.] Now the *fourth* reason of the point is, *because Christ expects more from his people, than he does from all the world besides, therefore he gives them the best gifts.*

Where the Lord expects and looks for most, there he gives most. Though believers are but "a little flock," though they are but "a remnant," though

they are but "a fountain sealed, a spring shut up, a garden enclosed," yet Christ looks for more from them, than from all the world besides. He looks for more **love** from them, than from all the world besides; and he expects more **service** from them, than from all the world besides; and he looks for more **honor** from them than from all the world besides: Mal. 1:6, "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am your father, where is my honor? and if I am your master, where is my fear?" He looks for more **fear** from them than from all the world besides, and for more **prayers** and **praises** from them than from all the world besides.

[5.] Fifthly, *The Lord Jesus gives the best gifts to his own people, that he may fence and strengthen them against the worst temptations.*

There are no men on earth who lie so open to temptations, as saints. The best men have been always the most tempted. The more excellent any man is in grace and holiness, the more shall that man be followed with temptations, as you may see in David, who was tempted by Satan to number the people; and Job, to curse God and die; and Peter, to deny Christ; and so Paul was buffeted, yes, and Christ himself most grievously assaulted. The Lord knows well enough that Satan has a cruel eye, an envious eye, a malicious eye upon his beloved ones; and therefore he is pleased, by his precious gifts, to strengthen them against his assaults. What Paul once said concerning bonds and afflictions, that they attended him "in every place," that may believers say concerning temptations—that they attend them in "every place," in every calling, in every condition, in every company, in every service, etc. As now, **that the hearts of his people and temptations may not meet**—the Lord is pleased to give them the best and choicest gifts.

Austin thanked God for this, that his heart and the temptations did not meet. The Lord has on purpose given these glorious gifts into the hearts of his saints, that their souls and temptations may be kept asunder; that though they be tempted—yet they may not be conquered; though they be assaulted—yet they may not be vanquished. Basil, Luther, Vincentius, and that famous marquis Carraciolus, etc., met with very strange and strong temptations—but the precious gifts which the Lord had cast into their

bosoms made them triumph over all. Oh that grace, that peace, that life, that love, that communion with which the Lord had crowned them, made them too great, too noble, and too glorious to yield to any temptations with which they were beset. It was their pleasure to overcome offered pleasure; their honor to overcome offered honor; their greatness to overcome offered greatness. When one of them was tempted with money and preferment, he scorned the offers, saying, *Give me money that may last forever, and glory that may eternally flourish.*

Jerome tells a story of a Christian soldier, whom when the praetor could not by any torments remove from Christianity, he commanded him to be laid on a bed in a pleasant garden, among the flourishing and fragrant flowers; which done, all others withdrawing, a most beautiful harlot came to him, and used all art to destroy his soul; but the Christian soldier being filled with the royal gifts of the Spirit, bit off his tongue with his teeth, and spat it in her face as she was tempting him, and so got victory over all her temptations.

The precious favors God confers upon his, make them temptation-proof; they make believers trample upon the most amiable baits. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God," says Joseph. Joseph's sense of Potiphar's favors heaped upon him, strengthened him against the impudent solicitations of his wanton mistress, Gen. 39. And shall not the singular favors which God confers upon his dearest ones strengthen them against Satan's assaults? Surely gracious hearts are wrought more upon, and bettered and strengthened more by spirituals than by temporals; by eternals than by externals; and if Satan does not find it so, I am much mistaken.

Well, remember this, Satan's overcoming the saints gives him the greatest advantage to boast and triumph over Christ. [The devil marches well-armed and in good array, says Luther.]

Ambrose brings in the devil boasting against Christ, and challenging Judas as his own; *He is not yours, Lord Jesus—he is mine; his thoughts beat for me; he eats with you—but he is fed by me; he takes bread from you—but money from me; he drinks with you—but sells your blood to me.* So when Satan prevails over the saints, *look, O Christ,* says he, *are*

these the price of your blood? are these the objects of your love? are these the delight of your soul? what, are these your jewels? are these the apple of your eye? are these your pleasant portion? Why, how I lead them! how I triumph over them! they seem rather to be mine than yours. Ah, Christians! resist as for life, that Satan may never have occasion thus to insult and triumph over Christ, etc.

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, *Christ gives the best gifts to his dearest ones, that they may be an honor and a praise unto him in the glorious day of his owning of them, and marriage to them before all the world.*

Believers in this life are but betrothed to Christ: "I will betroth you unto me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness," Hosea 2:19-20. Their marriage-day is put off until the glorious day of Christ's appearing; the great day of his glory will be the marriage-day; Rev. 21:2, 9-10, compared. [The good things of eternal life are so **many**, that they exceed number; so **great**, that they exceed measure; so **precious**, that they are above all estimation. *Augustine.*] It would not be for the honor and glory of Christ, that his spouse in that day should be clothed with rags; therefore he has given them the bracelets, the ear-rings, and the jewels before-hand, that they may be a praise and an honor to him in the marriage day. Oh! when the saints shall appear with all those glorious jewels about them, that Christ has bequeathed to them, how will their splendid glory darken all other glory, and make the very sun to hide its face. This is our betrothing day, that will be our marriage day.

Ridley, the night before him martyrdom, invited his hostess and the rest at table to his marriage, "for," said he, "tomorrow I must be married." So several other martyrs went as merrily to die—as to dine; knowing that their dying day did but make way for their marriage day. The Lord does by his rich and royal favors, trim up his bride beforehand, that she may be an honor and a praise to him in the day coronation, in the day of marriage—when he will own her before devils, angels, and all reprobates; when he will say, "Lo, here am I, and the bride, O Father! that you have given me."

And thus you have a brief account of the reasons of the point, why the Lord gives the best gifts to his own people.

We shall make some short but sweet USES of this point.

And, *first*,

[1.] Does the Lord give the best and greatest gifts to his people? ***Then you who are his people, sit down and wonder at this matchless love of God.***

Oh! what is in you or I—that should cause the Lord to give such gifts to us as he has given? We were all equal in sin and misery; nay, doubtless, we have actually outsinned thousands, to whom these precious gifts are denied. Let us therefore sit down and wonder at this condescending love of God. Oh! we were once poor wretches sitting upon the ash-heap, yes, wallowing in our blood—and yet behold the King of kings, the Lord of lords, has so far condescended in his love, as to bestow himself, his Spirit, his grace, and all the jewels of his royal crown upon us! Oh! what heart can conceive, what tongue can express, this matchless love!

"I will be yours forever," says Christ, "and my Spirit shall be yours forever, and my grace yours forever, and my glory yours forever, and my righteousness yours forever; all I am and all I have, shall be yours forever!" O what matchless love is this! Oh! what a Christ is this! [*O Lord Jesus,* says Bernard, breaking forth into an admiration of Christ's love, *I love you more than all my goods, more than all my friends, yes, more than my very self, etc.*]

[2.] But then, *secondly,* ***Be greatly thankful, oh be greatly thankful—for the great gifts which Christ has bestowed upon you.***

It is not a little thankfulness which will answer and suit to the great gifts which the Lord Jesus has bestowed upon you. Oh say with the psalmist, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his favors, and great benefits. I will take the cup of salvation, and will call upon the name of the Lord," Psalm 116:13-14. Yes, say again with the psalmist, "I will praise you more

and more." Or as it is in the Hebrew, "I will add to your praise," Psalm 71:14. Oh when you look upon the jewels, the pearls that Christ has given you, say, Lord, I will praise you more and more, I will rise higher and higher in your praises, I will be still a-adding to your praise. The very law of **nature** bespeaks great thankfulness, where great favors are given; and the law of **custom** bespeaks it, and does not the law of **grace** bespeak it much more? [Injuries shall be writ in the dust—but our mercies on marble, that our hearts may be the better provoked to praise and thankfulness.]

When Tamerlane had taken Bajazet, among other questions he asked him "if ever he had given God thanks for making him so great an emperor?" He confessed immediately, that "he never thought of that;" to whom Tamerlane replied, "It is no wonder so ungrateful a man should be made a spectacle of misery." Oh! what do they then deserve who are unthankful for spiritual favors!

Tell me, O Christians, are not the gifts which Christ has conferred upon you, **special** gifts? And will you not he thankful for them? Were they but common gifts, you ought to be thankful for them; how much more then for special gifts, for right-handed favors?

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness." Jeremiah 31:3. There are but few upon whom God bestows His saving love. Tell me, are not the gifts which Christ has given you, **rare** gifts? What would you have been--if Christ had not made a difference between you and others--by those glorious gifts which He has conferred upon you? You look upon some, and see they are very ignorant of spiritual truth. O! What would you have been--if God had not bestowed that saving knowledge upon you? You look upon others who are unclean, profane, and filthy. Why! such a wretch you would have been--if the Lord had not made a difference between you and them, by bestowing Himself, His grace, and Spirit upon you. "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. **Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath!** But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us

with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:3-6.

"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **And that is what some of you were!** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

[It was always a principle in morality, that sweet and intimate friendship cannot be extended to many. Friends usually go by pairs.]

It was long since determined in the schools, that "penitents had more reason to be thankful than innocent; sin giving an advantage to mercy to be doubly free in giving and in pardoning;" and so the greater obligation is left upon us to thankfulness.

Luther has a very famous story, in his writing upon the fourth commandment, in the time of the council of Constance. He tells you of two cardinals, that as they were riding to the council, they saw a shepherd in the field weeping. One of them being affected with his weeping, rode to him to comfort him; and coming near to him he desired to know the reason of his weeping. The shepherd was unwilling to tell him at first—but at last he told him, saying, "I, looking upon this toad, considered that I never praised God as I ought, for making me such an excellent creature as a man, lovely and reasonable. I have not blessed him, that he made me not such a deformed toad as this." The cardinal hearing this, and considering that God had done far greater things for him than for this poor shepherd, he fell down dead from his mule; his servants lifting him up, and bringing him to the city, he came to life again, and then cried out, "O! how truly did you say, the unlearned rise and take heaven by force, and we with all our learning wallow in flesh and blood." The application is easy.

Thirdly, The next use is,

[3.] *If the Lord has given the best gifts to his people, then* ***oh that his***

people would not give God the worst—but the best of everything. [*It is the most wicked avarice to defraud God of the oblation of ourselves,* says Chrysostom.]

Oh! give the Lord the best of your **strength**, the best of your **time**, the best of your **mercies**, and the best of your **services**—who has given to your souls the best of gifts! Num. 18:29, "You must present as the Lord's portion the **best** and holiest part of everything given to you." So I say, of all your offerings offer God the **best**, who has given to you the best and greatest gifts. So in Exod. 35:22, "Some brought to the Lord their offerings of gold—medallions, earrings, rings from their fingers, and necklaces. They presented gold objects of every kind to the Lord." They gave the best of the best, and so must we.

Oh do not offer to God the worst of your **time**, the worst of your **strength**, the worst of your **mercies**, the worst of your **services**. That same is a very dreadful text: Mal. 1:8, 13-14, compared, "When you give blind animals as sacrifices, isn't that wrong? And isn't it wrong to offer animals that are crippled and diseased? Try giving gifts like that to your governor, and see how pleased he is!" says the Lord Almighty." Says God, Will men be put off thus? No, I know they won't; and why then should you deal worse with me than with men? Your governors will have the best, yes, the best of the best; and will you deal worse with me, says God, than with your governors? [If a man should serve the Lord a thousand years, says Austin, it would not deserve an hour of the reward in heaven; no, not a moment, much less an eternity. And therefore, says he, we had need do as **much** as we can, and do all that we do as **well** as we can, etc.]

Will you thus requite me for all my favors, O foolish people and unwise? is this your kindness to your friend? Ver. 13-14, "You say, 'It's too hard to serve the Lord,' and you turn up your noses at his commands," says the Lord Almighty. "Think of it! Animals that are stolen and mutilated, crippled and sick—presented as offerings! Should I accept from you such offerings as these?" asks the Lord." Oh! that God had not cause to complain thus of many of your souls, to whom he has shown much love. But mark what follows: ver. 14, "Cursed is the cheat who promises to give a fine ram from his flock but then sacrifices a defective one to the Lord. For I am a great king," says the Lord Almighty, "and my name is feared

among the nations!" If you have better in your hands, and yet shall go to put off God with the worst—the curse will follow. Think of it and tremble, all you who deal fraudulently and false-heartedly with God!

Ah, Christians! you must say, *World, stand behind! Sin and Satan, get you behind us—for the best gifts, the choicest favors that ever were given, we have received from the Father of lights; and therefore by his gifts he has obliged our souls to give him the best of our time, strength, and services; and therefore we will not be at your call or beck any longer!* Oh, say, the Lord has given us the best gifts, and "Cursed is the cheat who promises to give a fine ram from his flock but then sacrifices a defective one to the Lord."

[4.] Fourthly, ***This should bespeak the people of God to trust and lean upon God for lesser gifts.***

Has God given you a crown—and will you not trust him for a crumb? 2 Tim. 4:8. Has he given you a house which has "foundations, whose builder and maker is God?" Heb. 11:15. Has he given you "a kingdom that shakes not"? Heb. 12:28. And will you not trust him for a cottage, for a little house-room in this world? Has he given you himself, his Son, his Spirit, his grace—and will you not trust him to give you bread, and friends, and clothes, and other necessary mercies that he knows you need? Romans 8:32, Mat. 6:32. Has he given you the greater—and will deny you for the lesser? Surely not! Will you trust that man for much—who has given you but a little? And will you not trust that God for a little—who has given you much? Will you not trust him for pence—who has given you pounds? O sirs! has the Lord given you himself, the best of favors—and will not you trust him for the least favors? Has he given you pearls—and will not you trust him for pins? etc.

Does not the apostle argue sweetly in Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" What! says the apostle, has God given us his Son, his only Son, his bosom Son, his beloved Son, the Son of his joy, the Son of his delights? Oh how can he then but cast in all other things into the bargain—such as wrapping paper and packing thread? Oh! that Christians would learn to reason themselves out of their fears, and

out of their distrusts, as the apostle does. Oh! that Christians would no longer rend and rack their precious souls with fears and cares—but rest satisfied in this, that he who has been so kind to them in spirituals, will not be lacking to them in temporals, Proverbs 8:23-32.

[5.] Fifthly, *If the Lord has given the best gifts to his people, this should then bespeak his people,* ***not to envy the men of the world for those lesser favors which God has conferred upon them.***

It was horrid wickedness in Ahab to envy poor Naboth, because of his vineyard; and is it a virtue in you who are Christians to envy others, because their outward mercies are greater or sweeter than yours? Should the prince upon whose head the royal crown is set, and about whose neck the golden chain is put—envy those whose hands are full of sugar-plums, and whose laps are full of rosemary, etc. Has not God, O Christians! put a royal crown of glory upon your heads, and a golden chain of grace about your necks, and his Son's glorious robe upon your backs? and why then should your hearts rise in envy against others' mercies? O! reason yourselves out of this sinful temper! [David three different times gave himself this counsel—not to envy at others. Psalm 37:1, 7-8, compared. So Psalm 73:21.]

I would have every Christian thus to argue: Has not the Lord given me himself? Is not one grain of that grace which God has given me, more worth than ten thousand worlds? and why then should I be envious of others' mercies?

There was a soldier who, for breaking his rank in reaching after a bunch of grapes, was condemned to die by martial law, and as he went to execution, he went eating of his grapes; upon which, some of his fellow-soldiers were somewhat troubled, saying, "He ought then to mind somewhat else!" To whom he replied, "I beseech you, sirs, do not envy me my grapes, they will cost me dear; you would be loath to have them at the rate that I must pay for them." So say I, O saints! do not envy the men of this world because of their honors, riches, etc., for you would be loath to have them at that rate which they must pay for them!

Oh! there is a day of reckoning a-coming, a day wherein all the nobles

and brave gallants in the world must be brought to the bar, and give an account of how they have improved and employed all the favors which God has conferred upon them; therefore envy them not! Is it madness and folly in a great favorite at court—to envy those who have only the scraps which come from the prince's table? Oh! then, what madness and folly is it that the favorites of heaven should envy the men of the world—who at best do but feed upon the scraps which come from God's table! Spirituals are the delicacies, temporals are but the scraps. Temporals are the bones, spirituals are the choice meat.

Is it below a man to envy the dogs because of the bones? And is it not much more below a Christian to envy others for temporals—when himself enjoys spirituals?

[6.] Sixthly, ***Be not troubled for the lack of lesser gifts.***

It is to me a sad thing to see gracious souls, who have some comfortable satisfaction in their own hearts that the Lord has given Christ and grace to them, John 14:1-3, etc., go up and down whining and weeping because they have not health, or wealth, or child, or trade, etc., when the Lord has bestowed upon them such choice, spiritual blessings—the least of which will outweigh all temporal blessings. Well, Christians, remember this, you act below your spiritual birth, your holy calling—when you allow your hearts to be troubled and perplexed for the lack of temporal things. Can you read God's special love in these temporal things? Does your happiness lie in the enjoyment of them? Are not the angels happy without them? Was not Lazarus more happy than Dives? Yes! Oh! then, let not the lack of those things trouble you, the enjoyment of which can never make you happy. Should one be troubled for lack of a rattle or a doll—who is proclaimed heir of a crown? And why then should a Christian, who is heir-apparent to a heavenly crown, be troubled for the lack of worldly toys? etc.

Jerome tells us of one Didymus, a godly preacher, who was blind; Alexander, a godly man, coming to him, asked him whether he was not sorely troubled and afflicted for lack of his sight? "Oh yes," said Didymus, "it is a great affliction and trouble to me." Then Alexander chid him, saying, "Has God given you the excellency of an angel, of an apostle—and

are you troubled for that which rats and mice and brute beasts have."

It is great folly, it is double iniquity for a Christian to be troubled for the lack of those things that God ordinarily bestows upon the worst of men. Oh the mercies which a Christian has in **hand**, oh the mercies which a Christian has in the **promises**, oh the mercies which a Christian has in **hope**—are so many, so precious, and so glorious, that they should bear up his head and heart from fainting and sinking under all outward needs.

There goes a story among scholars of Aesop's deceiving Mercury, he having promised him one part of his nuts, keeps all the kernels to himself, and gives to Mercury only the shells. Ah, Christians! God has given you the kernels—but the world the shells; why then should you be troubled for lack of the shells—when God has given you the kernel? etc. [Cyprian reports of some who, forsaking the Lord, were given over to evil spirits, and died fearfully. A backslider may say, All my pains and charge is lost.]

[7.] Seventhly, *If the Lord has given his people the best gifts, oh then,* ***let not them leave off that God, who has bestowed such choice and noble favors on them.***

Jer. 2:11-13, "Has any nation ever exchanged its gods for another god, even though its gods are nothing? Yet my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols! The heavens are shocked at such a thing and shrink back in horror and dismay, says the Lord." Why? "For my people have committed two evils, they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters," etc. This was that which aggravated the Israelites' sin, Psalm 105. and 106—that they forsook that God who had conferred upon them many rich and royal favors. But oh! then, what madness and folly is it in you—that you should forsake that God who has done such mighty things for your souls?

I may say, to keep you close to God—as Saul said to his servants, to keep them close to him, 1 Sam. 22:7, "Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, you Benjamites, will the son of Jesse give everyone of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds?" Ah, Christians! can the world give

you spiritual life? Can the world give you peace of conscience, pardon of sin, the favor of God, the hopes of glory? No! Oh then! never leave nor forsake that God who has given you all these royal favors, which none can give nor take—but himself. He who forsakes God forsakes his own mercies; he forsakes his life, his joy, his crown, his all in all.

There is no evil compared to this—of forsaking the greatest good. It makes a man's life a very hell. "Such shall be written in the dust," Jer. 17:13.

[8.] Eighthly and lastly, ***Be not impatient nor angry—when God shall take away some lesser mercies from you.*** Did an impatient soul but see himself in a glass, he would loathe himself; for, says Homer, his eyes sparkle like fire, his heart swells, his pulse beats, etc. In a word, an impatient soul is a bedlam, a monster, a devil, etc.

Has God given you the best and the greatest gifts which your souls can ask—or he himself can give? And will you be angry or impatient when he shall come to take away lesser mercies? What? will you be an impatient soul, when God comes and writes death upon such a near mercy, and passes the sentence of death upon such and such desirable mercies? Truly this is the way to provoke God to strip you naked of your choicest ornaments, and to put you in chains—or else to turn you a grazing among the beasts of the field, as he did Nebuchadnezzar.

God gives the best—and takes away the worst; he gives the greatest—and takes away the least; the sense of which made Job bless God when stripped of all. If a man should give you a pearl—and take away a pin; if he should give you a bag of gold—and take away a bag of pennies, would it not be a madness in you to be impatient, and angry? Does God take away a pin—and has he not given you a pearl for it? He has given you a *pound*, O Christian! for every *penny* that he has taken from you; therefore be not angry, nor impatient. Remember, Christians, how many in the world there are, who sit sighing and mourning under the lack of those very favors that you do enjoy. "Why does the living man complain?" What! out of the grave—and complain! What! out of hell—and complain! This is man's sin—and God's wonder!

But now some poor unsaved sinners may say—Here is good news for saints—but what is all this to us all this while?

Why, I will tell you; I have something to say for the comfort and encouragement of poor unsaved sinners. Ah, sinners! Christ is willing to bestow the best gifts upon the worst sinners. Take one text for all; it is a sweet one, and full to the point in hand: Psalm 68:18, "You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive, you have received gifts for men, yes, for the *rebellious* also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." [Read also Proverbs 1:20-29, chapter 8:1-8, and chapter 9:1-7; Isaiah 43:22-25; Jer. 51:5. None so faithful as Christ, Heb. 3:5-6.]

Christ has received gifts, as a steward, from the hand of the Father, to dispense them among men, yes, among the *rebellious*—the worst of men. If there is here at this time any rebellious sinner, or rebellious drunkard, or rebellious curser, etc., let such rebellious sinners know that Christ has received gifts "even for the *rebellious*."

"That the Lord God might dwell among them." [Rev. 3:20, 2 Cor. 6:16, "I will dwell in them." The words are very significant in the original: I will *in*dwell *in* them. There are two *ins* in the original, as if God could never have enough communion with them.] That is, that the Lord God might have sweet fellowship and communion with them: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

"Behold **I** stand at the door and knock." I, who have heaven to give, and peace to give, and pardon to give, and grace to give, and myself to give! I, who has pure gold to enrich you, and white raiment to clothe you, and eye-salve to anoint you! "I stand at the door and knock; if *any man* will open the door," let him be ever so guilty, ever so filthy, ever so unworthy, etc., "I will come in and sup with him, and he with me."

Lord, at whose door do you stand knocking? Is it at the rich man's door, or at the righteous man's door, or at the humbled man's door, or at the weary and heavy-laden man's door, or at the mourner's door, or at the qualified or prepared man's door? No! says Christ, it is at none of these doors. At whose door, then, O blessed Lord? At the lukewarm Laodicean's

door; at their door who are neither hot nor cold, who are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." These, says Christ, are the worst of the worst; and yet if any of these wretches, these monsters of mankind, will open the door, "I will come in, and will sup with them, and they with me."

I have read a remarkable story of a great rebel who had raised a mighty party against a Roman emperor. The emperor upon his being much provoked and stirred in spirit, made a proclamation, that whoever brought in the rebel, dead or alive, would have a great sum of money. The rebel, hearing of this, comes and presents himself unto the emperor, and demanded of him the sum of money; whereupon the emperor reasons thus, "If I would now kill him, the world would say I did it to save my money;" and so he pardoned him, and gave him the great sum of money, notwithstanding all his former rebellion.

Oh! shall a heathen emperor do thus to a rebel who was in arms against him, and will not God do as much for poor rebellious sinners? Surely he will. What though you have been in arms against God, and mustered up all the strength and force you could, even all the members of your body, and faculties of your soul, against God, and Christ, and holiness—yet know that the glorious King is a merciful king; he is a God of pardons; he delights to make his grace glorious, and therefore is very willing to show mercy to the greatest rebels, to the worst of sinners. Witness Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, the thief, Paul, and others. [Romans 5:10; Col. 1:21; Romans 6:13, 16, 19-20.] **The greatness of man's sins do but set off the riches of free grace.** Sins are debts, and God can as easily blot out a debt of many thousands as he can a lesser debt; therefore let not the greatest rebel despair but believe, and he shall find that "where sin has abounded, there grace shall superabound," etc.

And thus much for this observation. We shall now proceed to the next words, namely, "*That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ*." Ephesians 3:8.

The Fourth Doctrine

I shall now proceed to the fourth doctrine, namely, **that the gifts and graces which God bestows upon his people should be improved, employed, and exercised by his people.**

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, **that I should preach among the Gentiles** the unsearchable riches of Christ!" Ephesians 3:8

A little to open and explain the words.

"That I should **preach**." That is, declare good news, or the glad tidings of salvation that is brought by Jesus Christ to sinners. The Greek word in the New Testament, answers to the Hebrew word *Bessorah* in the Old Testament—both signifying good news, glad tidings, or a joyful message.

"That I should preach among the **Gentiles**." The word that is here rendered Gentiles, is sometimes used generally for all men, or all nations. So it is used in Mat. 25:32, and 28:19. Sometimes this Greek word is used more especially for the people of the Jews; so in John 11:48, 50-52, and Acts 10:22; and sometimes it is used for the Gentiles, distinguished from the Jews; so in Mat. 6:32.

By the Gentiles here you are to understand those poor heathen who were without God in the world, who never had heard of Christ, nor those unsearchable riches that are in him; as you may clearly see by comparing this text with that, Gal. 1:15-16, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach among the heathen," says he, "immediately I consulted not with flesh and blood."

The first observation that I shall speak to, from these words thus opened, is this: **That the gifts and graces that God bestows upon his people should be improved, employed, and exercised by his people.**

The Greek word that is here rendered ***grace***, we showed you, has a three-fold signification in the Scripture. Sometimes it denotes the favor of God, sometimes the common gifts of the Spirit, and sometimes the saving graces of the Spirit. Now, says Paul, that singular favor that God has conferred upon me, and all those common gifts and special graces with which he has enriched me, they are all to be employed and exercised. "Unto me is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

So that there is nothing more clear than this, namely: That the gifts and graces that God bestows upon his people, should be employed, improved, and exercised by his people.

"To me is this grace given." Not that I should be idle—but active; not that I should be negligent—but diligent; not that I should hide my talents —but improve them.

I shall touch upon a few scriptures that speak out this truth, and then open it to you. 2 Tim. 1:6, "Therefore I put you in remembrance, that you stir up the gift of God which is in you." As the fire is increased and preserved by blowing, so are our graces. Some think that it is a metaphor taken from a spark kept in ashes, which, by gentle blowing, is stirred up, until it becomes a flame. Others say, it is an allusion to the fire in the temple, which was always to be kept burning. [Calvin and others.] We get nothing by dead and useless habits. Talents hidden in a napkin gather rust. The noblest faculties are imbased, when not improved, when not exercised.

Philip. 2:12, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The Greek is, "Work until you get the work through." The reason why many men's hearts tremble, and are so full of fears and doubts, is because their salvation is not wrought out; they do net make thorough work in their souls, they put not that question home—Whether they have grace or not? Whether they have an interest in Christ or not? They do not rise with all their strength against sin, nor with all their power to serve the Lord; and therefore fears and doubts do compass them round about.

So in 1 Cor. 15:58, "Be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in

the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

"Be steadfast." It is a metaphor taken from a foundation, on which a thing stands firmly; or a seat or chair, wherein one sits fast.

"Unmoveable" signifies one that will not easily move his place or opinion.

"Abounding," or excelling "in the work of the Lord."

"Knowing that your labor is not in vain." The Greek is "labors unto weariness." The apostle would have them labor unto weariness; "For," says he, "it is not in vain." It will turn to a good account; it will yield you much of heaven here, and make you high in heaven hereafter. [Grace is bettered and made more perfect by acting. Neglect of our graces is the ground of their decrease and decay. Wells are the sweeter for drawing.]

There are only two things that I shall endeavor to do, for the opening of the point.

I. To show you **why** persons must improve, employ, and exercise the graces and gifts which God has bestowed upon them. And then,

II. The **end** to which they are to exercise those graces and gifts.

I. For the *first*, There are these **twelve reasons why gracious souls should exercise and improve their gifts and graces.** Friends, this point is a point of as singular use and of as great concernment to you, as any that I know the Scripture speaks of, and therefore I desire you to lend your most serious and solemn attentions.

[1.] *First*, They must exercise and improve their graces, ***Because the exercise and improvement of their graces is the ready way to be rich in grace.***

As sin is increased in the soul by the frequent actings of it, so grace is nourished and strengthened in the soul by its frequent actings. The *exercise* of grace is always attended with the *increase* of grace. Proverbs

10:4, "The diligent hand makes rich;" or, the nimble hand; the hand which is active and agile—that hand makes rich. Ruth 2, how did Boaz follow the business himself! his eyes were in every corner, on the servants and on the reapers, yes, on the gleaners too. [Our graces are like Gideon's army—but a handful in comparison; but our sins are like the Midianites, innumerable as grasshoppers.]

It is recorded of Severus, that his care was not to look what men said of him, or how they censured him—but to look what was to be done by him. He will rise in judgment against those professors who look more what this man and the other man says of them, than what is to be done by them. The heart of a Christian is to be taken up with what is to be done by him, and not with what this man thinks, or the other judges of him.

Pacunius has an elegant saying; "I hate," says he, "the men who are idle in deed, and philosophic in word." God loves, says Luther, the runner, not the questioner. **Grace grows by exercise and decays by disuse.** Though both arms grow—yet that arm which a man most uses is the stronger and the bigger; so it is both in gifts and graces. In birds, their wings which have been used most are sweetest; the application is easy. Such men as are contented with so much grace as will bring them to glory, with so much grace as will keep hell and their souls asunder—will never be rich in grace, nor high in comfort or assurance. Such souls usually go to heaven in a storm. Oh, how weather-beaten are they before they can reach the heavenly harbor!

[2.] *Secondly*, They must exercise their gifts and graces,***because it is the main end of God's giving gifts and graces to them.***

Grace is given to trade with; it is given to lay out, not to lay up. [The reason, say some, why Christ cursed the fig tree, though the time of bearing fruit was not come, was because it made a glorious show with leaves, and promised much—but brought forth nothing.] Grace is a candle that must not be put under a bushel—but set upon a candlestick. Grace is a golden treasure that must be improved, not hoarded up, as men do their gold. Grace is a talent, and it is given for this very end, that it should be employed and improved for the honor and advantage of him who gave it. The *slothful* servant, in God's account, is an *evil* servant, and

accordingly God has denoted him, and doomed him for his ill husbandry, to destruction, Mat. 25:24-31.

"What a shame is it," says Jerome, "that faith should not be able to do that which infidelity has done! What! not better fruit in the vineyard, in the garden of God, than in the wilderness? What! not better fruit grow upon the tree of life, than upon the root of nature?" etc.

[3.] And then thirdly, ***Because grace, exercised and improved, will do that for us, which all the means in the world can never do for us.*** [No Israelite who was bitten or stung with the fiery serpent could be healed but by looking up to the brazen serpent. **Those spots which a Christian finds in his own heart can only, by a hand of faith, be washed out in the blood of the Lamb.**]

I shall evidence this truth in some remarkable instances.

Suppose the **guilt of sin** to be upon a man's soul, even as a heavy mountain, there is nothing but the exercise of grace which can remove this guilt. The man prays, and yet guilt sticks upon him; he hears, and yet guilt as a mountain lies heavy upon him; he mourns, he sighs, he groans, and yet guilt sticks upon him; he runs from ordinance to ordinance, and from ordinary service to extraordinary, and yet guilt follows him; he runs from man to man, 'Sir, was ever any man's case like mine? I have prayed thus long, I have heard thus long, I have mourned thus long, etc., and yet guilt lies as a mountain upon my soul!'

There is nothing below the exercise of grace which will remove this. It is only faith in the promises of remission that will remove the guilt of sin which lies so heavy upon the soul. It is only faith's application of the righteousness of Christ which can take off this burden that sinks the soul, even as low as hell. Faith must make a plaster of the blood of Christ, and apply it to the soul, or the soul will die under its guilt. There is nothing below this can do it. Faith's application of the blood of Christ takes off the guilt, and turns the storm to a calm: Romans 5:1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Again, suppose that the power and **prevalency of sin** hinders the soul's

sweet communion with God, so that the soul cannot sport itself, and joy and delight itself in God, as in the days of old; it cannot see God smiling, stroking, and speaking kindly, as in former days. Now, there is nothing in all the world which can ease the soul of this burden of sin, but the exercise of grace. Oh, says such a poor soul, I pray, sir—and yet I sin; I resolve against sin—and yet I sin; I combat against sin—and yet I am carried captive by sin; I have left no outward means unattempted—and yet after all, my sins are too hard for me; after all my sweating, striving, and weeping—I am carried down the stream. There is nothing now but the actings of faith upon a crucified Christ that will take off this burden from the soul of man. [Much less, then, can the papists' purgatories, watchings, whippings, etc., or Saint Francis' kissing or licking of lepers' sores, cleanse the fretting leprosy of sin, etc.]

Now, you must make use of your graces to draw virtue from Christ; now faith must touch the hem of Christ's garment, or you will never be healed. It is just with a soul in this case as it was with the poor widow, Luke 8:43-49, that had the issue of blood; she leaves no means unattempted whereby she might be cured; she runs from one physician to another, until she had spent all she was worth, and now says she, "If I could but touch the hem of his garment, I would be whole." Hereupon she crowds through the crowd to come to Christ, and being got behind him, she touches the hem of his garment, "and immediately she was made whole." The cure being thus wrought, Christ uncrowns himself to crown her faith: "And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort, your *faith* has made you whole; go in peace." He does not say, Woman, your trembling has made you whole; or, Woman, your sweating and struggling in a crowd to come to me, has made you whole; or, Woman, your falling down and abasing yourself, though she did all this; but, "Woman, your *faith* has made you whole." Ah, Christians! it is not your trembling, or your falling down, or your sweating in this and that service—which will stop the bloody issue of your sins—but believing in Christ. [A touch of faith cured the woman, as well as a full hold. It is the exercise of the graces of the Spirit by which we mortify the deeds of the flesh, Romans 8:13. **It is not our strong resolutions or purposes which will be able to overmaster these enemies.** A foul sore will run until it be indeed healed, though we say it shall not.]

It is sad to consider how few professors in these days have attained the right way of mortifying of sin. They usually go out against their sins in the strength of their own purposes, prayers, and resolutions, etc., and scarcely look so high as a crucified Christ; they mind not the exercise of their faith upon Christ; and therefore it is a righteous thing with Christ that after all, that they should be carried captive by their sins. Nothing eats out sin like the actings of grace; nothing weakens and wastes the strength of sin like the exercise of grace. Oh! did men believe more in Christ, sin would die more; did they believe the threatenings more, sin would die more; did they believe the promises more, sin would die more; did they believe reigning with Christ more, sin would die more: "He who has this hope purifies himself, even as Christ is pure," 1 John 3:3.

Again, Suppose that the soul be followed with black, dismal, fiery **temptations**, there is nothing now in all the world that can divinely strengthen and fence the soul against these temptations but the exercise of grace, the improvement of grace. It is true you are to hear, read, pray, meditate, etc.; but all these without the exercise of grace in them, will never make you victorious over Satan's temptations. Nothing puts Satan to it like the exercise of grace. [Luther said, *I am without set upon by all the world, and within by the devil and all his angels*. And yet, by the exercise of grace, he became victorious over them all, etc.]

It is said of Satan, that he would say to a holy man who was much in the exercise of grace, *You do always overcome me*. Eph. 6:16. "Above all, take the shield of faith, whereby you may be able to quench the fiery darts of the devil." Whatever piece of armor you neglect, be sure that you neglect not the shield of faith. The Greek word that is here rendered *a shield*, comes from another word that signifies a door or a gate, to note that as a door or a gate does secure our bodies, so will the shield of faith secure our souls against the fiery darts of the devil: "Above all, take the shield of faith, whereby you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the devil." The apostle alludes to the custom of the Scythians, who used to dip the heads of their arrows or darts in the gall of asps and vipers, the venom of which, like a fire in their flesh, killed the wounded with torments—most like hell of any other. But the soldiers then had generally shields of leather, as several writers testify, and when the fiery darts

landed upon them, they were presently quenched. So these fiery darts of Satan, when they land upon the shield of faith, they are presently quenched; and there is no other way to do it. Until the Lord draws out a man's faith to act upon the promises and upon Christ, these fiery darts will not be quenched.

Suppose that the **world**, the *smiling* world or the *frowning* world, the *tempting* world or the *persecuting* world--should lie as a heavy stone or burden upon your hearts, as it does upon the hearts of thousands in these days; (witness their attempting anything to get the favors, honors and riches of this world! Ah! how many have turned their backs upon God, and Christ, and truth, etc., to gain the world!) **How will you get this burden off?** Only by exercise and actings of grace. Many men hear sermons much--and yet remain worldly. They pray like angels--and yet live as if there were no heaven nor hell. They will talk much of heaven--and yet those who are spiritual and wise do smell their breath to stink strong of earth. All the arts, and parts, and gifts in the world can never cure them of this soul-killing disease; but only the exercise of grace, until faith breaks forth in its glorious actings. A man may hear sermons and pray many years--and yet remain as carnal, base, and worldly as ever! There is no way under heaven to remove this stone, this burden--but the exercise of faith! "For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." 1 John 5:4-5

[Faith is a better engineer than Daedalus, and yet he made wings with which he made an escape over the high walls within which he was imprisoned. This world is the soul's prison—yet faith is such an engineer that it can make wings for the soul to fly out, etc.]

Not that the habit of faith overcomes the world—but faith in the exercise of it conquers the world, and that it does these three ways.

(1.) First, *Faith, in the exercise of it, presents the world to the soul under all those notions that the Scripture holds forth the world unto us by.*

The Scripture holds forth the world as an impotent thing, as a mixed

thing, as a mutable thing, as a momentary thing. [Earthly riches are full of poverty, says Austin.] Now faith comes and sets this home with power upon the soul, and this takes the soul off from the world.

(2.) Secondly, *Faith does it by causing the soul to converse with more glorious, soul-satisfying, soul-delighting, and soul-contenting objects*.

2 Cor. 4:16-18, "Though our outward man perish—yet our inward man is renewed day by day." How comes this to pass? "While we look not at the things which are seen—but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal—but the things which are not seen are eternal." [While we look upon eternal things as a man looks upon the mark that he aims to hit.] Now when faith is busied and exercised about soul-ennobling, soul-greatening, soul-raising, and soul-cheering objects, a Christian tramples the world under his feet; and now heavy afflictions are light, and long afflictions short, and bitter afflictions sweet, unto him, etc. Now, stand by world! welcome Christ! etc.

So in Heb. 11. It was the exercise of faith and hope upon noble and glorious objects which carried them above the world, above the smiling world, and above the frowning world, above the tempting world, and above the persecuting world, as you may see by comparing several verses of that chapter together: ver. 9-10, "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Ver. 24-26, "And by faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect to the recompense of reward." Ver. 27, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." And in ver. 35, "They refused deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." [Every man is as the objects are about which his soul is most conversant, etc.]

So in Heb. 10:34, "They took joyfully the confiscation of their goods," (Why?) "knowing in themselves, that they had in heaven a better and

more enduring substance."

(3.) Thirdly and lastly, *Faith does it by assuring the soul of enjoying of better things*. For my part I must confess, so far as I understand anything of the things of God, I cannot see how a soul under the power of a well-grounded assurance can be a servant to his slave, I mean the world. I confess men may talk much of heaven, and of Christ, and religion, etc.; but give me a man who does really and clearly live under the power of divine assurance, and I cannot see how such a one can be carried out in an inordinate love to these poor transitory things. I know not one instance in all the Scripture that can be produced to prove that ever any precious saint that has lived in the assurance of divine love, and that has walked up and down this world with his pardon in his bosom, have ever been charged with an inordinate love of the world. [In my treatise called "*Heaven on Earth*," you may find many considerations to evince this, and to that I refer you, etc.] That is a sad word, 1 John 2:15.

[4.] Now a fourth reason of this point, why persons are to exercise their graces, is, *because* ***it is the best way to preserve their souls from apostasy and backsliding from God.*** 2 Pet. 1:5-11, "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, etc.; for if you do these things you shall never fall." "Add to your faith virtue." The Greek word that is here rendered *add*, has a great emphasis in it. It is taken from dancing round. Link them, says the apostle, hand in hand, as in dancing, people join hands; so we must join hand to hand in these measures of graces, lead up the dance of graces, as in the *galliard* [French dance] everyone takes his turn.

So in chapter 3:17-18, "You therefore, beloved, seeing you know these things, beware lest you also, being led aside with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." There are many who turn aside, and part with God, and Christ, and truth, and the words of righteousness; and therefore you had need to take heed that you fall not, as others have fallen before you.

But how shall we be kept from apostatising? Why, "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." It is a growth in

grace, it is the exercise of grace—which will make a man stand when others fall, yes, when cedars fall, etc.

[5.] Fifthly, ***All other exercises without the exercise of grace will profit nothing.*** Or if you will, take it thus:

All other exercises will be loss to us, without the exercise of grace; therefore we had need to improve our graces. When the house is on fire, if a man should only pray, and cry, etc., he may be burnt for all that; therefore he must be active and stirring; he must run from place to place, and call out for help, and must work even in the fire, and bestir himself as for his life, in the use of all means, whereby the fire may be quenched. So if grace be not acted upon, it is not all a man's praying and crying, etc., which will profit him or better him. Grace must be exercised—or all will be lost; prayers lost, tears lost, time lost, strength lost, soul lost, etc.

1 Tim. 4:7-8, "But *refuse* profane and old wives' fables." [Make a fair excuse.] Shift them off, as the word is, set them aside. Tell them that you are not at leisure to attend them, make a fair excuse, as the word notes; tell them you have business of an eternal concernment to look after, and "exercise yourself rather unto godliness;" or lay aside your upper garments, as runners and wrestlers do, to which the apostle alludes, and bestir yourself lustily; for says he, verse 8, "Bodily exercise *profits little*—but godliness is profitable unto all things, and has the promise of this life, and of that which is to come." [Let the patient take such or such a potion that in itself is good—yet, if it lacks such or such a particular ingredient, it works not; it does no good. It is so here.]

The Babylonians are said to make three hundred and sixty different commodities from the palm tree; but what are those commodities, compared to those thousands which attend holiness, which attend the exercise of grace? "The word did not profit those who heard it, because it was not mixed with faith." Hebrews 4:2. He does not speak there of unbelievers--but of those who had faith in the soul--but not in the exercise; and therefore the word did not profit them. They heard, and were never the better. And what was the ground of it? Why, it was because they did not exercise faith upon the word. The words which fell from the preacher's lips into their ears, were a sweet potion--but they did

not work effectually, because they lacked the ingredient of faith. Faith is one of those glorious ingredients, which makes every sermon, every truth, work for their souls' advantage. Nothing will work for a believer's good, for his gain--if it is not mixed with faith. Nothing makes a man rich in spirituals, like the frequent and constant actings of faith.

[6.] Sixthly, ***Because it is the end of all the dignity and glory which God has conferred upon his people****;* therefore they must exercise and improve their grace.

In 1 Pet. 2:9, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people—that you may show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

"You are a chosen generation." That is, a picked people; the dearly beloved of his soul; such as he first chose for his love, and then loves for his choice.

"A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." The Greek is, "a people of purchase," such as comprehends, as it were, all God's gettings, his whole stock, that he makes any reckoning of.

"That you may show forth," or, as it is in the Greek, "that you may preach forth," that you may publicly declare the virtues of him who has "called you out of darkness into his marvelous light;" that you may so hold forth the virtues of him who has conferred all this dignity and glory upon you, as to excite others, to "glorify your Father who is in heaven." You know the picture of a dear friend is not to be thrust in a corner—but in some conspicuous place of the house. Why, our graces are the very image of Christ, they are his picture; and therefore to be held forth to open view. These candles must not be put under a bushel—but set up in a candlestick. Jewels are to wear—not to hide; so are our graces. [God himself is wronged by the injury that is done to his image. The contempt is done to the king himself—which is done to his image or coin.]

It was a capital crime in Tiberius's days, to carry the image of the emperor upon a ring or coin, into any sordid place. And shall not Christians be more mindful and careful, that their graces, which are Christ's image, be

in no way obscured—but that they be kept always sparkling and shining? Christ's glory and your comfort, O Christian! lies much in the sparkling of your graces. Pearls are not to be thrust in mud walls, or hung in swines snouts—but to be hung around the neck.

[7.] Seventhly, *Gracious souls must exercise their grace,* ***because the more grace is exercised and improved, with the more ease and delight will all pious services be performed***, Psalm 40:7-8; 119:97-112. When grace is improved and exercised, gracious services are easily performed. As the more natural strength is exercised and improved, with the more ease and pleasure are all bodily services performed; so the more grace is acted and improved, with the more ease and delight all Christian services are performed. Such souls find wages in their very work, they find not only *for* keeping—but also "*in* keeping of his commands there is great reward." "All the ways of the Lord are ways of pleasantness to them," and they find "that all his paths drop marrow and fatness," Romans 6:22; Psalm 19:11; Proverbs 3:17; Psalm 65:11. Ah, Christians! as ever you would have the services of God to be easy and delightful to your souls, look to the exercise and improvement of your graces—and then your work will be a joy.

[8.] Eighthly, *You must exercise and improve your gifts and graces,* ***because the more grace is improved, the more God will be honored.*** Romans 4:19-21, "Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was **strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God**, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised." [Abraham's faith made him rejoice and obey, Heb. 11. Faith is as the spring in the watch, which moves all the wheels. Not a grace stirs until faith sets it to work, Romans 4:3, etc.]

"He gave glory to God." But how did he give glory to God? Was it a dead habit of faith, which set the crown of honor upon the head of God? No! It was the lively actings of his faith upon the promise and the promiser, which gave glory to God. All the honor and glory that God has from believers in this life, is from the actings of their grace. It was Abraham's

acting of faith that was his high honoring of God. Christians! I would entreat this favor of you, that you would be often in the meditation of this truth, namely: That all the honor which God has from believers in this life, is from the actings and exercise of their graces.

When you go to prayer, then think thus with yourself: Is it so, that all the honor which God shall have from my soul in prayer, will be from the actings of grace in prayer? Oh then, what cause have I to stir up myself to lay hold on God, and to blow up all those sparks of grace that are in me! As a body without a soul, much wood without fire, a bullet in a gun without powder—so are words in prayer without the Spirit, without the exercise of the graces of the Spirit. Jonah acted his faith when he was in the belly of hell; and Daniel acted faith when he was in the lions' den; and the thief acted faith when he was on the cross; and Jeremiah acted faith when he was in the dungeon; and Job acted faith when he was on the ash-heap; and David acted faith when he was in his greatest distress; and so did Moses in Exod. 14. And you know the outcome of all was—much glory to God, and much good to them. His heart will never be long a stranger to joy and peace, who is much in the exercise and actings of grace. [So did the publican; he prayed much, though he spoke little; the hottest springs send forth their waters by *ebullitions*. Augustine cries out against those who did not profit by afflictions.]

[9.] Ninthly, ***Because the more grace is improved, the more afflictions and tribulations will be lessened and sweetened to us.*** 2 Cor. 4:16-17, "Though our outward man decreases—yet our inward man is renewed day by day," or day and day.

When Peter Martyr was dying, he said, "My body is weak—but my mind is well—well for the present, and will be better forever hereafter." This is the godly man's motto, "For afflictions there is glory—for light afflictions a weight of glory—for momentary afflictions eternal glory." So in Heb. 10 and 11. O friends! if your graces were more exercised and improved, afflictions would be more sweet. This would turn the cross into a crown; this would turn bitter into sweet, and long winter nights into summer days. It would make every condition to be a paradise to you, etc.

[10.] Tenthly, ***If grace be not exercised and improved—the soul***

may be easily surprised, conquered, and vanquished by a tempting devil and an enticing world. When the sword is in the scabbard, the traveler is easily surprised; and when the guard is asleep, the city is quickly conquered. The strongest creature, the lion, and the wisest creature, the serpent—if they are dormant, are as easily conquered as the weakest worms. So the strongest and wisest saints, if their graces are asleep, and not in the exercise—they may be as easily surprised and vanquished as the weakest Christians in all the world, as you may see in David, Solomon, Samson, Peter. Every enemy insults over him who has lost the use of his weapons, etc. [Saints should be like the seraphim—beset all over with eyes and lights. The fearful hare, they say, sleeps with her eyes open. Oh, how watchful, then, should a Christian be!]

[11.] Eleventhly, ***We must improve our graces, because decays in grace are very great losses to us.*** By decaying in grace, we come to lose our strength, our best strength, our spiritual strength; our strength to do for God; our strength to wait on God, and walk with God; our strength to bear for God; our strength to suffer for God. [Spiritual losses are recovered with great difficulty. A man may easily run *down* the hill—but he cannot so easily run *up*. Aman may soon put an instrument out of tune—but not so soon put it in again.]

By decaying in grace, we come to lose that "joy which is unspeakable and full of glory," and that comfort and "peace which passes understanding," and to lose the sense of that "favor that is better than life." Now our faith will be turned into fear, our dancing into mourning, our rejoicing into sighing. And when, O Christian! you begin to fall, and to decay—who knows how far you may fall, how much your graces may be impaired, and how long it may be before your sun rises when once it is set; therefore you had need to exercise and improve your graces.

[12.] Twelfthly, and lastly, ***You are to improve your graces, because souls truly gracious have a power to do good.*** I do not say that a man in his natural estate—though Arminians do—has power in himself to do supernatural acts, as to believe in God, to love God, and the like, etc., for I think a toad may as well spit cordials as a natural man do supernatural actions, 1 Cor. 2:14; Jer. 13:23; James 1:17; Eph. 2:1-3. No! I say that all the grace we have is from God; and that man in his natural

estate is dead God-ward, and Christ-ward, and holiness-ward, and heaven-ward. Yet this I say—that souls truly gracious have a power to do good. It is sad to think how many professors excuse their negligence by pretending an inability to do good, or by sitting down discouraged, as having in their hands no power at all. *What can we do,* say they, *if the Lord does not breathe upon us, as at first conversion? We can do nothing*.

I think in my very conscience, that this is one reason of much of that slightness, neglect, and omission of duties, that is among professors in these days, so that God may complain, as he does, Isaiah 64:7, "There is no man who stirs up himself to take hold of me—they are as men asleep," who sit still and do nothing. But certainly those who are truly united to Christ, do not act as dead stocks, as if every time and moment of their acting God-wards and holiness-ward they received new life from the Spirit of Christ, as at first conversion they did. And I am confident, for lack of the knowledge and due consideration of this truth, many professors take such liberty to themselves, as to live in the neglect of many precious duties of godliness, for which, sooner or later, they will pay dear. But remembering that it is not a flood of words—but weighty arguments, that convince and persuade the souls and consciences of men, I shall give you **four reasons to demonstrate, that believers have a power to do good**; and the first is this.

First, ***because they have life;*** **and all life is a power to act by.** Natural life is a power to act by; spiritual life is a power to act by; eternal life is a power to act by. The philosopher says, "That a fly is more excellent than the heavens, because the fly has life, which the heavens have not," etc.

Secondly, ***Else there is no just ground for Christ to charge the guilt of sins upon them;*** as neglect of prayer, repentance, mortification; nor the guilt of carelessness and slothfulness, etc., which he does. If they can act no further, nor any longer than the Holy Spirit acts them, as at their first conversion, notwithstanding their union with Christ, and that spiritual principle of life which at first they received from Christ—certainly if it is so, it will not stand with the unspotted justice of God to charge the guilt of sins of omission upon believing souls, if they

have no power to act—but are as stocks and stones, etc., as some dream. [Omission of *diet* breeds diseases; so does omission of *duty*—and makes work either for repentance, hell, or the physician of souls.]

A third ground is this: if there is not some power in believers to do good, **then *we should not have as much benefit by the second Adam as we had by the first***. The first Adam, if he had stood, would have communicated a power to all his sons and daughters to have done good, as being corrupted he does communicate power to sin, as all his children find by sad and woeful experience; and shall not Christ much more communicate a power to us to do good in our measure? Surely he does, though few mind it, and fewer improve it as they should. If there is not such a power in believers, how have they gained more by the second Adam than they lost by the first? and wherein lies the excellency of the second above the first?

Fourthly and lastly, ***All those exhortations are void, and of no effect—if there is not some power in souls truly gracious to do good;*** as all those exhortations to watchfulness, to stir up "the grace of God that is in us," and to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," and that also, "give all dilligence to make your calling and election sure." To what purpose are all these precious exhortations, if the regenerate man has no power at all to act anything that is good? Nay, then, believers under the covenant of grace should be in no better a condition than unregenerate men who are under a covenant of works, who see their duties discovered—but have no power to perform; which is contrary, as to other scriptures, so to that Psalm 40:7-9, "Then said I, Lo I come: in the volume of your book it is written of me, I delight to do your will, O my God: yes, your law is within my heart," or, "your law is in the midst of my heart," as the Hebrew reads it; and to that of Ezek. 36:25-27, etc. A soul truly gracious can sincerely say, "Your law, O Lord, is in the midst of my heart, and I delight to do your will, O Lord." I confess I cannot do as I should, nor shall I ever do it as I would, until I come to heaven; but this I can say in much uprightness, that "Your law is in my heart, and I delight to do your will, O Father." And so Paul, "With my mind I serve the law of God, though with my flesh the law of sin," Romans 7:25.

And we have many **promises** concerning divine assistance, and if we did but stir up the grace of God that is in us, we would find the assistance of God, and the glorious breakings forth of his power and love, according to his promise, and the work which he requires of us, Isaiah 26:12; 64:5, etc. Though no believer does what he should do—yet doubtless every believer might do more than he does do, in order to God's glory, and his own and others' internal and eternal good, Isaiah 41:10; Heb. 13:5-6, etc. Affection without endeavor is like Rachel—beautiful but barren. They are truly blessed—who do what they can, though they cannot but underdo.

When Demosthenes was asked what was the first part of an orator, what the second, what the third, he answered, *Action!* The same may I say, if any should ask me what is the first, the second, the third part of a Christian, I must answer, *Action!* Luther says, "He had rather obey—than work miracles." "Obedience is better than sacrifice."

But, sir, you will say, what is the meaning of that text, that is so often in the mouths of professors, "Without me, you can do nothing"? John 15:5.

I answer, All that that text holds forth is this, that if a man has not union with Christ, if he be not implanted into Christ, he can do nothing. "Without me," that is—separate from me, or apart from me—as the words may be read, "you can do nothing." If you are not implanted into me, if by the Spirit and faith you are not united unto me, you can do nothing. The *arm* may do much by virtue of its union with the *head*; but if you separate the arm from the head, from the body, what can it do? Certainly the soul, by virtue of its union with Christ, may do much; while those who as are separated from Christ can do nothing—at least as they should. Ah, Christians! if you would but put out yourselves to the utmost, you would find the Lord both ready and willing to assist you, to meet with you, and to do for you above what you are able to ask or think. **Union with Christ is that wherein the strength, comfort, and happiness of the soul does consist.**

Caesar, by continual employment, overcame two constant diseases, the headache and dizziness. Oh the spiritual diseases that the active Christian overcomes! Among the Egyptians, idleness was a capital crime. Among the Lucani, he who lent money to an idle person was to forfeit it. Among

the Corinthians, the slothful were to be flogged. Oh! the deadly sins, the deadly temptations, the deadly judgments—which idle and slothful Christians are given up to! Therefore be active, be diligent, be abundant in the work of the Lord. Idleness is the source of much sin. Standing pools gather mud, and nourish and breed venomous creatures; and so do the hearts of idle and slothful Christians, etc.

II. Now the second thing that we are to do for the further opening of this point is, to show you ***The special ENDS that the gifts and graces which God has bestowed upon believers, should be exercised and improved to.***

And they are these that follow:

[1.] *First*, **They are to be improved and exercised *to the honor of God, to the lifting up of God, and to the keeping up of his name and glory in the world.*** 1 Cor. 10:31, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do—do it all for the glory of God."

He who does not use his gifts and graces to this end, crosses the grand end of God's bestowing such royal favors on him. Graces and gifts are talents that God has given you to trade with, and not to hide in a napkin, Mat. 25. The *idle* servant, in Christ's account, was an *evil* servant. The idle soul, in Christ's account, is an evil soul, and accordingly Christ will deal with him.

Seneca calls sloth "the nurse of beggary, the mother of misery;" and slothful Christians find it so. Christians, God has given you grace—that you should give him glory. His honor should be dearer to you than your jewels, than your crowns, than your lives, ay, than your very souls. You live no further, than you live to his praise.

It is recorded of Epaminondas, the commander-in-chief of the Thebans, that he did not glory in anything but this, "That his father, whom he dearly loved and honored, was living when he won three famous battles against the Lacedaemonians," who were then renowned for their valor to be invincible; regarding more the honor and contentment which his

father would receive of it, than his own. Shall a heathen thus strive to honor his earthly father? And shall not Christians strive more to honor their heavenly Father with all the gifts and graces which he has conferred upon them.

But you will say, **HOW should we honor the Lord?** I answer,

(1.) ***You must honor God by a free and frequent acknowledgment that all your graces flow from the Lord Jesus, the fountain of grace.*** John 1:16, "Of his fullness we all receive grace for grace." James 1:17, "Every good and perfect gift comes down from above," etc. You must say, O Christian, *I have nothing but what I have received; I have no light, no life, no love, no joy, no peace—but from above!* 1 Cor. 4:7. *The jewels which hang about my breasts, and the chains of pearl which are around my neck, and the golden crown which is upon my head, and all the sparkling diamonds in that crown—are all from above!* Ezek. 16:11-15, Psalm 45:8, *seq. All those princely ornaments by which I am made more beautiful and lovely than others; and all those beds of spices and sweet flowers, by which I am made more desirable and delectable—are from above! I am nothing. I have nothing of my own; all I am, and all I have, is from on high.*

"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand," says David, 1 Chron. 29:14. So you say, "Lord, the **love** with which I love you—comes from you; and the **faith** by which I hang upon you—comes from you; and the **fear** by which I fear before you—comes from you; and the **joy** which I rejoice before you with —comes from you; and the **patience** with which I wait upon you—comes from you." And therefore say, as David did, upon the receipt of mercy, "Praise be to you, O Lord, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name." 1 Chronicles 29:10-13

(2.) You must honor him, *by acknowledging the dependency of your graces, upon the fountain of grace.* And that your strength to stand lies not so much in your graces, as in their dependency upon the fountain of grace—from their reception from the God of grace. A man by his arm may do much—but it is mainly by reason of its union and conjunction with the head. It is so between a Christian's graces and Christ. The stream does not more depend upon the fountain, nor the branch upon the root, nor the moon upon the sun, nor the child upon the mother, nor the effect upon the cause—than our graces depend upon the fountain of grace, Psalm 138:3, Philip. 4:12-13.

Now that our very graces do thus depend upon the fountain of grace; and that our strength to stand lies not so much in our graces as in Christ, is clear by this—that the graces of the saints may and do most fail them when they have most need of them: Mark 4:40, "And he said, Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" When the wind was high, their faith was low; when the storm was great, their faith was little; so Luke 8:25, "And he said unto them, Where is your faith?" Have you now to *seek* it—when you should be *using* it? **Peter** denied Christ—when he had need by faith to have confessed Christ. **Moses'** faith failed him—when it should have been most serviceable to him, Num. 20:12. And **David's** courage failed him—when it should have been a shield to him, 1 Sam. 21:13-14. And the **disciples'** love failed them—when it should have been most useful to them, John 14:28. And **Job's** wisdom and patience failed him—when they should have been his greatest supporters. By all which it is most clear, that not only ourselves, but also our very graces—must be supported by the God of grace, the fountain of grace—or else they will be lacking, when we most need them.

Though our graces be our best jewels—yet they are imperfect; and as the moon shines by a borrowed light, so do our graces. If it were not for the Sun of righteousness all our graces would give no light. Though grace is a glorious creature, it is but a creature, and therefore must be upheld by its Creator. Though grace be a beautiful child—yet it is but a child, that must be upheld by the Father's arms. This, Christians, you must remember—and give glory to God!

(3.) You must honor him *by uncrowning your graces—to crown the God of your graces.* By taking the crown off from your own heads, and putting it upon his, or by laying it down at his feet, as they did theirs, in Rev. 4:10, Acts 3:11-12, 16, and 4:7-10. These scriptures are wells of living waters; they are bee-hives of living honey; see and taste. [True it is that *we* do what we do—but it is as true that Christ empowers us to do what we do.] The Lord has often uncrowned himself, to crown his people's graces, as you may see in these following scriptures, Mat. 9:22, and 15:28, Mark 10:52, Luke 7:50. And why, then, should not his people uncrown their graces to crown him? Cant. 5:10, *seq*. That which others attribute to your graces—you must attribute to the God of grace. You must say, Though our graces are precious—yet Christ is more precious; though they are sweet—yet Christ is most sweet; though they are lovely—yet Christ is altogether lovely.

Your graces are but Christ's picture, Christ's image; and therefore do not worship his *image*, and in the mean while neglect his *person*. Make much of his picture—but make more of himself. Let his picture have your eye—but let himself have your heart, John 1:39, *seq*. Your graces are but Christ's hands, by which he works; be therefore careful that you do not more mind the workman's hands—than the workman himself. Your graces are but Christ's servants; therefore do not smile upon the servant—and look asquint upon the Master. Your graces are but Christ's favorites; therefore do not so stare upon them, and be taken with them, as to forget the Prince on whom they wait, etc. All I drive at is this—that not your graces, but Christ, may be all in all unto you, etc.

[2.] The *second* end to which you must improve your gifts and graces, is***to the good of others.*** Psalm 66:16, "Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what he has done for my soul;" Psalm 34:8, "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man who trusts in him;" Isaiah 2:3; Acts 5:26-29. God has given you gifts and grace—to that end that you should improve them for others' good. It is the very nature of grace to be diffusive and communicative. Grace cannot be long concealed. The better anything is, the more communicative it will be. Grace is as fire in the bones, as new wine in the bottles; you cannot hide it, you must give vent to it: Acts 4:28, "We cannot but speak the things which we have

heard and seen." Can the fire cease to turn all combustible matter into fire? can the candle, once thoroughly lighted, cease to spend itself for the enlightening of others? Then may the precious sons of Zion cease to give light to others, by their examples, counsels, and communicating their experiences.

There is no way to honor God, no way to win souls, nor any way to increase your own gifts and graces—than to exercise them for the good of others. Grace is not like to worldly vanities, which diminish by distribution—but like candles which keep the same light, though a thousand are lighted by them. Grace is like the widow's oil—which multiplied by pouring out, 2 Kings 4; and like those talents—which doubled by employment, Mat. 25.

Again, by how much more we pour out our spiritual things to others—by so much is the abundance the greater to us. Those who give their money to their neighbor, diminish their own substance; and by how much he gives—by so much the less is the money which he possesses; but in spirituals it is quite otherwise.

No way to advance the kingdom of Christ like this—of improving your gifts and graces to the advantage and profit of others. There is no love nor pity to the precious souls of men like this. There is no way to abound in grace, to be rich in grace like this. There is no way to be high in heaven like this. [Romans 1:11-12; 2 Cor. 9:6.] Are you, O Christian, bound to do good to others, by communicating *earthly* things? And are you not much more bound to do them good by communicating of *spiritual* things? Surely you are. Why are Christians so often in Scripture compared to trees—but because of their fruitfulness and usefulness to others? And why are they called "stewards of the manifold gifts of God," but to note to us, that their gifts are not to be kept for themselves—but employed for the good of others? And why has Christ put a box of precious ointment into every Christian's hand—but that it should be opened for the benefit of others?

Certainly, he who is good is bound to do good; for gifts and graces are given, not only to make us good, and keep us good—but also to make us, yes, to provoke us to do good. "We therefore 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 lay out for the good of many." I think they are not good Christians who scorn to learn this good lesson, though from a heathen. And oh, that all who write themselves Christians, were so good as to imitate the good which shined in many heathens! To me it is very sad, that Christians that live and act below the very heathens; that they should be offended to hear now and then of those excellencies which sparkled in the very heathens. I think that is a very evil spirit—which cannot endure to hear of those excellencies in others that he lacks himself. Certainly he is a brave Christian, and has much of Christ within —who accounts nothing his own that he does not communicate to others. The bee does store her hive out of all sorts of flowers for the common benefit; and why then in this should not every Christian be like a bee?

Synesius speaks of some, who having a treasure of rare abilities in them, would as soon part with their hearts as their abilities. I think they are rather monsters than real Christians, who are of such a spirit.

[3.] The *third* and last thing to which you are to improve your gifts and graces is, ***to the benefit and profit of your own souls***. Not to improve them to your own internal and eternal good, is with a high hand to cross the main end of God's conferring them upon you. Ah, Christians! you must improve them—to the strengthening of yourself against temptations—to the supporting of yourself under afflictions—to the keeping under of your strong corruptions—to the sweetening of all your difficulties—and to the preparing and fitting yourself for the days of your death. The good of the soul is specially to be minded:

(1.) because it is the most notable part of man;

(2.) because the image of God is most fairly stamped upon it;

(3.) because it is first converted;

(4.) because it shall be first glorified.

I shall content myself with giving you this hint, because I have before spoken more fully to this head. And thus we have done with the doctrinal

part.

We shall come now to make some **USE** and **APPLICATION** of this point to ourselves.

If this be so, that it is the duty of Christians to improve and exercise the gifts and graces that the Lord has given them,

Then, in the *first* place, ***this looks very sourly and badly upon all lazy, idle, negligent Christians, who do not stir up themselves to lay hold on God, who do not stir up the grace of the Lord in them.*** It is sad to consider how many Christians can stir up themselves to lay held on all opportunities to make themselves great and rich in the world—and yet allow their golden gifts and graces even to grow rusty for lack of exercise. No Christians are so free from Satan's assaults—as active Christians are; nor are any so tempted—as idle Christians. The Jewish Rabbis report, that the same night that Israel departed out of Egypt towards Canaan, all the idols and idolatrous temples in Egypt, by lightning and earthquakes, were broken down. So when grace and holiness is set up in the heart, all the idols of Satan, which are men's lusts, are thrown down.

It is sad to see how busy many men are to exercise and improve a talent of riches—who yet bind up their talents of gifts and grace in a napkin. By these—God loses much honor and praise—and they themselves lose much comfort and contentment—and others lose much profit and benefit—and the gospel loses much credit and glory.

But the main use that I shall make of this point, shall be to exhort and stir you all up, to make a blessed improvement of your graces. And indeed it is a point of most singular use to us all our days, a truth that is every day of very great concernment to our souls.

Now there are seven considerations or motives, to stir up your souls to make a blessed improvement of the grace and gifts you have received.

[1.] And the *first* is this: **Seriously consider *that the exercise and***

improvement of grace in your souls—will be more and more the death and ruin of sin in your souls.

Take it from experience; there is not a choicer way than this for a man to bring the power of his sin under control—than to keep up the exercise of his grace. Sin and grace are like two buckets at a well—when one is up the other is down. Certainly, the readiest and the surest way to bring under the power of sin, is to be much in the exercise of grace: Romans 8:10, "But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness." The life and activity of Christ and grace in the soul—is the death and destruction of sin in the soul. **The more grace acts in the soul—the more sin withers and dies in the soul.** The stronger the house of David grew, 2 Sam. 3, the weaker the house of Saul grew. As the house of David grew every day stronger and stronger, so the house of Saul every day grew weaker and weaker. So the activity of the new man—is the death of the old man.

When Christ began to bestir himself in the temple—the money-changers quickly fled out, Mat. 21:12-14. So when grace is active and stirring in the soul—corruption quickly flies. A man may find out many ways to **hide** his sin—but he will never find out any way to **subdue** his sin—but by the exercise of grace. Of all Christians, none so mortified as those in whom grace is most exercised. Sin is a viper that must be killed—or it will kill you forever; and there is no way to kill it but by the exercise of grace.

[2.] *Secondly*, Consider this by way of motive to provoke you to exercise and improve your graces. ***The exercise and improvement of your graces will provoke others to bless and admire the God of grace.*** "Let your light so shine before men—that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven," Mat. 5:16—the light of your conversation, and the light of your graces. Oh how many thousand souls are now triumphing in heaven—whose gifts and graces shined gloriously when they were on earth. And ah! how many thousands are there now on earth, who bless and admire the Lord for the shining of the graces of those who are now in heaven; who bless the Lord for the faith of Abraham, and the zeal of David, and the meekness of Moses, and the patience of Job, and the courage of Joshua, etc.

Ah, Christians! as you would stir up others to exalt the God of grace, look to the exercise and improvement of your graces. When poor servants shall live in a family, and see the faith of a master, and the love of a master, and the wisdom of a master, and the patience of a master, and the humility of a master, etc., shining like so many stars of heaven—oh how does it draw forth their hearts to bless the Lord, that ever they came into such a family! It is not a mere *profession* of religion—but the exercise and improvement of grace, which contributes so much to the lifting up the glory of the Lord, and to the greatening of his praise in the world. Many saints have had their hearts warmed and heated by sitting by other saints' fires, by eyeing and dwelling upon other saints graces. Ah! when men's graces shine as Moses his face did, when their lives, as one speaks of Joseph's life, is a very heaven, sparkling with variety of virtues, as with so many bright stars; ah! how are others stirred up to glorify God, and to cry out—These are Christians indeed! These are an honor to their God, a crown to their Christ, and a credit to their gospel. Oh! if they were all such, we would become Christians too. It is a very great stumbling-block to many poor sinners, to see men who make a very great and large profession of Christ, never to exercise and show forth the virtues or graces of Christ. They profess they know him, and yet by the non-exercise of his virtues—they deny him.

It was one of Machiavel's principles, that the *external appearance of virtue* was only to be sought. I am afraid that this cursed soul-damning principle is the best flower that grows in many men's gardens in these days. Though there is no virtue but is as a bright stone in a dark night, it shines and shows its clearness and beauty; it is as pure gold, the brighter for passing through the fire; yet how do most covet rather the *name* of virtue, than to be really virtuous! Such, I believe, shall have the hottest and the lowest place in hell. [*There is not a more cruel creature, more impatient and vindictive, than a hypocrite,* says Luther, who had the experience of it; therefore trust not to the Machiavels of the times.] Well, Christians, remember this, it is not a *mere show* of grace—but the *exercise* of grace—which will provoke others to glorify the fountain of grace.

That is a very remarkable scripture, 1 Thes. 1:2-3, 8, compared, "We give

thanks to God always for you, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God, and our Father. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia—but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad." In this eighth verse you have an elegant metaphor, which signifies, that their faith was so lively, that with its sound, as it were, it stirred up other nations. The Greek word is to sound as with the sound of a trumpet, to make to sound afar off. Says the apostle, *your graces made a noise like a trumpet; they stirred up others to be gracious and active, as the trumpet stirs up men to war.*

So in 2 Thes. 1:3-4, "We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring." This is the character of the angelical nature, to rejoice in the graces and gracious actings of others. He who acts otherwise holds forth the image of the devil, and declares himself a native of hell. [Pliny tells of some in the remote parts of India, that they have no mouths. We have many such monsters among us—who have no mouths to bless God for the good that shines in others.]

[3.] *Thirdly*, Consider *that* ***the exercise and improvement of grace, may be a special means to stir up the exercise of grace in others.***

Your improvement of grace may be a special means to stir up others to improve their graces also. 1 Thes. 1:7, "You became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia." Or as the Greek is, "you were types, moulds," patterns of piety to those who were in Christ long before you. So in 2 Cor. 9:2, "For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action." I knew you were eager, and this I boasted of; I made it my glory to tell how grace shined in your souls. "And," says he, "your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action." When they saw how warm and lively, and active, how open-handed and open-hearted you

were to the poor saints—their hearts were stirred up to acts of charity also. Stories speak of some who could not sleep when they thought of the trophies of other worthies who went before them. The highest examples are very quickening and provoking. [Precepts may instruct—but examples do persuade.]

That this may stick upon your souls, I beseech you bed and board, rise and walk with this one consideration, namely—**that all the good you provoke others to by counsel or example, shall be put down to your account.** It shall certainly turn to your internal and eternal advantage. In the great day, Christ will make honorable mention of all the good that you have stirred and provoked others to, and will reward you for it before angels and men. The faith, the love, the hope, the charity, the patience, etc., that you have provoked others to, shall be put down to your account, as if you had been the only actor of them, etc.

As all the sins which men provoke or stir up others to by their counsel or example, shall be put down to their accounts, as you may see in David. David did but send a letter concerning the death of Uriah, and yet the charge comes, "*You* have slain Uriah with the sword," 2 Sam. 12:9. As whatever is done by letter, counsel, or example, to provoke others to sin, shall certainly be charged upon men's accounts at last; just so, whatever good you stir up others to, that shall be set upon your score, and shall turn to your eternal account in the day of Christ. Oh! who would not then labor with all their might, even day and night, to stir up the grace of the Lord in themselves and others, seeing it shall turn to such a glorious account in that day wherein Christ shall say to his Father, "Lo, here am I, and the children that you have given me," etc. [They shall shine as so many suns in heaven, who are much in stirring and provoking of others to the exercise of grace and holiness, Dan. 12:3, 6:1-2.]

[4.] *Fourthly*, consider this, ***the exercise and improvement of grace, contributes very much both to the stopping the mouths of your enemies, and to the rendering of you lovely in the very eyes of your enemies.*** Oh! there is nothing in all the world that contributes so much to the stopping of the mouths of your enemies, and to the rendering of your souls lovely in the eyes of your enemies, as the exercise and improvement of your graces. As you may see in David, David

improved his grace to a glorious height, and says Saul, "You are more righteous than I," 1 Sam. 24:17. John improved his grace to a glorious height, and was much in the exercise of it, and what follows? "Herod feared and reverenced him, knowing that he was a just and a holy man," Mark 6:20.

Oh! how did the wisdom, faith, and holiness of Joseph, Daniel, and the three children, silence their most enraged adversaries! yes, what a deal of honor did the exercise of their graces cause those heathen princes to put upon them? [So what a deal of respect and honor did Alexander the Great put upon Judas the high priest; Theodosius upon Ambrose; and Constantine upon Paphnutius, kissing that eye of his that was bored out for the cause of Christ, etc.] 1 Peter 2:15, "For so is the will of God, that by well-doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." It is not all the talking and profession in the world that can stop the mouths of foolish men; it must be well-doings, grace improved, grace exercised and manifested in ways of holiness—which must work so great a wonder as to stop the mouths of wicked men.

The Greek word that is here translated *well-doing*, denotes the continual custom of well-doing. And indeed, nothing but a continual course of well-doing will be able to stop the mouths of wicked people. It is not a *fit* of holiness—but a course of holiness—which can produce so great a miracle as to stop the mouths of wicked men: "That you might stop the mouths of ungodly men."

The Greek is, "that you may muzzle," or, "halter up." There is no way in the world to button, muzzle, or halter up the mouths of wicked men—but by the exercise of your graces in ways of well-doing. Oh! this will cause you to be well thought of, and well spoken of; this is that which will make even wicked men to say, "These are Christians indeed! these are those who have not only a *name* to live—but are alive; who have not only a *form* of godliness—but the *power!"* A Christian's exercise of **faith** in times of need, and of **patience** in times of affliction, and of **courage** in times of temptation, and of **boldness** in times of opposition, etc., does mightily silence and stop the mouths of the worst of men.

Henry the Second of France, being present at the martyrdom of a certain

tailor burnt by him for his piety, was so terrified by beholding the wisdom, courage, faith, and constancy of the martyr, that he swore at his going away, "that he would never be any more present at such a martyrdom."

[5.] Fifthly, ***Dwell much upon the sweet nature of grace—if you would have your souls carried out to the exercise and improvement of grace.***

The name of grace and the nature of grace is very sweet. The Hebrew word that is rendered *grace* signifies favor and mercy; and it answers to the Greek word that signifies favor and mercy; and some derive the Greek word from a word that signifies *joy*, because grace begets the greatest joy and sweetness in the hearts of men, that possibly can be. **Grace is a panoply against all troubles—and a paradise of all pleasures.**

Grace is compared to the sweetest things; to sweet spices, to wine and milk. Grace is a beam of the Sun of righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace is a sweet flower of paradise, a spark of glory, etc. It is nourished and maintained by that sweet word, which is sweeter than the honey or the honey-comb, and by sweet union and communion with the Father and the Son. [Cant. 4:10, 14, 16, 6:2; Isaiah 55:1-2; Psalm 119:103; 1 John 1:3-4.] Grace is exercised about the sweetest objects, namely—God, Christ, promises, and future glory. Grace sweetens all your services and duties. Your best religious performances are but stinking sacrifices—if they are not attended with the exercise of grace. Grace is that heavenly salt which makes all our services savory and sweet in the nostrils of God.

Grace is of the greatest and sweetest **use** to the soul; it is an anchor at sea, and a shield at land; it is a staff to uphold the soul, and a sword to defend the soul; it is bread to strengthen the soul, and wine to cheer the soul; it is medicine to cure all diseases, and a plaster to heal all wounds, and a cordial to strengthen the soul under all faintings, etc. Grace is your eye to see for Christ, your ear to hear for Christ, your head to design for Christ, your tongue to speak for Christ, your hand to do for Christ, and your feet to walk with Christ.

Grace makes men of the harshest, sourest, crabbedest natures, to be of a

sweet, lovely, amiable, pleasing temper, Isaiah 11:7-9. It turns lions into lambs, wolves into sheep, monsters into men, and men into angels, as you may see in Manasseh, Paul, Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus, and others. Yet sometimes grace, in a rugged unhewn nature, is like a gold ring on a leprous hand, or a diamond set in iron, or a jewel in a swine's snout, etc.

[6.] *Sixthly*, By way of motive, consider this,***that wicked men do exercise and improve to the uttermost, all those principles of wickedness that are in them—against the ways of God, the honor of God, and the comforts of the saints.***

Now shall wicked men improve all their principles to the uttermost against God, his truth, and saints, etc.; and shall not saints improve their graces to the honor of God, the advancement of truth, and the joy and benefit one of another? You may see the activity of wicked men's spirits in Proverbs 4:16, "They sleep not unless they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall." Oh, they cannot rest! "The wicked are like the troubled sea," as Isaiah speaks, "when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt," Isaiah 57:20, 21. [The Hebrew word signifies properly a laborious sinner, a practitioner in sin. The verbsignifies to make a stir, to be exceeding busy, unquiet, or troublesome, etc.]

So in 2 Pet. 2:14, "Having eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls." A heart they have, exercised with covetous practices; cursed children—they break all promises and covenants with God and man, as Samson did the new ropes. So in Proverbs 19:19, "A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment, for if you deliver him—yet you must do it again." The Hebrew word signifies to add. Says he, You must add deliverance to deliverance, for he will still be a-adding sin to sin. Ahab, after he was threatened with utter rooting out, begat fifty sons, as it were, to cross God, and to battle it out with him. Let God thunder in his judgments—yet he will add sin to sin, he will proceed from evil to evil, until he comes to the very top of evil, namely, to be hardened in sin, and to scoff at holiness, etc., Jer. 9:3.

The old Italians were accustomed, in time of thunder, to ring their loudest bells, to drown the noise of the heavens. So let God thunder from

heaven—yet wicked men will so increase their wicked principles, that their consciences may not hear the noise of the thunder-claps of divine displeasure. [Witness Ahab, Haman, Jehu, Jeroboam, the fool in the Gospel, and those in Mat. 23:14-16.] The covetous man will increase his earthly principles, and the ambitious man will increase his ambitious principles, and the voluptuous man will increase his voluptuous principles, and the unchaste man will increase his unclean principles, and the erroneous man will increase his erroneous principles, and the blasphemous man will increase his blasphemous principles, etc. Ah sirs! shall wicked men thus increase their wicked principles to the uttermost against God, Christ, and piety, and against the prosperity, peace, joy, and happiness of the saints? And shall not saints improve their graces to the uttermost for the honor of the Lord, the advancement of religion, and the mutual profit and benefit of each other?

[7.] *Seventhly,* ***The more high and excellent any man is in grace—the more highly he shall be exalted in glory.*** Oh! therefore, exercise your grace, improve your grace. As you would be high in heaven, labor to improve your graces much while you are here on earth; for glory will be given out at last, according to the exercise and improvement of your grace.

The more high and improved a man's graces are—**the more that man will do for God**; and the more any man does for God—the more at last shall he receive from God: 1 Cor. 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." So Gal. 6:7, *seq*., "He who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly; but he who sows liberally shall reap liberally." [Darius, before he came to the kingdom, received a garment as a gift from Syloson; and when he became king, he rewarded Syloson with the command of his country.]

The more any man has improved his grace—**the more that man will be able to bear and suffer for God**; and the more any man bears and suffers for God, the more glory shall that man have at last from God: Mat. 5:11-12, "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad," or "leap and dance for joy, leap and skip for joy,"

etc. Why so? "For great is your reward in heaven!" God is a liberal paymaster, and no *small* payments can fall from so great and so gracious a hand as his.

The more excellent any man is in grace—**the more he is the delight of God**. Psalm 16:2-3, "My goodness extends not to you—but to the saints who are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." Now this is spoken in the person of Christ, for the apostle applies these words to Christ, Acts. 2:25. Now says Christ, "My goodness reaches not to you," O Father! "but to the saints, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." And doubtless, those who are his greatest delight on earth—shall be possessed of the greatest glory in heaven. If fathers give the greatest portions to those children in whom they delight, why should not Christ? Is it equity in the one, and iniquity in the other? Surely not. Christ may do with his own as he pleases. [The father delights in all his children—yet sometimes he delights more in one than in another, etc.]

Again, the more any man improves his grace—**the clearer, sweeter, fuller, and richer is his enjoyments of God here**. There is no man in all the world who has such enjoyments of God, as that man has that most improves his graces. It is not he who *knows* most, nor him who *hears* most, nor yet he who *talks* most—but he who exercises grace most—who has most communion with God, who has the clearest visions of God, who has the sweetest discoveries and manifestations of God. Now certainly if those who improve their graces most, have most of God here, then without controversy, they shall have most of God hereafter. A man may as well plead for equal degrees of grace in this world—as for equal degrees of glory in the other world.

Again, if those who are most graceless and wicked shall be most tormented—then certainly those who are most gracious shall be most exalted in the day of Christ. The more wicked any man is, the more shall he be tormented in the day of vengeance: "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shall receive the *greater damnation*," Mat. 23:14, Luke 12:47-48. The darkest, the lowest, the hottest place in hell is provided for you; therefore it soundly follows, that those who are most gracious—shall at last be most glorious.

And thus much for the motives that tend to provoke all the precious sons of Zion, to make a thorough improvement of the gifts and graces that the Lord has bestowed upon them.

I shall now come to the resolution of a weighty question, and so conclude this point, which I have been the longer upon, by reason of its very great usefulness in these days, wherein men strive to exercise anything, yes, everything—but grace and holiness, etc.

Now this question is this: ***When may a soul be said to be excellent in grace—or to have highly improved grace?***

Now to this question I shall give these following answers:

[1.] *First*, A soul that is high and excellent in grace, that has improved his graces to a considerable height, ***will keep humble and unspotted under great outward enjoyments.*** It is said of Daniel, that he had "an excellent spirit;" and herein did his excellent spirit appear—in that he was holy and humble in heart, though high in place and worth, etc., Dan. 6:3-7. Daniel keeps humble and holy when he is lifted high, yes, made the second man in the kingdom. Malice itself could not find anything against him—except "in connection with the requirements of his religion." [Many are seemingly good until they come to be great, and then they prove stark nothing.] It is much to be very gracious when a man is very great—and to be high in holiness when advanced to high places. Usually men's pride rises with their outward good. Certainly, they are worthy ones, and shall walk with Christ in white, whose garments are not defiled with greatness or riches, etc., Rev. 3:4.

[2.] *Secondly*, Those who have highly improved their graces, ***will comply with those commands of God which cross nature, which are contrary to nature.*** And doubtless that man has improved his graces to a very high rate, whose heart complies with those commands of God which are cross and contrary to his nature; as for a man to love those who loathe him, to bless those who curse him, to pray for those who persecute him, etc., Mat. 5:44. It is nothing to love those who love us, and to speak well of those who speak well of us; and to do well, and behave well towards those who behave well towards us. Oh—but

for a man to love those who hate him, to be courteous to those who are currish to him, to be sweet to those who are bitter to him, etc., this strongly demonstrates a high improvement of grace. [They use to say, If any man would have Mr. Foxe do him a good turn, let him do him an injury.]

Certainly that man is very, very godly, who has learned that holy lesson of "overcoming evil with good," Romans 12:21. Such a one was Stephen, Acts 7:55, 60. He was a man full of the Holy Spirit, that is, of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit; he was much in the exercise of grace, he can pray and sigh for them, yes, even weep tears of blood for them—who rejoiced to shed his blood. So did Christ weep over Jerusalem. Christ shed tears for those who were to shed his blood.

So Abraham "being strong in faith gave glory to God," Romans 4:20. How? Why, by complying with those commands of God that were contrary to flesh and blood, as the offering up of his son, his only son, his beloved son, his son of the promise; and by leaving his own country, and his near and dear relations, upon a word of command. The commands of God so change the whole man and make him new, that you can hardly know him to be the same man. Well, sirs, remember this—it is a dangerous thing to neglect one of God's commands, though it be ever so cross to flesh and blood; who by another of his commands, is able to command you into nothing or into hell. "Let Luther hate me, and in his wrath call me a devil a thousand times —yet I will love him, and acknowledge him to be a most precious servant of God," says Calvin.

[3.] *Thirdly*, Consider this, ***such souls will follow the Lord fully, who have made an improvement of their graces.*** Oh, this was the glorious commendations of Caleb and Joshua in Numb. 14:24, that they "followed the Lord fully," in the face of all difficulties and discouragements. "They had another spirit in them," says the text, they would go up and possess the land; though the walls were as high as heaven, and the sons of Anak were there, they made no more of it than to go, see, and conquer.

"They followed the Lord fully." In the Hebrew it is, "They fulfilled after me." The Hebrew word is a metaphor taken from a ship under sail, that is

carried with a strong wind, as fearing neither sands, nor rocks, nor shelves, etc. Such have little if anything of Christ within—who follow him by halves or haltingly.

Cyprian brings in the devil triumphing over Christ thus: "As for my followers, I never died for them as Christ did for his; I never promised them so great reward as Christ has done to his; and yet I have more followers than he, and they do more for me than his do for him."

[4.] Fourthly, ***Such souls that have improved their graces to a considerable height, will bless God as well when he frowns—as when he smiles.***

As well when he *takes* as when he *gives*—when he *strikes* as when he *strokes*—as you may see by comparing these scriptures together. [Job 1:21; Lev. 10:3; 2 Sam. 15:25-26; Isaiah 63:14-15.] When the Lord had stripped Job of all, and had set him naked upon the ash-heap, then says Job, "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." Where grace is improved to a considerable height—it will work a soul to sit down satisfied with the naked enjoyment of God, without other things: John 14:8, "Show us the Father, and it suffices us." The sight of the Father, without honors; the sight of the Father, without riches; the sight of the Father, without men's favour—will suffice the soul. As Jacob said, "It is enough that Joseph is alive;" so says the soul that is high in grace, *It is enough that Jesus is alive*, etc.

[5.] Fifthly, ***Souls that have improved their graces to a considerable height, will be good in bad times and in bad places.***

Such souls will bear up against the stream of evil examples, in the worst of times and in the worst of places. [Though the fish live in the salt sea—yet they are fresh. So though souls eminently gracious live among the wicked—yet they retain their spiritualness, freshness, and life.] **Abraham** was righteous in Chaldea; **Lot** was just in Sodom; **Daniel** holy in Babylon; **Job** upright and fearing God in the land of Uz, which was a profane and most abominable superstitious place; **Nehemiah** zealous in Damascus. Oh, give me a man who has improved his grace,

and the worse the times are—the better that man will be; he will bear up bravely against the stream of evil examples, he will be very good when times and all round about him are very bad.

Some say that roses grow the sweeter when they are planted by garlic. Truly, Christians that have gloriously improved their graces are like those roses—they grow sweeter and sweeter, holier and holier, by wicked men. The best diamonds shine most in the dark, and so do the best Christians shine most in the worst times.

[6.] Sixthly, ***Such turn their principles into practice***. They turn their speculations into power, their notions into spirit, their glorious inside into a golden outside, Psalm 45:13.

[7.] Seventhly, ***Such as have made a considerable improvement of their gifts and graces, have hearts as large as their heads****;* whereas most men's heads have outgrown their hearts, etc.

[8.] Eighthly, ***Such are always most busied about the highest things****,* namely, God, Christ, heaven, etc., Philip. 3; 2 Tim. 4:8; 2 Cor. 4:18; Romans 8:18.

[9.] Ninthly, ***Such are always a-doing or receiving good***. As Christ went up and down doing good, Mat. 4:23; chapter 9:35; Mark 6:6.

[10.] Tenthly and lastly, ***Such will mourn for wicked men's sins, as well as their own.*** Oh the tears, the sighs, the groans, that others' sins fetch from these men's heart! Iambus wept when he saw a harlot dressed with much care and cost, partly to see one take so much pains to go to hell, and partly because he had not been so careful to please God, as she had been to please a wanton lover, Jer. 9:1-2; 2 Pet. 2:7-9.

I have at this time only given you some short hints, whereby you may know whether you have made any considerable improvement of that grace the Lord has given you. I do intend, by divine permission, in a convenient time, to declare much more of this to the world. I shall follow all what has been said with my prayers, that it may help on your internal and eternal welfare.

The Fifth Doctrine

I shall now proceed to the fifth doctrine, namely—***That the Lord Jesus Christ is very rich.***

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles **the unsearchable riches of Christ!**" Ephesians 3:8

For the opening of this point, we shall attempt these three things:

I. To demonstrate this to be a truth—that the Lord Jesus is very rich.

II. The grounds why he is thus held forth in the word, to be one full of unsearchable riches.

III. To show you the excellency of the riches of Christ, above all other riches in the world.

IV. And then the use and application of the point.

I. To demonstrate this to be a truth—that the Lord Jesus is very rich.

[1.] First, **Express scripture speaks out this truth**. He is rich in **goodness**: Romans 2:4, "the riches of his goodness," his "native goodness," etc., that is ready to be employed for your internal and eternal good, etc.

Again, He is rich in **wisdom** and **knowledge**: Col. 2:3, "In whom," speaking of Christ, "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Christ was content that his riches should be hid from the world; therefore do not be angry that yours is no more known to the world. What is your one mite to Christ's many millions? etc. [As man is an epitome of the whole world, so is Christ the epitome of all wisdom and knowledge etc.]

Again, He is rich in **grace**: Eph. 1:7, "By whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

Again, He is rich in **glory**: Eph. 1:18, "That you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." So in chapter 3:16, "That he would grant unto you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." So in Philip. 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ." The riches of glory are unconceivable riches. Search is made through all the depths of the earth for something to picture it by. The riches of this glory is fitter to be believed than to be discoursed of, as some of the very heathens have acknowledged. [Neither Christ nor heaven can be exaggerated.—Augustine.]

[2.]. But, *secondly*, as express scripture speaks out this truth, that Christ is very rich, *so* ***there are eight things more that do with open mouth speak out Christ to be very rich***.

(1.) *First*, **You may judge of his riches, *by the dowry and portion that his Father has given him***. In Psalm 2:7, "You are my Son, this day have I begotten you; ask of me, and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession." He is the heir of all things. All things above and below, in heaven and earth, are his. Heb. 1:2, "God has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things." Christ is the richest heir in heaven and earth. Men cry up this man to be a good match and that; and why so—but because they are great heirs. Ah! but what are all the great heirs of the world to this heir, the Lord Jesus? Joseph gave portions to all his brethren—but to Benjamin a portion five times as good as what he gave the others. So the Lord scatters portions among the sons of men. He gives brass to some, gold to others; temporals to some, spirituals to others; but the greatest portion of all he has given into the hands of Christ, whom he has made the heir of all things; Rev. 11:15, "And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever." So in chapter 19:11-12,

"Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. And the one sitting on the horse was named Faithful and True. For he judges fairly and then goes to war. His eyes were bright like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns. A name was written on him, and only he knew what it meant." Mark that! What are princes' single crowns, and the pope's triple crown, compared to Christ's many crowns? Certainly he must be very rich, that has so many kingdoms and crowns. Wait but a while, and you shall see these scriptures made good, etc.

(2.) *Secondly*, **You may judge of his riches, *by his keeping open house for the relief and supply of all created creatures, both in heaven and in earth.***

You look upon those as very rich that keep open house for all comers and goers. Why, such a one is the Lord Jesus Christ; he keeps open house for all comers and goers, for all created creatures both in heaven and earth. Psalm 104:24, "The earth is full of your riches. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number—living things both large and small." "When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing." says the Psalmist, Psalm 145:16. So Isaiah 55:1, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, let him come and buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Why do you lay out your money for that which is not bread, and your strength for that which does not profit?" [King Croesus was so rich, that he maintained a whole army with his own revenues. But what is this to what Jesus does? etc.] All creatures, high and low, honorable and base, noble and ignoble, blessed and cursed—are fed at the cost and charge of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are all fed at his table, and maintained by what comes out of his treasury, his purse. All angels and saints above, and all saints and sinners below, are indebted to Christ for what they enjoy. Oh! the multitudes, the numberless number of those who live upon the cost and charge of Christ. Can you number the stars of heaven? can you number the sands upon the sea-shore? then may you number the multitudes, the millions of angels and men who are maintained upon the cost and charge of the Lord Jesus.

In Col. 1:16-17, "For by Him everything was created, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for

Him. He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together."

(3.) *Thirdly*, **You may judge of the riches of Christ *by the time that he has fed and clothed, cherished and maintained, so many innumerable millions of angels and men.***

He has maintained his court above and below, upon his own cost and charge, for some six thousand years. Oh, to keep such a multitude, if it were but for a day, would speak him out to be richer than all the princes in the world; but to keep so many millions, and to keep them so long, what does this speak out—but that Christ is infinitely rich, rich in goodness and mercy? It would beggar all the princes on earth, to keep but one day the least part of those who Christ maintains every day, etc.

(4.) But, *fourthly*, **you may judge of the riches of Christ by this, *that he does not only enrich all the saints—but every aspect of the saints.***

That is, he enriches all the faculties of their souls; he enriches their **understandings** with glorious light; their **consciences** with quickness, pureness, tenderness and quietness; and their **wills** with holy intentions and heavenly resolutions; and their **affections** of love, joy, fear, etc.—with life, heat, and warmth, and with the beauty and glory of the most soul-enriching, soul-delighting, soul-ravishing, and soul-contenting objects etc. All saints' experiences seal to this truth, and therefore a touch shall suffice, etc.

(5.) *Fifthly*, Judge of the riches of Christ by this, *that* ***notwithstanding all the vast expense and charge that he is at, and has been at for so many millions of thousands of creatures, and that for some six thousand years—yet he is never the poorer; his purse is never the emptier.***

There is still in Christ a fullness of abundance, and a fullness of redundance, notwithstanding all that he has expended. It were blasphemy to think that Christ should be a penny the poorer by all that he has laid out for the relief of all those who have their dependence upon him. Col. 1:19, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness

dwell." Not stay or abide a night or a day and then be gone—but should dwell. The sun has not the less light for filling the world with light. A fountain has not the less for filling the lesser vessels. There is in Christ the fullness of a fountain. The overflowing fountain pours out water abundantly, and yet remains full. Why, the Lord Jesus is such an overflowing fountain; he fills all, and yet remains full. Christ has the greatest worth and wealth in him. As the worth and value of many pieces of silver is concentrated in one piece of gold, so all the petty excellencies scattered abroad in the creature are united to Christ; yes, all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth, is epitomized in him, etc. [They say it is true of the oil at Rhemes that, though it be continually spent in the inauguration of their kings of France —yet it never runs dry. I am sure, though all creatures spend continually, on Christ's stock—yet it never wastes.]

(6.) *Sixthly*, **The Lord Jesus *is universally rich*, and that speaks him out to be rich indeed.** He is universally rich. You have few people who are universally rich. That is a rich man indeed, who is universally rich; that is, he is rich in money and rich in land, and rich in commodities, and rich in jewels, etc. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is one who is universally rich; he is rich in all spirituals; he is rich in goodness, rich in wisdom and knowledge; he is rich in grace, and rich in glory. Yes, he is universally rich in respect of temporals. "He is the heir of all things." He is the heir of all the gold in the world, and of all the silver, and of all the jewels, and of all the land, and of all the cattle in the world—as you may see by comparing some scriptures together. Hos. 2:5, 8, 9, "Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace. She said —I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink." But mark what follows: verses 8-9, "She doesn't realize that it was **I** who gave her everything she has—the grain, the wine, the olive oil. Even the gold and silver she used in worshiping the god Baal were gifts from me!"

So in Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him." All others are either usurpers or stewards; it is the Lord Jesus who is the great landlord of heaven and earth. "For all the animals of the forest are mine, and I own the cattle on a

thousand hills. Every bird of the mountains and all the animals of the field belong to me. Psalm 50:10-11. *It is all mine!* says the Lord.

Thus you see that the Lord is universally rich—rich in houses, in lands, in gold, in silver, in cattle, etc., in all temporals as well as in spirituals; but where will you find a man who is universally rich either in spirituals or temporals? It is true, you may find one Christian rich in one grace, and another Christian rich in another; but where will you find a Christian who is universally rich—who is rich in every grace—who is rich in knowledge, in faith, in love, in wisdom, in humility, in meekness, in patience, in self-denial? *Abraham* was rich in faith, and *Moses* was rich in meekness, and *Job* was rich in patience, and *Joshua* was rich in courage, and *David* was rich in uprightness, etc. But where will you find a saint that is rich in all these graces?

Or where will you find a man who is universally rich, in respect of temporals, as to be rich in lands, and rich in moneys, and rich in wares, and rich in jewels, etc. But now the Lord Jesus Christ is universally rich, both in respect of spirituals and temporals. "In having nothing I have all things," says one, "because I have Christ; having therefore all things in him, I seek no other reward, for he is the universal reward," etc. [Gregory the Great was accustomed to say that he was poor whose soul was void of grace—not whose coffers were empty of money.]

(7.) *Seventhly*, **You may judge of the riches of Christ, *by the tribute which is due to him.***

He is the great landlord and owner of all that angels and men possess above and below. All created creatures are but tenants-at-will to this rich landlord, the Lord Jesus. He puts out and puts in as he pleases; he lifts up one, and casts down another; he throws down the mighty, and sets up the needy—according to the pleasure of his own will. "Whom he will—he destroys, and whom he will—he saves alive," Psalm 113:7; 148:14; Luke 1:52. Whom he will—he binds, and whom he will—he sets at liberty; whom he will—he exalts, and whom he will—he abases; whom he will he makes happy, and whom he will he makes miserable, etc. The psalmist, Psalm 148, upon this account, calls upon all celestial and terrestrial creatures, to pay their tribute of praise to the Lord. He has given them all

their beings, and he maintains them all in the beings that he has given them.

The ancient Hebrews, as Josephus relates, set marks and tokens sometimes on their arms, sometimes at their gates—to declare to all the world the tribute and praise that was due to the Lord, for all his benefits and favors shown unto them. Bernard says, "We must imitate the birds, who morning and evening, at the rising and setting of the sun, omit not to pay the debt of praise that is due to their creator."

(8.) *Eighthly* and lastly, **judge of the riches of Christ *by the multiplicity and variety of temporal and spiritual gifts and rewards that he scatters among men.***Christ says to the believer, as the king of Israel said to the king of Syria, "I am yours—and all that I have," 1 Kings 20:4. This is a hive which is full of divine comfort.

He gives honors to thousands, and riches to thousands, and peace to thousands, and pardon to thousands, and the joys and comforts of the Holy Spirit to thousands. There is not a moment that passes over our head—but he is a-scattering of his jewels up and down the world; he throws some into one bosom, and others into others—but the best into the bosom of his saints. Oh, the abundance of peace, the abundance of joy and comfort! Oh, the fear, the faith, the love, the kindness, the goodness and sweetness—which the Lord Jesus Christ scatters up and down among the precious sons and daughters of Zion, besides all temporal favors. There is not a saint that receives so much as a cup of cold water—but Christ rewards it abundantly into the bosom of the giver, Mat. 10:42. By all which you may well judge, that certainly the Lord Jesus is very rich, for if he were not, he could never hold out in scattering of rich rewards among so many millions, and for so many thousand years, as he has done. [The Duke of Burgundy gave a poor man a great reward for offering him a plant root, being the best present the poor man had. And surely so will God bountifully reward the least favors showed to his.]

And so much for the proof of the point, namely, that the Lord Jesus is very rich. We come now in the second place to discover to you,

II. The grounds and reasons why the Lord Jesus Christ is held forth in the word to be so very rich.

And they are these that follow:

[1.] First, ***To encourage poor sinners to look after, and to be willing to match with him.*** [Abraham's servant, to win over the heart of Rebekah to Isaac, brings forth jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and acquaints her what a rich match she would have by matching with Isaac, and so overcame her, Gen. 24. And so does God deal with poor sinners, etc.]

Poverty hinders many a match. The Lord did foresee from eternity, that fallen man would never look after Christ, if there were not something to be gotten by Christ. The Lord has therefore in his wisdom and goodness to fallen man, thus presented him as one exceeding rich, that so poor sinners might fall in love with him, and be willing to give up themselves to him: Proverbs 8:34-35, "Blessed is the man who hears me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors;" as guards do at princes' gates and doors. Now, the arguments to draw out the soul thus to wait upon the Lord, lie in the next words, "For whoever finds me finds life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord." The Hebrew runs thus, "For finding me he shall find lives, and shall draw forth the favor of the Lord." Divine favor is as it were a jewel locked up; ay—but by finding Christ, by getting Christ, the soul gets this jewel, that is more worth than a world; yes, by gaining him, the soul gains lives; namely—a life of grace, and a life of glory—and what more would the soul desire?

A *second* ground of this is,

[2.] ***Because he is ordained by the Father to convey all riches of grace to his chosen and beloved ones.***

John 1:16, "From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another;" and this we receive by divine ordination. John 6:27, "Labor not," says Christ, "for the food that perishes—but for that 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 sealed

Christ; [*Sealed*, that is, made his commission authentic, as men do their deeds by their seal.] He has designed Christ, he has set Christ apart for this very work, that he might give grace unto us. God has ordained to convey all fullness of light to the air by the sun, and therefore has put a greater fullness of light into the sun. God has ordained all fullness of nourishment to the branches by the roots, and therefore has put a fullness of juice into the roots. So the Lord has ordained that all the riches of grace, of peace, of glory, etc., which believers shall enjoy here and in heaven, they shall have from the Sun of righteousness, from this blessed root the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore the Father has filled this Sun with light, this root with heavenly juice, because he is by divine ordination to convey all spiritual and glorious riches into the hearts of his chosen and beloved ones, John 15:21-22.

A *third* ground is,

[3.] ***To take away all excuse from ungodly and wicked men, and that they may be found speechless in the day of vengeance, when the Lord shall come to reckon with them.*** [Sirens are said to sing skillfully while they live—but to roar horribly when they die. So will all those who have rejected so rich a Jesus as has been offered to them, when the Lord Jesus shall plead with them, etc.]

Ah, sinners! how will you who have turned your backs upon Christ, who is thus rich—be able to answer in the day when God shall reason the case with you? When God shall say, Sinners, has it not been often told you that Christ is rich in mercy, and rich in goodness, and rich in grace, rich in pardons, rich in loves, and rich in glory, rich in spirituals, rich in temporals, and rich in eternals—and yet you have slighted this Christ, you have turned your backs upon this Christ—you have preferred your lusts, and the world, and the service of the devil, above this Christ. Oh! how dumb, how speechless will sinners be, when the Lord shall thus plead with them. Oh! how will their countenances be changed, their thoughts troubled, and their joints loosed, their consciences enraged, and their souls terrified—when they shall see what a rich match they have refused, and thereupon how justly they are forever accursed, etc.

[4.] *Lastly*, It is upon this account, ***That he may be a complete***

Redeemer to us, and that nothing may hinder our souls closing with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We stand in need of one who is rich—rich in **grace** to pardon us, rich in **power** to support us, and rich in **goodness** to relieve us, and rich in **glory** to crown us. There is none but such a Christ can serve our turns. We stand in need of one who is rich, who is universally rich, one who is rich in money to pay all our debts. We have run much in debt with God, and none can pay this score but Christ. Our sins are debts that none can pay but Christ. It is not our tears but his blood, it is not our sighs but his sufferings—which can satisfy justice for our sins. We are much in debt to God for the ground we tread on, the air we breathe in, the beds we lie on, the bread we eat, the clothes we wear, etc.; and none can pay this debt but Christ. Angels and saints may pity us—but they cannot discharge the least debt for us, etc. Christ must pay all—or we are prisoners forever, etc. We stand in need of one who is rich in goodness. We are a needy people, and are still in need. Christ must be still a-giving, or we shall be still a-languishing. If he shuts his hand—we perish and return to dust. Our temporal needs are many, our spiritual needs are more, and if Christ does not supply them, who will? who can? Nay, our needs are so many and so great, that Christ himself could not supply them, were be not very, very rich.

And thus I have given you a brief account of the reasons of the point, why the Lord Jesus is held forth by the Scripture to be so very rich. We shall now come to the third thing proposed, and that is,

III. The excellency of the riches of Christ—above all other riches in the world.

I shall briefly run over this third branch, and so come to the application, which is most in my eye, and upon my heart.

[1.] *First*, **The riches of Christ are *INCOMPARABLE riches*.**

"Happy is the man who finds Wisdom," that is, the Lord Jesus Christ,

"For the profit of wisdom is better than silver, and her wages are better than gold. Wisdom is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. She offers you life in her right hand, and riches and honor in her left. She will guide you down delightful paths; all her ways are satisfying." Proverbs 3:14-17

One grain of grace is of far greater worth, than all the gold of Ophir and all the silver of the Indies—which are but the guts and garbage of the earth. We may say of the riches of this world, compared with the riches of Christ, as Gideon once said of the vintage of Abiezer, "The gleanings of Ephraim are better than the vintage of Abiezer." So the gleanings, the smallest gatherings of the riches of Christ, are far better, more excellent, more satisfying, more contenting, more ravishing than all the riches of this world. [Riches are called thick clay, Hab. 2:6, which will sooner break the back than lighten the heart, etc.]

"The whole Turkish empire," says Luther, "is but a crust which God throws to a dog." The wise merchant, Mat. 13:44-45, parts with all to gain this pearl of price; the truth is, other riches are but a burden. Gen. 13:2, "Abraham was very *rich* in cattle, in silver, and in gold." The Hebrew is, "He was very *heavy* in cattle, in silver, and in gold"; to signify, that riches are but heavy burdens. **A little will satisfy nature, less will satisfy grace—but nothing will satisfy men's lusts.**

Pheraulus, a poor man, on whom Cyrus bestowed so much, that he knew not what to do with his riches, being wearied out with care in keeping of them, he desired rather to live quietly, though poor, as he had done before, than to possess all those riches with discontent; therefore he gave away all his wealth, desiring only to enjoy so much as might supply his necessities. Let worldly professors think seriously of this story and blush, etc.

[2.] Secondly, **The riches of Christ are *INEXHAUSTIBLE riches*.** As I have showed you, Christ can never be drawn dry. Earthly riches are true gardens of Adonis, where we can gather nothing but trivial flowers surrounded with many briars, etc. "Have you entered into the treasures of the snow?" says God to Job. Now, Gregory of Nyssa says that the treasures of the snow are worldly riches, which men rake together as

children do snow, which the next shower washes away, and leaves nothing in the place but dirt; and can dirt satisfy? Surely not! No more can worldly riches.

The Spanish ambassador coming to see the treasury of St. Mark, in Venice, which is famous throughout the world, fell a-groping 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 of Mexico and Potosi, etc. Certainly Christ's treasures have no bottom, all his bags are bottomless; but Scripture, history, and experience, do abundantly testify that men's bags, purses, coffers, and mines—may be exhausted or drawn dry—but Christ's can never. Millions of thousands live upon Christ, and he feels it not; his purse is always full, though he is always giving, etc.

[3.] *Thirdly*, **The riches of Christ are *SOUL-SATISFYING riches*.** Oh those riches of grace and goodness that are in Christ—how do they satisfy the souls of sinners! A pardon does not more satisfy a condemned man, nor bread the hungry man, nor drink the thirsty man, nor clothes the naked man, nor health the sick man, than the riches of Christ do satisfy the gracious man.

John 4:13-14, "Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of living water springing up to everlasting life." Grace is a perpetual flowing fountain. Grace is compared to water. Water serves to *cool* men when they are in a burning heat, so grace cools the soul when it has been scorched and burned up under the sense of divine wrath and displeasure. Water is *cleansing*, so is grace; water is *fructifying*, so is grace; and water is *satisfying*, it satisfies the thirsty, and so does grace. "Show us the Father, and it suffices us," John 14:8. But now earthly riches can never satisfy the soul; but as they said once of Alexander, "that had he a body suitable to his mind, he would set one foot upon sea, and the other upon land;" he would reach the east with one hand, and the west with the other. And doubtless the same frame of spirit is to be found in all the sons of Adam.

In Eccles. 5:10, "He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor

he who loves abundance with increase. This is also vanity." If a man is *hungry*, silver cannot feed him; if *naked*, it cannot clothe him; if *cold*, it cannot warm him; if *sick*, it cannot cure him—much less then is it able to satisfy him. Oh! but the riches of Christ are soul-satisfying riches. A soul rich in spirituals, rich in eternals, says, *I have enough, though I have not this and that temporal good, etc.* [The reasonable soul may be *busied* about other things—but it cannot be *filled* with them, etc.—Bernard.]

[4.] *Fourthly*, **The riches of Christ are *HARMLESS riches*.** They are riches that will not hurt the soul, that will not harm the soul. Where is there a soul to be found in all the world that was ever made worse by spiritual riches? Oh but earthly riches have cast down many, they have slain many. If poverty, with Saul, has killed her thousands, riches, with David, has killed her ten thousands. Eccles. 5:13, "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt." Earthly riches are called thorns, and well they may; for as thorns, they pierce both head and heart; the head with cares in getting them, and the heart with grief in parting with them. Oh the souls that riches have pierced through and through with many sorrows! Oh the minds that riches have blinded! Oh the hearts that riches have hardened! Oh the consciences that riches have benumbed! Oh the wills that riches have perverted! Oh the affections that riches have disordered and destroyed! Earthly riches are very vexing, very defiling, very dividing, and to multitudes prove very ruining. "For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows." 1 Timothy 6:10. [Some say where gold grows, no plant will prosper; so no truth, no good, etc., will have any heart-room where the love of money prevails, etc.]

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.*

[5.] *Fifthly*, **The riches of Christ are *UNSEARCHABLE riches*.** This is plain in the text, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the

unsearchable riches of Christ." There are riches of justification, riches of sanctification, riches of consolation, and riches of glorification in Christ. All the riches of Christ are unsearchable riches. A saint with all the light that he has from the Spirit of Christ, is not able to search to the bottom of these riches. Nay, suppose that all the perfections of angels and saints in a glorified estate should meet in one noble bosom—yet all those perfections could not enable that glorious glorified creature for to search to the bottom of Christ's unsearchable riches. Doubtless when believers come to heaven, when they shall see God face to face, when they shall know as they are known, when they shall be filled with the fullness of God, even then they will sweetly sing this song, "Oh the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of the unsearchable riches of Christ!" As there is no Christ to this Christ, so there are no riches to his riches, etc. Oh but such are not the riches of this world, they may be reckoned, they may be fathomed, etc. [The philosophers seeing to the very bottom of earthly riches, despised them, and preferred a contemplative life above them.]

[6.] *Sixthly*, **The riches of the Lord Jesus Christ are *permanent and abiding riches; they are lasting, they are DURABLE riches.***That is a choice scripture, Proverbs 8:18, "Riches and honor are with me, yes, durable riches and righteousness." The Hebrew word that is rendered *"durable riches"* signifies old riches. All other riches are but new, they are but of yesterday as it were. Oh! but with me are old riches, durable riches. All other riches, in respect of their fickleness, are as a shadow, a bird, a ship, an arrow, a dream, a post, etc. [It is reported of one Myrogenes, when great gifts were sent him, he sent them back, saying, I only desire this one thing at your master's hands, to pray for me, that I may be saved for eternity, etc.] This Valerian, Valens, and Bajazet, three proud emperors, found by experience, and so have many kings, and generals, and nobles, as Scripture and history do abundantly evidence. Earthly riches are very **uncertain**, 1 Tim. 6:17. They are ever upon the wing; they are like tennis balls, which are bandied up and down from one to another. As the bird hops from twig to twig, so do riches from man to man. This age can furnish us with multitudes of instances of this nature, etc.

[7.] *Seventhly* and lastly, **The riches of Christ are *the most***

USEFUL riches—*to sweeten all other riches, mercies, and changes*, etc., which speaks out the excellency of these riches above all other riches. The more useful anything is, the more excellent it is. Now the riches of Christ are of all things the most useful to poor souls. When the soul is under the guilt of sin, nothing relieves it like the riches of Christ. When the soul is surrounded with temptations, nothing strengthens it like the riches of Christ. When the soul is mourning under afflictions, nothing comforts it like the riches of Christ. When all earthly good fails, nothing makes a Christian sing care away like the riches of Christ, etc. The riches of Christ sweeten all other riches that men enjoy. [Earthly riches cannot enrich the soul, nor better the soul. Oftentimes under silk and satin apparel there is a threadbare soul.]

If a man be rich in parts, or rich in grace, rich in faith, rich in knowledge, rich in wisdom, rich in joy, rich in peace, etc.; or if a man be rich in temporals, rich in money, rich in wares, rich in jewels, rich in lands, etc., the glorious and unsearchable riches of Christ sweeten all his riches, and the lack of these riches embitters all the riches which men enjoy. When men's consciences are enlightened and awakened, then they cry out, what are all these worldly riches to us, except we had an interest in the unsearchable riches of Christ? As Absalom once said, "What are all these to me, except I see the king's face?"

I have read of one that, upon his dying bed, called for his bags, and laid a bag of gold to his heart, and then cried out, "Take it away, it will not do, it will not do."

There are things that earthly riches can never do:
They can never satisfy divine justice.
They can never pacify divine wrath.
Nor they can never quiet a guilty conscience.

And until these things are done, man is undone. The crown of gold cannot cure the headache, nor can the honorable ring cure the gout, nor can the chain of pearls around the neck take away the pain of the teeth. Oh but the unsearchable riches of Christ give ease under all pains and torments.

Nugas, the Scythian king, despising the rich presents and ornaments that were sent unto him by the emperor of Constantinople, asked "Whether those things could drive away calamities, diseases, or deaths?" looking upon all those presents as no presents, that could not keep off calamities from him. Truly, all the riches and glories of this world cannot keep off the least calamity, neither can they make up the lack of the least mercy. But the riches of Christ do both keep off calamities, and make up the lack of all mercies that the soul craves or needs. All which speak out the excellency of the riches of Christ above all other riches. We come now unto,

IV. *The USES and APPLICATION of this point.*

Use 1. And the first use that we shall make, is a use of **exhortation, to exhort you all, seeing Christ is so rich, *to labor to be spiritually rich.*** Oh labor to be rich in grace. In the handling of this use I shall propound this method.

[1.] I shall lay down some considerations that may provoke your souls to labor to be rich in grace.

[2.] I shall propound some directions or helps, to help you to be rich in grace, which is as much a mercy as a duty, etc.

[3.] I shall lay down some propositions concerning the soul's being rich in grace.

[4.] I shall show you how you may know whether you are the people who are rich in grace, or no.

I shall begin with the first, and be a little the more large upon it, because it is a point of mighty weight and concern; and then be the more brief in the three following particulars.

For the first, by way of **MOTIVE**, I shall only propound these following considerations, to provoke your souls to labor to be rich in grace. *Laborandum* was one of the emperors' motto, and must be every

Christian's.

[1.] *First*, ***Consider that the more rich the soul is in grace, the higher the soul will be in joy and comfort.*** [Oh the joys, the joys, the unconceivable joys! cried out Katharine Bretterge, who had attained to a great measure of grace, etc.]

It is the greatest measures of grace, which usher in the greatest measure of joy and comfort into a believing heart. Christians, have you tasted of the consolations of God? Have you at times sat down and drank of these wells of salvation? Are your hearts carried out for more of those waters of life? Then labor to be rich in grace. A little star yields but a little light, and a little grace will yield but a little comfort—but great measures of grace will yield a man not only a heaven hereafter—but also a heaven of joy here. Divine comfort is a choice flower, a precious jewel, and only to be found in their bosoms who are rich in grace. Spiritual comforts are such strong waters, that weak Christians are not able to bear them. Great measures of grace carry with them the greatest evidence of the truth of grace; and the clearer evidence there is in the soul of the truth of grace, the higher will joy and comfort spring. The soul is apt to hang her comforts on every hedge, to seek in every by-corner for comfort; but as fuel heats not without fire, so neither can anything soundly comfort a Christian without the God of grace, without his being rich in grace.

Great measures of grace carry with them the greatest evidence of a man's union and communion with God, and the more a man's union and communion with God is evidenced, the more will the soul be filled with that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, and with that comfort and peace which passes understanding. In great measures of grace a man may read most of the love and favor of God; and the more a man sees of the love and favor of God to him, the more high the springs of comfort rise in him. In great measures of grace, as in a crystal glass, the soul sees the glorious face of God shining and sparkling—and this fills the soul with joy. Acts 9:31, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied." The more their graces were increased, the more their comforts were augmented.

"If one drop of the joy of the Holy Spirit should fall into hell, it would swallow up all the torments of hell," says Austin. Oh! who would not then labor to increase in grace, that he may abound in joy? The promise lies most fair before the eyes of those who are rich in grace. Their interest in it is most clear, and rarely that they go without it, unless it is by taking part sometimes with Satan against their interest in Christ, or sometimes through the power of unbelief, which indeed cuts off all the comfort of the soul, or by looking after other lovers, or by not hearkening to the voice of the Comforter, etc. Christians, you often complain of the lack of joy and comfort. Oh! do but abound in grace, and you won't complain of the lack of comfort. "Without delight the soul cannot live," says one; "take away all delight, and the soul dies." Let this that has been spoken, provoke every Christian to labor to be rich in grace.

[2.] But, *secondly*, consider this, ***you have singular opportunities and choice advantages to be rich in grace.***

In former times God gave our grace by drops—but now by flagons, Cant. 2:5. Opportunities, if not improved, will, as that sword which Hector gave Ajax, be turned into your own heart. This will be a sword in your heart—that there have been soul-enriching opportunities, and you have neglected them, and turned your back upon them. The thoughts of this will one day be the scorpions that will vex you, the rod that will lash you, the thorns that will prick you, and the worm that will gnaw you. "The stork," says the prophet, "knows the time of her migration, as do the turtledove, the swallow, and the crane. They all return at the proper time each year. But not my people! They do not know what the Lord requires of them" Jer. 8:7. The market for your souls is open; do not let your season slip away, lest with the foolish virgins you go to buy when it is too late, Mat. 25. The merchant will not slip his opportunity of buying, nor the sailor his of sailing, nor the farmer his of sowing; and why should you slip yours of growing rich in grace? Many men lose their souls, as Saul lost his kingdom—by not discerning their time to be spiritually rich.

Tamerlane at first hung out a white flag—but if they slipped that opportunity, then a red, and so death and destruction followed, etc. The Lord Jesus hangs out the white flag of mercy in these days, to entice souls to come in, and to share with him in his glorious and unsearchable riches,

in the riches of his grace and mercy; but if you don't come, Christ has a red flag, and if that be once put out, you are lost forever. Thrice happy are those who take the first opportunity of closing with Christ, and of subjecting themselves to Christ. [Such there have been who, by giving a glass of water opportunely, have obtained a kingdom, as you may see in the story of Thaumastus and king Agrippa, etc.]

Plutarch writes of Hannibal, "That when he *could* have taken Rome he *would* not—but when he *would* have taken Rome he *could* not." When many men may have mercy—they would not receive it; and when they would have mercy—they will be refused. Proverbs 1:24, *seq*. Mercy and grace are sometimes upon the bare knee. Christ stands knocking at sinners' doors; he is willing to come in and make sinners rich and happy forever; he calls upon souls to open to him, Rev. 3:20, *seq*. "Lift up your heads, O gates; and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle," Psalm 24:7-8. The King of glory comes not empty-handed; no, he comes with his hands and heart full of rich and royal presents, and blessed and enriched forever are those who open to this King of glory, etc.

[3.] *Thirdly*, Consider this, ***souls rich in grace shall have their names immortal.***

Every man naturally would have, if it were possible, his name immortal. Now there is no way in the world to have your names immortal, like this of growing rich in grace. A man who is spiritually rich shall live—and his name shall live when he is dead. In Neh. 7:2, it is said of Hananiah, that "he was a faithful man, and feared God above many;" or, "he feared God above multitudes," as the Hebrew has it. His name lives, though his body for many hundred years has been turned to dust. So in Acts 7:55, "Stephen was a man full of the Holy Spirit." Though Stephen was stoned—yet his name lives, his memorial is precious among the saints to this very day. So in Heb. 11:38, they were such "of whom this world was not worthy." And in the third Epistle of John, the six first verses, compared with ver. 12, Gaius and Demetrius, who were rich in grace, have crowns of honor set upon their heads, their names live, and are a sweet savor to this very day, etc. So in Psalm 112:6, "The righteous shall be had in everlasting

remembrance—but the name of the wicked shall rot." The great man's name, and the rich man's name, shall rot, says he—but "the name of the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." [If I may but keep a good name, I have wealth enough, said Plautus.]

The Persians use to write their kings' names in golden letters; so the Lord writes the names of souls rich in grace in golden characters. Their names are always heirs to their lives. Believe it, there is no such way in the world to have immortal names, like this of growing rich in grace. One man thinks to make his name immortal, by making himself great; another by heaping up silver and gold as the dust of the earth or the stones of the street; and another by doing some strange exploits, etc. But for all this the Lord will make good his word, "the name of the wicked shall rot." If God is God, his name must rot; but "the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance;" they leave their names behind for a blessing, Isaiah 65:15. It is sad to consider what many poor carnal creatures have done and suffered to make their names immortal. The Romans' desires of praise and a name, made them bountiful of their purses, and prodigal of their lives. [A good name yields a fragrant smell over town and country; it puts a shining luster upon the countenance; it fits to any public employment, in ministry or magistracy; it stops many a foul mouth, and it makes men live when they are dead.]

Erostratus set the temple of Diana on fire, on that night that Alexander was born—only that he might be talked of when he was dead.

Calvin observes, that Servetus in Geneva, in the year 1555, gave all his goods to the poor, and his body to be burned—and all for a name, for a little glory among men. But these poor creatures have all missed the mark. There is no way, Christians, to have your names immortal, like this, of growing rich in grace. Neither Satan nor the world shall ever be able to bury such men's names, who are rich in grace; their names shall rise in glory here, as well as their bodies hereafter.

[4.] But then, *fourthly* and mainly, consider, ***that spiritual riches will enable you to live up to your principles.***

That man who has but so much grace as will keep hell and his soul

asunder, will never live up to his principles. Souls weak in grace are too apt to deny, and in their practices to contradict—their own principles. Oh that this age could not furnish us with too many instances of this nature! Oh! what is that that is the reproach of religion, and the dishonor of God and the gospel—but this, that professors live below their principles, that they live not up to their principles? And let me tell you, Christians, **there is nothing but a rich measure of grace that will enable a soul to live up to his principles**. A man who is not rich in grace will never be able to live up to his own principles—but will upon every occasion and temptation be ready to wound two at once; the honor of God and his own soul. Yes, men who are not rich in grace, will be ready to deny their own principles—as many weak Christians did in persecuting times.

But you will say to me, ***What are those gracious and holy principles, that a rich measure of grace will enable a man to live up to?***

I will instance only in those who have most worth and weight in them, and they are worthy of all your thoughts.

(1.) *First*, It is your principle, that **you must suffer, rather than sin**.

It is your principle rather to undergo the greatest calamities, than willingly to commit the least iniquity. Now, pray tell me, what will enable a Christian to live up to this principle? Will a *little* grace, a little knowledge of God, a little faith in God, a little love to God, a little zeal for God, a little communion with God? Will this do it? Surely not! It must be much grace that must enable the soul to live up to this principle. [It is better for me to be a martyr than a monarch, said Ignatius when he was to suffer, etc.] When sin and suffering have stood in competition, many weak Christians have chosen rather to sin, than to suffer, which has opened many a mouth, and saddened many a heart, and wounded many a conscience. Yes, such by their not suffering, have suffered more than ever they could have suffered from the wrath and rage of man.

Oh! but now spiritual riches will enable a man to live up to this principle, as you may see in Daniel, who had an excellent spirit in him, who was rich in grace, and filled with the Holy Spirit; he lives up to his principles;

he lives out his principles, when he was put hard to it; when he must either neglect the worship of his God and make a god of his king—or be thrown into the lions' den. Now, Daniel chooses rather to be cast into the lions' den than not to do homage to his God; he had rather suffer much, than that God should lose a grain of his glory. Of the same spirit and metal were those worthies, Heb. 11, who, when they were put to it, did rather choose to suffer the very worst of miseries, than they would in the least dishonor the Lord, wound their own consciences, and make work for repentance, etc. And so did Jovinian, Eusebius, Galeacius, Basil, Vincentius, Bolilas, etc. By all which you see, that Christians who are spiritually rich, live up to this principle, namely—to suffer rather than sin, when sin and suffering stand in competition; which babes in grace cannot do. [Of the very same spirit were the primitive Christians: they chose rather to be thrown to lions without, than left to lusts within.]

(2.) *Secondly*, It is your principle, ***that grace and virtue are to be pursued after, for their own worth, beauty, and excellency.***

But pray, tell me, what will carry a Christian out to this principle? Will a *little* grace carry a man out to pursue after grace, for the beauty, holiness, excellency, and spirituality that is in it? Alas! we see by daily experience that it will not do it. All other considerations put together, are little enough to draw men on to pursue after grace for its native beauty and excellency. Many seek Christ—but it is more for loaves—than for love, John 6:26; and they pursue after the means of grace, not for the beauty, excellency, and glory that is stamped upon the means—but one to maintain his honor, and another to keep up his name, and another to bring in credit or custom, and another to please his friends, and another to silence his conscience, etc.—but few there be, if any—but those who are rich in grace, who are true to this principle, who pursue after grace for its own beauty and excellency.

It was a notable expression of David, who was a man rich in grace, Psalm 119:140, "Your word is very pure, therefore your servant loves it." Oh! for a soul to love grace, and the word of grace, for its own interest, for the holiness, purity, and glory of it. This speaks out the soul to be rich in grace. So Paul, a man rich in grace, pursues after grace for its own interest, for the beauty and excellency of it. He forgets "what is behind,

and presses forward after the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, that if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead," Philip. 3:13-14. That is, to that perfection that the dead shall reach to in the morning of the resurrection, etc.

The young philosophers were very forward to learn the precepts of their sect, and the rules of severity, that they might discourse with kings and nobles, not that they might reform their own manners. Many professors in this age are like those philosophers; they are very industrious to get knowledge, that they may be able to discourse, and that they may be eyed, owned, and honored among others, for their knowledge and understanding. But now souls who are rich in grace, they labor after greater measures of grace, out of love to grace, and because of an excellency that they see in grace. **Grace is a very sparkling jewel, and he who loves it, and pursues after it for its own native beauty, has much of it within him**, etc.

(3.) *Thirdly*, It is your principle, *that* ***men must subject themselves, and square all their actions by the word of God.***

Now, what will make a man live up to this principle? Will a *little* grace? Surely not! Isaiah 8:10. But great measures of grace will. Zacharias and Elizabeth were rich in grace, and they lived up to this principle: Luke 1:5, "They walked in all the commandments of the Lord blameless." The apostles were rich in grace, and they lived up to this principle: 2 Cor. 1:12, "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have lived our lives in the world." So in 1 Thes. 2:10, "You are witnesses, and God also, how holily, justly, and unblameably, we have behaved ourselves among you who believe." Oh! here are souls who live up to their principles. A Christian who is rich in grace is excellent all over.

George, prince of Anhalt—his family is said to have been *ecclesia, academia, curia*, a church, a university, and a court. A Christian who is rich in grace has a heart as large as his head, yes, a heart that is as large as the whole will of God: Acts 13:22, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who shall fulfill all my will." In the Greek it is, *all my wills*, to note the universality and sincerity of his obedience. Souls

rich in grace practice that themselves, which they prescribe to ethers. Lessons of music must not be read only—but acted also. Souls rich in grace are good at this, and they will be good in all places and cases. They are as good at the particular duties of religion, as at those who are more general; they are good fathers, and good masters, and good husbands—as well as good Christians, in a more general sense.

But now souls who have but a *little* grace, they are much in the general duties of religion—but very defective in the particular duties of religion, as sad experience does abundantly evidence. Those who have a blemish in their eye, think the sky to be ever cloudy; and nothing is more common to weak spirits, than to be criticizing and contending about other duties, and to neglect their own. But such who are rich in grace, make it their glory to subject themselves to the rule of righteousness; as Baldasser, a German minister, cried out, *Let the word of the Lord come, let it come—and we will submit to it*. It must be much grace that must enable a man freely, fully, and sweetly to subject himself and his actions to the word of the Lord.

(4.) *Fourthly*, It is your principle, *that* ***you must deny yourselves, your own profit, ease, pleasure, etc., for a public good.***

And this the Scripture requires. It is your principle to deny yourselves, your own honor, pleasure, profit, etc., for a public advantage, when your particular advantages stand in competition with the public. Now self must be laid by, and the public must carry the day. Oh—but will a little grace enable a man to live up to this principle! Woeful experience shows the contrary. Ay—but now, give me a man who is rich in grace, and he will live up to this golden principle, as you may see in Nehem. 5:14-18.

Nehemiah was a man eminent in grace, and he chose rather to live upon his own purse than upon the public purse: "I would like to mention that for the entire twelve years that I was governor of Judah—from the twentieth until the thirty-second year of the reign of King Artaxerxes—neither I nor my officials drew on our official food allowance. This was quite a contrast to the former governors who had laid heavy burdens on the people, demanding a daily ration of food and wine, besides a pound of silver. Even their assistants took advantage of the people. But because of

my fear of God, I did not act that way. I devoted myself to working on the wall and refused to acquire any land. And I required all my officials to spend time working on the wall. I asked for nothing, even though I regularly fed 150 Jewish officials at my table, besides all the visitors from other lands! The provisions required at my expense for each day were one ox, six fat sheep, and a large number of domestic fowl. And every ten days we needed a large supply of all kinds of wine. Yet I refused to claim the governor's food allowance because the people were already having a difficult time."

Oh, here was a brave spirit indeed; he was far from enriching himself by others' ruins, from emptying others' purses to fill his own. But he is dead—and it seems this brave spirit is buried with him! There are few of his name, and fewer of his spirit, if any in this world, and therefore well might he pray, "Remember, O my God, all that I have done for these people, and bless me for it." And accordingly God did remember him for good—and made him very famous and glorious in his generation. [It is a base and unworthy spirit for a man to make himself the center of all his actions. The very heathen man could say, A man's country and his friends, and others—challenge a great part of him.]

And that is a remarkable passage concerning **Moses**: Num. 14:12-21, "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of you a great nation, and mightier than they," says God to Moses. "Therefore let me alone to destroy them and cut them off, for they are a rebellious generation. And I will make you a mightier nation for honor, riches, and power, than they. Nay!" says Moses, "this may not be, Lord." Oh, the people must be spared, the people must be pardoned, and the people must have your presence with them, and rather than it should be otherwise, let my name, Lord, be blotted out of the book of life. Lord! I care not how bad it goes with myself—just so they may live. Can the self-seekers of our age think seriously of this and not blush?

So **Mordecai** was a man of a brave public spirit: Esther 10:3, "Mordecai the Jew was next unto King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, because he worked for the good of his people." He made it his business to seek their good.

Christ also was full of grace, and had a brave public spirit; he laid out himself and laid down himself for a public good; and so did Paul, etc. Few in our days are of Lorenzo's opinion and mind—who was rather willing to beautify Italy than his own house. "That pilot dies nobly," says Seneca, "who perishes in the storm with the helm in his hand." Such that seek themselves more than the public good, must be served as Aesop did his fellow-servant; he gave him warm water to drink, by which means he vomited up the stolen figs. Friends, it is not a little grace that will make a man prefer the public good, above his own particular good—but much grace will; therefore labor to be rich in grace. [Christ healed others—but was hurt himself; he fed and filled others—but was hungry himself, etc.]

(5.) *Fifthly*, It is your principle, *that* ***you are to do the duties that God requires of you, and quietly leave the outcomes and results of all, to the wise disposal of God.***

But pray tell me, will a *little* grace enable a man to live up to this principle, to do his duty, and to leave outcomes and results to him to whom they belong? Surely not! Eccles. 9:10, "Whatever your *hand* finds to do—do it with all your might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave where you go." Mark, he does not say, what your *head* finds to do, for that may find a thousand things; nor what your *heart* finds to do, for that may find ten thousand things; but what your *hand* finds to do; that is, look what work which God cuts out to your hand to do—that do with all your might.

We are to do much good in a little time; we are made here, and set to be a-doing something that may do us good a thousand years hence, yes, that may stand us in stead to eternity. Our time is short, our task is great. The devil knows that his time is but short, and that is the reason why he is so active and stirring, why he does outwork the children of light, in a quick despatch of the deeds of darkness. Christians, do not deceive yourselves; it is not *shows* of grace, nor little measures of grace—which will enable a man to live up to this principle—but great measures of grace will, as you may see in the three Hebrew children, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king—O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will

rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." Daniel 3:16-18

So those worthies, Psalm 44:19, "Though you have sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death—yet have we not forgotten you, neither have we dealt falsely in your covenant." Here was much of Christ and grace within. So in Acts 21, when Paul was to go up to Jerusalem to suffer, his friends, by many tears and arguments, labored to dissuade him, for fear of some sad outcome and event which would follow. But Paul, rich in grace, answered, "Why all this weeping? You are breaking my heart! For I am ready not only to be jailed at Jerusalem but also to die for the sake of the Lord Jesus." I will go up to Jerusalem, and I am willing to go up, though I die for it. Ay, here is a soul who lives up to his principle!

Ay—but now souls who are weak in grace, as we have had large experience of it in our times, they are more taken up and busied about the outcomes and results of things, than they are with their own duties. [Christ healed others—but was hurt himself; he fed and filled others—but was hungry himself, etc.] When they should be a-praying, a-believing, a-waiting, and acting for God—they have been a-questioning and fearing what the outcomes and results of this, and that, and the other thing would be. And indeed they have been high and low, as secondary causes have wrought—which has made many of their lives a very hell. But now those who are rich in grace, they say as once he did, "Let us be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may the Lord do that which seems him good," 2 Sam. 10:10-12. **Let us do our duties—and let the Lord do as pleases him**, etc.

(6.) *Sixthly*, It is your principle, *that* ***men are to be prepared, and to stand fast against all sudden assaults and invasions that may be made upon them.***

Many a valiant person dares fight in a battle or a duel, who yet will be timorous and fearful if suddenly surprised in a midnight alarm. Many precious souls, when they have time to consider of the evil of sin, the holiness of God, the eye of God, the honor of God, the glory of the gospel,

the joys of the saints, and the stopping of the mouths of sinners—will rather die than sin; they will rather suffer anything than do the least thing that may be a reproach to Christ. Oh! but when a *sudden* occasion or temptation is presented, why, then they often fall; as David, by chance, spied Bathsheba washing herself, and falls before the temptation; he is conquered and carried captive by that sudden occasion.

But that is a more comfortable and considerable passage that you have concerning Joseph, in Gen. 49:23-24, "The archers sorely grieved him," says the text, "and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Joseph never lacked counsel nor courage, when he was at the worst. Souls rich in grace usually stand firm under the greatest and suddenest pressures, assaults, and invasions, as you may see in Paul, 2 Cor. 1:9-12; and so the three children; and so Daniel; and so those worthies, Heb. 11:35, "They would not accept of deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." Many sudden assaults and attempts were made upon them; their enemies would gladly have stormed them, and overcome them—sometimes by golden offers, sometimes by terrible threats. But they are invincible; nothing stirs them, nothing overcomes them.

Really, friends, it must be much grace that will make a man live up to this principle; and there is nothing that speaks out more the strength of grace in a man, than his standing against sudden assaults and invasions that by the devil and the world are made upon him. You may *talk* of this—but without much grace you will never be able to *do* it, etc.

(7.) *Seventhly* and lastly, It is your principle, *that* ***your hearts are to be ready for every work which God shall impose upon you.***

You are not to choose your employment, neither are you to refuse any employment that God shall put upon you. You are always to have an open ear, a ready hand, an obedient heart, and a willing cheerful soul—to comply with whatever work or service it is, which God shall put upon you; this is your principle. Ay—but tell me, Christians, will a *little* grace enable a man to live up to this principle? I judge not. You are to stand ready to change your employment from better to worse, if the Lord shall be

pleased to order it so. You are to be ready to change your crown—for a cross; to change that employment that is honorable—for that which is base and low; and that which is more profitable—for that which is less profitable: as it were from the ruling of a province—to the keeping of a herd; from being a master—to be a servant; from being a servant to great men—to be a servant to the basest servant, yes, to the poorest beast. Certainly a *little* grace will never enable a man bravely and sweetly to live up to this principle. Their hearts which are poor in grace, are like a wounded hand or arm, which being but imperfectly cured, can only move one way, and cannot turn to all postures and all natural uses.

Weak Christians are very apt to choose three things—their mercies, their crosses, and their employments. They are often unwilling that God himself should choose their way or their work.

But now souls who are rich in grace—they are at God's beck and call. They are willing that God shall choose their work and their way. They are willing to be at his disposal; to be high or low; to serve or to be served; to be something or to be nothing, etc. Now I beseech you, Christians, that you would seriously and frequently remember this, that there is nothing in all the world that is such an honor to God, and a glory to the gospel—as for Christians to live up to their principles; nor is there anything of such a reproach to God and his ways, as this—for men to live below their principles, and to act contrary to their principles. And you will never be able to live up to your principles, nor to live out your principles, except you grow rich in grace; therefore labor, I say, labor as for life, to abound in grace, etc.

[5.] Now the fifth motive is this, **consider *that souls rich in grace are a mighty blessing to the land and place where they live.***

There are no such blessings to cities, and nations, as those souls are, who are rich in grace. Oh they are great blessings to all places where they come; they are people who are fit for the highest and noblest employments. There is not the **highest** work that is too high for a man who is rich in grace; nor the **hottest** work that is too hot for a man rich in grace; nor the **lowest** work that is below a man rich in grace. Such a man will not say, I would do it—but it is below my place, my nobility, my parts,

my education. *May Christ have honor? may others have good? If so, I will do it,* says the soul who is rich in grace, *whatever comes of it, and bless God for the opportunity*.

Dan. 6:3, "Now **Daniel** so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom." Why was Daniel set upon the throne? Because of his his exceptional qualities, which fitted him for the highest employment.

So **Joseph** was a blessing to his master's family, and the people among whom he lived. None can be such blessings to people and places, as souls rich in grace. So in Neh. 7:2, "I gave the responsibility of governing Jerusalem to my brother Hanani." And why he? "because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most men do." Oh the wisdom, the prudence, the zeal, the courage, the compassion, the patience, the self-denial—that should be in magistrates! There is a truth in that old maxim, magistracy will try a man. None fit to rule—but such who are rich in grace; such a one will be father of his country.

What a world of good may a man do with worldly riches, in a parish, in a city, in a nation! but that is nothing compared to the good that a man may do, who is rich in grace. Oh the sins that he may prevent! Oh the judgments that he may divert! Oh the favors and blessings that he may draw down upon the heads and hearts of people! I presume you forget not what a blessing Moses, Joseph, Job, Nehemiah, Mordecai, and Daniel, proved to the people among whom they lived; and these were all rich in grace. A man rich in wisdom, rich in faith, rich in goodness, etc., oh what a blessing may he prove to ignorant souls, to staggering souls, to wandering souls, to tempted souls, to deserted souls, etc.

Look! What the sun is to us, that may a soul rich in grace be to others, etc. O friends! would you be blessings to your families? would you be blessings to the city, to the nation? Oh then labor to be rich in grace, and do not think it enough that you have so much grace as will keep you from dropping into hell, and which will bring you to heaven; but labor to be rich in grace, and then you will prove indeed a blessing to the place and nation where you live.

The Romans, when they did perceive any natural excellency to be in any people, though they were never so poor and base—they would take them from their dinners of turnips and water-cresses, to lead the Roman army. It is true, that **natural and moral endowments will enable men to do much; but grace will enable men to do ten thousand times more**. There is no work too high nor too hard for souls rich in grace; and therefore, as you would be choice instruments in the Lord's hand, and eminently serviceable in your generations, oh labor to be rich in grace! It is not he who has most wit in his head—but he who has most grace in his heart—who is most fit for generation-work.

[6.] Sixthly, ***A rich measure of grace will bear up your souls in several cases, therefore labor to be rich in grace.***

A rich measure of grace will bear up the soul under great **means of grace**. When a soul is spiritually rich, this will bear him up under great means. Such a one will be able to look God in the face with joy and comfort; he can say, *It is true, Lord, I have had more means than others, and lo! I am grown richer than others. You have taken more pains with me than with others, and lo! I bring forth more fruit than others: my five talents have become ten.* But a little grace will not bear men out under much means of grace.

Again, A great measure of grace will bear the soul up under a great **name**, as well as under great means. For a man to have a great name to live, and yet to have but a little life—is a dreadful stroke; to be high in name and little in worth—is a very sad and sore judgment. [What will the name avail, where the thing is lacking? says Augustine.] To have a name to be an eminent Christian, and yet to be poor in faith, in love, in wisdom, in knowledge, etc., is the greatest unhappiness in the world. This stroke is upon many in these days. But that which is saddest of all is this—they feel it not, they observe it not. But now he who is rich in grace, has something within which will bear him up under a great name in the world.

Again, a great measure of grace will bear you up under great **desires**, as well as under a great name. A man who is rich in grace may ask what he pleases; he is one much involved with God, and God will deny him nothing. The best of the best is for this man; he may have anything; he

may have everything that heaven affords. He is able to improve much, and therefore he may ask much, and have it.

It was a sweet saying of one, "O Lord, I never come to you but by you. I never go from you without you." Sozomen says of Apollonius, that he never asked anything of God—but he had it.

And another, speaking of Luther, says, He could have what he wanted from God. Rich men may long for this and that, and have it; they have something that will fetch it—but poor men may not. Oh! now, who would not labor as for life, to be rich in grace? Oh! this will bear you out under great means, and under great names, and under great desires; therefore, rest not satisfied with a little grace.

But then, seventhly and lastly,

[7.] ***Souls rich in grace are the honor of Christ, and the glory of Christianity.***

It is the glory of Christ when those who are ingrafted into him thrive and grow. This declares to all the world that Christ keeps a good house, and that he does not feed his children with trash—but with the choicest delicacies; that he is open-handed and free-hearted. It is the glory of the father when the child grows rich under him, and the glory of the master when the servant grows rich under him; and so it is the glory of Christ when poor souls grow rich under him. The name of Christ, and the honor of Christ, is kept up in the world by souls who are rich in grace. They are the people who make others think well and speak well of Christ.

You may at your leisure read the first and second epistles to the Thessalonians, and there you shall see what an honor they were to the Lord Jesus and the gospel, who abounded in spiritual riches. Such Christians who are like to Pharaoh's lean kine reproach three at once—God, the gospel, and their teachers: and this age is full of such Christians. It is your greatest work in this world to keep up the honor and the glory of the Lord, and this you can never, you will never do, except you labor to be rich in grace. Let others "labor for the food which perishes." You are to "labor for that which endures to everlasting life." When you come to die,

and when you come to make up your accounts, it will never be a grief—but a joy unto you, that you have made it your greatest business and work in this world to be rich in grace.

But here you may say,

What MEANS must we use that we may grow rich in grace?

I answer:

[1.] First, ***Let no discouragements take you off from laboring to be enriched with spiritual riches.***

A soul who would be spiritually rich must be divinely resolved, that come what may—he will hold on in the use of means, that he may be rich with the riches of Christ. Joshua was resolute in this point: "Choose whom you will serve, whether the Lord, or those other gods that your fathers served. As for my part, I and my house will serve the Lord!" Josh. 24:15; Luke 13:24, "*Strive* to enter in at the strait gate." The Greek word signifies, "to strive with all your might," with all your strength, to strive even to an agony, to strive as they did for the garlands in the Olympic games. The word here used seems to allude to their striving for the garland, where they put out themselves to the utmost. So in John 6:27, "Labor not for the food which perishes—but for that which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you." [Many men are like Cicero, not thoroughly resolved in themselves whether to follow Pompey or Caesar; the riches of this world, or the riches of another world. Such men will still be poor.]

I have read of one that did not fear what he did, nor what he suffered, so he might get riches: "For," says he, "men do not ask how good one is, or how gracious one is—but how rich one is." Oh, sirs! the day is a-coming when God will ask how rich your *souls* are; how rich you are in faith, in wisdom, in knowledge, in fear, etc.; and not how rich you are in money, or in jewels, or in land, or in goods—but how rich are you in *grace!* This should provoke your souls to strive in the face of all discouragements to be rich in grace. What will not the merchant do, and the mariner do, to gain these temporal riches? Oh the dangers, the hazards, the tempests,

the storms, the deaths that they run through for earthly riches—which are never without their sting! And shall not Christians labor in the face of all oppositions after spiritual riches?

It is reported of Nevessan the lawyer, that he would say, "He who will not venture his body—can never be valiant; and he who will not venture his soul—will never be rich." I am sure that man who will not venture, and venture hard, in the face of all discouragements, to be spiritually rich—will never be rich. He may be good in the main, and may go to heaven in a storm; but he will never be rich in spirituals, who will not venture himself to the uttermost for the gain of spiritual riches.

[2.] Secondly, ***Be fixed under a Christ-exalting and a soul-enriching ministry.***

Fix yourself under that man's ministry, who makes it his business; not a thing by the by—but his business, his work; not to tickle the ear, to please the fancy—but to enrich the soul, to win the soul, and to build up the soul. 2 Tim. 4:3, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine—but after their own lusts shall they heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears." This age, yes, this city is full of such slight, light, delirious souls—who neither like nor love anything, but what is empty and airy.

Junius confesses, "that in his time there was one who confessed that he had spent over twenty years in trying different religions," pretending that scripture, "Try all things, and hold fast that which is good." It is sad to see how many preachers in our days, under pretenses of angelical attainments, make it their business to enrich men's heads with high, empty, airy notions—instead of enriching their souls with saving truths. If these are not strangers to that wisdom that is from above, I know nothing. Proverbs 11:30, "He who wins souls is wise." The Hebrew word signifies to catch souls, by using all art and industry, as fowlers do to take birds. [**He is the best preacher, not who tickles the ear—but who breaks the heart!**] No wisdom compared to that which wins souls from sin and the world, and which wins souls to Christ and holiness! No teaching compared to this! Remember this, you will never be rich in grace if you care not who you hear, nor what you hear. That Christ that

commands you to take heed **how** you hear, commands you also to take heed **what** you hear. And every soul won to God is a new pearl added to a minister's crown, etc.

But you will say to me,

How should we know which is a soul-enriching ministry, that so we may wait on it?Take these three rules:

(1.) *First*, Judge not of the soul-enriching ministry by the voice of the minister, nor by the multitude of hearers who follow him, nor by his affected tone, nor by his rhetoric and flashes of wit—but by the holiness, heavenliness, and spiritualness of the matter. Many ministers are like empty orators, who have a **flood** of words—and a **drop** of matter.

Some preachers affect rhetorical strains; they seek abstrusities, and love to hover and soar aloft in dark and cloudy expressions, and so shoot their arrows over their hearers' heads, instead of bettering their hearers' hearts. Mirthful things in a sermon are only for men to gaze upon and admire. What are high strains and flashes of wit, new-minted words and phrases—but like fancy bottles to the good corn. Truth is like Solomon's spouse, "all glorious within." [rather the Spouse, the Church: Psalm 45:13 —G.] She is most beautiful when most naked, as Adam was in innocency.

The oracle would have Philip of Macedon use silver lances in winning an impregnable fort, etc.—but ministers must not use golden sentences, strong lines, froth of wit. It is iron, and not gold, that kills in the encounter. It is the steel sword, not the golden sword—which wins the field, etc. "When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God." 1 Corinthians 2:1

(2.) *Secondly*, Judge of it by its revealing the whole counsel of God, the whole will of God, revealed in his word.

In Acts 20:27, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." There are some who make it their business only to advance the glory of Christ, and to darken the glory of the Father; and

some cry up the glory of the Father, and yet cast clouds and darkness upon the glory of the Son. And what dirt and scorn is cast upon the Spirit by many vain, blasphemous people in these times is notoriously known; and if these men are not far from declaring the whole counsel and will of God, I know nothing.

Christ must be held out in all his offices, for they all tend to the enriching of poor souls, to the adding of pearls to a Christian's crown. And clearly it is sad to consider how many there be that cry up one office and cry down another. Some cry up the kingly office of Christ—but mind not his prophetic office; and some cry up his prophetic office—but trample upon his kingly office; and some cry up both his kingly and prophetic office, and yet make slight of his priestly office. Christians, fix yourselves under his ministry, who gives the Father his due, the Son his due, and the Spirit his due; who makes it his business to open the treasures and the riches both of the one and the other, and to declare to you the whole will of God; for there are many who "hold the word in unrighteousness," Romans 1:18, and who will only acquaint you with some parts of the will of God, and keep you ignorant of other parts—whose condemnation will be great as well as just, etc. Serious experienced saints relish those very truths best —which such corrupt teachers distaste most, etc.

(3.) *Thirdly* and lastly, You may judge of it by its coming nearest to the ministry of Christ and his apostles. [Christ and his apostles labored to make men Christians, and not critics. Augustine.]

There was no ministry so soul-enriching and soul-winning as the ministry of Christ and his apostles. Oh! the thousands that were brought in by one exercise! Let men of frothy wits say what they will, there are no preachers compared to these who come nearest in their ministry to Christ and his apostles. That incomparable man, Peter Hamus, said: "Let us speak the very words of Scripture, for so did Christ, the prophets, and apostles; let us make use of the language of the Holy Spirit, and forever abominate those who profanely disdain at the stately plainness of God's blessed book, and who think to correct the divine wisdom and eloquence with their own childishness and sophistry." God's holy things ought to be handled with fear and reverence, rather than with wit and dalliance. Spiritual sophistry is the next degree to unfaithfulness. No ministry like

that which comes nearest to Christ, etc.

[3.] The *third* direction is this, ***If ever you would be rich in grace, be rich in spirituals—then keep humble.***

Psalm 25:9, "The humble he will teach his way, and the meek he will guide in judgment;" James 4:6, "God resists the proud—but gives grace to the humble." "He sets himself in battle-array against the proud," as the Greek has it, "but he gives grace to the humble." He pours grace into an humble soul, as men pour wine into an empty vessel. Of all souls, humble souls do most prize spiritual riches; of all souls they most improve spiritual riches; of all souls they are most fearful of losing spiritual riches. In Isaiah 57:15, "For this is what the high and lofty One says--he who lives forever, whose name is holy—I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."

Humility, as the violet, though the lowest—yet is the sweetest of flowers. The word notes to us thus much: that God will not dwell with a humble man as a wayfaring man dwells with his relations—a few nights and then away. *Dwelling* notes a constant and not a transient act of God. God will forever keep house with the humble soul; when once they meet, they never part. There is no such way to be rich—as to be poor and low in our own eyes. This is the way to enjoy his company—in whom all treasures are.

[4.] *Fourthly, If ever you would be spiritually rich,* ***improve the riches that you have.***

Improve that **knowledge**, that **faith**, that **light**, that **love** that you have. Those who had two talents did, by the improvement of them, gain two more; and those who had five did, by the improvement of them, gain five more: Proverbs 10:4, "The diligent hand makes rich." Take hold of all opportunities to enrich your souls with spiritual riches. Men will easily, readily, greedily, and unweariedly grasp all opportunities wherein they may get earthly riches; and why should not you be as diligent in taking hold of all opportunities to enrich your precious souls? [The neglect of golden, soul-enriching opportunities, has made many a man's life a hell.]

Is not the soul worth more than raiment, more than friends, more than relations, more than life—yes, more than all? And why, then, do you not labor to enrich your souls? You were better have a rich soul under a thread-bare coat, than a thread-bare soul under a silk or golden coat. If he is a monster among men, who makes liberal provision for his dog—and starves his wife; what a monster is he who makes much provision for his baser part—but none for his noble part!

A slothful heart in the things of God is a heavy judgment: Proverbs 4:31, "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding," or, as the Hebrew has it, "the man who had no heart," that is, to make use of his vineyard, "and lo, it was all grown over with thorns and nettles," etc. Oh the lusts, the wickednesses—which will overgrow slothful, sluggish souls! Spiritual sluggards are subject to the saddest strokes. Oh the deadly sins, the deadly temptations, the deadly judgments that spiritual sluggards will unavoidably fall under! None such an enemy to himself—none such a friend to Satan—as the spiritual sluggard. It is sad to think how the riches of Christ, the riches of consolation, the riches of justification, the riches of glorification, are brought to many men's doors, and yet they have no hearts to embrace them! There is no judgment like this! Well, spiritual sluggards, remember this, when your consciences are awakened, this will be a sword in your souls—that you might have been saved, you might have been spiritually and eternally enriched—but that you have trifled and fooled away golden opportunities and your own salvation! Wealth without wit is ill bestowed, etc.

[5.] *Fifthly, If ever you would be spiritually rich,* ***walk uprightly, holily, and obediently.***

If ever you would be spiritually rich, look to your walking. It is not the knowing soul, nor the talking soul—but the close-walking soul, the obediential soul—that is in spirituals the richest soul. Others may be rich in notions—but none so rich in spiritual experiences, and in all holy and heavenly grace, as close-walking Christians. Psalm 84:11, "The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly." The upright walker shall be both of his court and council; he shall know anything, and have anything.

In John 14:21, 23, compared, "If any man loves me, he will keep my commandments, and I will love him, and my Father will love him." What then? "We will make our abode with him, and will manifest ourselves to him." Certainly they cannot be poor, who enjoy such guests as these; they must needs be full, who enjoy those who are fullness itself. God and Christ are overflowing fountains, and holy souls find it so. [*When my heart is coldest—I present God to my soul under the notions of his greatness; but when my heart is loose and fearing—then I present God to my soul under the notion of his goodness,* says Luther.]

[6.] Sixthly, *If ever you would be spiritually rich,* ***be most in with those Christians who are spiritually rich.***

Let them be your choicest companions—who have made Christ their chief companion. Do not so much eye the outsides of men, as their inside; look most to their internal worth. Many people have an eye upon the external garb of this and that professor—but give me a Christian who minds the internal worth of people—who makes such as are most filled with the fullness of God, to be his choicest and his chief companions.

In Psalm 16:2, "My goodness extends not to you," says David, now David speaks in the person of Christ—"but to the saints who are in the earth, in whom is all my delight." There are saints—and there are excellent saints. Now those are the excellent ones—who are most rich in heavenly treasures; and these you should make your bosom friends, your choicest companions: Proverbs 13:20, "He who walks with wise men shall be wise;" that is, he shall be more wise, more humble, more holy, and more abounding in all spiritual riches. The word that is rendered *walk*, signifies *walking;* to note to us, that it is not he who *talks* with the wise, nor he who *commends* the wise, nor he who takes a *step* or two or three with the wise, who shall be wise—but he who gives up himself to the society and company of the wise, who shall be more and more wise, more and more gracious, more and more holy.

He who comes where sweet spices or ointments are stirring, does carry away some of the sweet savor, though he himself does not realize it. The spouse's lips drop as the honeycomb: Cant. 4:10, "The tongue of the just

is as choice silver," he scatters pearls, he throws abroad treasures where he comes: Proverbs 15:7, "The lips of the wise disperse knowledge." The Hebrew word is a metaphor from scattering abroad with a fan, or from seedsmen scattering abroad of their seed in the furrows of the field. They scatter their light, their love, their experiences, among those with whom they converse, as seedsmen scatter their seed in the field. Christ says his spouse's lips are like a thread of scarlet, with talking of nothing but a crucified Christ; and thin like a thread, not swelled with other vain and wicked discourses.

The old zealous primitive Christians did so frequently, and so effectually mind and talk of the kingdom of heaven, and of the riches and glory of that state, that the heathen began to be a little jealous who they affected the Roman empire; when, alas, their ambition was of another and a nobler nature: Psalm 37:30, "The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks judgment; for the law of the Lord is in his heart." Proverbs 12:28, "The tongue of the wise is health, his tongue is a tree of life, whose leaves are medicinable." No way to be rich in spirituals, like being much in with precious souls, whose tongues drop marrow and fatness. [The very heathen man could say, *When a wise man speaks, he opens the rich treasures and wardrobe of his mind,* etc.]

Utterance is a gift; and dumb Christians are blameworthy, as well as dumb ministers. We should all strive to a holy ability and dexterity of savory discourse. If Christ should come to many of us, as he did to his two disciples, in that last chapter of Luke, and say to us, as to them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" oh! with what paleness of face and sadness of countenance would we look! When the heart is full, it overflows in speech. We know *metals* by their tinkling, and *men* by their talking. Happy is he who speaks out anything of Christ from experience.

[7.] Seventhly, *If ever you would be spiritually rich,* ***then take heed of tasting or eating of forbidden fruit.***

This stripped Adam of his crown, of his jewels, and of all his rich ornaments in a moment; and of the richest and greatest prince who ever breathed, made him the miserablest beggar that ever lived. Oh take heed of tasting of poison, of eating of poison. A person who has ate poison will

not thrive, let him take ever such wholesome food. The choicest cordials will not increase blood, and spirits, and strength—but the man will vomit up all. Poor souls who have been tasting of poison, are apt to find fault with the minister, and sometimes with this and that, as the cause of their not growing rich in spirituals; when, alas! the only cause is their eating of poison. These are like him who, having a thorn in his foot, complained of the roughness of the way as the cause of his limping. Sirs, it is not the minister, nor this, nor that—but your eating of forbidden fruit, that is the cause of your non-thriving in spirituals. Sin is the soul's sickness—and nothing more hinders growth than sickness. Christians, if ever you would be trees, not only having the leaves of honor—but the fruits of righteousness, then **take heed of sin, abhor it more than hell, and fly from it as from your deadliest enemy**, etc.

[8.] *Eighthly* and lastly, *if ever you would be spiritually rich,* ***be sure to maintain secret communion with God.***

You know many men come to be very rich in the world by a secret trade. Though many have not such an open trade as others—yet they have a more secret trade, and by that they gain very great estates, as many of you here in London know by experience. [Acts 10:3, 9; Gen. 21:33; Exod. 14:16; 1 Sam. 1:13.] Take it, friends, as an experienced truth, there is no such way under heaven, to be rich in spirituals, as by driving of a secret trade heaven-wards. It is true, it is good for men to attend upon this, and that, and the other public services; for in all divine services God shows his beauty and glory. Ay—but such that delight to be more upon the public stage than in the closet, will never be rich in spirituals. **They may grow rich in notions—but they will never grow rich in gracious experiences**, Psalm 63:2-3; 27:4; 84:10.

Oh! God loves to see a poor Christian shut his closet door, Mat. 6:6, and then to open his bosom, and pour out his soul before him. God has very choice discoveries for souls who drive a secret trade—the best wine, the best dainties and delicacies are for such. And I never knew any man or woman in my life, who was richer in grace, than those who were much in closet communion with God. Much of a Christian's spiritual strength lies in secret prayer, as Samson's did in his hair. Nothing charms away Satan, and weakens sin, like this. Secret prayers are the pillars of smoke wherein

the soul ascends to God, out of the wilderness of this world. Secret prayer is Jacob's ladder, where you have God descending down into the soul, and the soul sweetly ascending up to God. No way to be rich in spirituals like this. Therefore be sure to maintain and keep up a secret trade between God and your own souls.

Oh let God hear often of you in secret. Oh! in the secret walks, the soul meets with the King of glory. Oh! there the soul hangs upon Christ; there the soul sucks and draws virtue from Christ; and there the soul is made rich with the riches of Christ. Christ is much delighted and taken with secret prayer: Cant. 2:14, "O my dove, who is in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs—let me hear your voice, let me see your countenance; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is lovely." **Secret meals are very fattening, and secret duties are very soul-enriching!** Christians! set more close to this work, and if you don't thrive by it, trust me no more. And thus you see by what means you may grow rich in grace.

3. The third thing I propounded to speak to was, ***Some propositions concerning spiritual riches.*** And the first proposition is this:

[1.] ***All who grow rich in grace—grow rich gradually.***

The sun ascends by degrees; children, plants, and trees all grow by degrees; so do saints in spirituals. It is true, many men as to temporals, by the death of some friend, or this and that providence, grow rich in a sudden; but no soul who is rich in grace—but grows rich gradually. In Proverbs 4:18, "But the path of the just is like the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day." He proceeds from virtue to virtue, until at length he shines like the sun in its strength. And so in Mal. 4:2, "But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture." Hosea 14:5-7, "I will be to Israel like a refreshing dew from heaven. It will blossom like the lily; it will send roots deep into the soil like the cedars in Lebanon. Its branches will spread out like those of beautiful olive trees, as fragrant as the cedar forests of Lebanon. My people will return again to the safety of their land. They will flourish like grain and blossom like grapevines. They will be as fragrant as the wines

of Lebanon ." I shall but hint at this now, because I have spoken more fully to it already, etc.

The second proposition is this:

[2.] ***Few or none are rich in all graces.***

There are some men in the world who are generally rich—who are rich in money, and rich in land, and rich in goods—but where you have one man who is a generally rich man in this sense, you have ten thousand who are only rich in some one thing, as money, goods, or land, etc.; so it is here. It is a hard thing, if possible, to find a soul who is universally rich; who is rich in every grace, who is rich in faith, and rich in wisdom, and rich in love, and rich in patience, etc. Abraham was rich in faith, and Job was rich in patience, and Moses was rich in meekness, and David was rich in zeal, etc; but none of these were rich in every grace. And so in these days you may find one Christian rich in one grace, and another Christian rich in another grace; but where will you find a Christian who is rich in every grace? Such who are rich in some graces—are yet very defective and lame in other graces.

The saints once at Rome were richer in wisdom and knowledge than the saints at Thessalonica, Romans 15:14; and the saints at Thessalonica were richer in faith, love, patience, and charity than the saints at Rome, 1 Thes. 1:4, 2:8, compared with 2 Epistle 1:3-4. It is with saints as with sinners, one sinner excels in one vice, another in another vice; so one saint excels in one virtue, and another in another virtue. One is rich in joy, in comfort; another is rich in humility, in fear; another in faith and hope; and another in love. [No grace grows alike in all saints. In the parable some brought forth thirty, some sixty, some a hundred, etc.] And mark how this arises.

It arises sometimes from hence—that every saint does endeavor to excel in that particular grace which is most opposite to his bosom sin. Now every saint's bosom sin is not alike. It may be pride is one man's bosom sin, and hypocrisy another man's bosom sin, etc. Now it is the very nature of grace to make a man strive to be most eminent in that particular grace that is most opposite to his bosom sin, and upon this account it comes to

pass that one is rich in one grace, and another in another.

Again, some saints have frequent occasions to act and exercise such and such graces. Others are called forth to exercise such and such other graces. Now the more any particular grace is exercised, the more that particular grace is increased. Frequent exercise cause a stronger habit both in graces and in sins. If all Christians would be rich in all graces, what difference would there be between heaven and earth? What need would there be of ordinances? And when would Christians long to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? etc.

The third proposition is this:

[3.] ***Souls may be rich in grace, and yet not know it—and yet not perceive it.***

The child is heir to a crown, to a great estate—but knows it not. Moses' face did shine, and others saw it—but he perceived it not. So many a precious soul is rich in grace, and others see it, and know it, and bless God for it—and yet the poor soul perceives it not. Now because a right understanding of this may be of much use to some saddened, dejected souls, I will show you how this comes to pass.

First, **Sometimes it arises from *the soul's strong desires of spiritual riches*.** The strength of the soul's desires after spiritual riches, does often take away the very sense of growing spiritually rich. Many covetous men's desires are so strongly carried forth after earthly riches, that though they do grow rich—yet they cannot perceive it, they cannot believe it. It is just so with many a precious Christian; his desires after spiritual riches are so strong, that they take away the very sense of his growing rich in spirituals. [The sun ascends without perception; and so it is often in this supernatural motion, etc. The Greeks derive their word for desire from a root that signifies to burn. Now, if one should heap ever so much fuel upon a fire, it would not quench it—but kindle it the more. The application is easy.] Many Christians have much worth within them—but they see it not. It was a godly man who said, "The Lord was in this place, and I knew it not," etc. Gen. 28.

Again, **This arises sometimes from *men's neglecting the casting up of their accounts*.** Many men thrive and grow rich, and yet by neglecting the casting up of their accounts, they cannot tell whether they go backward or forward. It is so with many precious souls; they grow in grace and are spiritually rich, and yet by neglecting the casting up of their accounts, they do not know it, they do not perceive it, etc. [Seneca reports of one Sextius, that he would every night ask himself these three questions: (1). What evil have you mended this day? (2). What vice have you stood against this day? (3). In what part are you bettered this day? etc.]

Again, **sometimes it arises from *the soul's too frequent casting up of its accounts*.** If a man should cast up his accounts once a week or once a month, he may not be able to discern that he does grow rich—and yet he may grow rich. But let him compare one year with another, and he

shall clearly see that he does grow rich. Though most are to blame for neglecting the casting up of their accounts—yet some are to blame for casting up their accounts too often; for by this means they are not able to perceive their spiritual growth, and so can neither be so thankful nor so cheerful as otherwise they might. Let there be some considerable time between your casting up of your accounts, and you will find that your souls are grown rich, though for the present you perceive it not.

But then *again*, **sometimes it arises from *the soul's mistake in casting up of its accounts*.** The soul many times mistakes; it is in a hurry; and there the soul puts down ten for a hundred, and a hundred for a thousand; as sometimes men in hurrying over their books, they slip and make mistakes, and so they think there is nothing gained, whereas indeed there is much gained, and in the close they shall find it so. Many a gracious soul many times takes a great deal of grace for a little; and little grace for no grace. Look, as hypocrites put down their counters for gold, their pence for pounds, and always appraise themselves above the market; so sincere souls do often put down their pounds for pence, their thousands for hundreds, and still appraise themselves below the market, etc.

The fourth proposition is this:

[4.] *That saints must endeavor to grow rich in every grace.*

It is the duty and the glory of saints to endeavor to grow rich in every grace. So the apostle, 2 Pet. 1:5-12, "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge," etc. It is the work, the duty, the glory of a Christian, to be still adding one grace to another. So in chapter 3:18, "Grow in grace," that is, in every grace—but more particularly and specially, "in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

"Grow in grace." That is, grow in love, in faith, in humility, in meekness, etc.—but especially "in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior." All the graces which are in you are weak; and therefore you had need to strengthen them all.

Again, You have the seeds of all corruptions in you; and is there any way

to be rid of every sin—but by thriving in every grace?

Again, You have opportunities as well to thrive in one grace as in another.

Again, Will not Satan labor might and main to keep your graces low and poor? You never hurt him less, you never honor Christ less, you never mind your work less—than when grace is weak and low. This he knows, and therefore labors to keep your graces down.

Again, are not you liable to many changes in this world? As, to be rich and poor, exalted and abased; now to relieve, and at another time to be relieved; now well, and at another time sick; now strong, and at another time weak; now in storms, and at another time in calms; now tempted, and at another time delivered; now in one condition, and at another time in another condition; now up, now down; now forward, now backward, etc.

Now pray tell me, do not the many changes and variety of providences which we meet with in this world behoove us to be rich, not in some—but in every grace? Don't a state of prosperity behoove a man to be rich in wisdom, rich in humility, rich in love, and rich in compassion, that his heart may be kept close to God in that state, and that he may do nothing unworthy of God, who has done so much for him? And now, when God shall change the manner of his administrations towards such a man, when God shall put out his candle, pull off his robes, and clothe him with rags, and set him with Job upon the ash-heap, doesn't this condition bespeak much patience, much contentment, much self-denial, much faith? How else will this man bravely bear up, when God shall write such bitter things against him, and pass the sentence of death upon his nearest and his dearest comforts? If a man be not rich in one grace as well as in another, when God shall bring changes upon him, and pour him from vessel to vessel—his life will be a burden, a hell to him, etc.

Again, consider this: growing rich in every grace renders a Christian most lovely and beautiful in grace; as a growth in all the members of the body renders the body most lovely and beautiful. The perfect beauty and loveliness of the body rises from the symmetry and fitness of the parts unto one another. Rare and excellent beauty arises from the loveliness of

all parts. If one part is lovely, and another deformed, then there is no perfect beauty. Well, remember this, there are no such beautiful Christians as those who grow rich in every grace. Oh! they are the beauty of Christ, the honor of the gospel, and the glory of Christianity.

And so much for the fourth proposition, namely, that we must labor to be rich in every grace.

The fifth proposition that I shall lay down is this,

[5.] *Saints should labor more particularly and more especially to be rich in FAITH.*

Though it is of concern to believers to be rich in every grace—yet it is of special concern to them to labor to be rich in this particular grace of faith. In Jude, ver. 20, "Building up yourselves in your most holy faith." It is not enough to have faith—but they must build up themselves and build up one another "in their most holy faith."

There are three things that the Scripture calls precious:

First, The **blood of Christ**: in 1 Peter 1:19, "You are not redeemed with silver and gold—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot."

Secondly, The **promises** are called precious promises: 2 Peter 1:4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises."

Thirdly, **Faith** is called precious faith: ver. 1, "Unto those who have obtained like precious faith with us." Now, though it be of concern for every saint to labor to be rich in every grace—yet more especially and more particularly to be rich in this grace of faith; and that upon this account that follows:

(1.) *First*, Because **faith is *the soul's greatest and choicest fence against her worst enemies.*** In Eph. 6:16, "Above all, take the shield of faith, whereby you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." "**Above all**, take the shield of faith." Neglect no part of your armor—but above all, look to the shield of faith. Look, what the shield is

to the body, that is faith to a believer's soul, to secure him against all the fierce and fiery darts of Satan.

Satan would say to a man with great faith, "You do always overcome me. When I would exalt and promote you, you keep yourself in humility; and when I would throw you down, you lift yourself up in assurance of faith." Faith makes the soul invincible; it makes the soul victorious; it leads captivity captive; it binds Satan in chains; it foils him at every weapon; and therefore, above all, labor to be rich in faith.

(2.) *Secondly,* ***Growth in faith will advance the growth of all other graces.***

All other graces thrive in the soul as faith thrives—and not otherwise. Be rich in faith, and be rich in all; be weak in faith, and be weak in all. Faith has an influence upon all other graces; it is like a silver thread which runs through a chain of pearls; it puts strength and vivacity into all other graces. You never knew a man rich in any grace—who has not been rich in faith. Every man's hope, joy, fear, love, humility, patience, etc., is as his faith is. All other graces live upon faith's cost and charge. Look, what the breast is to the child, wings to the bird, oil to the wheels, and the soul to the body—that is faith to all other graces in the soul of man.

It is reported of the crystal, that it has such a virtue in it, that the very touching of it quickens other stones, and puts a luster and a beauty upon them. I am sure it is true of faith. There is such a divine virtue and power in faith, that it will quicken and cast a luster and a beauty upon all other graces in the soul of man; and therefore you should labor as for life—to be rich in this particular grace of faith.

(3.) *Thirdly*, consider this, ***Of all graces that are in the soul of man, faith is the most useful grace****; and therefore you should, above all, labor to be rich in faith.*

It is a Christian's right eye, without which he cannot see for Christ; it is his right hand, without which he cannot do for Christ; it is his tongue, without which he cannot speak for Christ; it is his very vital spirits, without which he cannot act for Christ.

It is fabled of King Midas, that whatever he touched would be turned into gold. I am sure that whatever faith touches, it turns into gold, that is, into our good. If our faith touches the promises, it turns them into our good; whatever faith lays its hand upon, it appropriates to itself, and turns it into the soul's good. If faith looks upon God, it says, "This God is my God forever and ever, and he shall be my guide unto death," Psalm 63:1; 89:26. When it looks upon Christ, it says with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God," John 20:28. When it looks upon the crown of righteousness, it says, "This crown is laid up for me," etc.

Faith is *bread* to nourish us, and *wine* to cheer us, and a *cordial* to strengthen us. Faith is a *sword* to defend us, a *guide* to direct us, a *staff* to support us, a *plaster* to heal us, a *friend* to comfort us, and a *golden key* to open heaven unto us. Faith, of all graces, is the most useful grace to the soul of man. "Without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. 11:6; 4:2. All those services are lost, wherein faith has not a hand. You may write loss upon all the *prayers* you make, and upon all the *sermons* you hear, and upon all the *tears* you shed, and upon all the *alms* you give —if all be not managed by a hand of faith.

(4.) *Fourthly*, You should labor above all to be rich in faith, *because* ***faith is that princely grace that Christ is most taken with***.

Cant. 4:9, "You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes,"—that is, with that piercing eye of faith that looks up to my mercy-seat—"with one chain of your neck."

There are two things that with open mouth speak out Christ to be most taken with the faith of his people.

And the *first* is, **his uncrowning himself to crown his people's faith.** Christ does often take the crown off his own head, and puts it upon the head of faith. Witness such passages as these, which are frequent in Scripture, "Your faith has healed you," "Your faith has saved you," "Your faith has made you whole," etc. Christ takes the crown off his own head—and puts it upon the head of faith. And no wonder; for of all graces, faith takes the crown off a man's own head, and puts it on the head of Christ. Man naturally is apt to crown anything but Christ. He is apt to crown his

prayers, and crown his desires, and crown his endeavors, etc. Oh but now faith acts like a king of kings—and uncrowns all, and sets the crown upon the head of Christ!

And then a *second* thing that speaks out Christ to be most taken with the grace of faith is this, that **he overlooks all other graces in comparison of faith**, as you may see in the Canaanite woman, Mat. 15:21-29. The poor woman shows a great deal of compassion, a great deal of wisdom, a great deal of humility, a great deal of love, and a great deal of self-denial; but in the close says Christ, "O woman, great is your faith, be it unto you even as you will." He does not say, O woman, great is your love; nor, O woman, great is your wisdom; nor, O woman, great is your humility and self-denial; nor, O woman, great is your patience, etc.; but, "O woman, great is your faith!" He overlooks, as it were, all other graces, and sets the crown upon the head of faith: "O woman, great is your *faith*."

So in Mark 5, the woman who had a hemorrhage twelve years comes to Christ for cure, and in the close of the story says Christ to her, "Woman, your faith has made you whole." He does not say, Woman, your pressing hard to come to me has made you whole—but "Your *faith* has made you whole." He does not say, Woman, your earnest desires and endeavors to be made whole has made you whole—but "Your *faith* has made you whole." He does not say, Woman, your fear and trembling has made you whole—but "Your *faith* has made you whole," etc.

So in Luke 7:50, "Your faith has saved you, go in peace." Though she wept much, and loved much—yet Christ does not say, Your tears have saved you, your sorrow has saved you. He does not say, Your humility, your charity has saved you; but "O woman, your *faith* has saved you." Christ overlooks all other graces, as it were, and casts a loving eye upon the grace of faith, etc.

(5.) And then again, in the *fifth* place, you should above all labor to be rich in faith, *because* ***of all graces in the soul of man, faith makes him most lively and active.***

There is no grace, I say, no grace in the soul of man, which makes him so full of life and action—as the grace of faith. Faith is the first pin, the first

wheel which moves all the golden wheels of obedience. In Heb. 11, you read what those worthies did; they left their country, their kindred, upon a bare command of God. Faith has Rachel's eye—but Leah's womb. Faith makes souls very fruitful in ways of well-doing. Faith is as the spring in the watch, which moves the wheels. Not a grace stirs until faith sets it to work.

Faith is like Solomon's virtuous woman, who sets all her maidens to work. Faith sets **joy** to work. "Abraham desired to see my day, and saw it, and rejoiced." Faith sets **love** to work; it works by love; Gal. 5:6. Faith sets hope to **work**, Romans 8:24-25. Faith sets **godly sorrow** to work, Zech. 12:10. Faith sets **patience** to work. I believe that God is wise and loving, and what he does is out of some noble design to do my soul good; this spins out **patience**. Faith fits a man to do, to suffer, to wait, to walk, etc., therefore labor above all to be rich in faith. [True faith puts forth itself into vital operations. Ferdinand believed the story told him by Columbus, and therefore he furnished him with ships, and got the West Indies by his faith in the undertaking. But Henry the 7th of England believed him not, and therefore trusted him not with shipping, and so lost all the purchase of that faith.]

(6.) And then, *sixthly*, of all graces, **faith *renders the soul most invincible;*** and therefore you should labor above all to be rich in faith.

It renders the soul invincible and unconquerable under all the hardships and trials which it meets with in this world. Faith makes a man triumph in all the changes and conditions of this life. It was their faith which made them invincible in Daniel 3:16-18, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king—O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

And so Daniel's faith stopped the lion's mouth; it made him too strong for the strongest beasts of prey, as you may see in Daniel 6.

Though the enemies of a believer are very subtle, strong, and experienced; and though the battle be hot and long—yet a soul rich in faith shall have the day. Faith will render a believer victorious in the close: "He may suffer death," as Cyprian said to Cornelius, "but never conquest." Faith renders the soul a lion, a rock, etc. It is reported of some of the Roman and Grecian captains, that they proved always victorious, and were never beaten by any. Such is the nature of faith; it renders a soul victorious in all engagements. In all engagements faith brings a man bravely off, and enables him to keep his ground, and triumph. [As may be fully seen in the Book of Martyrs, and in Heb. 11.] Psalm 60:6-10, "God has spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice: I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of my head; Judah is my lawgiver; Moab is my wash-pot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph you because of me," etc.

It is not great resolutions, nor big words, nor high looks—but faith, that will make a man stand fast in shaking times. No hand can put the garland upon a Christian—but the hand of faith, etc. Faith alters the tenses, it puts the future into the present; Gilead *is* mine, etc.

(7.) And then, *seventhly*, above all labor to be rich in faith, ***because Satan will labor might and main to weaken your faith.***

Oh! the great design of Satan is not so much to weaken you in externals, as it is to weaken you in internals. Satan can be contented that men should have their heads full of notions, and their mouths full of religion, and their bags full of gold, and their chests full of silver, and their shops full of wares—just so that their souls be either void of faith, or but poor and low in faith. Satan's greatest plot is to weaken the faith of Christians. Luke 22:31-32, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." Satan has a gnawing tooth at your faith; his design is upon that; he will labor might and main to weaken that, to frustrate that, and therefore "I have prayed that your faith fail not."

(8.) And then, *eighthly*, consider this, of all graces, **faith contributes *most to the bringing down of mercies and blessings upon***

yourselves and friends*;* and therefore you should above all labor to be rich in this particular grace of faith.

Faith contributes to the bringing down of blessings upon **ourselves**. In Dan. 6:23, "Daniel was delivered," says the text, "because he believed in his God." It was his faith, and not his prayers; it was his faith, and not his tears; it was his faith, and not his sighs that stopt the lion's mouths, and wrought deliverance for him. So in Psalm 27:13, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living: So in 2 Chron. 20:20, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established; believe his prophets, so shall you prosper," and so they did.

That is a very famous scripture to this purpose, 2 Chron. 13:15-17, "Then the men of Judah began to shout. At the sound of their battle cry, God defeated Jeroboam and the Israelite army and routed them before Abijah and the army of Judah. The Israelite army fled from Judah, and God handed them over to Judah in defeat. Abijah and his army inflicted heavy losses on them; there were 500,000 casualties among Israel's finest troops that day." Here was a great slaughter; no wars, no slaughters comparable to those the Scripture speaks of. And the reason is rendered, verse 18, "So Judah defeated Israel because they *trusted* in the Lord, the God of their ancestors." Were men more rich in faith, they would be more rich in other blessings, etc.

And as faith is the only way to bring down a blessing upon ourselves, so faith is the only way to bring down blessings upon our friends and relations. Though another man cannot be saved by my faith—yet he may be blessed with many blessings, upon the account of my faith. In Mat. 15:22-29, it was the Canaanitish woman's faith which brought a blessing of healing upon her daughter. And so in Mat. 8:6-14, the centurion's faith healed his servant that was sick of a palsy, "and from that very hour he was healed." The servant got well by his master's faith. And so likewise in Mark 9, the faith of the father prevailed for the his demon possessed son. "If you can believe," says Christ, "all things are possible." And the poor man said with tears, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." And presently Christ charged the evil spirit to come out of him, etc. A believing husband, a believing wife, a believing child, or a believing servant, may bring down, by the actings of faith, many a blessing upon their relations.

Faith has a happy hand, and never but speeds in one kind or another. It has what it would, either in money or money's worth.

One pointing to Luther said, "There is a man who can have anything of God that he will ask." **Faith has a kind of omnipotency in it**, it is able to do all things, etc.

And as faith brings down blessings upon our own heads and the heads of our friends, so **it often brings down wrath upon our enemies**. There is nothing contributes so much to our enemies' ruin as faith does. I am confident it has neither been armies, nor navies, nor parliaments, that have had the chief hand in bringing down the proud and stout enemies of Christ and Zion, in this and other nations—but the faith of his despised people. One enemy may stand before the face of another—but what enemy can stand before the face and power of faith? That is a remarkable scripture, Heb. 11:33, "By faith these people overthrew kingdoms, ruled with justice, and received what God had promised them. They shut the mouths of lions, quenched the flames of fire, and escaped death by the edge of the sword. Their weakness was turned to strength. They became strong in battle and put whole armies to flight." Other means were used—but that which did the work, and struck all dead, was faith. **Faith engages God in every encounter**, and who can stand before a consuming fire? [Mary Queen of Scots, was accustomed to say that she feared John Knox's prayers, who was a man of much faith—more than an army of ten thousand men.]

Polybius, speaking of Horatius' keeping of the field against his enemies' forces, says, "That his enemies were more afraid of his faith than of his warlike strength." And truly there is nothing that renders men more dreadful to an understanding enemy than their faith. Oh! it is brave for men to believe down the power of darkness, to believe down those who war against the Lamb, etc. No way to get an enemy down like this; nor no way to keep an enemy down like this; no way to save a kingdom like this; nor no way to keep a kingdom like this. The nation is indebted to none so much as to believing souls. O England! England! you had long before this been a prey to men that delight in blood, had it not been for the faith of the worm Jacob, etc. Christians! as you would have Christ, go on and do more and more for England; as you would be crowned with the choicest

and the chief blessings, and as you would have vengeance executed upon all that hate, that wage war against and persecute Christ and the saints—be mighty in believing.

(9.) Ninthly and lastly, ***Faith is a root grace; and will the branches flourish if the root withers?***

Oh! therefore, water this root, have an eye to this root. If you have a choice root in any of your gardens, oh how careful are you of it! you will mind it and water it and look to it, etc. Well, of all graces faith is the root grace, and if this dies you will find your graces to languish. Your hope, love, fear, patience, humility, joy, etc., can never outlive your faith. These live together and they die together; therefore, above all, labor to be rich in faith, for this is a root grace, and if this flourishes—all other graces will flourish; but if this decays—all other graces will lose their strength, beauty, glory, etc.

And thus much for the fifth proposition. We come now to the sixth proposition, and that is this:

[6.] ***That no gracious souls do at all times alike grow and thrive in spiritual riches.***

A child sometimes shoots up more in a month than he does at other times in many months, and sometimes more in a year than he does afterwards in many years. And do not plants and trees sometimes shoot up more in a week than in many, etc. So, many a Christian thrives more, and gets more spiritual riches in one month than in many, in one year than in many. I appeal to your experiences, Christians! don't you find it so? I know you do. To cite Scripture to prove this would be to cast water into the sea, and to light candles to see the sun at noon. Sin and Satan do sometimes work more violently and more strongly in the souls of saints than at other times. Now, when sin and Satan work most, and prevail most, then grace thrives least. **As the life of grace is the death of sin, and the growth of grace the decay of sin—so the increase of sin is the decay of grace, and the strengthening of sin is the weakening of grace.**

Again, No saints have at all times alike gales of the Spirit of God, and therefore they do not grow in spiritual riches at all times alike. No ships have at all times the same gales of wind, etc. A man thrives in spiritual riches as the gales of the Spirit of God are upon him, and not otherwise. When the Spirit of the Lord does blow most sweetly and strongly upon his heart, then his graces thrive and flourish most, then those beds of spices do yield the most fragrant smell; but when the Spirit of the Lord withdraws and withholds his influences, how does the strength and glory of grace wither and decay! Latimer said of the Spirit, that *He is coming and going*, etc.

The herb *heliotropium* does turn about, and open and shut, according to the motion of the sun; so do the graces of the saints according to the internal gales, motions, and operations of the Spirit, etc.

Again, no saints have at all times the like external advantages and opportunities of growing rich in spirituals. They have not the word, it may be, in that power and life as formerly; or it perhaps they enjoy not the communion of saints as formerly; or if they do—yet perhaps those who have formerly been as fire to warm and inflame them, are now become water to cool them, and deaden them; or it may be they have not those advantages for closet duties as formerly; or it may be, the course of nature is changed; and if so, it is no wonder that they thrive not in spirituals as formerly. When children have not as good food, and as good lodging, and as good looking after as at other times, no wonder if they thrive not as at other times. When men have not the same advantages and opportunities to grow rich in the world as formerly, do we wonder that they thrive not as before? Surely not!

And sometimes this arises from the breaking of some bone by sin. David found it so. Many a man, by breaking a bone, is much hindered from thriving in the world. Oh! this broken arm, this broken leg, has cost me many a fair pound which otherwise I might have got. Oh friends! sin is the breaking of the bones, the breaking of a man's peace and communion with God; it is the breaking of his hope and confidence in God; it is the disjoining of a man from God; and so it hinders a man's spiritual growth: Isaiah 59:1-2; chapter 64:7; Gal. 6:1. Believe it, Christians! if you play and dally with sin, if you fall in with sin, if you make friends with one with sin

—you will never grow rich in spirituals. Sin will cause such a breaking of bones, as will undoubtedly hinder the prosperity of your souls. And so much for the sixth proposition.

[7.] The *seventh* and last proposition that I shall propound is this: ***A man may grow rich in those graces which are more remote from Christ, which are less conversant about Christ, when he does not grow rich in those graces, that, as special favorites, stand always at the elbow of Christ, and are most busied and conversant about Christ.*** Let me open it thus to you:

You know at court there are some that have the honor to attend always at the prince's elbow, and there are others that appertain to the same prince —but are more remote in their employments for him, etc. So in the soul, there are some graces which are more remote, and not so conversant about the person of Christ, as now humility, self-denial, patience, meekness, temperance, sobriety, and the like. Now, though these graces do appertain to the same prince, though they are all servants of the Lord Jesus—yet notwithstanding they are more remote, and busied about other objects and things. Oh! but now faith and love are choice favorites, that always stand at the elbow of Christ. Faith and love are Christ's greatest favorites in heaven.

Now I say, a Christian may grow rich in those graces which are more remote from Christ, which are less conversant about the person of Christ, when he does not grow rich in those particular graces which are most active about the person of Christ. He may grow rich in humility, in self-denial, in meekness, in temperance, etc., when he does not grow up in joy and delight and comfort, etc. The tree grows downward, when it does not grow upward; so a soul may grow rich in some particular graces, when he does not grow rich in other graces. He may grow rich in those graces which are more remote from Christ, when he does not grow rich in those graces which are more conversant about the person of Christ. Some limbs and branches of a tree grow more than others.

And so I have done with these propositions; the serious minding of them may prevent many objections, and to many give satisfaction in several cases, etc.

The fourth and last thing propounded was, to give you,

Five marks of a person who is spiritually rich.

Clearly, as there are few worldly rich men, compared to those who are poor; so there are few in this professing age, that will be found to be spiritually rich, compared with the multitude of Laodiceans who swarm in these times. We have many who *say* they are rich, and who *think* they are rich; when the truth is they have either no grace, or but a very little grace; and these five following things do clearly evidence it, etc.

[1.] First, *Rich men have more variety of objects to delight themselves with, than poor men have.*

They have houses and gardens, and lands and cattle, and silver and gold, and jewels and pearls, and what not, to delight themselves with. Oh! but poor men have not such variety of objects to delight themselves with, as rich men have. It is just thus in spiritual riches. A man who is rich in grace has more variety of spiritual objects, about which his soul is most conversant, than a man who is poor in grace. He has more objects of love, of joy, of delight, of contentment—to busy and exercise his soul about, than others who are weak in grace. **A soul rich in grace possesses and enjoys all things in Christ, and Christ in all things.** They enjoy all good in him who is the chief good, who is the spring and fountain of good. Joseph, in Pharaoh's court, had more variety of objects to delight him, than his brethren had to delight themselves in their father's house, etc.

I have spoken largely to this already, and therefore shall content myself in giving you this hint. It stands upon you to inquire what variety of objects you have to delight your souls in. But,

[2.] Secondly, ***Rich men can reach to those things that poor men cannot reach to.***

I would have such and such things, says the poor man, as the rich man has; I would fare as he fares, and wear as he wears, and do as he does—but my funds will not reach it. So a soul who is spiritually rich can reach

to those things that one who is poor in grace cannot reach unto. He can reach to those joys, to those comforts, and to those contentments, to those heights of communion with God, and to those visions and apprehensions of God—that a soul who is not rich in grace cannot reach to. *Oh! I would gladly have that comfort, and that joy, and that peace, and that communion with God, and those visions of God, that such and such souls have*, says a poor Christian; *but I cannot; my funds will not reach to it.*

It is an argument a man is grown taller, when he can reach higher than he could before, whether it be a beam or a pin, etc. So it is an argument, that a soul is grown rich in grace, when he can reach beyond what formerly he could reach unto; when he can reach beyond his enlargements, beyond his in-comes, beyond his comforts—to Christ; when in duty—he can reach above duty; when in an ordinance—he can reach to Christ, above the ordinance; when under enlargements—he can reach above enlargements, to Jesus Christ.

Oh! but now a man who has but a little grace, he can rarely reach above his duties, above ordinances, above enlargements—to Christ. He is very apt to sit down and warm himself with the sparks of his own fire, and to feed upon ashes, as the prophet speaks, Isaiah 50:11, 44:20, etc. But now, a soul who is rich in grace, says, *Well! these ordinances are not Christ, these refreshings are not Christ, these meltings are not Christ, these enlargements are not Christ; these are sweet—but he is more sweet; these are very precious—but he is most precious*. And thus those who are spiritually rich do out-reach all others, etc. [A tree that is well grown stands firm in the worst storms; it bends not, it breaks not, etc.]

[3.] Thirdly, ***Rich men can with more ease and pleasure bear burdens, than poor men can.***

When trials and burdens are laid upon poor men, they sigh, and shrug, and complain that they are not able to bear them—when rich men make nothing of them. So souls who are rich in grace can bear burdens without a burden; they can bear crosses, afflictions, and persecutions, with abundance of ease, cheerfulness, and contentedness of spirit; they do not shrug, nor grumble—but bear the greatest trials with greatest sweetness,

as you may see in Acts 5, "They went out *rejoicing* that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus." So Paul, 2 Cor. 12:10, "I take *pleasure* in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake." "I take pleasure." The Greek word is an emphatical word; it is the same word that God the Father uses to express his infinite delight in his Son: Mat. 3:17, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" or, "in whom I am infinitely delighted." The same word the apostle uses to express the wonderful delight that he took under all his sufferings; he rejoices and leaps for joy under all his burdens.

Oh! but now a soul who is poor in grace, he cannot bear a burden without a burden; every light affliction discourages him, and sinks him; every molehill is a mountain; every scratch on the hand is a stab at the heart; every wave is a sea—and the poor Christian sighs and groans, and cries out, *Oh! There is no sorrow like my sorrow! no loss like my loss! no cross like my cross!* but souls rich in grace act quite contrary, as has been hinted and proved, etc.

[4.] Fourthly, ***Rich men are most envied.***

History and Scripture speak out this, as well as our own experience. The rich man above all others is the greatest object of envy, and it is as true that such who are most rich in spirituals are of all men the most envied. Moses and Aaron were rich in spirituals—and oh, how were they envied by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and other wicked wretches! Ezra, Nehemiah, and Mordecai, were rich in spirituals—and who more envied? Among all the prophets and apostles, those have been most envied, who have most abounded in spiritual worth. And to this very day, none are such objects of scorn and envy, as those who have most of Christ within. Men who have more leaves than fruit, who have a golden outside—but a threadbare inside—are less envied than those who are "all glorious within." [It was said of Caesar and Pompey, that the one could not endure a superior, nor the other an equal.]

Men of greatest excellencies, are the main objects upon which the eye of envy is placed, Psalm 45:13. Saul's envious eye was placed upon David, and Cain's upon Abel, and Esau's upon Jacob, and Herod's

upon John, and the Pharisees' upon Christ. Envious souls are like the ravens, that fly over the sweet garden, and light upon the stinking carrion. Envy does ever ascend; it never descends. An envious man can with more ease die miserably, than see another live happily. **An envious heart weeps to see others' mercies, and joys to see others' miseries.** An envious heart is like the mermaid, which never sings but in a storm, and never mourns but in a calm. An envious man cannot endure those excellencies in others that he lacks in himself; he loves not any light which outshines his own, any crown which outweighs his own, etc. Socrates calls envy *the soul's saw*, etc.

[5.] Fifthly, ***Rich men are most tempted and assaulted.***

Pirates do not attack empty vessels—but those who are most richly laden. Beggars need not fear the thief, though the rich man does. Those who have been most rich in spirituals, have been most assaulted and tempted by Satan. Witness Abraham, Job, Joshua, Peter, Paul, yes, Christ himself. The best men have always been most and worst tempted. None so much in the school of temptation—as those who are most rich in grace. There are none who are such blocks, such mountains in Satan's ways—as these. None do him such mischief as these; none are so active and so resolute in their oppositions against him as these, etc.; and therefore none so assaulted and tempted as they. [God and Satan will try to the utmost those particular graces wherein any Christian does excel, etc.] And thus by these five things you may know whether you are rich in grace or no.

Use 2. If the Lord Jesus Christ is so rich, *then do not join anything with him, in the great work of your redemption and salvation.*

There are riches enough in Christ to pay all your debts, and to satisfy divine justice to the utmost farthing, without being indebted to your prayers, tears, or humiliations. Kings love no equals.

When Augustus Caesar desired the senate to join two consuls with him, for the carrying on the government of the state, the senators answered, "That they held it a diminution to his dignity to join any with so incomparable a man as Augustus Caesar was." Was it a diminution to his

dignity to join others with him in the government of the state? And is it not a diminution of the dignity and glory of Christ, to join your actions and your endeavors with his blood, in the business of your redemption? In Isaiah 63:3, "I have trodden the wine-press *alone;* and of the people there was *none* with me." And in Isaiah 44:24, "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and he who formed you from the womb, I am the Lord who makes all things; who stretches forth the heavens alone, who spreads abroad the earth by myself." It is a sad reproach to Christ to join anything with him in the great business of your salvation; therefore abhor it more than hell itself: let Christ be all in all. We must say of Christ as it was once said of Caesar, *He may have a companion—but he must not have a competitor*, etc.

Use* 3. If Christ is so rich, *then take heed of three things.

(1.) Take heed *of sitting down dejected and discouraged under any losses or troubles which befall you, or which have or shall befall you for the name of Christ.*

Christ is universally rich; he is able to make up all your losses and needs: Philip. 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ," as he did the widow's vessel. The *fountain* has not the less water for the vessel it fills, nor the *sun* the less light for that it gives forth to the stars; so the Lord Jesus Christ has never a whit the less for what he gives forth unto his saints.

When Zedislaus, the king of Poland's general, had lost his hand in his service, the king sent him a golden hand. Ah, Christians! when you lose this or that for Jesus, he will send you a golden hand; if you lose a penny for him, he will give you a pearl. Christ will not live long in any man's debt; if he would, he would lose his glory, etc.

(2.) If the Lord Jesus is very rich, *Oh then take heed of despairing by reason of your sins.*

I confess, the least sin should humble the soul—but certainly the greatest sin should never discourage the soul, much less should it work the soul to despair. Read 1 Tim. 1:13-15, and despair—if you can. Despairing Judas

perished, Acts 2, whereas the murderers of Christ, believing on Christ, were saved. Despair is a sin exceeding vile and contemptible; it is a word of eternal reproach, dishonor, and confusion; it declares the devil a conqueror; and what greater dishonor can be done to Christ, than for a soul to proclaim before all the world the devil a crowned conqueror? A despairing soul is a terror to himself; his heart a hell of horror; his conscience a field of black blood. He has no rest at home nor abroad, at bed nor board—but is as if infernal devils followed him in fearful shapes, terrifying and tormenting his perplexed soul. Eternity of misery, feared or felt, begets that monster which, like Medusa's head, astonishes with its very aspect, and strangles *hope*, which is the breath of the soul. Other miseries may *wound* the spirit—but despair *kills* it dead, etc. ["My sin is greater than can be forgiven," says Cain. *You lie, Cain,* says Augustine; for God's mercy is greater than the sins of all men, and it is a great injury to God to distrust of his mercy.]

(3.) If Christ be so rich, *then take heed of presuming*.

Take heed of taking encouragement to sin upon this account, that Christ is rich in grace and mercy. Christ is a lion as well as a lamb; he has a sword as well as a scepter. To argue from the riches of Christ's mercy to sinful liberty—is the devil's logic. A soul who thus reasons is a soul left of God, a soul who is upon the last step of the ladder, a soul who Satan has by the hand; and the eternal God knows where he will lead him. What the women sung of Saul and David, that "Saul had slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," 1 Sam. 18:6-7, that I may say of despair and presumption, "*Despair* has slain her thousand—but *presumption* has slain her ten thousand." "Shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we who are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Romans 6:1-2.

As the beams of the sun, shining on the fire, put out the fire, so the shinings of God's mercy on us should extinguish sin in us, as the apostles argue, 2 Peter 3:15, Romans 2:4. Christ seems to say to souls, as Theseus said once, "Go," says he, "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 prevails not, look for me to be up in arms." Ah souls! if you shall abuse the riches of grace to a presumptuous sinning

against Christ, Christ will take up arms, and you shall die for it.

***Use* 4. If Christ be so rich, *Oh! then, open to Christ when he knocks*.**

Christ knocks by his word, and he knocks by his rod; he knocks by his Spirit, and he knocks by his messengers, and he knocks by conscience. Oh, open to him! for he is very rich. Though you shut the door against a poor man—yet you will open it to one that is rich; and why not then to Christ, who would sincerely have entrance? 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."

"Behold, **I** stand." I who am the King of glory, I who am "King of kings, and Lord of lords," Psalm 24:7-9, Rev. 17:14. I who am rich in mercy, rich in goodness, rich in grace, rich in glory, "I stand at the door and knock." I who have gold to enrich you, I who have eye-salve to enlighten you, I who have glorious apparel to clothe you, I who have mercy to pardon you, I who have power to save you, I who have wisdom to counsel you, I who have happiness to crown you, "I stand at the door and knock."

"If **any man** opens." If the master will not—yet if the servant will; if the mistress will not—yet if the maid will; if the parent will not—yet if the child will; if the rich man will not—yet if the poor man will; if the pharisee won't—yet if the publican will.

"I will come in, and sup with him, and he with me." Jesus Christ has the greatest worth and wealth in him. As the worth and value of many pieces of silver is concentrated in one piece of gold, so all the heavenly excellencies which are scattered abroad in angels and men, are united in Christ; yes, all the whole volume of perfection which is spread through heaven and earth—is epitomized in Christ.

They say it is true of the oil at Rheems, that though it be continually spent in the inauguration of their kings of France—yet it never wastes. Christ is a pot of manna, a cruse of oil, a bottomless ocean of all comforts and contentments—which never fail. A saint may say, "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."

Use* 5. If Christ be so rich, *then sit down and wonder at his condescending love.

That one so rich should fall in love with such who are poor, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked, Rev. 3:17-21, etc.; that one so high should look so low as poor us; that one so great, that one who is the Lord and heir of all, should match with us who have nothing at all. O the breadth, the length, the depth, the height of Christ's love to unlovely souls! to such that had neither portion nor proportion; that had neither external nor internal worth that might in the least draw his love towards them, Heb. 1:2-4, Philip. 3:17-19, etc., Ezek. 6:16. You were indebted to God for the clothes you wear, for the bread you eat, for the houses you live in, the air you breathe in, the beds you lie on, the ground you tread on, etc. Now for Christ to love such, and to be willing to bestow himself upon such nothings, oh! how should this work them to spend their days in admiring and contemplating upon his kindness and goodness!

I have read a story of an elephant, who being fallen down, and unable to help himself or get up again, by reason of the inflexibleness of his legs, a forester coming by helped him up, wherewith the elephant, by the very instinct of nature, was so affected, that he followed this man, would do anything for him, and never left him until his dying day. The application is easy. [Love is like fire, very operative.]

Use* 6. If Christ be so rich as has been discovered to you, *then PRIZE Christ above all.

As the people prized David above themselves, saying, "You are worth ten thousand of us," 2 Sam. 18:3, so should saints lift up Jesus Christ above themselves, and above everything below himself. He who does not lift Christ up above all—has no saving interest in Christ at all; he who sets not Christ above all—is not a disciple of Christ: Luke 14:26, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14:26. Surely **they do not truly love Christ—who love anything more than Christ.** [Austin says he would willingly go

through hell to Christ.]

It was a notable saying of Jerome, "If my father should hang upon me, my brethren should press round about me, and my mother should stand before me—I would throw down my father, I would break through my brethren, and I would trample upon my mother—to come to Christ."

Other saints have lifted up Christ above all their lands, relations, and lives, as you may see in Heb. 11; and so did a multitude of the martyrs under the ten persecutions, etc. As Pharaoh set up Joseph above all, and made him governor of the land, and as Darius set up Daniel over all—so you must prize Christ, and set up Christ above all.

Remember a few things, that this may the better stick upon your hearts.

[1.] First, ***A Christ highly prized will be a Christ greatly delighted in.***

Every soul **delights** in Christ as he prizes Christ—and no otherwise. The reason of reasons why Christ is no more delighted in, is because he is no more prized among the sons of men: Cant. 2:5, "As the apple-tree among the trees of the forest, so is my well-beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was pleasant to any taste." The seeing of this object delights the eye of a believer, the hearing of this object delights the ear of a believer, the enjoying, the possessing of this object delights the heart of a believer: "I sat down under his shadow with great delight."

The apple-tree is delightful for shadow, so is Christ; he is a shadow to poor souls when they are scorched with troubles within and terrors without: Isaiah 32:2, "And a man," that is, Christ, "shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and as a covert from the tempest, as rivers of waters in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

The apple-tree is delightful for pleasantness of fruit, so is the Lord Jesus for those pleasant fruits of righteousness and holiness which grow upon him.

And the apple-tree is delightful for varieties, so is Christ; for there are all varieties of excellencies in himself: Col. 1:19, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." We delight in people and things as we prize them, and no otherwise. Jonathan highly prized David, and delighted in him accordingly. Jacob highly prized Rachel, and delighted in her answerably. You will delight in Christ as you prize him; if you prize him but a little, you will delight in him but a little.

[2.] *Secondly*, Remember this, ***a Christ highly prized will be a Christ gloriously obeyed.***

Every man **obeys** Christ as he prizes Christ, and no otherwise. The higher price any soul sets upon Christ, the more noble will that soul be in his obedience to Christ. If Christ were more prized in the world, he would be more obeyed in the world. A soul who highly prizes Christ is better at obeying than at disputing any command of Christ. If Christ will command such a soul to step over the world's crown to take up his cross, the soul will do it, as you may see in Moses, Heb. 11:24-26. He sets a higher price upon Christ's cross than upon Pharaoh's crown. When Christ's cross and the world's crown stood in competition, upon a bare command of God Moses steps over the world's crown to take up Christ's cross: "He chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." And so Abraham, upon a bare command of God, leaves his country, and his near and dear relations. He wholly resigns up himself to God; he puts his hand into God's, and is willing that God should lead him where he pleases, and do with him what he pleases. [The command of God must outweigh all authority and example of men. —Jerome.]

I remember an excellent saying of Luther, "I had rather," says he, "fall with Christ than stand with Caesar." And indeed every gracious soul who highly prizes Christ will rather choose to fall with Christ than to neglect his obedience to Christ. By obeying Christ we gain more honor than we can give; by kissing the Son we even command him, and make him ours, etc.

[3.] *Thirdly*, Christians, remember this, ***all the causes of prizing people and things are eminently and only in Christ****;* which

bespeaks you all to set a very, very high price upon the Lord Jesus. Christ's beauty needs no letters of commendation. You prize some for their **beauty**; why, the Lord Jesus Christ is the fairest among the children of men, Psalm 45:1-2; Cant. 5:10, "My beloved is white and ruddy; the chief," or, the standard-bearer, "among ten thousand." You prize others for their **strength**; why, the Lord Jesus Christ has in him everlasting strength: Isaiah 26:4, "Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength; he is the rock of ages." You prize others for bearing their father's image; why the Lord Jesus bears the image of his Father: Heb. 1:3, "He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." [The character of his subsistence. A comparison from the seal of a ring, the form of which is imprinted in the wax.] You prize others for their **wisdom** and **knowledge**; such a one is a very wise man, you say, and therefore you prize him; and such a one is a very knowing man, and therefore you prize him; why, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ: Col. 2:3, "In whom," says he, speaking of Christ, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The truth is, all those perfections and excellencies which are in all angels and men, they all center in Christ, they are all epitomized in Christ.

All the angels in heaven have but some of those perfections that are in Christ. All wisdom, and all power, and all goodness, and all mercy, and all love, etc., is in no glorified creature, no, not in all glorified creatures put together. But now in Christ all these perfections and excellencies meet, as all water meets in the sea, and as all light meets in the sun. Others you prize for their **usefulness**; the more useful people and things are, the more you prize and value them. The Lord Jesus Christ is of universal use to his people; why, he is the right eye of his people, without which they cannot see; and the right hand of his people, without which they cannot do, etc. He is of singular use to all his people. He is of use to weak saints—to strengthen them; and he is of use to doubting saints—to settle them; and he is of use to dull saints—to quicken them; and he is of use to falling saints—to support them; and he is of use to wandering saints—to recover them. In prosperity he is of use to keep his saints humble and watchful, spotless and fruitful; and in adversity he is of use to keep them contented and cheerful. All which should very much engage our hearts to prize this Christ. [Christ is, as Origen speaks, whatever we can desire. If we hunger

and thirst, he is the food of the soul.]

Again, we prize things as they **suit** us; why, Christ is not only a good—but a suitable good. Christ is light to enlighten us, John 1:8-9; and he is life to enliven us. He is riches to supply us, and he is raiment to clothe us; he is a staff to support us, and he is a sword to defend us; he is bread to nourish us, and he is water to refresh us, and wine to cheer us; and what would we have more?

[4.] *Fourthly*—yet once more, that this may stick upon us, let us consider, *that* ***where we are highly prized—there we highly prize.*** [Christ may well be compared to the trees of the sanctuary, Ezek. 47:12, which were both for food and for medicine.]

Why, the Lord Jesus Christ does exceedingly prize every believing soul; yes, even such poor weak saints—whom many swelled souls slight and despise as people of no worth, because they lack that light and knowledge, and those parts and gifts—which others have. Well, Christians, remember this, Christ prizes you as the apple of his eye, Zech. 2:8; he prizes you as his jewels, Mal. 3:17; he prizes you as his portion, Deut. 32:9, "The Lord's portion is his people;" he prizes you as his glory, Isaiah 46:13; he prizes you as his ornaments, Ezek. 7:20; he prizes you as his throne, Jer. 40:21; he prizes you as his diadem, Isaiah 62:3; he prizes you as his friends, John 14; he prizes you as his brethren, Heb. 2:11-12; he prizes you as his bride, Isaiah 62:5; he prizes you above his Father's bosom—for he leaves that to do you service, John 16:28; yes, he prizes you above his very life—he lays down his life to save your souls, John 10. Now, oh who would not highly prize such a Christ—who sets such an invaluable price upon such worthless souls!

[5.] *Fifthly* and lastly, consider, *That* ***your high prizing of Christ will work you to value the least things of Christ, above the greatest worldly good.***

It will make you value the least nod of Christ, the least love-token from Christ, the least good look from Christ, the least good word from Christ, the least truth of Christ, etc.—above all the honors, treasures, pleasures, and glories of this world: Psalm 119:72, "The law of your mouth is better

than thousands of gold and silver." Luther would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible. And oh that a serious consideration of these things might work all your hearts to a high prizing of the Lord Jesus!

Use 7. If Christ be so rich—then TRUST to Christ.

Who will not trust a rich man? Everyone strives to trust a rich man: "The rich have many friends," Proverbs 14:20. Why, the Lord Jesus Christ is very rich; will you be persuaded to trust him? Oh trust him with your best treasures, with your choicest jewels, with your names, souls, estates, relations! The apostle was excellent at this: 2 Tim. 1:12, "I know him," says he, "in whom I have believed, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, until that day." [Interpreters differ about the pawn or pledge which the apostle committed to God's custody. One says it was his soul; a second says it was himself, which is all one; a third says it was his works; a fourth says it was his sufferings; a fifth says it was his salvation. Without doubt, it was all that was near and dear to him.] I have committed my soul to him, and my life to him, and my name to him, and all my mercies and enjoyments to him. The child cannot better secure any precious thing it has, than by putting it into the father's hands to keep. **Our mercies are always safest and surest when they are out of our hands, when they are in the hands of God.** We trust as we love, and we trust where we love; where we love much, we trust much. Much trust speaks out much love; if you love Christ much, surely you will trust him much.

That was a notable bold expression of Luther, "Let him who died for my soul—see to the salvation of it." I have committed my soul to him, I have given it up into his hands, who is my life, who is my love, and let him look after it, let him take care of it. In securing of that, he secures his own glory.

Oh that Christians would trust in this rich Christ for a supply of necessities! Is Christ so rich—and will you not take his word that he will not see you lack? Will you trust a rich man upon his word, and will you not trust a rich Christ upon his word? Do you believe he will give you a crown—and will you not trust him for a crust? Do you believe he will give you a kingdom—and do you doubt whether he will give you a cottage to

rest in? Has he given you his blood—and do you think that he will deny you anything that is really for your good? Surely he will not, he cannot." [Christ's promises are ever performed, 2 Cor. 1:20. His promises are over-performed, 1 Cor. 2:9, etc.]

Again, ***Trust him for power against all the remainders of sin in you.*** Has Christ freed you from the damnatory power of sin, and from the dominion of sin—and will not you trust him for deliverance from the remainders of sin? Psalm 65:3, "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, you shall purge them away." Oh excellent faith! Romans 8:1, 6:14.

Again, ***Trust him to bring you into the land of rest.*** Do you think that this Joshua is not able to carry you through all difficulties, dangers, and deaths? Do you think that he will leave you to die in the wilderness, who have already had some glimpses of heaven's glory? Oh trust to this Christ for the bringing your souls into the promised land! Christ would lose his glory should you fall short of glory, etc.

Use* 8. If Christ be so rich—*then do not forsake him, do not leave, do not turn your backs upon him. Are there riches of justification, and riches of sanctification, and riches of consolation, and riches of glorification in Christ? Yes! Then do not depart from him, do not shake hands with him. [You read of no arms for the back, though you do for the breast, Eph. 6:11.] That is a sad complaint of God in Jer. 2:12-13, "Be appalled at this, O heavens, and shudder with great horror," declares the Lord. "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." It is madness and folly to fly from the fountain—to the stream; from the light of the sun—to the light of a candle. And is it not greater madness and folly to forsake the Creator—to run after the creature? Oh say as Peter, "Where should we go, you have the words of eternal life," John 6:68. To run from Christ, is to run from all life, peace, and joy; it is to run from our strength, our shelter, our security, our safety, our crown, our glory. Crabs, which go backward, are reckoned among unclean creatures, Lev. 11:10. The application is easy.

Origen, on coming to Jerusalem, after he had shamefully turned his back

upon Christ and his truth, and being exceedingly pressed to preach, at last he yields, and as he opened the book, he happened to cast his eye upon that place of the psalmist, "What have you to do to declare my statutes, or that you should take my covenant in your mouth, seeing you hate instruction, and cast my word behind you?" Psalm 50:16-17. Now the remembrance of his own folly so reflected upon his conscience, that it made him close the book and sit down and weep. Such as forsake a rich, a full Christ—shall have weeping work enough.

That is a very solemn scripture, Jer. 17:13, "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." Can you read this text, backsliding souls, and not tremble? etc.

Use* 9. If the Lord Jesus Christ be so rich, *Oh! then all you who have a saving interest in him, labor mightily to clear up your interest, and to be more and more confident of your interest in so rich a Jesus.

My brethren, it is one thing for a man to have an interest in Christ, and another thing to have his interest cleared up to him. I do speak it with grief of heart, that even among such Christians that I hope to meet in heaven, there is scarce one of forty, nay, one of a hundred, that is groundedly able to make out his interest in the Lord Jesus. Most Christians live between fear and hope, between doubting and believing. One day they hope that all is well, and that all shall be well forever; the next day they are ready to say that they shall one day perish by the hand of such a corruption, or else by the hand of such or such a temptation; and thus they are up and down, saved and lost, many times in a day.

But you will say unto me, ***What means should we use to clear up our interest in Christ?*** I will tell you.

There are six distinct means that you should labor after, for the evidencing more and more your interest in Christ. And take it from experience, you will find that they will contribute very much for the evidencing your interest in Christ.

[1.] And the *first* is this, ***Faithfully and constantly fall in with the interest of Christ.***

Holiness is the interest of Christ, the gospel is the interest of Christ, the precious ordinances are the interest of Christ, etc. Now the more sincerely and soundly you fall in with the interest of Christ, the more abundantly you will be confirmed and persuaded of your interest in Christ. Such souls as fall in with strange interests, or with base and carnal interests, may justly question whether ever they had any real interest in Christ. Christians! did you more sincerely and fully fall in with Christ's interest, you would less question your interest in Christ; this would scatter many a cloud. [The primitive Christians did generally fall in with the interest of Christ, and they generally had an assurance of their interest in Christ.]

[2.] *Secondly,* ***Be kind to the Spirit of Christ.*** [Lam. 1:16, Philip. 4:30, Isaiah 63:10.]

Do not grieve him, do not slight him. If you should set this Spirit a-mourning—who alone can evidence your interest—who alone can seal up your interest in Christ—by whom shall your interest in Christ be sealed up. Oh do not grieve the Spirit by acting against light, against conscience, against engagements; do not grieve him by casting his cordials and comforts behind your backs; do not grieve him by slighting and despising his gracious actings in others; do not cast water upon the Spirit—but wisely attend the hints, the items, and motions of the Spirit, and he will clear up your interest in Christ, he will make you say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his!" Cant. 2:16.

[3.] Thirdly, ***Labor more and more after a full and universal conformity to Jesus Christ.***

The more the soul is conformable to Christ—the more confident it will be of its interest in Christ: 1 John 4:17, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world." "As he, so are we." The child is not more like the father—than we are like our Savior. The child is the father multiplied, the second edition of the father. Our *summum bonum—our highest good*—consists

in our full communion with Christ, and in our full conformity to Christ. Oh! if men were more universally conformable to Christ in their affections, ends, designs, and actings, etc., they would have abundantly more clear, full, and glorious evidences of their interest in Christ. **A more full conformity to Christ in heart and life will make your lives a very heaven**, etc. As all good orators endeavor to be like Demosthenes, so all good Christians should endeavor to be like Jesus Christ; for therein lies their glory and perfection.

[4.] Fourthly, ***Interest Christ in the glory of all you enjoy, and in the glory of all you do.***

This is a precious way to have your interest in Christ more and more evidenced to your own souls, 1 Cor. 10:31, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do—do it all for the glory of God." Such as are good at this, as are much in this—will find Christ every day a-clearing up more and more their interest in himself. It is not usually *night* for a long time, with such souls.

Oh Christians! interest Christ more and more in the glory of all your **graces**, interest him in the glory of all your **duties**, interest him in the glory of all your **abilities**, as Christ does interest you in himself, in his Spirit, in his graces, in his riches, in his titles, in his dignities, in his offices. Ah Christians! did you interest Christ more in all you **have**, in all you **are**, and in all you **do**—you would never be so full of fears, and doubts, and questions about your interest in Christ as you are, John 1:16, Rev. 1:5-6, 1 Peter 2:9. Your glorifying of Christ in all you have and do, will speak out not only the truth of your love—but also the strength and greatness of your love; and where men love much, where they love strongly, there they do not question the truth of their love. [The mother who strongly loves her child, does not question the truth of her love to her child.]

The heathen gods were contented to divide their honors among themselves; and hence the senate of Rome rejected Christ, from taking him to be a God, after that they had consulted about it; for, said they, if Christ comes to be acknowledged a God, he will not share with the rest, he will have all himself; and so upon this reason they refused him.

Christians! Christ will not have any competitor; he will rather part with anything than with his glory: Isaiah 42:8, "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." Christ will rather part with his life than with his honor; therefore, let every Christian say as David does: 1 Chron. 29:11-13, "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things. Riches and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and it is at your discretion that people are made great and given strength. O our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name!" And clearly, friends, the more your hearts are led forth to interest Christ in all you enjoy, and in all you do, the more clear and glorious evidence you will have of your interest in Christ. Let his honor and glory lie nearer and nearer to your hearts—and you shall see that he has set you as a seal upon his arm, as a seal upon his heart.

[5.] The *fifth* means to gain the knowledge of your interest in Christ is, ***By cleaving to Christ, and whatever is dear to Christ—in the face of all miseries, difficulties, and dangers.***

It is nothing to cleave to Christ in fair weather, when everyone cleaves to Christ, when everyone professes Christ; but to cleave to him in a storm, when everyone runs from him, this speaks out a child-like disposition; it speaks out a Jacob's spirit: Psalm 44; Acts 5; Heb. 11; Dan. 3; Acts 21:13. Surely he must needs have much of Christ—which nothing can take off from cleaving to Christ. When the soul says to Christ, as Ruth said to Naomi, "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me," Ruth 1:15-18.

When neither the frowns of men, nor the reproach of men, nor the contempt of men, nor oppositions from men—can take the soul off from cleaving to Christ—it will not be long before Christ speaks peace to such a soul: Psalm 63:8, "My soul follows hard after you, your right hand upholds me." In the Hebrew it is, "My soul cleaves to you," or "is glued to you," as Jonathan's soul cleaved to David, and as Jacob's soul cleaved to

Rachel—in the face of all difficulties and troubles.

Doubtless, when the soul cleaves to Christ in the face of all afflictions and difficulties, this very much evidences of its interest in Christ. In temporals men cleave to people and things, as their interest is in them; and so it is in spirituals also. Christ cannot, Christ will not, throw such to hell—who hang about him, who cleave to him. [Shamma, one of David's worthies, stood and defended the field when all the rest fled.]

[6.] *Sixthly* and lastly, ***If you would know whether you have an interest in Christ—then be very much in observing what interest Christ has in you.***

Observe whether he has the interest of a head, a husband, a father, or no. Christ has a general interest in all creatures—as he is the Creator and preserver of them; and he has a head's interest, a husband's interest, a father's interest—only in those who have a saving interest in him. The interest of the head, the husband, the father, is the greatest interest; it is the sweetest interest, it is a commanding interest, it is a growing interest, it is a peculiar interest, it is a lasting interest. And really, if the Lord Jesus has such an interest in you, you may be as confident that you have a real and glorious interest in him, as you are confident that you live. And thus much for the means whereby you may come to know your interest in rich Jesus.

Before I close up this discourse, give me permission to **speak a few words to poor sinners** who, to this very day, are afar off from this Jesus, who is so rich in all excellencies and glories. Ah poor hearts! you have heard much of the riches of the Lord Jesus, and oh that I could persuade with you to get a saving interest in this Christ! Get this Christ—and you get all. Miss him—and you miss all. It is a matter of eternal concernment to your souls. Nothing can make that man miserable—who has this rich Christ. Nothing can make that man happy—who lacks this rich Christ.

In Proverbs 4:5-7, "Get wisdom (that is Christ), get understanding, forget it not. Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all your getting get understanding." And so in Proverbs 16:16, "How much

better is it to get wisdom than gold? and to get understanding, rather to be chosen than silver?" Had you all the power of the world, without a saving interest in Christ—you would be but weak,"1 Cor. 1:25-29. Had you all the wit and learning in the world, without a saving interest in Christ—you will be but a fool. Had you all the honors in the world—yet without a saving interest in Christ, you would be but base. Had you all the wealth in the world—yet without a saving interest in Christ—you would be but a beggar, Dan. 4:17; Luke 16:22-26, etc. Oh, therefore, labor for a a saving interest in Christ!

Oh, become the wise merchant at last! The wise merchant in the Gospel, parts with all to buy the pearl, to get an interest in Christ, Mat. 13:45-47. Oh it is your greatest wisdom, it is of an eternal concernment to your souls—to sell all, to part with all, for an interest in the Lord Jesus! Oh do not deal with your own souls, when Christ is offered to you, as sometimes simple people do when they go to market; they might have a good pennyworth—but they are loath to part with some old piece of gold that has been given them by a father or a friend; somewhat willing they are to have a good pennyworth—but unwilling they are to part with their gold. It is so with many poor sinners, when the Lord Jesus Christ is presented to their souls as a very glorious pennyworth, somewhat willing they are to have him—but unwilling they are to part with their old good, with some old sweet darling lust.

But, sinners, don't you deceive your own souls. **Sin and your souls must part—or Christ and your souls can never meet!** Sin and your souls must be two—or Christ and your souls can never be one. Christ is a most precious commodity; he is better than rubies, Proverbs 8:11, or the most costly pearls; and you must part with your old gold, with your shining gold, your old sins, your most shining sins—or you must perish forever. Christ is to be sought and bought with any pains—at any price. We cannot buy this gold too dear. He is a jewel more worth than a thousand worlds—as all know that have him. Get him—and get all; miss him—and miss all.

Now if ever you would get an interest in Christ, and so by gaining a saving interest in him, be possessed of all the riches and glory that come by him —then be sure to get your hearts possessed with these nine principles that

follow.

[1.] And the first principle is this, *That* ***the great end and design of Christ's coming into the world, was the salvation of sinners.***

Get this principle rooted in your spirits. "I came not to call the righteous," says he, "but sinners to repentance," Mat. 9:13, Mark 2:17. And in 1 Tim. 1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Christ lays aside his royal crown; he puts off his glorious robe; he leaves his Father's bosom; he takes a journey from heaven to earth—and all to save poor lost sinners. That which Christ had most in his eye, and upon his heart, in his coming into the world—was the salvation of sinners. Lay up this truth, feed upon this honey-comb.

[2.] Secondly, Get this principle rooted upon your hearts, namely, ***That none ever yet obtained an interest in Christ but unworthy creatures.***

When you are pressed to get an interest in Christ, you are ready to say, Oh "I am unworthy," will Christ ever look after such a one as I am?

I answer—this is a most certain principle, that none ever attained an interest in Christ but unworthy creatures. Was Paul worthy before he had a saving interest in Christ? What worthiness was in Matthew when Christ called him from the tax collector's booth? And what worthiness was in Zaccheus when Christ called him down from the sycamore tree, and told him that this day salvation was come to his house? Was Manasseh or Mary Magdalene worthy before they had a saving interest in Christ? Surely not! Though you are unworthy—yet Christ is worthy; though you have no merit—yet God has mercy; though there is no salvation for you by the law—yet there is salvation for you by the gospel.

Again, Christ requires no worthiness in any man before he believes. He who won't believe before he is worthy—will *never* believe. [Such as shall go to prove he does—must make a new gospel, a new Bible.] If you look upon God with an evangelical eye, you shall see that he who is most unworthy—is most capable of mercy. A real sense of our own

unworthiness renders us most fit for divine mercy. This objection, *I am unworthy*, is an unworthy objection, and speaks out much pride and ignorance of the gospel, and of the freeness and riches of God's grace, etc.

[3.] Thirdly, Let this principle dwell in you, namely, ***That Christ has lost none of his affections to poor sinners by going to heaven.***

Oh how did his affections work toward sinners when he was on earth! And certainly they work as strongly towards them now that he is in heaven. His love, his heart, his good-will, is as much towards them as ever. Christ is Alpha and Omega; the phrase is taken from the Greek alphabet, whereof Alpha is the first letter, and Omega the last, Rev. 1:8. I am before all, and I am after all. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever," Heb. 13:8. Christ is the same before time, in time, and after time. Christ is unchangeable in his essence, in his promises, and in his love to poor sinners.

[4.] Fourthly, Get this principle riveted in your hearts, ***That he is able to save to the uttermost—all who come unto God by him.***

Heb. 7:25, "He is able to save to the uttermost;" that is, to all ends and purposes, perfectly and perpetually. He needs none to help him in the great business of redemption; he is thorough Savior; "he has trod the wine-press *alone*," Isaiah 63:3.

[5.] Fifthly, Get this principle riveted in your hearts, ***That the lack of such preparations or qualifications that many men lay a great stress upon, shall be no impediment to hinder your soul's interest in Christ, if you will but open to Christ, and close with Jesus Christ.***[Some men there are, who would have men better Christians before they come to Christ, before they believe in Christ —than usually they prove after they are come to Christ. Surely, did legal preachers seriously weigh the following scriptures, they would not so vehemently, I say not angerly, press the absolute necessity of such and such qualifications before faith in Christ, as they do: Mark 16:16; John 3:34; Heb. 11:6; Romans 14:28; John 5:12; Mat. 7:17-18, 12:33; Romans 8:2; Gal. 5:6.]

Rev. 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if *any* man hears my voice, and open to me, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Pray tell me at whose door was this that Christ stood and knocked? Was it not at the Laodiceans' door? Was it not at their door who thought their penny as good silver as any—who said they were rich, and had need of nothing, when Christ tells them to their very faces, "that they were poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked." None more unprepared, unqualified, and unfitted for union and communion with Christ than these lukewarm Laodiceans; and yet the Lord Jesus is very ready and willing that such should have intimate communion and fellowship with him.

"If *any* man will open, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." The truth of this you have further evidenced, Proverbs 1:20-24, and 8:1-6, and 9:1-6. All these scriptures with open mouth speak out the truth asserted, namely, That the lack of preparations or qualifications shall not hinder the soul's interest in Christ—if the soul will adventure itself by faith upon Christ. I ask, what qualifications and preparations had they in Ezekiel 16, when God saw them in their blood—and yet that was a time of love, and God even then spread his skirt over them, and made a covenant with them, and they became his. What qualifications or preparations had Paul, Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus, and Lydia, etc.? And yet these believed in Christ, these had a blessed and glorious interest in Christ, etc.

Ay—but some may object, and say,

Objection: What is the meaning of that text, Mat. 11:28, "Come unto me, all you who are *weary* and *heavy laden*, and I will give you rest"?

Answer: There is a threefold answer to be given to this objection.

First, Though the invitation be to those who are weary and heavy laden—yet the promise is made to coming, to believing. [The dove found no rest until she returned to the ark. No more will the troubled soul until it returns to Christ.]

Secondly, This text shows only this, that those who are burdened and

bowed down under sin, and under the sense of divine wrath, are to come to Christ, and that there is no way for them to obtain ease and rest but by coming to Christ. But this text does not show that only these must come to Christ, or that only these may come to Christ.

Thirdly, and lastly, No one scripture speaks out the whole mind of God; and therefore you must compare and consult this scripture with the scriptures, and instances lately cited, and then you will clearly see that souls may believe in Christ, and come to obtain an interest in Christ, though they are not so and so prepared, nor so and so qualified, as some would have them.

[6.] Sixthly, Get this principle rooted in your hearts, *That* ***Christ is appointed and anointed by the Father to this very office of receiving and saving poor sinners.*** [Moses was faithful in his office as a servant—but Christ as a Son, Heb. 3:2-6. Christ had never entered into glory, had he not been faithful in his offices, etc.]

Turn to Isaiah 61:1-4, John 6:28, and Psalm 68:18, "You have ascended on high, you have led captivity captive; you have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious also (what for?), that the Lord God might dwell among them." Christ has received gifts for rebellious sinners, for rebellious Sabbath breakers, for rebellious swearers, for rebellious drunkards, etc.

"That the Lord God might dwell among them." That is, that he might have near communion and fellowship with them.

[7.] Seventhly, Get this principle rooted in you, *That* ***it is the delight of Christ to give poor sinners a saving interest in himself.***

He is not only able to do it—but it is his delight to do it. Christ's soul is in nothing more. Witness his leaving his Father's bosom; witness his laying down his crown; witness those many sufferings and deaths that he went through in this world; witness those gospel acclamations, Mark 16:16, Rev. 22:17; witness those persuasive exhortations and gracious entreaties, Ezek. 53:11, Mat. 11:28, 2 Cor. 5:20; witness divine injunctions, 1 John 5:23, Mat. 11:21; witness those solemn lamentations,

Mat. 23:37, Luke 19:42, Psalm 81:13; and witness the inward motions and secret excitations of his blessed Spirit, Gen. 6:3, all which speak out his great willingness and delight to save poor sinners.

So in Psalm 40:7-8, "I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is in my heart;" or, as the Hebrew has it, "It is in the midst of my affections." Now mark, the will of the Father was the salvation of sinners. This was the will of the Father, "That Jesus Christ should seek and save those who are lost," Mat. 18:11. Now, says Christ, "I delight to do your will, O my God;" it is the joy and rejoicing of my heart to be a-seeking and a-saving lost sinners. When Christ was hungry, he went not into a dining house—but into the temple, and taught the people most part of the day, to show how much he delighted in the salvation of sinners, etc. [Christ did so much delight, and his heart was so much set upon the conversion and salvation of the Samaritans, that he neglected his own body to save their souls, as you may clearly see in John 4.]

[8.] Eighthly, Get this principle riveted in your hearts, ***That as there is nothing in Christ to discourage you from looking after an interest in him—so there is everything in Christ that may encourage you to get an interest in him.***

Look upon his name: [*The name of a Savior is honey in the mouth, and music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart*, says one.] "Your name is an ointment poured out, and therefore do the virgins love you," Cant. 1:3. *The name of Jesus has a thousand treasures of joy and comfort in it,* says Chrysostom; and so have all his other names.

If you look upon Christ in his natures, in his offices, in his graces, in his beauties, in his gifts, and in his works, you will find nothing but what may encourage you to believe in him, and to resign up yourselves to him. Ah, poor sinners, what would you have? Is there not power in Christ to support you, and mercy in Christ to pardon you, and grace in Christ to heal you, and goodness in Christ to relieve you, and happiness in Christ to crown you—what more would you have? Oh that you would believe!

[9.] Ninthly, Let this principle be rooted in you, *That* ***the surest way, and the shortest way to mercy, and to get an interest in***

Christ, is by an instant casting of the soul by faith on Christ.

There is no way under heaven to be saved by Christ but by believing. There is no way to get an interest in the riches of Christ but this, "he who believes shall be saved," let his sins be ever so great. "He who believes not, shall be damned," let his sins be ever so little. [John 3:16-18, 36, and 8:24, and 16:9, and 4:50, 53, and 5:24, and 6:35, 40, and 7:38, and 11:25, 26, and 12:46; Acts 10:43; Romans 3:26; 1 John 5:10-12.] And so much shall suffice to have spoken concerning this great and weighty point. I shall follow what has been said with my prayers, that what has been said may work for your internal and eternal welfare, etc.

The Sixth Doctrine

I shall now proceed to the sixth doctrine, namely—**That it is the great duty of preachers to preach Jesus Christ to the people.**

"To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that **I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ**." Ephesians 3:8

I shall prove it, and then open it to you.

The **proof**. In Acts 5:42, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach." What? Jesus Christ. So in Acts 3:20, "And he shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you." So in 1 Cor. 1:23-24, and 2 Cor. 4:5, "We preach not ourselves—but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." So in Acts 4:2, and 2:35, and 9:20. As soon as Paul was converted, straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue, that he was the Son of God.

Now for the **opening** of the point, I shall only attempt two things.

(1.) Give you the reasons *WHY* it is the great duty of ministers to preach Christ to the people.

(2.) Which will be the main point—to show *HOW* they are to preach Christ to the people.

I confess this a very useful point in these days, wherein many men preach anything, yes, everything but a crucified Jesus. Well, Christians, remember this, as it is your duty to take heed ***how*** you hear, so it is as much your duty to take heed ***who*** you hear. Many there are, who count and call themselves the ministers of Christ, and yet have neither skill nor will to preach Jesus Christ, to exalt and lift up Jesus Christ in lip or life, in word or work. A sad reckoning these will have to make up at last!

I. WHY it is the great duty of ministers to preach Christ to the people.

[1.] ***Because this is the only way to save and to win souls to Jesus Christ.***

There is no other way of winning and saving souls—but by the preaching of Christ to the people. In Acts 4:10-12 compared, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." You may preach this and that, and a thousand things to the people, and yet never better them, never win them. It is only preaching of Christ, that allures and draws souls to Christ: John 17:3, "This is life eternal, to know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." **Ah, nothing melts the hearts of sinners, nor wins upon the hearts of sinners, like the preaching of the Lord Jesus.** It is true, the teaching of this and that opinion, may please many a man's fancy—but it is only the preaching of Christ that changes the heart, that conquers the heart, that turns the heart, etc. Peter, by preaching of a crucified Christ, converts three thousand souls at once, Acts 2:14-42. Were Christ more preached, men would be more enamored with him. He is only precious to those who hear of him, and who believe in him. Christ is in all respects incomparable; and therefore, as you would honor him, and win upon others, make him more and more known to the world, 1 Peter 2:7, etc.

[2.] They are to preach Christ to the people, ***because it is the choicest and the chief way to ingratiate Christ with poor souls.***

This brings Christ and the soul together, and this keeps Christ and the soul together. Nothing endears Christ to the soul like this. We see, by woeful experience, Christ neglected, despised, scorned, and trampled upon by most; and no wonder, for many preach themselves more than Christ, and they preach men more than Christ, and their own notions and impressions more than Christ. Surely Christ is but little indebted to such ministers; and, I think, the souls of men as little. Oh that they were so wise as to consider of it, and lay it to heart! Surely a real Christian cares nothing for that which has nothing of Christ in it. There is a strange and strong energy or forcibleness in hearing Christ and his beauties and excellencies displayed and discovered.

The daughters of Jerusalem, by hearing the church presenting Christ in so high a character, and by describing and painting him out in such lively colors, are so enchanted and inflamed that, might they but know where to find him, they would be at any pains to seek him. When Christ is set forth in his glories, with much affection and admiration, others fall in love with him, as you may see by comparing Cant. 5:10, *seq*., with chapter 6:1.

[3.] It is their great duty to preach Jesus Christ to the people, *because the preaching up of Christ is the only way to preach down antichrist, or whatever makes against Christ*.

Some would have antichrist down, yes, they would have him down root and branch—but there is no such way for his total and final overthrow as the preaching of Christ; for the more the glory, fullness, perfection, and excellency of Christ is discovered, the more the horrid vileness and matchless wickedness of the man of sin will be discovered and abhorred, etc.: 2 Thes. 2:3-4, 7-10, "And then shall that wicked one be revealed." The Greek word properly signifies a lawless monster; one that holds himself subject to no law. **Pope** Nicholas the First said "that he was above law," because Constantine styled the pope God; and of the same opinion were most of the popes.

"Whom he shall consume." The Greek word signifies to consume little by little, until a thing comes to nothing.

"With the spirit of his mouth." That is, with the evidence and glory of his word in the mouths of his messengers. The ministers of the word are as a mouth whereby the Lord breathes out that glorious, mighty, and everlasting gospel which shall by degrees bruise antichrist and all his adherents, and break them in sunder like a rod of iron, etc.

When Christ was born, all the idols that were set up in the world, as historians write, fell down. When Jesus Christ comes to be lifted up in a nation, in a city, in a town, in a family, yes, in any heart—then all idols without and within will fall before the power, presence, and glory of Jesus. Since Luther began to lift up Christ in the gospel, what a deal of ground has antichrist lost! and he does and will lose more and more, as Christ comes to be more and more manifested and lifted up in the chariot

of his word.

Many in these days that speak much against antichrist, have much of antichrist within them. And certainly there is no such way to cast him out of men's hearts, and out of the world, as the preaching and making known of Christ, as the exalting or lifting up of Christ in the gospel of grace. [Bellarmine confesses, to his great grief, that ever since the Lutherans have declared the **pope to be antichrist**, his kingdom has more and more decreased and decayed.]

[4.] A *fourth* reason why they are to preach Christ to the people is this, *because else they contract upon themselves the blood of souls*.

There is no other way for them to avoid the contracting of the blood of men and women's souls upon them—but the preaching of Christ unto them. [The Germans have this proverb: say they, The pavement of hell is made of the bare skulls of priests and the glorious crests of gallants. Their meaning is, that the more eminent any one is in church or state, and does not employ his eminency accordingly, the more low shall they lie in hell, Rev. 18:11-14.] Now, a man were better to have all the blood of the world upon him than the blood of one soul. The blood of souls, of all blood, cries loudest and wounds deepest. The lowest, the darkest, and the hottest place in hell will be the sad and dreadful portion of such upon whose skirts the blood of souls shall be found at last.

Hence that passage of Paul in 1 Cor. 9:16, "Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel." The motto that should be written upon preachers' study-doors, and on their walls, and on all the books they look on, on the beds they lie on, and on the seats they sit on, etc., should be this, "The blood of souls, the blood of souls!" The soul is the better, the noble part of man; it bears most of the image of God; it is capable of union and communion with God. Christ sweat for it, and bled for it; and therefore woe to those who make merchandise of the souls of men. This was a comfort and an honor to Paul, that he kept himself from the blood of souls, Acts 20:25-27. He appeals to them that they were witnesses that "he was free from the blood of all men." Paul had held out Jesus Christ in his natures, in his names, in his offices, and in all his excellencies and perfections—and so

frees himself from the blood of all men. And ministers can no way secure themselves from the blood of souls—but by *preaching up* and *living out* a crucified Jesus.

[5.] The last reason is this, *because the preaching of Christ contributes most to their comfort here, and to their reward hereafter; therefore they are to preach the Lord Christ to the people.*

When Luther was upon a dying bed, this was no small joy and comfort to his spirit. "You, O Lord," says he, "have I known, you have I loved, you have I taught, you have I trusted—and now into your hand I commend my spirit." There can be no greater joy to a minister than, by preaching Christ, to win souls to Christ: 1 Thes. 2:19-20, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming. You are our glory and joy." Those who by preaching Christ win souls to Christ shall shine as the stars in the skies, Dan. 12:3. Every soul won to Christ is a glorious pearl added to a preacher's crown: 1 Peter 5:4, "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory." A crown imports perpetuity, plenty, and dignity, the height of human ambition. [Jewel, Cowper, and others, had no such pleasure or joy as they had in preaching Christ unto the people.]

It is the opinion of some that there are three places of exaltation in heaven:

The first and highest is for converting ministers.

The second is for suffering martyrs.

The third is for persevering Christians.

Without doubt, those ministers shall be high in heaven who make it their heaven to hold forth Christ, and to win souls to Christ; who are willing to be anything, to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all to poor souls. And thus I have given you the reasons of the point.

I shall now come to the second thing, which is the main thing, and that is, to show you,

II. HOW ministers are to preach Christ to the people.

Many weak and slight spirits in these days think that it is as easy to preach as to play, and so they hop from one thing to another, and those who are not qualified nor fit for the least and lowest employment—yet judge themselves fit enough for the greatest and the weightiest employment in the world, and that which would certainly break the backs, not only of the best and strongest men—but even of the very angels, should not God put under his "everlasting arms." No labor to that of the mind, no travail to that of the soul—and those who are faithful in the Lord's vineyard find it so. Luther was accustomed to say that if he were again to choose his calling, he would dig, or do anything, rather than take upon him the office of a minister. And many other eminent lights have been of the same opinion with him. [2 Cor. 2:16, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Almost every upstart in these days thinks himself sufficient. "Who am I?" says Moses. Who am I not? says every green-head in these days.]

But what are those rules that every preacher is to observe in his preaching of Christ to the people? I answer, These eleven:

[1.] Jesus Christ must be preached *PLAINLY and CLEARLY, so that the lowest capacity may understand what they say concerning Christ*. They must preach Christ for edification of others, and not to work admiration of themselves—as too many do in these days. Paul was excellent at this kind of preaching, 1 Cor. 14:18-19. He had rather speak five words to edification than ten thousand words to work admiration in ignorant people. So in 1 Cor. 2:4-5, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom—but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men—but in the power of God;" [Preaching is not a matter of parts, words, or wit; it is opening up of Scripture which works upon the conscience, and which God owns and crowns.] as if he should say, such preach with little power who come with the excellency of

speech, or with the enticing words of man's wisdom.

Ah! many there are—I speak it with grief, and to their shame, that delight to soar aloft in obscure discourses, and to express themselves in new-minted words and phrases, and to show high strains and flashes of wit, and all to work in the ignorant, admiration of themselves. Such kind of preachers are as clouds, and painted glass windows, that *hinder* the light from shining in upon souls, that hinder the sun of righteousness from breaking forth in his beauty and glory upon the spirits of poor creatures. Woe unto these men in the day when such souls shall plead against them, when they shall say, Lord, here are the people whose office and work was to make dark things plain, and they have made plain things dark and obscure, that we might rather esteem them—than any ways profit by them. [It was a saying of Luther: From a vain-glorious doctor, from a contentious pastor, and from unprofitable questions, good Lord deliver his church!]

Aaron's bells were of pure gold. Our whole preaching must be Scripture proof, or we and our works must burn together. The profoundest prophets accommodated themselves to their hearers' capacities. [If you will be a good preacher, study to be well acquainted with the Scripture.] Holy Moses covers his glistening face with a veil when he was to speak to the people. Yes, it is very observable that the evangelists spoke simply many times for their hearers' sake, even to manifest incongruity, as you may see in John 17:2, Rev. 1:4. But above all, it is most observable concerning God the Father, who is the great Master of speech, when he spoke from heaven, he makes use of three different texts of Scripture in one breath: Mat. 17:5, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear him." "This is my beloved Son," that scripture you have in Psalm 2:7; "In whom I am well pleased," this you have in Isaiah 42:1; "Hear him," this you have in Deut. 18:15; all which may bespeak them to blush, who through curious wiseness disdain at the stately plainness of the Scripture!

Oh how unlike to God are such preachers, who think to correct the divine wisdom and eloquence with their own infancy, vanity, novelty, and sophistry! Yes, Jesus Christ himself, the great doctor of the church, teaches this lesson: Mark 4:33, "And with many such parables spoke he

the word unto them, as they were able to hear it;" not as he was able to have spoken. He could have expressed himself at a higher rate than all mortals can! he could have been in the clouds. He knew how to knit such knots that they could never untie—but he would not. He delights to speak to his hearers' shallow capacities. So in John 16:12, "I have many things to say unto you—but you cannot bear them now." He who speaks not to the hearers' capacities is as a barbarian to them, and they to him.

"He is the best teacher," says Luther, "who preaches simply, who preaches most plainly." He is not the best preacher who tickles the ear, or that works upon the imagination, etc.—but he who breaks the heart and awakens the conscience. It is sad to consider how many preachers in these days are like Heraclitus, who was called "the dark doctor," because he affected dark speeches. Oh how do many in these days affect sublime notions, uncouth phrases—making plain truths difficult, and easy truths hard! "They darken counsel by words without knowledge," Job 38:2. But how unlike to Christ, the prophets, and apostles these dark doctors are, I will leave you to judge; nor would I have their reckonings for all the world; I will leave them to stand or fall to their own Master. God loves, owns, and crowns plain preaching. Though some account it foolishness—yet "to those who are saved, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. 1:20-30. I have stayed the longer upon this first direction, because of its great usefulness in these deluding days.

[2.] As they must preach Christ plainly, so they must preach Christ *FAITHFULLY*. Proverbs 13:17, 25:13, Job 33:23. Ministers are stewards, 1 Cor. 4:2; and you know it is the duty of a steward to be faithful in his stewardship, to give to every men the portion that is due to him, cheering up those hearts that God would have cheered, and weakening those wicked hands that God would have weakened, and strengthening those feeble knees that God would have strengthened. Ministers are ambassadors; and you know it is the great concern of ambassadors to be very faithful in their master's messages. God looks more, and is affected and pleased more, with a minister's faithfulness than with anything else. A great voice, an affected tone, studied notions, and silken expressions, may affect and please poor weak souls; but it is only the faithfulness of a minister in his ministerial work that pleases

God, that wins upon God: Mat. 25:21-23, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of the Lord:" a joy too big to enter into you, and therefore you must enter into it. This was Paul's glory, Acts 20:27, that he "had not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God." Neither fear nor favor swayed him one way or another—but he was faithful in his Master's work, and usually God crowns him and his labors most, and sends most fish into his net—who is most faithful, though he be less skillful; who has more of the heart in the work, though he has less of the brain. [The office of a minister is the highest office; and if his office be highest, his faithfulness must be answerable, or he will be doubly miserable.]

The maid was looking for employment, when a man asked her, "Will you be faithful if I buy you?" "Ay," said she,"that I will though you do not buy me." So ministers must be faithful, though God should not buy them, though he should not thus and thus encourage them in their work. Their very feet are beautiful who are faithful, and their message most comfortable to those who sigh and mourn—who labor and languish under the sense of sin and fear of wrath, Isaiah 52:7.

[3.] They must preach Christ *HUMBLY* as well as faithfully.

"For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." 2 Corinthians 4:5. Paul does not compliment as the men of the world do, but he spoke as it was, for there are no greater servants than those who are servants to the souls of men for Jesus' sake. So John was very humble in the exercise of his ministry: John 3:30-31, "He must increase—but I must decrease," etc.

Luther used to say, "that a minister must take heed of bringing three dogs into the pulpit, namely, pride, covetousness, and envy." The friends of the bridegroom must not woo and sue for themselves—but for the bridegroom. Dispensers of the gospel are the bridegroom's friends, and they must not speak one word for the bridegroom and two for themselves, as has been the trade of many weak and worthless men. It is the greatest glory of a minister in this world to be high in spiritual work and humble in heart. Vain-glory is a pleasant thief; it is the sweet spoiler of spiritual excellencies. Paul was very humble in the exercise of his

ministry: none so high in worth as he, nor any so low and humble in heart as he. Though he was the greatest among the apostles—yet he accounts himself "less than the least of all saints;" yes, he counted it not only his duty but his glory, to be a servant to the weakest saints: "To the weak I became as weak;" "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not," 1 Cor. 9:22, 2 Cor. 11:29.

[4.] As they are to preach the Lord Jesus Christ humbly, so they are to preach him *WISELY*. In Proverbs 11:30, "He who wins souls is wise;" and indeed the greatest wisdom in the world is requisite to the winning of souls to Christ. He who wins souls, or he who caches souls, as the fowler does birds, as the Hebrew word imports, or fishermen fishes, "he is wise." There is a holy and a heavenly craft required in the winning of souls to Christ: 2 Cor. 12:16, "Nevertheless being crafty," says the apostle. He speaks of a holy and heavenly craft. [If one soul is more worth than a world, as he has told us, who only went to the price of it, Mat. 16:26, then they must needs be wise who win souls to Christ.]

It is written of the fox, that when he is very hungry for prey, and can find none, that he lies down and pretends himself dead, and so the fowls light upon him, and then he caches them. Paul, hungering after the welfare of the Corinthians' souls, makes use of his heavenly craft to catch them. There is a great deal of wisdom required to hold out Christ unto the people, not only as a good—but as the greatest good, as the choicest good, as the chief good, as the most suitable good, as an immutable good, as an independent good, as a total good, and as an eternal good. Christ must thus be held forth to draw souls to fall in love with him, and to work their hearts to run out after him. There is wisdom required to answer all cavils and objections which keep Christ and poor souls asunder. There is wisdom required to take souls off from all false foundations that they are apt to build upon; there is wisdom required to present Christ freely to souls, in opposition to all unrighteousness, and to all unworthiness in man; there is wisdom required to suit things to the capacities and conditions of poor souls, to make dark things plain, and hard things easy. Ministers must not be like him in the emblem, who gave straw to the dog and a bone to the donkey; but they must suit all their discourses to the conditions and capacities of poor creatures, or else all will be lost: time

lost, pains lost, God lost, heaven lost, and souls lost forever.

[5.] They must preach Christ, *ZEALOUSLY, BOLDLY*, as well as wisely. Acts 4:20. When they had charged them that they should preach no more in the name of Christ, *Why*, say they! *what do you tell us of the whip, or of prisons, or of this and that?* "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." So in Jer. 20:9, "Your word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot." Isaiah 58:1, "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Israel their sins." And Isaiah had his tongue touched with a coal of fire from the altar, chapter 6:6-7. And when the disciples were to go and preach the gospel, the fire sat upon their tongues, Acts 2:34.

The worst of men are in a dead sleep, and the best of men are too often in a sinful slumber, as the spouse in Cant. 5:2, and the wise virgins in Mat. 25; and therefore faithful ministers had need cry aloud; they had need to be courageous and zealous, to awaken both sinners and saints, that none may go sleeping to hell. Every coward is a murderer, as the philosopher well observed. [Basil, Luther, Latimer, Dering, and multitudes of others, have been very zealous and courageous in their ministry, etc.] **The cowardice of the minister is cruelty; if he fears the faces of men he is a murderer of the souls of men.** Ministers must say, as Hector in Homer, "I will combat with him, though his hands were as fire, and his strength as iron." Let men's hands be as fire and their strength as iron—yet ministers must deal with them, and strive to make a conquest on them, Ezek. 2:3, *seq*.

Luther professed that he had rather be accounted anything than be accused of wicked silence in Christ's cause. "Let me be accounted," says he, "proud, let me be accounted covetous, let me be accounted a murderer, yes, guilty of all vices—just so that I be not proved guilty of wicked silence for the Lord Jesus Christ." [Those who write the story of the travels of the apostles, report that Simon Zelotes preached here in England. If ever there needed some Zelotes it is now; such, as Epiphanius speaks of Elijah, that he sucked fire out of his mother's bosom.]

Themistocles being about to speak to the general of the Greek's army,

against Xerxes, he held up his staff, as if he had been about to strike him, "Strike," said Themistocles, "but yet hear." So should ministers say, strike—but yet hear; rail—but yet hear; despise—but yet hear; censure—but yet hear; oppose—but yet hear; do what you will—but yet hear. Says Augustine, "He is no friend to God, who is not zealous for him."

When one desired to know what kind of man Basil was, there was, presented to him in a dream, a pillar of fire with this motto, *Basil is such a one, all on a-light fire for God*. So every minister should be all on a-fire for God.

[6.] **They are to preach Christ *LABORIOUSLY, PAINSTAKINGLY*, *FREQUENTLY*.** [The doctor has his fee though the patient dies, and the vine-dresser has his reward though the vine withers; so will God deal with faithful ministers, 2 Cor. 2:16; Isaiah 49:2-4.] A minister must be like the bee, that is still a-flying from one flower to another to suck out honey for the good of others. Should not that dreadful word make every idle shepherd tremble: Jer. 48:10, "Cursed be he who does the work of the Lord negligently." 1 Cor. 15:58, "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." Oh the dreadful woes which are pronounced in Scripture against idle shepherds! Jer. 23:1, "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!" "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds, the leaders of Israel. Give them this message from the Sovereign Lord: Destruction is certain for you shepherds who feed yourselves instead of your flocks. Shouldn't shepherds feed their sheep? You drink the milk, wear the wool, and butcher the best animals, but you let your flocks starve. Ezekiel 34:2-3 (Zech. 11:17; Mat. 23:13-16, 23, 25, 27.)

The great Shepherd of our souls, the Lord Jesus, was still a-feeding of his flock, and much in provoking others to the same work: John 21:15, "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep;" 2 Tim. 4:2, "Preach the word in season, and out of season." Christ wept for souls, and bled for souls, and prayed for souls; and shall not ministers sweat much for souls, and work much for the good of souls? Doubtless they will give but a sad account to Christ, who make anything serve to fill up the hour; that spend only two or three

hours at the end of a week to fit themselves for Sabbath exercises. **Idleness is hateful in any—but most abominable and intolerable in ministers**; and sooner or later none shall pay so dear for it as such. Witness the frequent woes which are denounced in Scripture against them. Where should a soldier die but in the field? And where should a minister die but in the pulpit? [If a minister had as many eyes as Argus to watch, and as many hands as Briareus to labor—he could find employment enough for them all.]

Pompey, in a great dearth at Rome, having provided store of provisions for his citizens that were ready to perish, and being ready to put to sea, he commanded the pilot to hoist sail and be gone. The pilot told him that the sea was tempestuous, and that the voyage was likely to be dangerous. "It matters not," said Pompey, "hoist up sail; it is not necessary that we should live, it is necessary that they should be preserved from ruin and famine." So should ministers say, it is not necessary that we should live—but it is necessary that poor souls should live and be happy forever; it is necessary that they should be acquainted with the things of their peace; it is necessary that they should be delivered from the power of Satan and from wrath to come; and therefore it is necessary that we should be frequent and "abundant in the work of the Lord," and not plead storms and tempests, or that a lion is in the way. [The angels on Jacob's ladder were some ascending, others descending, none standing or sitting still. Ministers must be like them.]

It was Vespasian the emperor's speech, and may well be applied to ministers, An emperor ought to die standing.

[7.] As they are to preach Christ laboriously, so they are to preach Christ *EXEMPLARILY*. [A preacher, as Quintilian says of an orator, should be a well-spoken and well-living person.] 1 Peter 5:3, "Be an *example* to the flock." They must preach Christ as well in their life—as in their doctrine. Ministers must not be hot in the pulpit, and cold and careless in their lives. They must say, as Gideon said to his soldiers: Judges 17:17, "Look on me and do likewise;" Mat. 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Ministers are called angels, and they are called stars, because they should shine in righteousness and holiness.

What Caesar once said of his wife, "that it was not enough for her to be without fault—but she should be without all *suspicion* of fault," may well be applied to ministers, who, of all men in the world, should be most free from the very appearances of evil. **The lives of ministers oftentimes convince more strongly than their words; their tongues may persuade—but their lives command.** [John the abbot professes that he had never taught others anything which he had not first practiced himself.]

"Talk not of a good life," said the heathen, "but let your life speak." God appointed that both the weights and measures of the sanctuary should be twice as large as those of the commonwealth, to show, that he expects much more of those who wait upon him in the sanctuary than he does of others. Ministers should be like musk among linen, which casts a fragrant smell, or like that box of spikenard, which being broken open, filled the house with its odor.

Gregory says of Athanasius, that his life was a continual sermon and wooing men to Christ. Aristotle requires this in an orator—that he be a good man; how much more then should God's orators be good and gracious? When Eli's sons were wicked, the people abhorred the offering of the Lord, 1 Sam. 2:17; and **what is that that renders the things of God so contemptuous and odious in the eyes of many people in this nation—but the ignorance, looseness, profaneness, and baseness of those who are the dispensers of them. Unholy ministers pull down instead of building up. Oh the souls who their lives destroy! These, by their loose lives, lead their flocks to hell, where they themselves must lie lowermost.** [The souls of priests, I may say of ministers, must be purer than the sunbeams, says Chrysostom. Jewel, Bucer, and Bradford, were famous examples for holiness.]

A painter being blamed by a cardinal for putting too much red upon the visages of Peter and Paul, tartly replied, that he painted them so, as blushing at the lives of those men who styled themselves their successors. Ah how do the lewd and wicked lives of many who are called and accounted ministers, make others to blush!

Salvian relates how the heathen did reproach some Christians, who by their ungodly lives, made the gospel of Christ to be a reproach: "Where," said they, "is that good law which they do believe? Where are those rules of godliness which they do learn? They read the holy Gospel—and yet are unclean; they hear the apostle's writings—and yet are drunk; they follow Christ—and yet disobey Christ; they possess a holy law—and yet do lead impure lives." As this is very applicable to many professors in those days, so it is applicable to many preachers also.

I have read of a scandalous minister that was struck at the heart, and converted in reading those words: Romans 2:21, "You who teach another, teach you not yourself?" If this treatise should fall into any such hand, oh that it might have the same operation! **Wicked ministers do more hurt by their lives than they do good by their doctrine.**

I have read of a woman who turned atheist because she lived under a great learned doctor who preached excellently—but lived very licentiously.

The heathen brings in a young man, who hearing of the adulteries and wickedness of the gods, said, "What! do they so, and shall I stick at it?" So say most, when their teachers and leaders are lewd and wicked, what! do they such and such abominations, and shall we stick at it?

When one debauched in life among the Lacedemonians stepped up and gave good counsel, they would not receive it; but when another of a better life stepped up and gave the same counsel, they presently followed it. The application is easy. Every minister's life should be a commentary upon Christ's life; nothing wins and builds like this. [Chrysostom preached so feelingly and so affectionately that his hearers thought they had as good be without the sun in the skies—as Chrysostom in the pulpit.] "Be an example to all believers in what you teach, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity." 1 Timothy 4:12. "Watch your **life** and doctrine closely." 1 Timothy 4:16

[8.] Ministers must preach *FEELINGLY, EXPERIMENTALLY*, as well as exemplarily. **They must speak from the heart—to the heart**; they must feel the worth, the weight, the sweet of those things

upon their own souls who they give out to others. 1 John 1:1-3, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard." The highest goal in preaching, is to feel what a man speaks, and then speak what a man feels.

Praxiteles exquisitely drew love, taking the pattern from that passion which he felt in his own heart.

It was said of Luther, that he spoke as if he had been within a man. Ministers must so speak to the people, as if they lived in the very hearts of the people; as if they had been told all their needs, and all their ways, all their sins, and all their doubts. No preaching compared to this, no preachers compared to these.

Ministers should not be like Caesar's soldier—who dug a fountain for Caesar, and himself perished for lack of water. Yet many such there are in these days, who dig and draw water out of the wells of salvation for others, and yet themselves eternally perish, by their non-drinking of the waters of life. If they are monsters, and not to be named among men, that feed and feast their servants—but starve their wives, then what monsters are those who feed and feast other men's souls, with the dainties and delicacies of heaven—but starve their own? No misery, no hell to this!

[9.] As ministers must preach the word feelingly, experimentally, so they must preach the word *RIGHTLY*. They must divide and distribute the word according to everyone's spiritual estate and condition. They must give comfort to whom comfort belongs, and counsel to whom counsel belongs, and reproof to whom reproof belongs, and terror to whom terror belongs: 2 Tim. 2:15, "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth**;" or, "Rightly cutting into parts the word of truth," Isaiah 40:1-2, 50:4; 2 Cor. 5:10-12. Some say the metaphor is taken from the priests of the Old Testament, who having slain the beasts that were to be sacrificed, did divide the same in an

accurate manner. Others say it is a metaphor taken from a cutter of leather, who cuts off that which is superfluous. So in the handling of the word, questions which are superfluous and unprofitable, ought to be cut off; and that only is to be held forth which makes for the hearer's instruction, edification and consolation. Others say the metaphor is taken from the cutting and squaring out of the streets and highways, and setting out the bounds of men's lands and possessions. Others by cutting the word of truth aright, understand the raising of right instructions, by following the rule of the word, only as a ploughman who draws or cuts a right furrow in the ground. [And if Galen could say that in anatomizing a man's brain, physicians must carry themselves as men do in the temple, how much more must ministers do so in dividing the word of life!]

To divide the word aright, is to cut out to everyone his portion, as a parent cuts out bread to his children. A general doctrine not applied, is as a sword without an edge, not in itself—but to the people, who by reason of their own singular senselessness and weakness, are not able to apply it to their own estates and conditions; or as a whole loaf set before children, that will do them no good. A garment fitted for all bodies, is fit for no body; and that which is spoken to all is taken as spoken to none.

Doctrine is but the drawing of the bow; application is the hitting of the mark. How many are wise in generals—but vain in their practical inferences! Such preachers are fitter for Rome than England. Souls may go sleeping and dreaming to hell before such preaching, before such preachers will awaken them and show them their danger. Oh that therefore the people were so wise—that when sin is reproved, judgments threatened, miseries promised, and Christ freely and fully offered—they would apply all to their own souls! **This is the misery of many in our days; they come to sermons as beggars come to banquets, carrying nothing but the scraps away with them.**

[10.] They must preach the word *ACCEPTABLY*, as well as rightly. Eccles. 12:10, "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words;" or words of delight, as the Hebrew has it, "and that which was written was upright, even words of truth." Ministers' words should be divinely delectable and desirable; they should divinely please, and divinely profit; they should divinely tickle, and divinely please both ear and heart. A

minister should be a weighty speaker; he should clothe his doctrine in such a lovely dress, as that he may by it slide insensibly into his hearers' hearts. Ministers should clothe their matter with decent words. The leaves give some beauty to the tree. Good matter in an unfitting language, is like a bright candle in a detestable candlestick; or like a lovely body in tattered clothes; or like a gold ring on a leprous hand.

"Truth," says one, "loves to be plain—but not repugnantly stated." As she loves not to be clad in mirthful colors, like a wanton strumpet—so not in repulsive rags like a nasty creature. Aaron's bells were golden bells, sounding pleasantly, and not as sounding brass, or tinkling cymbals. Holy eloquence is a gift of the Holy Spirit, Acts 18:24, and may doubtless, as well as other gifts of the Spirit, be made prudently useful to the setting forth of divine truth, and the catching of souls by craft, as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. 12:16. Surely where it is, it may be made use of, as an Egyptian jewel to adorn the tabernacle. [It was a fine commendation given by Quintilian of Thucydides: *Thucydides writes sound and lively, close and clear; he is solid and succinct, sententious and judicious.*]

Lactantius has well observed, that philosophers, orators, and poets, were therefore very insightful, in that they easily ensnared incautious minds with sweetness of speech. Therefore his advice is, even in delivering the truth of Christ, to sweeten the speech for the winning of them to Christ, who will neither hear, nor read, nor value, nor regard the truth, except it be polished and trimmed up in a lovely dress. [Basil and Bucer were sweet and concise, full and clear, in their discourses.]

[11.] In the last place, and so to add no more, as they must preach the word acceptably, so they must preach the word *CONSTANTLY*. [The show-bread stood all the week before the Lord, to show that preaching is not out of season on any day.] 1 Cor. 7:10, 24; they must not leave the word to serve tables, Acts 6:1, as some have done for worldly advantages; they must not change their black cloaks, for scarlet cloaks; they must abide and continue in their places and employments; they must neither change their work nor their master: Acts 6:4, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." They would not assign their charge to some surrogates or deputies—that themselves might live at ease. No! they were peremptorily resolved to

hold on, to continue in these two choice duties, prayer and ministry of the word.

So in chapter 26:22, "I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen." 1 Tim. 4:15, 16, "Meditate upon these things; give yourself wholly to them, [spend your time in them], that your profiting may appear to all, or in all things. Take heed unto yourself, and unto your doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this you shall both save yourself, and those who hear you." 2 Tim. 3:14, "But continue you in the things which you have learned, and have been assured of, knowing of whom you have learned them." [Abide, keep your station, you will be put to it, you will meet with earthquakes.] Eccles. 12:9, "Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs."

Hosea was eighty years a prophet in Israel, and yet did not convert them; yet notwithstanding all discouragements he continued constant, and that with abundance of freshness and liveliness.

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

Erasmus says of Jerome, **He allowed least time for sleep, little for food, none for idleness.** It best becomes a minister to die preaching in a pulpit.

Now if this be so, then by way of use let me say, *That this truth looks very sourly and badly upon all those who preach anything rather than Christ*.

The Lord be merciful to them! How have they forgotten the great work about which their heads and hearts should be most exercised, namely—the bringing in of souls to Christ, and the building up of souls in Christ. Where do we find in all the Scripture, that Christ, his prophets or apostles, did ever in their preaching meddle with businesses of state, or

things of a mere civil concernment? "My kingdom is not of this world. Who has made me a judge?" says Christ.

I hope it will not be counted presumption in me if I shall propound a few rules for such to observe, who are willing to preach Christ to poor souls. I will only propound three.

[1.] ***If you would preach Christ to the people, according to the rules last mentioned—then you must get Christ within you.***

There is nothing that makes a man indeed so able to preach Christ to the people, as the getting of Christ within him; and it is very observable, that the great Rabbis and doctors who lack Christ within, they do but bungle in the work of the Lord, in the preaching of a crucified Jesus. What sad, dead, and pitiful work would they make! Yes, for lack of Christ within, how little of Christ do they understand! How little of Christ do they make known, notwithstanding all their borrowed helps! Paul was a man who had got a Christ within him: Gal. 2:20, "I live; yet not I—but Christ lives in me: and the life that I live is by faith in the Son of God," etc.

Compare this with Gal. 4:19, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you." A Christ within, makes him travail in birth. The Greek word translated, "I travail in birth," signifies not only the travail of the woman at the birth of the child—but also the painful bearing thereof before the birth. The pains of travail breed not a greater desire to see a child born into the world—than Paul's love bred in him, until Christ were anew formed in them, 2 Cor. 11:23. No man did so much for the winning of souls to Christ as Paul, nor any man had so much of a Christ within him as Paul. Nothing will naturalise a minister's heart to his work —like Christ within; nothing will make him so wise, so painstaking, so watchful, so careful to win souls—as Christ within; nothing will make him hold out and hold on in the work of the Lord, in the face of all oppositions, persecutions, dangers, and deaths—as Christ within; nothing will make a man strive with sinners, and weep over sinners, and wait upon sinners for their return—as Christ within. [As nurses to princes' children are fed with the best fare—but not for their own sakes—but for the children's sake to whom they give nurse, so it is with many ministers, 2 Tim. 2:24-25.] Such ministers as have not Christ within them, will find

no comfort, and as little success, in their preaching of Christ. Above all gettings, get Christ within—or else after all your preaching, and yourself—will be a cast-away.

[2.] Those who would preach Christ to the people, must *study more Scripture truths, Scripture mysteries—than human writings*.

They must study God's book more than all other books. The truth and antiquity of the *book of God* has no equal, either in age or authority. No writings are comparable to the writings of the scriptures, for,

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

2, rarity [preciousness];

3, variety;

4, brevity;

5, perspicuity;

6, harmony;

7, verity [truth].

Gregory calls the Scripture, **the heart and soul of God**; for in the Scriptures, as in a mirror, we may see how the heart and soul of God stands towards his poor creatures. It was the glory of Apollos that he was mighty in the Scripture, Acts 18:24; John 5:39, "*Search* the Scriptures," says Christ. The Greek word signifies to search as men search for gold in mines. You must search the Scriptures, not superficially but narrowly. The Scriptures are a great depth, wherein the choicest treasures are hid; therefore you must dig deep if you will find. Col. 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you;" or as the Greek has it, "Let the word of Christ indwell in you, as an engrafted word, incorporated into your souls." Let the word be so ingested and digested by you, as that you turn it into a

part of yourselves. You must be familiarly acquainted with the word; you must not let it pass by you as a stranger, or lodge and sojourn with you as a wayfaring man; it must continually abide with you, and dwell richly in you.

2 Tim. 3:16-17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." All books and helps are not comparable to the Bible, for the completing and perfecting of a man for the work of the ministry.

That which a papist reports of their sacrament of the mass, that there are as many mysteries in it as there are 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 word of God; no study like the study of the Scripture—for profit and comfort. Count Anhalt, that princely preacher, was accustomed to say, "That the whole Scriptures were the swaddling bands of the child Jesus," he being to be found almost in every page, in every verse, in every line. [*While they burned us,* said Du Moulin, *for reading the Scriptures, we burned with zeal to be reading of them*. But where is this brave spirit now?]

Luther would often say, "That he had rather that all his books should be burned, than that they should be a means to hinder people from studying of the Scripture."

[3.] Such as would preach Christ aright to the people, had need *dwell much upon the vanity of human doctrines*.

The vanity of which doctrines may be thus discovered:

***First*, They do not discover sin in its ugliness and filthiness as the Scriptures do.** They search but to the skin, they reach not to the heart; they do not do as the master did in Jonah's ship, when they were in a storm.

***Secondly*, Human doctrines have no humbling power in them.**

They may a little tickle you—but they can never humble you; they cannot cast down Satan's strongholds; they cannot melt nor break the heart of a sinner; they cannot make him cry out with the leper, "Unclean, unclean!" [These things had need be seriously minded in these days, wherein human doctrines are so much exalted and admired.]

***Thirdly*, Human doctrines nourish not the noble part, the soul of man.** The prodigal was likely to starve before he returned to his father's house. A man may study much, and labor much, and lay out much of his time and spirits about human doctrines, and yet after all be like Pharaoh's lean kine. A man who studies human doctrines does but feed upon ashes.

***Fourthly*, Human doctrines cannot cure a wound in the conscience.** The diseased woman spent all she had upon physicians—but was not a penny the better. The remedy is too weak for the disease. Conscience, like Prometheus' vulture, will still lie gnawing, notwithstanding all that such doctrines can do.

***Fifthly*, Human doctrines are so far from enriching the soul, that they usually impoverish the soul.** They weaken the soul; they expose the soul to the greatest needs and to the greatest weaknesses; they play the harlot with the soul; they impoverish it, and bring it to "a morsel of bread." Who so poor in spiritual experiences and heavenly enjoyments—as such that sit under the droppings of human doctrines?

***Sixthly*, Human doctrines make men servants to the whims and corruptions of men**; they make men-pleasers of men rather than pleasers of God; yes, they make men set up themselves and others, sometimes in the place of Christ—and sometimes above Christ.

I hope these few short hints may prevail with some to fall in with this counsel, that so they may the better preach the Lord Jesus to the people. And so much for this doctrine.

The Last Doctrine

Having spoken much concerning ministers' duty, I shall now speak a little concerning **the ministers' dignity**, and so finish this text.

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ!" Ephesians 3:8

This **grace**, this **favor**, this **honor** is given to me—that I should preach, etc. I look not upon it as a poor, low, base, contemptible thing—but as a very great honor, "that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

The observation that I shall speak to is this: *That the office of a minister or preacher is honorable.*

For the understanding of this point, premise with me two things:

First, That by a minister, I understand one who is qualified according to gospel rules, and who is internally called by God, and externally called by the people of God, to the ministerial office.

The *second* thing that I would have you premise with me for the understanding of the point is this, that the common appellation of those who are set apart for the preaching of the gospel in the New Testament is *ministers*. So in 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 3:6, and chapter 6:4, and chapter 11:15, 23; 1 Tim. 4:16, and in many other places, the word minister is a title of office, service, or administration given frequently to the preachers of the gospel. As for the names of ambassadors, stewards, and the like, wherewith they are often honored, they are figurative, and given to them by allusion only.

These two things being premised, we shall now proceed to the opening of

the point.

1. And, in the first place, I shall prove that the office of a minister is an honorable office.

2. And then, in the second place, I shall show you what honor is due to them.

3. And then, in the third place, I shall show you how you are to honor them.

4. And then, in the last place, we shall bring home all by a word of application.

Christians, give me permission to tell you this as an aside—that since the gospel has shined in England, a godly, faithful ministry was never more subtly and vehemently struck at by men who make a fair show, and by men of corrupt doctrines and wicked lives. This age has many church destroyers. Some there are, who under that notion of plucking up corrupt ministers, would pluck up by the very roots the true ministry. But God has and will be still too hard for such men. If they will be monsters, God will be sure to be master. His faithful ministers are stars which he holds in his right hand, Rev. 2:1; and men shall as soon pull the sun out of the skies, as pull them out of the hand of God.

Now, considering that there is such a spirit abroad in the world, I hope no sober, serious Christians will be offended at my standing up to vindicate the honor of a godly, faithful ministry. In order to which,

I. I shall first prove that the office of a minister is honorable; and to me these following things speak it out:

[1.] *The several* ***names*** *and titles which are given to them in Scripture*, does speak them out to be honorable. They are called fathers, stewards, ambassadors, overseers, and angels, as you all know, who know anything of Scripture. To spend time to prove this, would be to light candles to see the sun at noon.

[2.] *Their* ***work*** *is honorable*. Their whole work is about souls, about

winning souls to Christ, and about building souls up in Christ; and to these two heads the main work of the ministry may be reduced. The more noble the soul is, the more honor it is to be busied and exercised about it: James 5:20, "Let him know, that he who converts the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." [O divine soul, invested with the image of God, espoused to him by faith, etc.—Bernard.]

"Let him know," that is, let him take notice that an honorable and glorious work is done by him. The soul is the immediate work of God; the soul is the image of God; the soul is capable of union and communion with God; the soul is worth more than a world, yes, than a thousand worlds. Christ prayed for souls, and wrought miracles for souls, and wept for souls, and left his Father's bosom for souls, and bled out his heart's blood for souls, and is gone to heaven to make provision for souls, yes, he is now a-making intercession for souls. All which speaks out the excellency of their office whose whole work is about souls.

The Jews say of Moses his soul, that it was sucked out of his mouth with a kiss. Souls are dear and sweet to Christ.

[3.] A *third* thing that speaks out this truth is this, ***they are fellow-laborers with God;*** they are co-workers with God in the salvation of sinners. And this is a mighty honor, to be a fellow-laborer with God, to be a co-worker with God: 1 Cor. 3:9, "For we are laborers together with God." Who would not work hard with such sweet company? Who would not affect, prize, love, and honor such service? Ministers are called the light and salt of the world, because they enlighten blind souls, and season unsavory souls, and so save them from corruption and perdition, Mat. 5:14; John 5:35; Mat. 5:13; Mark 9:59-60. Oh, to be joined in any work with God, is an honor beyond what I am able to express!

The senate of Rome accounted it a diminution of Augustus Caesar's dignity to join any consuls with him for the better carrying on the affairs of the state. Oh—but our God does not think it a diminution of his dignity, that even his poor despised servants should be fellow-laborers and co-workers with him in the salvation of souls.

[4.] ***The honorable account that the Lord has of them in this employment***, speaks out this truth, that their office is honorable. In Mat. 10:41-42, compared, "He who receives you, receives me; he who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward;" and Luke 10:16, "He who receives you, receives me; and he who despises you, despises me." This honorable account God has of all his faithful servants in this employment. Kings and princes have their ambassadors in very high account: so has God his.

[5.] The *fifth* thing that speaks out this truth is this, ***they serve an honorable master***. They serve him who is all *ear* to hear, all *hand* to uphold, all *power* to protect, all *wisdom* to direct, all *goodness* to relieve, and all *mercy* to pardon. They serve that God that is *optimum, maximum*, the best and greatest. God has within himself all the good of angels, men, and universal nature; he has all dignity, all glory, all riches, all treasure, all pleasure, all delight, all joy, all beatitudes. Mark, abstracts do better express God than concretes and adjectives. [He has all—who has the haver of all.—Augustine.] God is being, goodness, beauty, power, wisdom, justice, mercy, and love itself. "God is love," says the apostle, in the very abstract. God is one infinite perfection in himself, which is eminently and virtually all perfections of the creatures. And oh then, what an honor must it be to those who are employed under so honorable a master!

[6.] ***Their very work and service is honorable***. Why else did the apostle cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" There is no such embassage in the world as this is in which they are employed: Eph. 6:19-20, "Pray for me, that I may make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds." [Their main work is to treat with sinners about eternity, etc.] Faithful ministers do represent the person of the King of kings and Lord of lords; their work is to treat of peace between God and man, or of open hostility between the Creator and the creature, 2 Cor. 5:19-20.

[7.] Lastly, **Their reward from God is honorable**. Though the world crown them with thorns, as it did their Lord and master before them—yet God will crown them with honor: Dan. 12:3, "They shall shine as the stars in the skies." You know ambassadors have not honors while they are

abroad—but when they come home into their own country, then their princes honor them, and put much honor upon them. So will God deal with his ambassadors 2 Tim. 4:7, 8, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only—but unto all them also that love his appearing."

So in Isaiah 49:5. "I am honored in the eyes of the Lord and my God has been my strength." So in 2 Cor. 2:15, "For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in those who are saved, and in those who perish." [God will at last highly reward those very services that men don't regard, etc.] Ministers shall be rewarded according to their faithfulness and diligence, though some perish. It shall be with them as with vine-dressers. You know vine-dressers are rewarded according to their diligence and faithfulness, though some vines never bear, nor bring forth any fruit at all. As ministers are diligent and faithful, so the reward, the crown, shall be given forth at last. This is many a faithful minister's grief, that he takes a great deal of pains in rubbing and washing, as it were, to make souls white and clean, pure and holy, and yet they remain after all as black as hell; but surely their reward shall be never the less with God. The nurse looks not for her wages from the child—but from the parent. If ministers, like clouds, sweat themselves to death that souls may be brought to life, great will be their reward, though their souls should perish forever, for whom they have wept, sweat, and bled.

God won't deal by faithful ministers, as Xerxes did by his steerman, who crowned him in the morning, and beheaded him in the evening of the same day. No; God will set an everlasting crown upon their heads who remain laborious and faithful to the death. The world for all their pains will crown them with thorns—but God at last will crown them with glory; he will set a crown of pure gold upon their heads forever. And thus you have the point proved.

The second thing that I am to do is to show you,

2. *What honor that is, which is justly due to faithful ministers.*

Now, this I shall show you in three things. There is a threefold honor that is due unto them.

[1.] First, ***Honorable countenance*** *is due unto those who are in so honorable a place and office as they are in:* 1 Cor. 4:1, "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers [Under-rowers to Christ, the master-pilot, helping forward the ship of the church to the haven of heaven.] of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;" 1 Thes. 5:12-13, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very high in love for their work's sake;" or, "to esteem them more than exceedingly," or, more than abundantly, as the Greek will bear. And so, in 1 Tim. 5:17, "Let the elders who rule well be accounted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine." The Greek word that is here rendered *labor*, signifies not simply to labor—but to labor with much travail and toil, to labor even to exhaustion, as he does who chops wood, or that toils in harvest, or who goes a warfare. Preaching is a most difficult work, and enfeebles a man exceedingly; whence the prophet cries out, "My leanness, my leanness," Isaiah 24:16. [Our Savior, at little past thirty, was reckoned by the Jews to be towards fifty, John 8:57, he had so spent himself in preaching. Preaching is a spending, painful work.] No pains, no labor, no work compared to that of the brain, to that of the mind, nor any so worthy of praise as those who are most in that labor, in that work.

No men's work is so holy and heavenly as theirs, nor no men's work is so high and honorable as theirs, and therefore none deserve to be more honored than they, though not for their own sakes—yet their work's sake. Shall Turks and papists so highly esteem and honor every hedge-priest of theirs above their merits, and shall not Christians much more honor their *faithful* ministers? Faithful ministers must have *countenance* as well as *maintenance*, they must have *reverence* as well as *recompense*. You are not to nod the head and put out the lip, to scoff, and mock, and jeer at them.

Isaiah 52:7, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace; who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation; who says unto Zion, your God reigns."

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet!" What is their face then? What is their doctrine then? Their very feet, when dirty, sweaty, and dusty, are yet very beautiful and lovely.

It was a common saying at Constantinople, that it was better the sun should not shine than that Chrysostom should not preach.

I have read of one that said, "if he should meet a preacher and an angel together, he would first salute the preacher, and then the angel afterward." If you do not give them honorable countenance, Jews and Turks, papists, and pagans, will in the great day of account rise up against you, and condemn you. I could say much of what I have observed in other nations and countries concerning this thing—but I shall forbear. Should I speak what I have seen, many professors might well blush.

The Grecians used to give far greater respect and honor to their philosophers than to their orators, because that their orators did only teach them to speak well—but their philosophers did teach them to live well. Oh what honor then is due to those who do teach you both to speak well and to live well! both how to be happy here and how to be blessed hereafter. And thus you see that honorable countenance is due to faithful ministers.

[2.] Secondly, *There is* ***an honor of maintenance****, as well as an honor of countenance that is due to them:* 1 Tim. 5:17-18, "Let the elders who rule well be accounted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, You shall not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn, and the laborer is worthy of his reward." [Harvest-laborers have food and drink, and double wages. Some think that the apostle has respect to the law of the first-born, Deut. 21:17, in which a two-fold portion is commanded to be given him. The ancient Christians, as appears by Tertullian, were accustomed, in their Agapae, or love-feasts, to give their ministers a double portion. Surely ministers should have such a liberal, honorable maintenance, as might set them above the vulgar, as the first-born by their double portion were set up above the rest of their brethren.]

Gal. 6:6, "Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all

good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." So in 1 Cor. 9:7-11, "Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?" Mat. 10:9-10, "Don't take along gold, silver, or copper for your money-belts. Don't take a traveling bag for the road, or an extra shirt, sandals, or a walking stick, for the worker is worthy of his food." God's appointment in all these texts bespeak it.

Again, you may consider *the* ***necessity*** *of it*. How shall they go on in their warfare if they are troubled with the things of this life? Again, **they are to *give themselves wholly* to the work of the ministry**, 1 Tim. 4:5. And again, the equity and justice of the duty Christ and the apostle shows in the forenamed scriptures, Mat. 10:10, 1 Cor. 9:10. The maintenance of the minister should be so free, and so liberal, as may testify that you honor him in your hearts, and as may keep him from contempt and scorn in the world. There are multitudes who grumble at the expense of a penny for the maintenance of those divine candles who spend themselves to give light to them; who will rather die than spend a little money to save their souls. They like well of religion without expense; and a gospel without charge. The scripture says, "Buy the truth, sell it not." You can never overbuy it, whatever you give for it; you can never sufficiently sell it, if you had all the world in exchange for it.

It is said of Caesar that he had greater care of his books than of his royal robes; for swimming through the water to escape his enemies, he carried his books in his hand above the water—but lost his robes. But alas! what are Caesar's books to God's book? The word is the field, and Christ is the treasure that is hid in that field. The word is a ring of gold, and Christ is the pearl in that ring of gold, and is it then worth nothing? Many deal

with faithful, laborious ministers, as carriers do with their horses, they lay heavy burdens upon them, and exact work enough; and then to recompense this, they hang bells at their ears and necks. They shall be commended and applauded for brave excellent preachers, and for great painstakers, etc. That maintenance that is justly due to the ministers of the gospel is honorable; it ought to be suitable to their condition and dignity. The maintenance that is due to them, is of the same nature with that which is given to princes and magistrates, by those who are under them, and not a common maintenance which superiors give to their inferiors or servants.

[3.] Thirdly, *There is* ***an honor of obedience and service*** *that is due to them*. And indeed, of all honors, this is the greatest honor that can be cast upon a faithful minister, the honor of obedience: Heb. 13:7, "Remember those who have the rule over you, who have spoken to you in the word of God;" and verse 17, " Obey those who rule over you." Oh, submit yourselves, for they "watch for your souls as those who must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you."

"Obey those who have the rule over you." The word that is rendered "Rule over you," in the seventh and seventeenth verses, signifies captains, guides. Faithful ministers are your captains, they are your guides, they are your chieftains, they are your champions who bear the brunt of the battle, the heat of the day; and therefore you must obey them, even as soldiers do their captains. So in 2 Thes. 3:14, "And if any man obey not our words, note that man, and have no company with him." Brand him as infamous, beware of him, let him see a strangeness in you towards him, that all may avoid him as one whose company is dangerous and infectious.

Ah Christians! by your submission to their doctrine, you highly honor them, and you make their heavy task to be easy and sweet unto them. Christians! it will be your honor and happiness in the day of Christ, that you have lived out what they have taught to you. I suppose you remember that happiness is not entailed to *hearing*, or *knowing*, or *talking*—but to *doing*. "If you know these things, blessed and happy are you, if you *do* them, John 13:17. There are some diseases which are called *opprobria*

medicorum, the reproaches of physicians; and there are some people that may be truly called *opprobria ministrorum*, the reproach of ministers, and those are those who are great hearers, and talkers, and admirers of ministers—but never obey the doctrines delivered by them. [**There is no fear of knowing too much—but there is much fear and danger of practicing too little.** I fear, with Augustine, that many grieve more for the barrenness of their lands than for the barrenness of their lives. The more the cypress is watered, the more it is withered. Oh that it were not so with many in these days!]

The Corinthians were Paul's honor, they were his living epistles, they were his walking certificates, they were his letters-testimonial, 2 Cor. 3:2-3. The obedience and fruitfulness of the people is the minister's testimonial, as the profiting of the scholar is the master's commendation. Oh what an honor is it to a faithful minister, when it shall be said of him, as one said once of Octavius, "When he came into Rome he found the walls all of base materials—but left them walls of marble!" So here is a minister who found the people *dark* and *blind*—but left them enlightened; he found them *dead*—but left them alive; he found them a *proud* people—but has left them humble; a *profane* people—but has left them holy; he found them a *carnal* people—but has left them spiritual; he found them a *worldly* people—but has left them heavenly; he found them a *wavering* people—but has left them settled and rooted, etc. No honor to a faithful minister like this. And thus you see what honor is due unto them, etc.

USE. And now let me make a word of use. Christians! if their office be so honorable, *then honor them*. Oh, give them the honor that is due unto them. Will you make conscience to give others their due, and will you make no conscience of giving ministers their due? Are there any who are greater blessings to a nation than faithful ministers? Who have stood more in the gap to turn away wrath than they? Who have begotten you to Christ through the gospel but they? Who have turned you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God but them? Who have built you up in the light and love of Jesus but them? etc. Oh, do not cast scorn and reproach upon them—but give them that honor that is due unto them!

But you will say to me, ***How shall we honor them?***

I answer, you must honor them these five ways:

[1.] You must honor them *by hearing them, and giving credit to their message*. The want of this honor troubled Isaiah too much; "Who has believed our report?" Not to believe the report that they make concerning God and Christ, etc., is to cast the greatest dishonor that can be upon them. [Antisthenes, a philosopher, went every day six miles to hear Socrates.] The wise men, Mat. 2, went many weary hundred miles to find Christ at Jerusalem; some think near a thousand miles. The Queen of Sheba, some say, went 964 miles to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and what was Solomon's wisdom to that wisdom of Christ that is held forth to souls in the ministry of the gospel. [We can never hear that too often that we can never learn too well.] The holy martyrs thought no weather too hot, no winter too cold, no journey too long, nor no torment too great—to enjoy the preaching of the gospel, though darkly.

[2.] You may honor them, *by standing fast in the doctrine of the Lord delivered by them*.1 Thes. 3:8, "You are our joy, our crown, if you stand fast in the Lord;" else, says the apostle, you kill our very hearts. If after all our studying, wrestling, sweating, and preaching, you shall play apostates, and leave the precious ways of God, and run after notions and vain opinions which cannot profit you, nor better you, you will kill many at once: your own souls and our hearts.

[3.] You should honor them, *by being followers of them*, so far as they are followers of Christ. So in 1 Cor. 4:16, "Be followers of me, even as I am of Christ." Chapter 11:11; Heb. 13:7; 2 Thes. 3:7; Phil. 3:7. All these scriptures bespeak you to be followers of them as they are followers of Christ. **Oh, it is an honor to faithful ministers, when their people are like them in knowledge, wisdom, love, humility, holiness!**

Plutarch said of Demosthenes that he was excellent at praising the worthy acts of his ancestors—but not so at imitating them. Ah, many in these days are excellent at praising and commending the holy and gracious actings of their ministers—but not so at imitating them!

[4.] You must honor them *by bearing them upon your hearts when you appear before the Lord in the mount.* Eph. 6:13, 19; 2 Thes. 3:1-2; 1 Thes. 5:25; Col. 1:2, 4; Heb. 13:8; Acts 12:5. All these scriptures do bespeak Christians to bear their faithful ministers upon their hearts when they are a-wrestling with God. None usually are opposed as they. Their wants are many, their weaknesses are more, their work is great, their strength is small. Oh pray, pray more and more for them; yes, pray believingly, pray affectionately, pray fervently, pray unweariedly—that they may speak from the heart to the heart, that they may speak things which are seasonable and suitable to the capacities and conditions of his people. They can tell when they lack your prayers, and when they enjoy your prayers; did you pray more for them, they might do more for your internal and eternal good, than now they do.

[5.] *Lastly*, You must honor them *by adhering to them, and abiding with them in all their trials, afflictions, and tribulations that do or shall attend them.* It is brave to own them in a storm, to own them when others disown them, when others oppose them, and act highly against them. Paul looked upon himself as much honored by Onesiphorus owning of him in his chains. "May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus." 2 Timothy 1:16-18.

Chrysostom says of Christians, "That they would not be kept from visiting the confessors in prison, although it was forbidden with many threatening terrors, and it was great danger to them." [The saints in the primitive times did so stick and cleave to those who were in bonds, that the very heathen admiringly cried out, "Look how the Christians love one another."]

But to draw to a close, you have heard that the office of a faithful minister is honorable, and you have heard what honor is due unto them. Let me therefore desire you all to take heed of scorning, despising, and despising of those who are faithful, who are qualified according to gospel rules. That is a sad word, 2 Chron. 36:15-18. God sent his messengers early and

late to reclaim them—but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, until there was no remedy, nor no healing. David never played such a harsh part all his days, as he did to the Ammonites that despitefully used his ambassadors, as you may see at large in 2 Sam. 10.

The Romans sacked the famous city of Corinth, and razed it to the ground, for a little discourtesy they offered to their ambassadors. [Ambassadors are inviolable by the law of nations, and the least indignity offered to them is to be as severely punished as if it had been offered to the person of that prince whom they represent.] And they slew many of the Illyrians and the Tarentines for misusing of their ambassadors. And do you think that the Lord is not as tender of the credit and honor of his faithful ministers, and that he will not avenge the affronts, wrongs, and injuries which are done unto them? Surely he will. "This is what the Lord Almighty says—I will send war, famine, and disease upon them and make them like rotting figs—too bad to eat. Yes, I will pursue them with war, famine, and disease, and I will scatter them around the world. In every nation where I send them, I will make them an object of damnation, horror, contempt, and mockery. **For they refuse to listen to me, though I have spoken to them repeatedly through my prophets.**" Jeremiah 29:17-19

"Again and again the Lord had sent his prophets and seers to warn both Israel and Judah—Turn from all your evil ways. Obey my commands and laws, which are contained in the whole law that I commanded your ancestors and which I gave you through my servants the prophets. But the Israelites would not listen. They were as stubborn as their ancestors and refused to believe in the Lord their God. They rejected his laws and the covenant he had made with their ancestors, and they despised all his warnings. They worshiped worthless idols and became worthless themselves. They followed the example of the nations around them, disobeying the Lord's command not to imitate them." 2 Kings 17:13-15

Now mark, though these temporal judgments are not visible among us—yet spiritual judgments, which are the worst of judgments, are very visible. Though there is no sword, no famine, no pestilence—yet there is

spiritual madness, spiritual drunkenness, spiritual giddiness. Oh the blind minds, the corrupt judgments, the hard hearts, the seared consciences, which are to be found among the professors of this age! As there are no mercies to spiritual mercies—so there are no judgments to spiritual judgments. Jer. 13:12; Ezek. 23:33; 1 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:15. Oh the slightness, the coldness, the deadness, the barrenness, which is abroad in the world! God suits his judgments to men's sins; the greatest sins are always attended with the greatest judgments. In these days men sin against more glorious means, greater love, more clear light, more tender affections of mercy, etc, than formerly; and therefore God gives men up to more sad and dreadful spiritual judgments than formerly.

They say when Hercules drew up Cerberus from hell, he led him in a chain, and he went quietly until he came to the horizon and saw the peeping of the light—but then he pulled so strongly that he almost pulled the conqueror and all back again. Ah it is sad when men had rather live in darkness, and die in darkness, and go to hell in darkness—rather than see the light, enjoy the light, and walk in the light! Many fret at the light, and at those who bring it, as the Ethiopians once a year solemnly curse the sun. Such souls stand in much need of pity and prayer.

And thus, according to my weak measure, I have given out what God has given in from this scripture, and shall follow it with my prayers, that it may be a word of life and power both to writer, reader, and hearer. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria in Aeternum.

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