

The Soul's Preparation for Christ.

Being a Treatise of Contrition.

In which is revealed how God breaks the heart
and wounds the soul, in the conversion
of a sinner to himself.

Psalm 51:17,

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:
a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

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“I found these ministers pressing the necessity of deep humiliation by the law, as the only way God took to the conversion of a sinner. I was also more convinced of it by-reading Mr. Hooker’s book, ***The Soul’s Preparation for Christ***, which made me conclude that never having those deep convictions, there was reason to question the truth of the work of grace in my soul.”

– William Kiffin, first signer of the 1644 London Baptist Confession,
describing his journey to conversion. – WHG

The Soul's Preparation for Christ.

Act 2:37

*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts,
and said to Peter and the other apostles, men and brethren,
What shall we do to be saved?*

In this great work of preparation for Christ, observe two things: first, the dispensation of the work of grace on God's part — he pulls a sinner from sin to Himself; and secondly, the frame and temper of spirit that God works in the hearts of those whom he draws. And that makes itself known in two particulars: partly in *contrition*, partly in *humiliation*. To better proceed in the prosecution of these two main points, I will handle them separately and at large. And first, we will sift out what this CONTRITION and HUMILIATION are, so that we may not deceive ourselves, and think we have them, when it is nothing so.

What Contrition Is

This contrition (as I conceive it) is namely, when a sinner by the sight of sin and its vileness and the punishment due for it; is made sensible of sin and made to hate it; and has his heart separated from it. And so, the sight of sin makes itself known in these **three particulars**:

First, when the soul is sensible of sin.

Secondly, when it has a hearty and sound sorrow for it, and an earnest detestation of it.

Thirdly, when he has his heart separated from his corruptions.

All these are not wrought so much by any power that is in us, as by the Almighty power of God working in us. For the sinner *would* not see his sin if the Lord did not *force* him. As the holy prophet says, *You hold my eyes waking; I am so troubled that I cannot speak*, Psa 77:4. The Lord so holds sin to a carnal sinful wretch, that his sin walks, and sleeps, and goes with him — for the soul of a poor sinner would fend off the blow, and not have the Word touch him. He labors to deflect the arrows of the Almighty, which the Lord shoots into the soul. But the Lord will not allow him to do so; *Your arrows stick fast in me, and your hand presses me sorely*, Psa 38:2 — as if the prophet said, I would gladly have beaten back your arrows, but they stick fast in me; and I would have shaken off the burden that lay upon me, but Your hand pressed me sorely. So that at last, when the sinner sees that he cannot shake off the arrows, he is then content to be separated from his corruptions.

This in general is in the text, in which you will plainly see these three particulars fully expressed.

First, *the sight of sin* by hearing Peter's words. And it was not only by the bare hearing of his words, but when Peter came somewhat roundly home ¹ to them and said, *This is Christ Jesus whom **you** have crucified*. Then follows the former work — namely, the acknowledgement of their sins. And the first cause that made them *see* their sin, was a *particular application* of their sins. He came punctually and particularly to them, and said, **You** are the ones who have crucified the Lord Christ. This touched them and made them see their sins.

Secondly, the daily and serious meditation upon and apprehension of their sins, and of those truths which were delivered in the word — *hearing*, that is, daily pondering and considering the evils that were committed by them and shown to them.

¹ *Come home*: made clear or apparent; it often refers to an unpleasant or troublesome realization. This figure of speech is employed repeatedly in this treatise, and for a reason. It's the *cause* of contrition, and the *effect* of conviction.

Thirdly, *they were pricked*; they didn't prick themselves, but the Lord followed the truth that was delivered, and by His Almighty hand, he made that word prosperous to their souls; and though they would not pierce themselves, yet the Lord pierced them.

The SECOND PART of it is in these words: they were pricked *in their hearts* — not in their hands or eyes, but in their *hearts*.

The THIRD PART is the separation from sin is in these words: *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Whatever you would have us do, we will do it; and whatever sin is forbidden, we are content to be rid of it. Indeed, nothing was too hard or too much for them.

Give me leave to take a doctrine from the words, *When they heard this*. Who were *they*? We see this in verse 36: *those who had crucified the Lord of life*.

What, some will ask, is it possible that they too would ever be so pierced for their sins? It was said of Judas, who betrayed Christ, *It would have been good for that man if he had not been born*, Mat 26.24. What shall we think of those who murdered Christ? If Judas was damned for *betraying* Christ, then they much more so, for *killing* him. Yet is it possible the Lord should do good *to them*? Yes, even *they* came to be pricked in their hearts.

The DOCTRINE derived is this: It is possible for the most stubborn sinners on earth to get a broken heart. *Those who stoned the prophets and killed those who were sent to them*, Mat 23.37, and slighted all the means of grace; those who refused Christ, and would not hear him — they are now brought to their knees, and are now resolved — if *any* course might be taken — to get Christ and mercy. Tit 1:12-13, *One of their own prophets said, the Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons*. A man would think it in vain to meddle with them, because they are such desperate wretches. But the text says, *reprove them sharply*, that they may be sound in the faith. So that, a Cretan, who is a filthy beast, may by a sound reproof, come to be a glorious saint. And whereas the Jews had burdened the Lord with their sins, it was therefore just for God to *ease Himself of his burden*, and send them and their sins down to hell together. So a man might think. But the Lord did not do so, as we see in Isa 43.23, 25: *I am he who blots out all your transgressions, for my own name's sake, and I will remember your sins no more*. And as the apostle says, Rom 1.29-30, the Gentiles were full of all unrighteousness, almost worse than they could be, for all kinds of degrees of sin. And yet many of them became full of all holiness; *such were some of you*, says the apostle, 1Cor 6.11. And in another place, we may see that a scarlet sinner may become a saint in nature. We know this scarlet is such a deep die, that all the art under heaven cannot alter it. And yet the Lord can make of a scarlet sinner, a milk-white Saint, Isa 1.18. I don't say it will *ever* be, and it *always* comes to pass — but it is *possible*.

The reason is taken from the Lord's Almighty goodness and power. The Lord is able to supply all wants, and amend what is amiss. Indeed, he is able to do more than what you stand in need of. When the Lord made heaven and earth, He didn't spend all his strength such that he was able to help no more. No, no; *he is All-sufficient still*. He is not only able to continue that good which the creature has, but to make a glorious supply of whatever is lacking. As David says, *He pardons all your iniquities, and forgives all your sins*, Psa 103.3 — not *some*, but *all*. Otherwise he would not be All-sufficient, not unless he had a salve for every sore, and a medicine for every malady. If our sins were more than God could pardon, or if our weaknesses were more able to overthrow us, than his strength is to uphold us, He would not be All-sufficient. Indeed, there are *some* things which the Scripture says God cannot do. But it is not because of the lack of power in God, but because there is a weakness in the creature — such as, *God cannot deny himself*. But the more and greater our sins and wickedness are, the more the strength and glory of his power will appear in pardoning them. And where sin abounds, there grace abounds much more in pardoning it. Christ is All-sufficient in power to procure mercy for all your sins, and the Spirit is all-sufficiently able to apply the satisfaction of Christ to your soul. And therefore, however fearful your condition (only the sin

against the Holy Spirit excepted), there is power and mercy in the Lord to pardon you; and it is possible for you to find mercy.

Use 1. The first use is for *reproof*. It checks the desperate discouragement that harbors in the hearts of many poor sinners, that if they can find no power in themselves, and no succor in the means, then they question the case. They quickly conclude it is impossible to receive mercy, and they think there is no hope of pardon, as they have had up to then — and so there is no care in sinning. Because they cannot see how mercy *may* be, they suppose it *cannot* be. This brings great indignity to the Lord Jesus Christ, and great discouragement to themselves. Why? The Lord is hardened, and He has difficulties (for them) at His command. When the siege around Jerusalem was marvelously sore,² and every man despaired of any comfort or succor, the prophet said, *Before tomorrow this time, a measure of fine flower will be sold for a shekel. And then a captain on whose hand the King leaned, said, If the Lord were to make windows in heaven, how could this thing be? And the prophet said to him, You shall see it, but not eat of it,* 2Kng 7.1-2. So it is with many who beg often, and the Lord doesn't answer — the soul is marvelously starved. The flood of iniquity comes in apace upon the soul, and all his sins come to his view. The heart begins to reason in this manner: If the depths of God's mercies were opened, can all these sins be pardoned? And can this damned soul of mine be saved? *Surely this cannot be.*

It is just so with God, that when we seek mercy, it is given to others as bad as we are; and yet we do not taste of it because we *distrust* the Lord. *Cain's* sin was so much greater, because he said it *could not be forgiven*, Gen 4.13. So too, it is a horrible sin to say the Lord is not so merciful, as the devil is malicious; and that the world and a sinful heart are more able to damn me, than God is able to save me. If this were so, God would be no God, and Christ no redeemer, and the Spirit no comforter. This is to make sin, ourselves, and the devil *above* God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, therefore check all those discouragements of soul which prevail with us too much.

Use 2. Secondly, it is a ground of great *encouragement* to provoke the hearts of all wicked men under heaven, to look out from that condition in which they live, for some *mercy* — because the most wicked of the world may be worked upon, and the most profane heart may be pierced. Who would not therefore have his heart quickened, to seek out recovery from that estate in which he lives? All you poor creatures, if there are any who are present here (and I don't doubt there are), oh you poor and ungodly sinful creatures, my soul pities you — *you* who have had your hands drenched in the blood of Christ, and whose sins are written with a pen of iron, and who are seen in every corner of the street — *you* who are thus in the gall of bitterness, and still in the kingdom of darkness. Though your case for the present is very desperate, yet here is a little twig in the midst of the main sea, upon which you may lay hold. And this may make you look up: *the Lord may yet show mercy to you.* Those who were as proud, as stubborn, and as rebellious as you, have had mercy. If you have the hearts of men, *look for mercy.* Though your estate is fearful for the present, *yet it may be good.* God has not fixed the scale of condemnation upon your sins; He has not yet sent you to hell. Consider this: whatever your condition, you yet live upon the earth and enjoy the means; and it is yet possible to have all your sins pardoned. Oh, *get on with it!*³ Go home, and say, 'Good Lord, were those pierced in their hearts, who pierced the Lord Jesus, and were *their* souls wounded?' Then say in conclusion, 'Why may not *my* profane sinful heart be humbled and pierced?' *It may be so.* If the Lord says *Amen*, it *will* be thus. That disease is not past remedy that has been cured in others. Therefore, let this stay your heart: those as bad as you, have been humbled, and brought home; and therefore, *why not you?*

² *Marvelous* does not mean *wonderful* here. Hooker uses it throughout to mean shocking, staggering, stunning.

³ Originally, "lay about you." It can mean *get moving*, *get hold of yourself*, or *stop moping!*

Objection. But the soul will say, Can all these abominations be removed? And is it possible that all these rebellions of my heart should be pardoned, and all this looseness and security be cast behind the back of the Lord? (Isa 38.17) Surely it cannot be.

Answer. *It is possible:* only labor that it may be so. And that you may not be puffed up with presumption, consider these **three cautions** in your seeking.

First, consider in your seeking, that a little mercy will not serve the turn. You have been an old weather-beaten sinner, and have wallowed in your filthiness. When you go to God for grace, consider that it is not a little grace or a small work that will do the deed. It is not a few spoonfuls or buckets-full that will cleanse a foul skin. So if you have had a filthy, profane heart which has been a thoroughfare for all wickedness; and you have thus given yourself liberty to do it, and have continued in it. There must be a *well* of mercy to purge such a miserable wretch as you.

When *David* had committed those two sins of adultery and murder, and had long continued in them, he was forced to beg for much mercy, and to say, *Purge me, wash me, cleanse me*, Psa 51. O Lord these stains are marvelously deep, therefore purge me with *hyssop*. No, he had never done with it, because his sins were more than ordinary. So, it will cost a great deal of work before a loose, profane drunkard can be made clean.

Secondly, you must expect it will be done with much difficulty and hardness in yourself, you who have been riveted in your base lusts and corruptions. The Lord will make it all crack, before you find mercy. You who have out-braved heaven with your profaneness, the Lord will make you a mirror of humiliation, just as up to now you have been a spectacle of filthiness. A man who has had a bone long out of joint, and it is now festered — it will make him cry many an *Oh!* before it is put back into its right place. So it is with a man whose heart is full of filthiness. It will cost him many pains and difficulties and heartaches, before the Lord will bring the soul to a right set again. *Manasseh* humbled himself mightily before the Lord. Because he had been a mighty proud, rebellious man, the Lord made his humiliation as miraculous as his sins had been, 2Chr 33.11-13. And so *David*, when he had given his sins ease in bedding with them, the Lord broke all his bones, Psa 51.8, and awakened him with a witness, 2Sam 12.7.

Lastly, you must resolve to bestow the utmost of your endeavor to get this mercy at the hands of the Lord. Dipping a foul cloth in water will not cleanse it; but it must be *soaked* and *rinsed* in it. So you must not think to have the foul stains of sin washed away with a few tears. No, no; you must rub your hearts over and over, and awake your consciences again and again. It is not a little examination, nor a little sorrow that will serve the turn. The Lord will pull down those proud hearts of yours, and it may be, let you go begging for mercy all your days. And well you may have it at your last gasp, when all is done.

The DOCTRINE derived is this: The first doctrine I will observe is this: There must be a true sight of sin before the soul can be broken. For the text says, they first *heard* and *then* apprehended the evil that was done by them. And thus they were brought to a saving remorse for their sins. The text says, *Then you will remember your own evil ways and your doings that were not good, and will loath yourselves for your abominations*, Eze 36.31. First, they will remember their works, and then they will loath themselves. It is the course that Ephraim takes in Jer 31.19: *After I was instructed, I struck my thigh; and after I was turned, I repented, I was ashamed and confounded, because I bore the reproach of my youth*. And it is God's course which he takes with his own, as in Job 36.8-10: *Once the Lord had gotten his people into fetters, he showed them their wickedness, and made their ears open to discipline*. And in another place, the prophet showed the ground and reason why the people did not repent. They did not understand the ground and reason for their sin, *For no man says, What have I done?* Jer 8.6. *As a horse rushes into the battle and fears nothing*, so a wicked man continues in a sinful course, never considering what he has done. The drunkard doesn't ask, How have I abused God's creatures? And the despiser of God's

ordinances doesn't ask, How have I rejected the Lord Jesus Christ? And therefore it is no wonder if he is not affected with what he does.

Now, to better clear this doctrine, I will handle these three things: *first*, I will show what this true sight of sin is; *secondly*, I will show the reason why there must be a true sight of sin before the soul can be broken for it; *thirdly*, I will make *use* of the point.

What the true sight of sin is.

FIRST, not every sight of sin will serve the turn, nor every apprehension of a man's vileness; but it must have these **two properties** in it: first, he must see sin *clearly*; secondly, *convictingly*.

Property 1. Seeing sin clearly.

Whoever would see sin clearly, must first see it truly and fully, and be able to fathom the compass of his corruptions, and to dive into the depth of the wretchedness of his vile heart. Otherwise it will befall a man's sin, as it does the wound on a man's body. When a man looks over the wound superficially, and doesn't search it to the bottom, it begins to fester and rankle; and so in the end he is slain by it. So it is with most sinners. We dismiss it all with this: "*We are sinners*," and such ordinary confessions. But we never see the depth of the wound of sin; and so we are slain by our sins. It is not a general, slight, and confused sight of sin that will serve the turn. It is not enough to say, *It is my infirmity*, and *I cannot amend it*, and *We're all sinners*, and so forth. No, this is the ground of mistaking our evils, and not reforming our ways, because we have a slight and superficial sight sin. A man must prove his ways, as the goldsmith proves his gold in the fire. A man must search narrowly, and have much light to see what the vileness of his own heart is; and to see what his sins are that procure the wrath of God against him. As the prophet David says, *I considered my ways, and turned my feet to your testimonies*, Psa 119.59. The phrase in the original is much like this — *I turned my sins upside down*. He looked all over its ways. And as Zec 12.10 says, *When the people look to the one whom they have pierced, and consider the nature of their sins, then they will mourn*.

Note that this CLEAR SIGHT OF SIN may appear in **two particulars**.

1. First, a man must see his sin nakedly in its own proper colors. We must not look at sin through many mediums — through the profits, pleasures, and contentments of this world — for so we mistake sin. But the soul of a true Christian must see sin clearly. He must strip it clean of all the *contentment* and quiet that the heart has ever received from any corruption; and the heart must look at the *danger* of sin. Just as the adulterer must not look at sin in regard to its sweetness; nor the drunkard at his sin in regard to the contentment that comes by it; nor the covetous man in regard to the profit that comes by his sin. You who are such as these, the time will come when you must die; and then consider what good these sinful courses will do you. How will you judge sin *then*, when it leaves a blot upon your soul, and guilt upon your conscience? What will you think of it *then*? We must deal with sin as with a serpent. We must not play with a serpent as children do, because it has a fine speckled *skin*; but fly from it because of the *sting*. So we must deal with sin. A profane gallant ⁴ will profane the sabbaths, because otherwise he would be considered a Puritan. Don't look at the speckled skin of sin, but how you can answer for your sin before God — especially seeing that the Lord says, *I will not hold that man guiltless who blasphemes my name*, whatever position or condition he may be in. Look now at the nature of your sins *nakedly*.

2. Secondly, we must look at the nature of sin in its *venom* — the deadly hurtful nature that it has for plagues, and the miseries it procures for our souls. And you may do that partly if you compare it with other things, and partly if you look at it in regard to yourselves. First, compare sin with those things that are most fearful and horrible. For example, suppose any soul present here were

⁴ *Gallant*: noun; a man who is overly concerned with his dress, and how he appears to others.

to behold the damned in hell, as if the Lord gave you a little peephole into hell, so that you may see the horror of those damned souls — and your heart begins to shake in consideration of it. Then propound to your own heart what pains the damned in hell endure for sin — and your heart will shake and quake at it. The least sin that you ever committed, even if you make a light matter of it, is a greater evil than the pains of the damned in hell. Setting aside their sin, all the *torments* in hell are not so great an *evil* as the least sin is. Men begin to shrink at this, and loath to go down to hell, and to be in endless torments.

What a horrible thing sin is

Now I will make this good by giving **three reasons** that sin is a greater evil than those torments and plagues which the damned in hell endure.

REASON 1. The first reason is this: *whatever deprives a man of the greatest good, must be the greatest evil.* Nature says as much. Whatever deprives a man of all that comfort and happiness in which the soul finds most contentment, that must be the greatest evil of all. And sin alone deprives a man of the greatest good. For the good of the soul is to have a heart united to God and to have fellowship with him; to have Him, and salvation through him, and to be one with the Lord. *This is the chief good of the soul.* All things here below are made for the good of the body; and the body is made for the good of the soul; and the soul is made for God. And these things here below are only good to us so far as they are means to make us enjoy a nearer communion with God. Contrarily, riches, honors, profits, and pleasures are like so many curses to us, if our hearts are withdrawn from God by them. The reason why God is estranged from us is not because we are poor, or pursued, or imprisoned or the like; but it is *sin* that breaks the union between God and us. As the prophet Isaiah says, *Your sins have separated you and your God*, Isa 59.2. So, what separates us from God, who is the Chief Good, is our *sins*. It is not punishment that takes away the mercy of God from us, but a proud rebellious heart, and contempt for God's ordinances. Therefore, sin is far worse than all the plagues that the damned do or can suffer.

REASON 2. Secondly, because there is nothing so contrary and opposite to the Lord, as sin and corruption. This is the reason why God is the inflictor of all the punishments of the damned in hell. It is through the justice of God that they are damned, because God is of such a pure nature, that sin cannot be in Him, nor practiced by Him.

REASON 3. Thirdly, because it is *sin* that procures all plagues and punishments for the damned. And therefore, sin being the cause of their suffering, it must be greater than all their punishments. For all punishments are made miserable *because* of sin. Therefore, sin is a greater evil than all the miseries of the damned. If a man were in prison and had the peace of a good conscience, his prison would be a palace to him. And if a man were in shame and disgrace, and yet has the favor of God, there would be no misery in him. So it is with sin. If no man suffers but for sin, then sin is a greater evil than all other punishments, it being the fountain from which they flow.

Now, let us look at sin through these things, and when our corrupt heart provokes us, and the world allures us, and the devil tempts us to take any contentment in a sinful way — suppose we saw hellfire burning before us, and the pit of hell gaping to swallow us, and sin enticing us — then let us say *this* to our souls: It is better for a man to be cast into the torments of hell among the damned, then to be overcome with any sin, and so to rebel against the Lord. Now, therefore, if those plagues and punishments make the soul shake in consideration of them, oh then bless yourself so much the more from sin, which is the cause all plagues whatsoever. If a man were in hell and lacked his sins, the Lord would love him in hell, and deliver him from all those plagues. But if any man were free from all punishments, and had honor and wealth, yet he was a sinful and wretched creature, the Lord would hate him in the height of all his prosperity, and throw him down to hell forever.

SECONDLY, *we must see sin simply as it is in itself*, in regard to its proper work; it is nothing but a professed opposing of God himself. A sinful creature joins the side of the devil and the world, and comes in battle-array against the Lord, and flies in the face of the God of hosts. They are called *haters of God*, Rom 1.30. That is, if some see grace in another — in some man or woman — and if they hate him for it; little do they think that they hate the God of heaven and His holy nature. If it were possible, they would have no God in heaven to take notice of their sins and to call them to account for them. As the wise man Gamaliel said to the Pharisees and elders, *Refrain yourselves from these men, and let them alone, for if this counsel or work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot destroy it, lest you be found fighters against God*, Act 5.34f. You think nothing of opposing the Gospel and its preaching, I tell you that there is never a creature that lives in any such sinful course, that he is not a fighter against God, and resists the Lord as really as one man resists another. As Stephen says, *You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart, you have resisted the Holy Spirit*, Act 7.51. You must not think that you resist men only. No, poor creatures, you resist the spirit; and so you aim at the Almighty in opposing the means of grace. What a fearful condition this is! I pray you, consider this in cold blood [dispassionately], and say this: Good Lord! What a sinful wretch I am! That a poor damned wretch of the earth should stand in defiance against the God of hosts, and that I should submit myself to the devil, and oppose the *Lord of hosts*!

And as you resist the Lord, so also you pass the sentence of condemnation upon yourselves, and seal up that doom which one day will be executed upon the wicked in hell at that great day of account. Look at what God will do then; you now do the same by sinning. This is the doom or (if I may say) the neck-verse of the wicked,⁵ and the final blow. As you now depart from God by sinning, so then you will depart from God *forever*. A wicked man forsakes God, and plucks his heart from under the wisdom of God that would inform him in the way of life. And the soul says, ‘God will not bless me; God will not be God to Me; but *I will live as I wish*, and I will run down post-haste to hell.’ And when your hearts begin to rise against God and his ordinances, and your souls begin to go against the Lord, I’ll tell you what I would think to myself. Suppose I heard the voice of the archangel crying, *Arise you dead and come to judgment*; and I heard the last trumpet sounding; and I saw the Lord Jesus coming in the heavens with his glorious angels; and saw the *goats standing on the left hand*, and the *Saints on the right hand* — and with that, I heard the terrible sound, *Depart you cursed* — would you be content to hear that sentence pass against your souls? Oh what lamentation and woe your poor souls would make in those days! And therefore consider it well, and say, ‘I do in sinning what the Lord will do in the day of Judgment.’ Will I depart from the Lord, and withdraw myself from mercy, and say that Christ will not rule over me and save me? Will I do against myself, what the Lord will do in that day? God forbid! There are two things that are hardly known: *what God is*, and *what our sins are* — or else we hardly apply the knowledge of them to ourselves.

Why Men don’t see the vileness of sin.

Objection. But some will object and say, If sin is so vile in itself, then why don’t men see it?

Answer. To this I answer, the reason why men don’t see their sins — how *vile* they are — is mainly on these **two grounds**:

First, because we don’t judge sin according to the Word and its verdict, but judge sin either in regard to the profit there is in it, or the pleasure we expect from it. The usurer looks at his profit that comes by sin, and the adulterer his pleasure. Judas saw the money, but he didn’t see the malice of his own heart, nor the lack of love to his master. And this made him take up the course he did. But when he threw away his thirty pieces, the Lord made him see the vileness of his sin. It

⁵ A verse or saying which decides one’s fate by uttering it; a shibboleth (Jdg 12.6).

came clearly to his sight, and therefore he cried out, *I have sinned in betraying innocent blood*. As bribes blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert judgment, so sin bribes the eyes of the soul. And therefore the tradesman sees much profit come by deceit and false measures, and so he gives way to it; but he doesn't see the *sin*. So the oppressor sees the mortgages and pawns that come in; but he cannot see his sin, until he is laid on his deathbed. And then the Lord shows him all the wrong he has done.

Secondly, another reason why we don't see the vileness of sin, is because we judge the nature of sin according to God's patience towards us. It's like this: a man commits a sin and isn't plagued by it, and therefore he thinks God won't execute judgments upon him at all. *All things continue the same*, says the wicked man (2Pet 3.4) — as if he said, You talk of the wrath of God that will be revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and where is the promise of his coming? Don't you see that such a man is an oppressor, and a profane person? Yet he grows rich and thrives in the world. And because God spares a wicked man for the present, he therefore he thinks these are nothing but words, and that he will be free from the punishment to come. As the prophet says in the name of the Lord, *These things you have done and I kept silence*, Psa 50.21. When you were on your ale-bench, and there spoke against holiness and purity, and because I bore it and said nothing, you therefore speak wickedly that *I was such a one as yourself*. The wicked man takes God's patience to be a kind of allowance for him in his sin. As the wise man says, *Because the sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are wholly set in them to do mischief*, Ecc 8.11. And as the prophet says, *They call the proud happy, for those who work wickedness are set to do evil, and those who tempt God are delivered*, Mal 3.15 — as if to say the wrath of God is incensed against swearers, and drunkards, and the like; but we see them prosper. And because they prosper, their own hearts are set to work wickedness.

But though it is true that the Lord sometimes bears with wicked men, the longer God stays [His hand], the greater account they must make, and the heavier the judgments they will receive from God. See what Job says, *You seal up my transgressions in a bag, and you sow up my iniquities*, Job 14.17. Wicked men treasure up *vengeance* against the Day of the Lord; the profane person treasures up *wrath*. And in the eighteenth verse, Job says: *The mountains falling come to nothing* — as if he said, 'Good Lord, who can bear all those sins that I have committed? Are they all sealed up, and will all the judgments due for them fall upon me heavier than the mountains? Good Lord, what rock or mountain can bear the weight of my sins thus sealed up and settled, and laid close to my heart?' And so God seals up a hundred thousand oaths in one bag; and an ocean of pride and mischiefs done to God's people and church, are barrelled up in another. And the Lord will one day lay all these upon your neck. Who is able to bear all these sins?

Now, it falls out with a sinner, as it does with a bankrupt debtor. One man throws him into prison, and when he is there, everyone comes against him. And so he will never come out, but will die and rot in the prison. So too, though the Lord will not execute judgment on you speedily, yet in the end, the Lord will be paid for all your sins. And when you are in hell, then mercy, and justice, and patience will cry out all to heaven for justice and vengeance. Then perhaps a drunkard is cast into prison for his drunkenness and blasphemy; and then all his filthiness comes in like so many bills of indictment against him. Oh, therefore labor to see sin *alive*; we play with sin as if it were *dead*. When children see the picture of a dead lion on a wall, they labor to pull him to pieces. But if there was a *live* lion in its place, it would make even the strongest man run. So you paint your sin, and say it is your infirmity, and God forgives your swearing, and the like; and thus you dally with your sins. But brethren, labor to see sin *alive*, and to see sin *roaring* at you — see the paw of sin and the condemnation that will be thrown upon the soul by it — and this will awaken the soul in the apprehension of it.

Property 2. Seeing sin convictingly.

We must see sin *convictingly*, so that it may appear to us, *as it is in itself*. What sin is in itself, we may conceive of in our soul's being *guilty* of sin. And this reveals itself in these **two particulars**:

There must be a sight of our personal, particular sins.

First, when we have a *particular* apprehension in our own person, of what we confess to be sin *in general*, we confess that such a sin is *in our own souls*, and our sins are as bad as the sins of any. This is the cursed distemper of our hearts: that however we may hold it to be truth *in general*, when it comes to our *own* sins, the case is altered, and we never come to rightly see them as they concern our own particular case. As the adulterer can easily confess the danger and filthiness of that sin in *others*, he doesn't think his *own* sin to be so vile. As the wise man says, *The one who enters the house of a harlot, does he ever turn back, or ever take hold of the path of life?* Pro 2.19. The Lord is pleased to set such a heavy stamp on this sinful distemper. These are truths. And a man in his cold blood will easily confess in general that *he never turns back*. Take the letter of the words. Whatever other interpretations they may have, the letter of them reads, *he is hardly ever recovered*. Even if it may be so, it is with much difficulty. David let his soul loose in that sin, and he hardly recovered himself again. Scarcely one in a thousand ever took hold of the way of life.

The drunkard will confess the danger of his sin *in general*. When he sees his drunken mates lie groveling in the dust, he will be ashamed of it and say, Now, *no adulterer or drunkard will ever come into the kingdom of heaven*. But here is the wound of it: when it comes to his own particular drunkenness and uncleanness (that he must look into them), then the sight of a man's knowledge doesn't have so much power to judge himself rightly, nor to make a particular application to himself. Rather, he thinks his adultery and drunkenness is not like another man's. Or else his knowledge is but weak. He sees like a man in the twilight, when the sun is down, and the heavens begin to withdraw their light. Though a man can see to read abroad, yet he cannot see to read in the house, or in the chamber. So it is with a weak knowledge and with a feeble understanding in a wicked man. He is not able to see the vile nature of sin *in himself*. When he comes to read his own private sins, and his bosom abominations, then he doesn't have as much light to perceive them so fully in himself, as he thought to do.

Therefore, the rule is this: arrest your soul in a special manner, for those sins of which you stand guilty. That phrase in Job is to good purpose, *You look narrowly to my paths; you set a print upon the heels of my feet*, Job 13.27. God followed Job hard on his heels, and strictly observed his ways. Deal thus with your own soul, and set a print on the heel of your heart. Arrest your heart *in particular* for your sins. And I would have you perceive your own particular sins, and follow them to your heart, and make hue and cry after your sins. Drag your heart before the Lord, and say, 'Are murder, pride, drunkenness, and uncleanness such horrible sins, and does God thus fearfully plague them? Lord, it was *my* heart that was proud and vain; it was *my* tongue that spoke filthily and blasphemously; *my* hand has wrought wickedness; *my* eye was wanton; and *my* heart was unclean and filthy. Lord, here they are. It is *my* affections that are disorderly, and it is *I* who delight too much in the world.'

Thus bring your heart before the Lord. You will observe the same in David. So long as Nathan spoke of sin *in general*, David conceived of it truly, and confessed the vileness of it. And the heart of this good King *raged* against the man, saying, he is the *Son of death*, 2Sam 12.5 (DRA). But as soon as the prophet said, *You are the man*, though he never saw his sin kindredly before, yet now his heart yielded, and he began to see himself and his sin in its natural colors. So the apostle John says, *He that hates his brother is a manslayer, and you know that no manslayer has eternal life abiding in him*, 1Joh 3.15.

Then play the part of Nathan, and say, '*I am the man*. It is this wretched heart of mine that has hated the saints of God. And therefore, if I am a murderer, won't my sin keep me from the kingdom

of heaven, as well as another man's sin? Yes, that it will. If pride and stubbornness are such vile sins in others, then they are vile in me.'

And as there must be a sight of our personal particular sins, so too,

The Conscience of a sinner must yield to what is known.

Secondly, the soul must be sat down with the audience of truth. The conscience of a sinner should be so convicted as to yield and give way to what is known — not seeking any shift or way to oppose that truth which is revealed. His particular apprehension of sin is like the indictment of a sinner before God. And his conviction is that which brings the soul to such a pass, that the heart will not — no it *dares* not — indeed (which is more) it *cannot* escape from the truth revealed. It is like when a man is only arrested, and nothing more; he may escape. Therefore, it is *not enough* to particularly arrest the soul and bring it under command, so that it cannot shift from the truth revealed. When the Lord comes to rack the hearts of those he means to do good to, the text says, *He will reprove the world of sin*, Joh 16.8. That is, he will *convince* the world of its *wickedness*. He will set the soul upon such a stand, that it will have nothing to say for itself; he cannot shift it off. For in every man's heart, there is naturally such corrupt carnal pleading, that it labors to defeat and push aside the work of the Word, so that it may not come home to his heart. As a man in battle-array labors to deflect the blow so it won't hit his body, so it is with a corrupt heart. When the Word comes home to the soul, as it sometimes comes into the heart of a drunkard, or an adulterer, or a murderer — and the Word of God seems to stab the heart — they push aside the Word of God by carnal shifts,⁶ and thus break its power so it cannot land its full blow on the soul. And so the Word has no place in them to any purpose.

Now, *this* kind of knowledge [of personal sin] takes away all shifts, so that the soul has nothing to say for itself. And it plucks away all defenses so that the edge of the Word cannot be blunted, but will fall squarely on the heart. This is what I would put to your consideration punctually. When that wisdom and knowledge is revealed to the soul so *powerfully*, that it prevails with the heart, and gives way to it — so that all the replies and pleas of the soul are taken away, and the soul falls under the forceful blow of the Word — not quarrelling, but yielding itself so that the Word may work on it — and with this, there is a restless amazement put into the heart of the creature, and a kind of dazzling of the eye — so that the soul is not content, now seeing before it the worst of his sin revealed — ***then*** the soul lies under the power of that truth which is made known. These two things make it plain: (1) the minister says, *God hates such and such a sinner*; and (2) the soul says, the Lord hates *me too, for I am guilty of that sin*. Many times when a sinner comes into the congregation, and attends to the ordinary means of salvation, if the Lord is now pleased to work mightily, the mind is at last enlightened, and the minister meets his corruptions — as though he were in the sinner's bosom. And he answers all his cavils, and takes away all his objections. And with that, the soul begins to be amazed to think that God would meet with him in this manner. And it says, 'If this is so, as it is for all I know, and if all that the minister says is true, then may the Lord be merciful to my soul, for I am the most miserable sinner that was ever borne.'

Give me leave to open a passage or two this way. Suppose there is an ignorant creature who knows nothing, and he thinks God will pardon him *because* he is ignorant, and doesn't need to consider this or that which the minister calls upon him to do. See what God says to such a person: *It is a people of no understanding; therefore, He who made them will not have mercy on them, and He who formed them will show them no favor*, Isa 27.11. You think to sweep it all away with a plea of ignorance, but the God of heaven will show you no pity; and He who made you won't save you. When a poor soul begins to consider, 'He that made us will save us, will he not?' — *No*, he will *not*; not one of you; not your wife, nor children, nor your servant. This drives the soul into shock when the Lord works this truth in him, and he frequents the ordinances more diligently, and says, 'If it

⁶ *Shift*: a contrivance, device, or excuse to deflect blame; a cavil.

is so, then my case is fearful.' In conclusion, he finds *every* minister says so; and *all* the writings confirm it; and he sees it is *so indeed*; and it is the *will* and *way* of God — *then* the soul is moved, and says, 'I see this is my just estate and condition, and therefore woe to me that I was ever borne.'

This is right conviction. And though his carnal neighbors come to him, and begin to cheer him up, and say, 'The Lord is more merciful than men;' 'Ministers must say *something*;' and so forth. If the heart is truly convicted, it returns this answer, and says, 'I have thought as you do. But now I see there is no such matter. These are but fig leaves, and they will not cover my nakedness.' It is true, Christ came to save sinners, and he came to humble sinners too; he came to bind up the heart, and he came to break the heart too. This is a great part of the spirit of bondage spoken of in Rom 8.15, *We have not received the spirit of bondage to fear again*. When God has revealed a man's bondage to him, he sees himself bound hand and foot. For mark it, so long as a man stays in these carnal shifts, he is not *bound*. But once he is bound and fettered, he says, 'If ever any had a proud heart, I am he; if ever any were profane, I am he; and if ever God hated such wretches, He hates me.'

Now there is no escape; there is no plea at all. He won't go away and say, there is no such matter. Ministers many say what they will. No, no, the soul that is truly convicted of sin *yields* itself, and says, 'I have sinned.' *Oh, what have I done to You, O preserver of men?* says Job, chap. 7.20 — as if he said, 'Lord, I have no plea at all to make, nor any argument to allege for myself. I can only yield up my armor. I cannot speak so badly of myself as I am. I have sinned and done foolishly in Your sight.' This is how it is with a heart truly convicted and thoroughly informed of the vileness of sin. He doesn't withdraw himself and play hide and seek. But he says,

'This is my just condition; the Lord met with my heart this day. God resists the proud and profane in heart, and He resists me too. I heard much, and would not be informed. Therefore it is just with God to harden my heart forever. The Lord has come often with many loving persuasions to allure me, and draw me to Himself. If the devil had the means I have had, he would have been moved and bettered by You more than I have been, and have done more than I have done. I hated and despised it all. And to this day, I haven't been brought to my knees. Will Christ not rule over me, and yet save me? No, *it cannot be*. Unless I can bring my neck under the yoke of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not possible that I should be saved by him. I don't excuse myself, Lord. No, I confess that I know more than all the men in the world can say of me; and I yield to all this and more. What shall I say? *O You preserver of men!*'

Reason. The reason why God deals thus with poor sinners, is taken from the office which the Lord has placed between the *heart* and the *will* of man. The ground lies thus.

Why God convinces men of their sins.

First, you conceive and *understand* a thing. Secondly, you *will* it and *choose* it.

The first is the inlet of the HEART, so that nothing can affect the heart, except so far as reason conceives it and ushers it home to the soul. Thereupon the *heart* acts. It's like the king who has his counselors. They call all matters before them, and consult about the business; and then they bring them before the king to have a final sentence from him — to know what he will have, and what he will not have. The *understanding* is like the counsellors; the *will* is the queen. The understanding says this or that is good, and then the will says, Let me have it. The understanding says these and those duties are required, and the will embraces them. The understanding conceives what sin is, and the will says these and those evils I have done, and they will cost me my life if I don't repent. This is how it was with Job when his oxen and cattle were taken. It never troubled him while he didn't know of it; but when he heard of it by the messengers, he said, *Naked I came from my mother's womb*. Job 1.21.

There must be a messenger before he can be grieved for the evil. So it is with the soul of a sinful creature. The devil has made a prey and a spoil of him. You came into the world in Adam — wise, holy, and gracious; but the devil has made you unholy and ignorant. And you don't consider this until God, by his ministers, opens your eyes and makes you see plainly that the image of sin and Satan is upon you; and that God has now become your enemy; and that now you're on the way to destruction, and have become the heir-apparent of hell. And when these evil tidings come to the *understanding*, that leaves them on the HEART and WILL of a man. And so it lets them work effectually on it as God blesses the same. As Paul says, *I know they did it through ignorance; if they had known the Lord of life*, they would never have crucified him, Act 3.15, 17.

This is why we commit sin: because we don't *see* it, and therefore we don't *sorrow* for it. As it is with some hot climates in the world, however much heat there is in the sun, if there is no entrance for the heat into the house, it won't scorch or heat anyone. So the *understanding* is like the door or entrance into the house; and *sin* has a fiery and scorching nature. If there is no passage — if the *mind* doesn't know — the *will* won't be affected by sin, and it will never scorch his *conscience*. A man may carry enough sin in his bosom to sink his soul forever. Yet we don't allow it to work on us, and we don't attend to it, because the brazen wall keeps it away. As the proverb goes, *What the eye never sees, the heart never rues*. Because we don't see our evils, and discern our sins as clearly as we should, it is therefore impossible to be touched by them as we ought to be.

Use 1. The first use is for *instruction*. From the former truth delivered, we may learn that an ignorant heart is a naughty (evil) heart, and a miserable wretched heart.⁷ Whether out of ignorance men *cannot*, or out of willfulness they *will not* apprehend their conditions, both are marvelously sinful and miserable. I desire to deal plainly on this point, because I know there are many who flatter themselves in their conditions, and think all is well with them. I will say nothing about the cause. But I appeal to the hearts of all who hear me this day, and you be the judges in these particulars. Imagine you saw a poor sinner come before you, and he lays open his condition, and bewails it with bitterness, saying that, for his part, he never found his heart touched by his sins; nor did sorrow for his corruptions ever enter his soul. Rather, he has lived senseless and careless — and as for this wounding of spirit, he counted it a wonder, for this humbleness of heart was ever a riddle to him. Let anyone pass sentence on this man now, and tell me seriously, what do you think of such a person? I think I hear every man reason (and every man's heart shakes at it), saying, 'Good Lord! What a senseless, poor, ignorant creature is this? If there is no humbling for sin, no pardoning for sin, and no share in Christ, *there is no salvation*.

What, is this a *good* heart that is not in the way to *receive* any good? Hardly. If a man is never broken for his sin, God will never bind him up; and if he is never humbled and burdened for his sin, God will never ease him of it. Therefore, woe to that soul who is thus miserable and accursed. I beseech you, pass this sentence against *yourselves*. Oh brethren, the hearts of men are past this brokenness of spirit — no, they are *enemies* to it. They never had their judgments cleared and convicted of their sins; and therefore, their hearts were never broken. This brokenness is so far from their heart, that it never came into their head. We don't *think* about the foul nature of sin.

Do you think this is a good heart, that was never humbled and prepared for Christ? Alas, it is so far from being truly worked upon, that it was never in any way to partake of mercy from God. Therefore your condition is marvelously miserable; your misery is as great as your sin, if not greater, because when a sinful creature is wounded and galled for his sin, there is some hope that he may be cured and helped. But an ignorant soul is not capable of it. He is in hell and doesn't see it; he is under the power of Satan and thinks he is at liberty. No, for the present he is incapable of any good from the means appointed to that end.

⁷ *Naughty*: lit. "worthless;" in the 17th c., it implied sexual impropriety; being evil, wicked, or reprehensible.

It is with an ignorant soul, as it befell the drunkard who was asleep on top of the mast. He fears no harm, because he doesn't see it. So it is with a sinful heart. He is still resolved to go on in his sin, because he doesn't see the danger. Take a man whose heart is stabbed with a stiletto. The wound is so narrow that it cannot be searched. There is no means to get at it. It is just so with a blind and ignorant heart. There are many means by which good might be done to it, but an ignorant heart bars them all, so that nothing can do good to the soul. All counsels, admonitions, and reproofs cannot prevail; all mercies do not allure, because he finds no sweetness in them. A minister is better able to teach the stool on which he sits, than to do him good. I think it is with a world of men who live in the bosom of the church, as it is with those who have suffered shipwreck. They are cast upon the waves. Their friends are standing on the shore, and see them, and mourn for them. They see one sinking, and another floating on the waves, even laboring for his life. And they sigh and mourn, but cannot help him. It is just so with ignorant people who are swallowed up with the floods of iniquity. Here is one man, and there another, going on the broad way to destruction. And we pity them, and pray for them, that God would open their eyes, and give them the sight of their sins. But alas! they are not able to conceive of anything. We cannot come at them, and thus they sink in their sins.

Our Savior, looking over Jerusalem, said, *Oh that you had known at least in this your day the things that belong to your peace; but now they are hidden from your eyes*, Luk 29.42 — as if he said, Oh, now that they are sinking, they will not be reformed or reclaimed. Now they are going the way of all flesh, and to hell too. The way of peace is hidden from their eyes. They refuse the means that may do them good. I might here condemn the Papists, who say ignorance is the mother of *devotion*; whereas ignorance is the breeder of all *wickedness*; it is the broad way to hell and everlasting destruction.

Use 2. The use is this: as you desire the comfort of your souls, and to be prepared for mercy, and to partake of that rich grace that is in Christ — as you desire to have the rich promises of the Gospel conveyed to you, as ever you would have the Lord Jesus Christ be a guest to your souls — you are to be entreated to give your souls no contentment till you have your eyes so opened as to *see* your sins, that you may be *convicted* of them.

Three means to see sin convictingly.

Question. Now it may be that some will say, What you say is good, but what means must we use to come to this sight of sin?

Answer. I answer such poor souls, give me leave to do three things:

First, I will show three means how we may come to see sin convictingly.

Secondly, I will take away all the excuses that may keep a man from it.

Thirdly, I will use some motives to stir us up to use the means, and set upon the service, though it is somewhat harsh and tedious to our corruptions.

Means 1: Go to God for Knowledge.

First, we must go to God for *knowledge*. The Lord knows our hearts. Therefore we must go to him, that He would make us able to know them too. The church of Laodicea thought none were like herself, as it is the fashion of many in this age to do. And therefore the Lord said, *You thought yourself rich and full, and that you lacked nothing*, Rev 3.17. It is an argument of a proud sinful heart, that he is always well-conceited about himself and of his own wit, grace, and sufficiency. But mark what the Lord says to this church: *I counsel you to buy from me eye-salve*. She thought all her tokens were good gold, and all her appearances were good religion; but the Lord bids her to buy eye-salve from him. — as if he said, You don't see your sins, etc., and therefore, go to God, and beseech Him who dwells in endless light, to let some light into your souls.

When the poor blind man, Bartimaeus, sat begging by the way, saying, *O you son of David have mercy upon me*, Mar 10.15, he pressed our Savior earnestly — so far, that when his disciples rebuked him, he cried all the more, *O you Son of David have mercy upon me*. And when Christ asked, What would you have me do for you? he answered, *Lord, that I may receive my sight*. If he so earnestly sought his bodily eyes, then much more should we seek the eyes of our souls, that we may see our sins. A BLIND MIND brings a wicked heart with it, and lays a man open to all sins. And therefore we ought to be more pinched for the lack of *this* sight, than of our *bodily* eyes.

Objection. What if the question is asked, What would you have — *honor, riches*, or the like?

Answer: O Lord, I would have *the sight of my sins*. I know sin is a vile, loathsome thing. O that I could see my sin convictingly and clearly!

Means 2: Acquaint Yourself with God and His Law.

Secondly, labor to acquaint yourselves thoroughly with God, and with his Law, and to see the compass and breadth of it. The words of the commandments are few, but there are many sins forbidden in them, and many duties required. Therefore, labor to see your sins convicted, and to see your many duties that are neglected. The apostle Paul thought he was once alive *without the Law*, Rom 7.9; and who but he in the world? He was able to succeed in all he did; he thought his penny was good silver. But *when the Law came* (the text says), *then sin revived*. When God had opened his eyes to see his sin, and the corruptions of his heart, then he saw himself a dead man. Yet Paul was a Pharisee, and brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and someone who kept the law of God in a strict manner. From this we learn that a man may be an ignorant man, however great his parts for human learning. And the same apostle says, *I would not have known lust, except the law of God had said, you shall not lust* — by which is meant the tenth commandment, which forbids the secret distemper of the heart, even if there is no delight and consent to it. Who, *Paul??* And yet he didn't know it. And therefore, it is no wonder that many who are otherwise well-learned, are ignorant in God's law. Therefore, look at yourselves in this mirror of the word. All you who say that though you are not able to talk so freely [of the word] as others, yet you have as good a heart towards God as the best — I tell you, if you could but see the filthiness of your hearts, you would be out of love with yourselves forever.

Means 3. An ignorant heart cannot be but a naughty heart.

Thirdly, bind your hearts to the peace, and to good behavior, and be willingly content to take every truth that is revealed, without quarrelling. And I would have a man bind his heart — hand and foot — so that it may not dare wrangle against the revealed will of God. So that whatever truth is delivered, however cross and contrary it is to our corrupt nature, the soul may be willing to receive its blows, and to let the strength of the Word come full upon the heart. This will make us feelingly understand our conditions. As in Job, once God had taken down his proud heart, see how he submits himself: *Behold, I am vile, what shall I say? I will lay my hand upon my mouth, I have sinned; but I will go no further*, Job 40.4, 5 — as though he reasoned with himself this way: I have (I confess) pleaded too much for myself; I have made more excuses for myself than needed; I have opposed your word; but now, *no more*.

Now, if any man seems to quarrel and take up arms against the truth of God, let that man know that he was never truly humbled for his sins. It is a sinful, rebellious spirit that carries itself this way against God and his word. The shifts by which the soul labors to beat back the power of the Word, may be reduced to these **three heads**:

Shift 1. The soul labors to beat back the power of the Word.

FIRST, the soul has but a slight apprehension of sin, and thinks it isn't so heinous or dangerous as those hot-spirited ministers convey to men. This is the common conceit of all men naturally, more or less, to take but a slight account of sin. And that is in **four respects**.

Why men take but a slight account of sin.

FIRST, *in respect to the commonness of it*. Because every man is guilty of it, we slight it. Says one, Aren't *all* sinners, as well as we? Though we have many failings, yet we have many fellows.

If we were all drunkards, or whoremongers, *then* would it be something? You say, true indeed, that you have many fellows in your sins; and you will share with many fellows in the punishment to come. There is room enough in hell for you and *all* your fellows. Hell has opened her mouth wide. Indeed, the more companions you've had in your sins, the more will be your plagues.

Question. O (says one) *all* the world lies in sin, and we do no more than the world does.

Answer. But if the world lies in sin, *Christ never prayed for the world*, Joh 17.9, and he will never *save* the world. Isn't this a senseless thing, to be someone that God hates? Is this all your pleasure, that you are a hater of GOD? What are the odds for a man to be stabbed with a penknife or with a spear; or for a man to be murdered in the streets or in his bed? So, even if your sins are not hideous blasphemies and the like, if they are but petty oaths, they are yet enough to sink your soul. It is not the *great* swearer, but *no* swearer will come into the kingdom of heaven. The text doesn't say no *great* liars will enter into heaven, but *no* liars at all will enter heaven, 1Tim 1.10. What difference is there between a man who goes to hell for open rebellion, and a man who goes to hell for a civil profession? And what difference is there between an *open* and a *secret* adulterer?

Question. But some will say, aren't all men sinful by nature, and aren't some saved? Why not me, as well as others?

Answer. I say, no man is saved *by nature*. Rather, if any are saved, the Lord opens his eyes, breaks his heart, [and gives him a *new nature*]. And so it must be with you too, if you think to ever receive any mercy from God.

SECONDLY, *there is also a naturalness in a sinful course*. But don't say therefore, It is my nature and infirmity — I have a choleric disposition; I sometimes swear when I am angry; I cannot help but be drunk sometimes when I settle into good company.

Question. What, would you have us be saints on earth?

Answer. Yes! Either saints, or else *devils*, who are never sanctified, never saved, never purged, never glorified. As the apostle John says, *Everyone who has this hope purges himself, as He is pure*, 1Joh 3.3. He strives with his whole endeavor to be pure; and he always respects all God's commandments. And as the author to the Hebrews says, *Pursue faith and holiness, without which no one can be saved*, Heb 12.14.

Perhaps you say, If it was an honor to pray in my family, and if Gentlemen and Knights did it, then I would do it. I tell you that if *holiness* seems to fly away by others' disgrace and your persecution, you must even yet *pursue* it. Indeed, do you say it's your nature to sin? Then I say your wickedness is even greater for it. We don't hate a man because he drinks poison; but we hate a toad because it has a poisonous *nature*. Therefore, mourn even more for your sins *because* it is your cursed nature to sin. And say this:

'Lord, if only temptations, or the world, allured me to do this, there would be some hope that You would have mercy upon me. But O Lord, I have a cursed *nature*. Even if there were no devils, or world, no outward temptations, this cursed nature of mine would still sin against you. Those who have received Christ, have a *new nature*. And therefore, if I have a carnal *corrupt nature*, then my condition is most fearful.'

And say this:

‘If temptations and the world allured me, there would be some hope of mercy. But it is my *nature* to sin, and therefore my estate and condition is most miserable and wretched. *Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?*’ Rom 7.24.

THIRDLY, *many say that words are but wind*; and all this wind shakes no corn. And so, when we press men to do the inward work of the soul, not only to keep men from the noose, but to tell them that they must pull down their proud hearts, and be humbled for their sins, and the like — then they reply that their thoughts fly away suddenly; and thoughts are free.

To which I answer, these words are such a wind as will blow your soul down into the bottomless pit of hell. It is not I who say so, but our Savior himself. *By your words you will be justified; and by your words you will be condemned*, Mat 12.37. Though you make nothing of your swearing, and idle thoughts, and your revilings of God’s people, yet the God of heaven will require them at your hands. And you will either receive acquittance from Christ for them, or else vengeance forever for them. *For the Lord comes with thousands of his saints in flaming fire to punish*, Jude 1.15 — not only murderers, and adulterers, and the like, but *all ungodly ones*. The Lord will call you to account for all your abominations — yes, for all your statements made against the people of God, made upon your ale-bench, when you tossed them to and fro. And *the Lord will set your sins in order before your eyes*, Psa 50.21. Indeed, he will call you to account for them, for all your thoughts, even if they are sudden and quickly passed over. As the prophet Jeremiah says, *O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness. How long will your vain thoughts remain in you?* Jer 4.15. Whatever men may think of thoughts, they are the very life and sinews of sin; and they are brought out by a man’s meditation on corruptions of this kind.

How sinful thoughts are produced.

A man may sin in *thought*, more than in any other kind whatsoever — both in regard to the vileness of sin, and his inability to avoid it. A thief cannot rob the whole town; but a covetous man may *wish* that all in the town were hanged, so that he might have their goods. So too, an adulterer cannot commit sin with every woman in the town; but he may *lust* after both the godly and the profane; and he may commit adultery both with the chaste and the unchaste too — *in his thoughts*. A man may sin infinitely in this way, and never be done with it. For no company or place can hinder an adulterer from sinning and lusting *in his heart*, nor the malicious man from *envying* in his heart, nor the covetous man from *desiring* the goods of other men. Though you dare not cut the throat of a single minister, you can hold malice toward all the ministers in the country.

FOURTHLY, *the soul has a strange inward resolution to cling to sin*, whatever can be said or done to the contrary. And this inward resolution of the soul takes delight in corruptions, even if he dies and is damned for it. This plucks the heart away from the Word, and lays so many mists upon the understanding, that it cannot see the truth. When the soul has nothing to say for itself, it falls to open and professed reviling of Jesus Christ, and to defying him. This is why, after many good arguments, the soul is at a stand, as it were. And it says, I won’t believe it, even if there were five thousand ministers to persuade me to believe it. And why does he do so? Does he have any argument to allege? No, not a word. But he that is proud *will* be proud; and he that is a swearer *will* swear, and will not scruple about anything. This comes from a proud and hard heart. When Jeremiah would have the people convinced of their sins, and of the punishments threatened to them, they said, *You speak falsely, there is no such matter*, Jer 43.2. So it is with many a carnal heart nowadays. If the minister of God will not please their fantasies, they say that all this business is what they knew before, when indeed they knew nothing at all. Therefore, God says, *Take heed, that there not be in any of you a root of bitterness. If the soul hears the law, and blesses himself in his wickedness, and says, ‘I will have peace even though I walk according to the imaginations of my own heart,’ the Lord will not spare that man. But the jealousy of the Lord will smoke against him*, Deu 29.18-20.

This *root of bitterness* is nothing else but sin, and a resolution to continue in it. For the Lord Jesus' sake, consider this: there are too many of these in the congregation. If you will not believe God's word, I tell you, you almost deny that there is a God, and you renounce the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation by him. You say in effect, there is no God, and there is no means of grace revealed. What devilish blasphemy is this? Let me say to the terror of all such hearts, hell never entertained any such thoughts. The devils in hell, for all I know, don't have any such professed resolutions. *The devils believe and tremble*, Jas 2.19; the devils believe that the scriptures are the Word of God. And they know there is infinite mercy in God; but they will never taste of it. And they know that all the plagues threatened will come upon them; and they shake and tremble at the remembrance of it. What, do even the devils consent to the Word of God, and conceive of it, and know that it is the truth of God, and that it will be made good upon them? Then good Lord! What a strange temper you must have, who will *not* believe it, and will *not* consent that it is true. The devil is no worse than you are in this case.

I must confess, the consideration of these passages sometimes makes the soul of a poor minister shake within him. If it were in my power — and it is not — the first work I would do, would be to humble and break the hearts of all such vile wretches. But all that I *can* or *will* do, is this: to speak what the holy man Moses spoke in Deu 11.16; and he spoke it with a marvelous caution. You who never came to the sight of this horrible contempt, *Take heed that there not be any among you, who says it will go well with me, no matter what the minister says*. It is worth as much as your souls. And to those who are guilty of this sin, I will give the same counsel that Peter gave to Simon Magus, who had a base esteem of the gifts of the spirit. *O (says Peter) pray that if it is possible, the thoughts of your heart may be forgiven you*, Act 8.22. It is a fearful thing; it is a marvelous opposing of grace. And for you, whose eyes God has opened, go home and consider the miserable estate of all those who lie in this sin. Go to prayer, and send up requests on behalf of all such poor creatures, and say, 'Is it so Lord, that there are many who have the name of Christians, who will not be reformed or humbled? Good Lord, that many who have the name of Christians, will not come in; that your word will not prevail or have a place in their hearts? Good Lord, break their hearts in pieces. Break in upon them, and let your word overcome them in mercy and compassion; and bring them to the true knowledge of sin *here*, and happiness *hereafter*.

This much for the first cavil.

Shift 2. Thinking whatever falls out, it won't fall on us.

SECONDLY, the soul says, I confess that I see more now than ever I conceived of before; I didn't conceive that sin was so heinous and so dangerous as it is. Now I see that it is marvelously great and dangerous. And yet, this is my hope, that whatever falls out, it will not light upon me. And therefore, why do I need to care? I hope to prevent it, and then all will be well. When the Word comes fair and full upon the conscience of a man, and would pierce his heart, and meets him in every place, as the angel met Balaam, he will have some ploy or other to set aside the Word. And he says, I hope, despite all this, that the danger will not fall upon me.

How the soul sets aside the threatenings of the Word.

Now the way that the soul uses to set aside the Word, and prevent the danger threatened, appears in these **three objections**.

Objection 1. The first is this: however vile sin is in itself, and even though he is guilty of it, he thinks the God of heaven does not attend to his sins; or else He is not so just or righteous that He will punish him for them. Indeed, if he were some notorious wretch — such as a murderer, or an adulterer, or a thief, etc. — then he would have cause to fear. But he thinks God will not bring him to account for every small sin.

Answer. I will show you that this is the sleight (the *deftness*) of the soul, and then show you how to avoid it.

It is ordinary with every carnal heart, more or less, to reason as Eliphaz did with Job: *How does God know? Can he judge through the dark? Thick clouds are a covering to Him, so that he doesn't see; He walks in the circuits of heaven*, Job 22.13-14. It is the guise of wicked men to say so. Indeed, the hearts of God's people are driven to a standstill with this. When they consider the ways of wicked men — how God sees them and doesn't punish them — they say, How does God know? And *is there knowledge in the Almighty?* Psalms 73.11. When the prophet saw *the way of the wicked prosper*, Jeremiah 12.1, and *their eyes bulge with abundance*, Psalms 73.7, he says, *Can God see this, and not punish it?* Jeremiah 5.9 — as if he said, If God cared for all that is done here below, could he endure such foreign oppositions to his word, and his Gospel, and his members? I have no doubt, many an adulterous heart thinks a dark night will cover all his abominations. And the malicious man who contrives evil against God's children, thinks God doesn't consider his course; or else that God won't trouble Himself to execute judgment on him for all his sins. As the prophet says, the Lord will not do *good or evil*, Zechariah 1.12. He is marvelously quiet; He won't trouble himself, either for the good that befalls, or the evil that is deserved by us.

Indeed, this is the bane of our ministry. When people hear of many judgments denounced against sin and sinners, I'll tell you what they think of it all: they think they are a mere course of words. If the adulterer or drunkard considered that no such person would inherit the kingdom of heaven, would he dare to go on? *Surely not*. But they think these are but the words of some hot-spirited minister, said to awe and scare men, and to keep them in compass. And so they won't be persuaded but that God is more merciful than to punish for every small sin. They think this is more than reasonable. *Let him make speed* (says the wicked) *that we may see it*; and *Let the counsel of the Most High draw near, that we may know it*, Isaiah 5.19 — as if they said, You ministers tell us much about God's wrath against Jerusalem. Let us see those enemies, and let the Word of the Lord come to pass *now* — or all these words are but wind, etc.

These are the carnal cavils of graceless persons, to which I answer, it is desperate ignorance and marvelous atheism of heart, by which the devil labors to keep men in sin. The Lord *knows your thoughts long before*. If you would hide yourself from the Lord in the dark, consider that the day and the night are all one with Him. Indeed, the Lord will *search Jerusalem with candles*, Zechariah 1.12. The word in the original signifies *to track her*. Indeed, he won't stop searching until he finds you out; *for the ways of man are before the Lord, and He ponders all his doings*, Proverbs 5.21. And *if our hearts condemn us, God knows all things, and is greater than our hearts*, 1 John 3.20. Does your conscience check you for vain thoughts, and cursed devices? Then God knows much more by you than you know by yourself. God saw Achan stealing the wedge of gold, and David in his adultery; and He sees all the malice of your heart against His saints; and all your uprising of heart against God's word. Yes, the Lord sees all the pranks of the adulterer in the darkest night. And God is just to bring all things to judgment; and also bring you to account for them. It is in vain for wicked men to dig deep, to hide their counsel from the Lord: *These things you have done* (said God) *and I kept silence; and therefore you thought I was altogether such a one as yourself. But I will reprove you, and set all your sins in order before you*, Psalms 50.21.

You must not think God is so gentle. No, he will set all your sins in order before you — if not here for your humiliation, then hereafter for your everlasting shame. The drunkard will then see all his jug-companions,⁸ and the adulterer his mates, and the unjust person all his tricks. No indeed, God will not abate you one thought of your heart. Wherever you may be, God will find you out with His judgments and say, Look, here is your pride, and here is your murder, and here are all your abominations. This is the wretch who could carry fire in one hand and water in the other; these are your sins, and this shall be your punishment.

⁸ Originally, "pot-companions."

Objection 2. Secondly, If God is so mighty (they say) that He knows all, and will call us to account for all, then [to consider it] is but sorrowing all the more; and we will do that afterwards. What will make all well enough, is but repenting [each time].

Answer. To this I answer, Do you dismiss it? ⁹ Don't be deceived. *God is not*, indeed He *cannot be mocked*, Gal 6.7; and therefore, don't delude your own souls. Every repentance will not serve the turn. You may have remorse of heart, and repent, and cry out to God for your sins; but this tormenting of your heart will be but a forerunner of your everlasting damnation hereafter. The Lord may deal with you as Moses said of the people of Israel, *You returned and wept before the Lord, but He would not hearken to your voice*, Deu 1.45. So the time may come that all weeping and wailing will not serve the turn. You see that *Judas wept*, and *brought back the thirty pieces of silver*, Mat 27.3-5. He had a marvelous horror of conscience; he was ashamed of himself, and made restitution; and yet he was a damned creature forever (Joh 17.12).

You who think it such an easy matter, ask your own heart this question, Can you be content to lay open all your cursed sinful courses, and all the wrong that you have done? Consider what a hard matter it is to bring your heart to do it; to confess all your hidden adulteries. And when you have done all this, you may be as far from salvation as Judas was, who went and hanged himself. Therefore, it is not every sorrow that will serve the turn, and bring comfort to your soul; but it must be repentance of the right stamp. Again, do you think you have repentance at your command? This is what cuts the throat of men's souls, and deprives them of all the benefit of the means of grace. You are not sure you will live, or if you do, that you have power of yourself to repent savingly. And would any man be so senseless as to hang his happiness on that which cannot help him? If you considered your own weakness, you wouldn't say that repentance is in your own power. Remember what the apostle says, 2Tim 2.25, 26, *Reproving, if perhaps at any time God would give them repentance, that they may acknowledge the truth, and come to an amendment of life out of the snare of the devil*. It is but *perhaps*; it is a rare work, and few have it.

Objection 3. Thirdly, some will say, God may give me repentance. Christ came into the world to save sinners, and why may he not save me?

Answer. I answer, is that all? Has it come to this? And who knows but that God may *damn* you too? If that is all, why may you not say more truly, How do I know that God won't give me up to a hard heart, and a blind mind forever, and that I may be forever cast out of the presence of God? Is it but, '*I may be*' all this while? And therefore, for a full answer, consider these **two things** to shake off this carnal security by which men resolve not to pin their salvation on God's mercy, but instead to *oppose* His mercy:

First, know this, that there is a time when God will *not* show mercy. *Behold*, says God, *I gave her a time of repentance, but she did not repent; therefore I will cast her upon the bed of sickness*, Rev 2.21-22. And as our Savior says to Jerusalem, *Oh, if you had known on this your day, the things belonging to your peace; but now they are hidden from your eyes*, Luk 19.42. God had sealed up his mercy, and the day of salvation was past. And when the day is over, *even if Noah, Daniel, and Job, were to pray for a people, they would save neither son nor daughter*, Eze 14.16. And if your father prayed for you who are a child, if mercy is past, the Lord will not spare that man, says the text — as if the Lord said, I have an abundance of mercy, but you will never taste of it. No, for all I know, the Lord may set a seal of condemnation upon you, and so give you over to all evil, to all sin, to all curses, and blot out your name from under heaven. Are you persuaded yet that this is God's word? If you were but persuaded of the sorrow some have had, it would make

⁹ Originally, "Do you make a buss at it?" — i.e., a *kiss off*; a token gesture; a mock pursing of the lips (Psa 2.12).

you look around you. The Wise man says, *Wisdom professes to pour out an abundance of mercy, saying, Oh you simple ones, how long will you disdain and despise purity and holiness?*¹⁰

Now mark, when a people have had this mercy and wisdom offered to them, and yet they despise it, then *they will cry and call, but I will not answer* (says God); *they will seek me early, but shall not find me*, Pro 1.28. The period of God's patience has come to an end, and there is no expectation of mercy. Call and call you may, but God will not hear you. You, whose consciences fly in your faces, and tell you that you have despised mercy; and would have none of God's counsels; and you hate the knowledge of his ways. Do you think to get it now by crying, when the date of mercy is past? No, no, you would have none of God's mercy before, and now He will have none of you. Do you think it fit that grace, and mercy, and the Spirit, should still stand and wait on you, and strive, and always be despised? Isn't it marvelously just, that the word you despised, should no longer work; and that the mercy you refused, should never be offered to you anymore? *It is just*, and you will find it so in the end. Take heed that the terms of mercy have not run out.

Shift 3. We resolve to bear the consequences.

THIRDLY, these souls say, if we cannot *avoid* it, then we are resolved to *bear* it as we may. If we are damned, we will undergo it as we are able. This is what we poor ministers find too often by woeful experience: that when we have taken away all the cavils from wicked men — and if we could then weep over them, and mourn for them, and beseech them to consider it rightly — mark what they say. 'Good sir, spare your pains; we are sinners. And if we are damned, then every tub must stand on its own bottom; we will bear it as well as we can.' What, is that the wind in the door? Is that all you can say? O woe to you, that you were ever born! O poor creature! If I were to cease speaking, and all of us join together in weeping and lamenting your condition, it would be the best course. For it is impossible that you could ever bear God's wrath with any comfort.

Let the following three considerations be remembered and retained, which will make any man come to a standstill, even the vilest wretches who blaspheme and swear, and who think if they are damned (they say), they have borne some things, and they will also bear this as well as they can.

First, *judge the lion by the paw* — judge the torments of hell by some little beginnings of it; and the dregs of God's vengeance by some little sips of it. And judge how unable you are to bear the whole by your inability to bear even a little of it in this life, in the terror of your conscience. As the Wise man says, Pro 18.14, *A wounded spirit, who can bear?* When God lays the flashes of hellfire upon your soul, you cannot endure it. Whatever a man can inflict upon a poor wretch may be borne; but when the *Almighty* comes in *battle array* against a poor soul, how can he withstand it? Witness the saints who have felt it. And also witness the wicked themselves, who have had some beginnings of hell in their consciences. When the Lord has let in a little horror of heart into the soul of a poor sinful creature, how he is transported with an insupportable burden! *When it is day, he wishes it were night; and when it is night, he wishes it were day*. All the friends in the world cannot comfort him. Indeed, many have sought to hang themselves — to do anything rather than suffer a little vengeance from the Almighty. One man is roaring and yelling as if he were in hell already, and he admits having no comfort. If the *drops* are so heavy, then what will be the whole *sea* of God's vengeance? If a man cannot bear the one, how can he bear the other?

Secondly, *consider your own strength*, and compare it with all the strength of the creatures. And so, if all the creatures are not able to bear the wrath of the Almighty, as Job says, *Is my strength the strength of stones, or is my flesh like brass that must bear Your wrath?* Job 6.12 — as if he said, It must be a stone, or brass, that must bear Your wrath. Even if you were as strong as brass or stones, you could not bear it. When the mountains tremble at the wrath of the Lord, will a poor worm or bubble, and a shadow endure it?

¹⁰ Pro 1.20-22; Hooker combines the gist of several Proverbs here.

Conceive this much: if all the diseases in the world seized on one man; and if all the torments that all the tyrants in the world could devise, were cast upon him; and if all the creatures in heaven and earth conspired for the destruction of this man; and if all the devils in hell labored to inflict punishments upon him — you would think this man was in a miserable condition. And yet all this is but a beam of God's indignation. If the beams of God's wrath are so hot, what is the full sum of his wrath when it seizes on the soul of a sinful creature in full measure?

Thirdly. If you still think to lift yourself up above all creatures, and bear more than they all do, then *set before your eyes the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ*, who creates the heavens and upholds the whole frame of it. When the wrath of God came upon him, only as a surety, he cries out with his eyes full of tears, his heart full of sorrow, and the heavens full of lamentations, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* Mat 27.46. Oh you poor creature, if you have the heart of a man, gird up the loins of your mind, and see what you can do. Do you think to bear that which the Lord Jesus Christ could not bear without so much sorrow? Yet he endured it without any sin or weakness. He had three sips of the *Cup*,¹¹ and every one of them sank his soul. And are you, a poor sinful wretch, able to bear the wrath of God forever?

That I may better prevail with you, consider these **three motives**.

Motive 1. *First, it is the only old way to heaven*, for God never revealed any other way than this in the old Law. The only way for the *leper* to be *cleansed* was to come out into the congregation and to cry, *I am unclean, I am unclean*. This leper was every sinner; this means of curing was the sight of his sin; and as he did, so must every sinner confess his sin, take the shame, and say, It is my proud heart, and this my loose life, etc. This true sight of sin is the only door to life and salvation. Who would not go that way, which is the right and ready way if you are ever to receive mercy at the hands of the Lord? It must be by *this* way, or not at all. I pray you, *take heed*, and do not find a shortcut to heaven. The further you go the contrary way, the further you must turn back again. This has deceived many a man more than he imagines.

When a traveler is loath to go through some *filthy lane*, he will break through the fence and go through the meadow, that he may avoid the foul way. And at last, when he has gone up and down and cannot get out again, he is forced with much loss of time, to go back again and go through the lane. So it is with many sinful wretches in the world, and this has cost them dearly. They won't go this way, by way of their sorrow for sin, to see the filthiness of it and of their cursed abominations. But they would have a new way to receive mercy and comfort from God. Yet at last they are driven to a standstill; and *then* they hear the minister of God when he says, *Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost*, Luk 19.10 — that is, to save those poor sinners who saw themselves *lost*, and considered the plagues of their heart. And when Christ works savingly, he opens the eye and awakens the conscience; and a man must confess before he can find mercy. Then the soul says, I never saw this work upon my soul, thus I was never lost. No? Where did you cross over then? You would need a new way to heaven. You are like the stony ground that received the Word with joy. But indeed, I'll assure you that you must come back again, and see all those abominations which have been committed in secret by you and reveal them, or else there is no means to come to life. *Let us search and test our ways*, says the church, Lam 3.40. You must not think that Christ will pardon all, and you do nothing. No, *first* see your sins, and *then* you will receive mercy and pardon for them.

Motive 2. Secondly, working by this means will be much easier than at another time. Once you get your conscience convicted and your eyes opened, the work will go on clearly and easily. Many of God's people will join in with you, and many good Christians will pity you, and pray for you, and you will have many helps this way. Therefore, isn't it better to have your conscience awakened

¹¹ This may refer to the Passover seder. The first cup (or sip) is the *Kiddush*, which means sanctification; it begins the Passover seder. The second is called the cup of plagues. The third is the cup of redemption.

now, when you may have help, than afterward when there is no remedy? When any of God's people fast or pray, they will remember you.

What, says one, Do you know such a man?

Yes, very well.

What is he?

Oh, he was the most shameless drunkard the sun ever did see, or the earth bear.

Was he so?

Oh, but now God has opened his eyes, and awakened his conscience. He frolicked ever so much before, but now he is as much wounded. Now his heart is broken, and his conscience flies in his face. It would be good to remember him. Though he has been a wretch and a professed opposer of God's people, yet let us remember him.

Yes, that I will. I know his burden is great. I have found it so. And I hope so long as I have a knee to kneel, and a tongue to speak, I will remember him.

And then they pray for him and say, Good Lord, who can bear a wounded soul? Good Lord you have humbled him and made him see himself vile and miserable; let him see your mercy in Christ. What a comfort this is, to have a whole country pray for him in this manner.

Objection. But some will object and say, This is something dangerous and it sometimes drives men to a desperate stand. And therefore, isn't it far better to be as we are, and not awaken this severe lion. A man cannot conjure down his conscience once it is up.

Answer. To this I answer, you *must* see your sins. That is the truth of it. Don't think to put it off. The lion will roar, and that conscience will be awakened one day. It is better to be awakened now, than to have your eyes opened in hell when there is no remedy.

Motive 3. Thirdly, set upon this work, for the outcome will be very successful. Oh what a comfort it will be to a poor soul at the time of death, when he comes to render his soul into the hands of God, that all his sins are wiped out. And then to hear those glad tidings from heaven, Be of good comfort poor soul. You have seen your sins; therefore I will not see them. You have remembered them and mourned for them; therefore I will never plague you for them. Who would not see his sins, that Christ may cover them on that Day of Accounts? There was never a broken-hearted sinner that God did not bind him up. And there was never any who was truly wounded for sin, that God did not heal and comfort him. And therefore, labor to look at your face in the mirror of God's law, and so see your own spots. I confess, this is tedious to your sins, and the plagues that are due to them; but *look* at them, so that God may not. If an adversary offers means of agreement, we used to say, don't let it come to a public trial, for the case is nothing. I say it will be so with every wicked man's case. The Lord has a controversy with every wicked man, and it must be tried on the public day of judgment; or else you must make a private agreement between God and your own souls. If there is any drunkard, or adulterer, or unjust person, who is guilty of any sin, you had better take the matter up in private. Don't fear to look upon your sins, but bring them all out before the Lord, and see their ugly face. And entreat the Lord to seal their pardon to you, that you may never be called to account for them. I tell you, it is the most comfortable course in the world.

Use. The last use is for *instruction* to all my fellow brethren. Let me speak a word to them and to myself too. Let us all take that course in dealing with the people and God's ordinances, which God himself takes up. As the steward disposes of everything at his masters will, and the apothecary¹² orders drugs as the physician appoints, let it be so with us too. We are but stewards and apothecaries. Let us take that course, and use those means that God has appointed for his people's good. God says you must see your sins, and be humbled for them. And therefore, let us labor to make men see them. As the apostle says, *I hope we were made manifest to your consciences*, 2Cor

¹² *Apothecary*: druggist or pharmacist; one who prepares medicines.

5.11. Didn't your consciences say so, such that you could not deny it? We must take up that course which the Scripture has revealed, and which the faithful servants of God have ever used, and which God has ever blessed. Indeed, it is our wisdom to do so. Matthew 7.29, *Christ taught the people with authority, not as the scribes*. There is a kind of commanding power which the *Word* ought to have on men's consciences. If a man is a sinner, it will reprove him, and command reproofs to seize him. And if he is in distress of conscience, it will command comfort to take place in his heart.

Give me leave to speak my thoughts; and it is my judgment too. What does it profit a man to scrape up a little Greek and Latin together, and leave the *sense* of the Scripture undiscovered, and the *conscience* not a whit touched, nor the *heart* stirred? He that knows anything, even if he were but an ordinary schoolboy, who had but *any skill* in the tongues, if he couldn't do *that*, then he should be scourged, and by my consent. But let it be, in a case of conscience, that a poor soul comes to an *anguish* of spirit. The only way to set this man on his feet again, is to answer all his objections and questions; and resolve all his doubts; and to make the way good, and the case clear. Alas! this course is not known among us. In the way of examination, if you come to examine a sinner, take away all his cavils, and all his carnal shifts that he has to hinder the Word, and force the soul to say, *It is God's word* — even if he will not entertain it.

Why men's hearts are not worked upon in the Ministry.

Let a man try this course and he will find a marvelous difficulty. This is the reason why our ministry doesn't thrive, and the hearts of men are not worked upon: because we don't labor the right way *to show men their sins*, and *to convince their conscience*, so that they may not flinch from the ordinances of God. Indeed, I take it to be the special cause why, after all the precious promises that God makes known, no man receives any good by them. We offer salves to those who don't know whether they have any sores or not; and we offer medicine to those we don't know whether they have any disease or not. We speak of grace and Christ, but people think they have no need of them. Permit me to speak my mind freely in this. *That ministry which does not ordinarily humble the soul, and break the heart for sin, does not convert and draw to Christ.*

Now we come to show the causes why, and the means how, sinners come to see their sins. The apostle says it to their faces: *You are the ones* who have committed this sin; *you have crucified the Lord of life*. This is *your sin*, Act 3.13-15.

The DOCTRINE derived is this: A special application of *particular sins* is a chief means to bring people to a sight of their sins, and a true sorrow for them. The apostle doesn't propound their sins *generally*, but he comes home to their hearts. And it is not only done in *this* place, but it has been the practice of all God's faithful ministers up to now, such as John the Baptist. He doesn't go cunningly to work, to slyly *intimate* some truths. Rather, he deals *bluntly* with them, and says, *O generation of vipers; who forewarned you to flee from the wrath to come?* Luk 3.7. And he shows them their sins *in particular*. And when the publicans came to be baptized, he says, *Collect no more than is appointed for you*; and he says to the soldiers, *Do violence to no man, and be content with your wages*, Luk 3.13-14. He was the minister of humiliation and preparation, and therefore he deals with them plainly.

When Ahab had slain Naboth, the prophet Elijah came to him and said, *In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs will lick your own blood*. Ahab said, *Have you found me out, O my enemy?* And he said, *I have found you out, because you have sold yourself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord*, 1Kng 21.19-20. And the text says when Ahab heard this, he put on sackcloth and went softly (v. 27). This was the power of a *particular* reproof, even though he was a miserable, wicked man. Thus Paul dealt with Peter when he faltered before the Jews. He plainly reproved him to his face, and not secretly. Because Peter had sinned openly, Paul therefore reproves him openly. So too our Savior Christ shakes up the scribes and Pharisees, Mat 23.13-14.

And this is the rule in general. As the apostle says, Reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, Tit 1.13.

Objection. Oh! But some will say, If I deal plainly with them in this way, I will discourage them altogether.

Answer. No, it will make them sound Christians indeed. See what the Lord says, *Plead with your mother*, Hos 2.2. The word in the original is, *call her into the court*; call her by her name and say that *she is not My wife, and I am not her husband*. And the Lord says by Ezekiel, *Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations*, Eze 16.2. He doesn't say, cause the *country* to know her abominations, or the *country* to know the sins of the court, but make *Jerusalem* know her own abominations. This is for **two reasons**.

Reason 1. First, because the Word thus applied hits sooner than it would otherwise. A master commands a servant to do such a thing, and because he doesn't name him, one thinks it isn't him, and another thinks it isn't him either, only because he is not named. So when a minister says, *In many things we all sin*, he hits no man; and so none are affected by it. But now, *particular* application brings every man's part and portion. It not only sets the dish before him, but cuts him some meat, and carves it for him. And in this cause, we do as the nurse does with a child. She not only sets the meat before the child, but she minces it, and puts it into the child's mouth. The steward not only says there is meat enough in the market, but he *buys* it, and *brings* it home, and *sees it prepared*, and *gives direction* as to what is for each one. The words of a faithful minister are like arrows which, if they are shot at waist height, will fall down again, and do nothing. But when a man levels at a mark, only then, if ever, he will hit it. So many ministers can tell a gravely fair tale, and speak of sins *in general*. And these *common reproofs*, these *intimations of sin*, they are like arrows shot at waist height; they touch no man. But when a minister makes application of sin *in particular*, and says, O all you drunkards and adulterers, this is *your* portion; let this be like venom in your hearts, to purge out your lusts. When our Savior Christ lapped up the Pharisees all in one speech, it is said they heard the *parable*, and knew he meant *them*, Mat 21.45.

Overly general discourses that men are great sinners, and such, are like the confused noise in the ship when Jonah was asleep. It never troubled him, till at last the Master came and said, *Arise, O sleeper, and call upon your God*, Jon 1.6. And as a Church Father observes, they came around him, and every man struck a blow at him, and then he awaked. So because of general reproofs of sin, and foreign terms, men may come to Church and sit and sleep, and are not touched or troubled at all. But when particular application comes home to the heart, and a minister says, This is *your* drunkenness, and *your* adultery and profaneness; and this will break *your* neck one day; what assurance do *you* have of God's mercy? And what can *you* say for heaven? — then men begin to look around them. There was never any convicting ministry, nor any man who in plainness applied the Word home to the heart, that their people would not be reformed by it. Or else their consciences would be troubled, and desperately provoked to oppose God and his ordinances, so that they may be plagued by it. The Word of God is like a sword; the explanation of the text is like drawing out this sword and brandishing it; and for so long, it never hits. But when a man strikes a full blow *at a man*, it either wounds him, or forces him to fence. So the *application* of the Word is like striking with the sword: it will work one way or the other. If a man can fence the blow; so it is. But if not, it wounds. I confess, it is beyond our power to awaken the heart; but ordinarily, this way does good.

Reason 2. Secondly, as the Word of God particularly applied hits *soonest*, so it sinks *deepest*. The words of the wise are compared to *nails fastened by the Masters of Assemblies*. The doctrine delivered is like pointed nails. But when it is clear, and then particularly applied, it is like driving those nails fast upon the hearts and consciences of men. And this I take to be the reason why many have come many times to oppose the ministers of the Gospel. Yet God has broken in upon them, and humbled their hearts, and made them see their miserable condition.

Use 1. The first use is for *instruction*. Here we find the reason why plain teaching finds such opposition, and is so cavilled at by ministers and others. It is because thereby the eye of the soul comes to be opened, and all a man's abominations are revealed, and his conscience is pinched by it. Our Savior says, *Whoever does evil, hates the light, lest his deeds be reproved*, Joh 3.20. A thief hates the light and the lantern-bearer, because they show his villainy. So too, those who are guilty of many sinful courses and base practices, hate the minister who brings the Word with any power to their souls. A malefactor at the assizes (local courts) can be content to see a hundred men in the town, and is never troubled by them. But if he sees *one* man who comes to give evidence against him, and who knows his practices — Oh, how his heart rises with desperate indignation against that man. Oh, he says, this is the one who seeks my life; he will make my neck crack. So it is with this soul-saving ministry. It is that which brings in a bill of indictment against a man. Now, a man can be content to come and hear however many sermons; but if a minister comes in as a witness against him, and begins to arraign him, and to indict him for his pride, and malice, and covetousness, and to convince him of them, and to lay him prostrate before the Lord and his own conscience — Oh, *then* he is not able to bear it.

What is the reason for this? He can hear others quietly, and say, Oh, they are sweet men; they deal kindly and comfortably. Why? *The Latin mass doesn't bite* (as the proverb goes). This kind of ministry doesn't work at all. And this is the reason why they aren't troubled, but can go away so well-contented. I have sometimes wondered at this: why a company of gentlemen, yeomen, and poor women, who scarcely know their ABC's, have a minister speak Latin, Greek, and Hebrew to them, and use the Church fathers, when it is certain that they know nothing at all. The reason is because all this doesn't *sting*. They may sit and sleep in their sins, and go to hell hoodwinked, never awakened. And that is the reason they will welcome such ministers to their houses, and say, Oh, he is an excellent man; I would give anything that I might live under his ministry.

It is just Ahab's old temperament. He could agree seasonably with *four hundred false Prophets*. And if there had been five thousand more, they would all have been accepted by him. But when Jehoshaphat asked, 1Kng 22.7-8, *Isn't there another prophet of the LORD?* Oh yes (says Ahab) *there is one named Micaiah, but I hate him; he never spoke good to me* — that is, he never soothes me. So it was with the temperament of the people that are mentioned in the Acts. When the apostle saw that they were a rebellious people, he dealt plainly with them. But they cried, *Away with such a fellow, he is not worthy to live*, Act 22.21-22. What? they said, Then it seems we will be cast off from the Lord, and be his people no longer. They were not able to bear that. People in this case, deal with God's faithful ministers as the widow of Sarepta did when the prophet told her that *the meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse would not decrease*. All this while he was welcome. But when her child was dead, *Oh what have I to do with you, you man of God?* Thinking indeed that the prophet had killed her Son, 1Kng 17.16-18.

All the while we leave the door wide open — so that all the drunkards and adulterers in the country may go to heaven — you like us well enough. We're as welcome as may be; and we're marvelously good preachers, and you think we're fit for the pulpit. But once we come to lay sin to your charge, and to threaten condemnation for it, and to say, *If God is in heaven you will never come there if you continue in your sins* — oh, *then* they are up in arms, and say as the widow did, Have you come to slay our souls, and awaken our consciences? Beloved, this argues for a spirit that never found the power of the Word. But it is our duty, and we must do it. And however it is not accepted by the wicked, it will yet be entertained by God, and He will give us our reward on that great Day.

Use 2. Secondly, its *necessity*. If particular application is so powerful, and so profitable, let me speak a word to my fellow-brethren. It falls heavy on those of us who are not willing to *practice* this, but rather *oppose* it in others who desire to do it. This plain and particular application is accounted a matter of silliness, and lack of wisdom, and rashness, and a thing which doesn't befit a pulpit. But (some say) a man's words must be sweet, and soothing, and he must have a tender

hand over men, whoever they may be, and however profane. Indeed, I dare say that if the devil himself were here, he would not be troubled. Ministers must lay bolsters under men's heads, and sew pillows under their elbows, so that they may sit easily, and not trouble drunkards and adulterers. But let them be still in their sins, and you will let them go down to hell. *This* is what the devil loves and takes great contentment in. And it is certain, if he could prevail, no other course would be taken up. If a great man is present, or a patron that we look to for a living (if only my ears hadn't heard this), it is strange to think how a minister daubs over this. If their sins are so gross that the whole Congregation would cry shame if he didn't reprove them, then what will they say? 'We will not, we dare not reprove you. But we beseech you and desire from you, that as every man has his infirmity, a word to the wise is sufficient,' etc. I blame myself, so far as my base fear possesses me. But brethren, what will become of preaching in its conclusion, if this reproofing may take no place in the hearts of the people?

And yet notwithstanding all this, there is one thing to be considered. If there isn't any *upright*-hearted minister or sincere Christian, who is more exact than ordinary, then what will *carnal* ministers do? Though they have no reason in the text, no ground in the Word to warrant them; though they cannot condemn a poor Christian on good grounds; yet they will invent new ways and twist the text to dishonor God's name [by glossing over sin]. And then in all bitterness, they can vent themselves against faithful Christians and conscionable Ministers [who do reprove sin]. And hence the hands of the wicked are strengthened, and the hearts of God's people are much daunted; and the Gospel of Jesus Christ will not prevail in the heart of those to whom it is preached.

Let us see what it is that God requires of us. Mark the severe charge and command that the apostle gives his scholar Timothy, 2Tim 4.1-2: *I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, preach the Word, be instant in season, and out of season, reprove, rebuke* — as if he said, The stubborn hearts of men need *reproving* especially. And therefore, doing this is the main thing that God requires, and the main end for which the Word serves. *Sharp reproofs make sound Christians*, Tit 1.13. He that heals only superficially, hurts more than he heals. Aren't there many to be humbled? And aren't there many lusts reigning in the hearts of men and women? Let us therefore throw away this shameful hiding, and make our ministry known to the souls of those to whom we speak.

Objection 1. But some will object to this preaching, that it is nothing but the rashness of men's spirits, a kind of railing that doesn't befit a pulpit.

Answer. To this I answer that the prophets of God ever used and practiced it; and the holy apostles, who were inspired in an extraordinary measure of the spirit, imitated Christ and his prophets in this. And God commanded Isaiah to *lift up his voice, as a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins*, Isa 58.1.

That is, tell the drunkard and adulterer of their sin. Did Christ and his Apostles "rail"? Are these men alone wise? Oh how fearful! that the souls of men should be so desperately transported *against* the truth of God! You who have had any such thoughts against the power of God in the ministry of the Word, *repent* and *pray* that if it is possible, the words of your mouths and the thoughts of your hearts may be forgiven, Act 8.22. The apostles and Christ himself used this kind of teaching. Seven times He said, *Woe to you scribes and Pharisees!* If Christ now lived, you would say he railed. Oh how fearful! I tell you, this sin is next to the sin against the Holy Spirit.

Objection 2. But secondly, they object that in this last age of the world, there is a difference. It is true, if men weren't taught, this would be necessary. But now in these times of knowledge, what is the need for all this ado? For all those troubles and reproofs? What, should we make men out to be incompetents, to mince their meat for them? No, set their meat, set the *Word* before them, and they are wise enough to take their meat, and to apply the Word to themselves.

Answer. I confess it is true, the Lord (blessed be His name) has made his word more evidently known than formerly. And yet there is a great deal of knowledge lacking in most sorts of men. Indeed, I can speak by experience, that as for the meaner, ordinary sort of people, it is incredible and inconceivable what ignorance is among them. Indeed, I will be bold to justify it, that whoever thinks himself the wisest in understanding, if we examine him closely, we will make it known to him that he knows little or nothing of what he should and ought to know.

But imagine men had the knowledge of the Word. The main end of preaching is not to *instruct* men, but to work on their *hearts*. When a man has taught men what they should do, he has but come to the walls of the castle; the fort is in the *heart*. The greatest work of the ministry is to pull down the *wills* of men who know *the truth of God, but hold it in unrighteousness*, Rom 1.18.

Indeed, for those who do know it, how dull they are in the performance of these duties which God calls for at their hands. So that we would not only need to mince their meat for them, but even put it in their mouths – and yet they *sleep* with the meat in their mouths! I appeal to you who are enlightened in the knowledge of the truth. Don't you find a dullness of mind, and an indisposed spirit in the performance of those duties which God calls for at your hands? It was said by a reverend Divine, that the freest horse sometimes needs a spur to prod him forward. So I say, even the best Christian needs a sharp reproof to prod him forward in a Christian course.

Objection 3. But thirdly, if *reason* cannot prevail, they dash this preaching out of countenance, and say, When ministers lack matter, they ransack men's consciences, and apply their particular sins to them, and so they make up their sermons.

Answer. Then our Savior Jesus Christ lacked matter, for he presses their faults to the Scribes and Pharisees *seven times* together. In fact, in the sixth chapter of John, he presses one truth *nine times*. His aim and end was namely, that he was *the bread of life*; he follows it, and settles it on them. Now, in the judgment of these men, Christ lacked matter. He had nothing with which to spend the time, and therefore he spoke to the hearts of men, and came home to their consciences. But to tell the truth, the ground of their cavils which are cast against this kind of preaching, is that it troubles the hearts of those to whom we *speak*, and brings vexation to their souls. Do we lack matter for our preaching? No, but this I say: it is an easy matter for any man to observe truths out of a text, and to lay out a point. This is an easy thing for anyone who has a judgment enlightened in the Scripture. But for a minister of God, the work of examination is to drive the soul of a carnal man to a stand, so that he cannot escape. It is to make him go away and hang the wings,¹³ in so far that the soul is *humbled*; or else goes away and snarls at the truth and reproof that was delivered. Or it is for a man to uphold a soul in the time of trouble, to comfort it, and take away all doubts – I say *this* is the hardest matter for a minister to accomplish under the sun.

Use 3. The third use is, for *exhortation*. This should stir up the hearts of all the people of God, to set an edge on their affections, and to desire this manner of teaching. And when God makes His truth known to us in this way, we should submit to its power. You have most need of this, and there is most profit in this. And therefore your hearts ought to be more enlarged to covet and submit to it.

How to profit in hearing the Word preached

And therefore, you who are hearers, suffer me to provoke you to it. When the time comes that you are to approach the house of God, pray to the Lord that he would direct you, and that the minister may come home to your hearts, and bring your hearts to the Word, as the people brought their sacrifices under the old Law. They brought them and laid them on the altar, that the priest might *kill* them, and divide them. So bring your hearts under the power of Jesus Christ, that they may be cut and divided, that your blood may be in the right vein, that your corruptions may be

¹³ *Hang the wings*: having slumped or drooped shoulders; it means feeling helpless, hopeless, or humbled.

subdued, that they may have their death-wound given to them. Take up that resolution of the prophet David, *I will hear what the Lord says to my soul*, Psa 85.8. I will not hear what the Levite says to the Courtier or to the Commons, but I will see what the Lord says to *me*. Oh (say some) the minister speaks home to that person; he touched him to the quick.¹⁴ What is that to *you*? Will another man's salve cure *you*? Therefore labor that the Lord may come home to you in particular; that the Lord may salve you, and cut you, and save you, for your everlasting comfort.

You are wise for the things of this life; you will be content to part with anything that may procure your comfort. If a father were now on his deathbed making his will, every child would think, what does my father give me? If a man is invited to a feast, he is not content only to have the food set before him, but if the master of the feast would carve for him, he will take it kindly. Every faithful minister is the father of the people, and they are his children. They are the stewards of the Lord's house, and give to everyone their portion — terror to whom terror belongs, and comfort to whom comfort belongs, Luk 12.42.

Therefore, when you come into the congregation, and see the minister giving and imparting to everyone his dole — reproof here, and instruction there — look up to heaven and labor to get something for your own particular need. Say as Esau did in another case, *Something for me, Lord something for me*. Instruct me, reprove me, make known my sins, reveal my abominations.

When the delicacies of salvation are being distributed, you who are at the lower end of the table should think to yourselves, 'Will the dish never come to the lower end? Oh that the Lord would now guide the Minister to lay his hand on the sore of this cursed infidelity of mind! Oh, that the Lord would knock down that sin of mine this day.'

And if your heart is any whit enlightened and touched, you will be much contented and comforted. As David said to Abigail when she came to dissuade him from going against Nabal to destroy him, she said, *Upon me alone, my Lord, be this iniquity*, 2Sam 25.24. Why? *Blessed be God* (says David) *who sent you this day to meet me; and blessed be your counsel, which has kept me this day from coming to shed blood and avenging myself*, vv. 32, 33.

So, if you have a good heart, you won't go away repining and fretting at the Word, and saying, 'The minister meant me, and crosses me.' Take heed of this temper of heart. And if God is pleased to carve out for any man, those particular fruits that concern his good, then go away and bless the Lord, and say, *'Blessed be His good word, and his poor servant who met this day with my sins. I never observed that pride; I never observed that malice; I never discovered that carelessness; I didn't care what became of Christ; I didn't respect what became of his ministers; I didn't regard what became of his name. But the Lord has shown me my sins — and blessed be God for that good work which has been communicated to my soul by His servant.'*

A Naughty Heart Revealed

And observe this: so far as the heart is fearful that the minister will address his sins, that far the heart is naughty.¹⁵ If indeed it is so — if your conscience testifies against you that you are loath to have your sins dealt with roundly; if you think the minister should be mild, and not use such bitter reprehensions and sharp reproofs — then I beseech you, think of it seriously. You are dealing with your sins as David dealt with Absalom. When Joab was to go out, David charged him to treat Absalom kindly and gently; that is, don't kill him, but take him prisoner. That was his statement, *Deal kindly for my sake with the young man Absalom*, 2Sam 18.5.

Do you deal this way with your sins? Would you have the minister deal kindly with drunkenness and adultery and malice? Don't kill drunkenness, but only take him prisoner; keep him in. Reform

¹⁴ *To the quick*: to the very core and depth of the soul.

¹⁵ *Naughty*: when this was written, the word meant evil, wicked, morally reprehensible.

only the outward face — of drunkenness, so we won't be drunk in the open streets, but in a corner — of swearing, so that men won't swear at every turn, but whenever they come among gentlemen, they do it *cunningly*.¹⁶

The case is clear. If your soul is of this temper, it never *hated* sin; it never *sorrowed* for sin; it never found the Word of God working upon it to *subdue* sin.

How to know whether we hate sin.

Imagine there was a traitor or rebel who had come into the town, who sought to take the King's life — no, suppose he were *your* enemy or the like. Would anyone say that a man hates his enemy, if he cannot endure to have that enemy discovered, arrested, and brought to execution? Surely not. Rather, we would say he loves him, covers him, hides him, and he would not have him known; he is a lover of a traitor, and a traitor himself. Otherwise, why do you harbor a traitor? You cover him so that he cannot come to judgment; and therefore you are a friend to him. *So it is in this case.* Can you say that you hate sin — that you hate malice, and covetousness, and looseness, and profaneness — and meanwhile your soul says, I cannot endure that the minister should discover these? I cannot endure that he should arrest them, and arrest my soul for my covetousness, and adultery, and the like. My heart rises, and I would cover it, and hide it. Indeed, I can speak out sometimes and say, The traitor isn't here; I am not the drunkard; I am not the adulterer you talk of. But if the minister pursues your soul, then you shut the door against him. If it is this way with you, then I tell you, you are a friend to the traitor. You never hated your sin; you have never yet been brought to a true sight or sorrow for it.

We will now proceed. *When they heard this*, the text says (Act 2:37). The word in the original conveys a continual act — *having heard this*. There wasn't an end to it, but the sting of the Word stuck in their hearts. When they walked on the way, the accusation sounded in their ears: *I have crucified the Lord of life*; and when they laid down, it came into their minds, *I have shed the blood of the Lord*; and when they arose, their first thought was, *I have consented to it and drenched my hands in it*. This stuck upon their spirits, and the sting of the truth would not go away. Rather, after they heard it, it remained in their hearts.

The DOCTRINE derived is this: That serious MEDITATION on our sins by the Word of God, is a special means to break our hearts for our sins. *After they had heard* (this denotes a continual action), the truth of God still stuck in their stomachs; the arrows of God would not come out. The Apostle shot some secret shot into their souls, which came home to their hearts and consciences *when they heard this*; that is, after musing and meditating and pondering this. When they could hold out no longer, and bear no more, they came to the apostles and said, *What shall we do?* Sometimes God brings a man into the church to carp at the minister, and to see what he may have against him. Now, if the Lord stings the conscience of that man, he will hear you the whole week after and say, I think I still see the man. He aimed at me; he intended me; and I think I hear the word still sounding in my ears. He is always meditating on the Word in this way.

And a serious meditation on sin, revealed by the Word, is a special means to pierce the soul for it. This is the power of meditation. David considered the glory of wicked men, how their eyes bulged with abundance, Psa 73.7, and how they had more than any heart could wish. And who but they in the world had this? Yet they weren't troubled; they weren't molested. When he considered and mused on this, it pierced his soul, and he was vexed with it. This went to his very entrails; and therefore that place is marvelously pregnant. Meditation was the means by which Lot was so touched with the abominations of Sodom. That righteous man dwelling among them, in *seeing and hearing, his righteous soul was vexed from day to day with their unlawful deeds*, 2Pet 2.8. Many besides Lot saw and heard, and yet they weren't vexed. But he vexed *himself* — that is,

¹⁶ Cunningly — veiled; surreptitious; not open or brazen.

meditation on those evils, and bringing them home to his soul, *vexed* him and *troubled* him. And that word *vexed* is a fine word, implying **two things**.

First, the search and examination of a thing.

Secondly, the racking and vexing of a man upon the trial.

So it was with Lot. He observed all the evils; he weighed them and pondered them; and then he racked his soul, and vexed himself with the consideration of them. The same word that is used here for *vexing*, is used in the matter of a storm. The text says, *The ship was **tossed** with the waves*, Mat 14.24. So MEDITATION *tosses* the soul with vexation. It was the practice of the church: *Remembering my affliction, the wormwood and the gall, my soul keeps them in remembrance, and is humbled in me*, Lam 3.19-20. In remembering, I remembered, for so the original has it. I remembered all my miseries and afflictions, and my sins that were the cause of it; that is, I still mused and meditated on it. And what follows? The heart was buckled and bowed by it, and was broken in the consideration of it.¹⁷

What meditation is.

Question. But you may ask, What do you mean by this *musings* and *meditating*?

Answer. Meditation is nothing else but a settled exercise of the mind for the further inquiry about a truth, for affecting the heart with it.

There are **four things** to be considered in meditation.

First, it is an exercise of the mind. It doesn't barely close with a truth, and apprehend it, and assent to it, and rest there; but it looks on every side of the truth. It is a fine phrase of David's, *I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet to your testimonies*, Psa 119.59. It is like ornate works which are the same on both sides; those who make them must turn them often, to compare each side. So it was with the prophet David: I turned my ways upside down, and looked every way at them. And so again, *Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased*, Dan 12.4. "Run to and fro" — what is that? It is not the bodily moving of the man, so much as the busy stirring of the mind, from one truth to another. It propounds one, and gathers another, so that it sees the whole compass of the truth. I used to compare *meditation* to *perambulation*, when men go the bounds of the parish. They go over every part of it, to see how far it goes. So meditation is the perambulation of the soul — when the soul looks to see how far sin goes, and considers the punishment of it, and the plagues that are threatened against it, and the vileness of it.

Secondly, it is the settled (fixed) exercise of the mind. It is not a sudden flash of a man's conception at the moment. Rather, it dwells and stays upon a truth; it settles again and again, what it has bestowed itself upon. When a man is deep in meditation on a thing, he neither sees nor hears any other thing; otherwise the stream of the heart is not settled on the truth conceived.

A man who has been injured by another, when he eats and walks, he still thinks of his injury; his heart is settled on it. So your hearts ought to be settled on the truth. The apostle to Timothy says, *Continue in the things you have learned*, 2Tim 3.14; the Word in the original is, *be in them*;¹⁸ that is, let a man's mind be molded into the truth.

Thirdly, it is a settled exercise for **two ends**: *first*, to make a further inquiry about the truth; and *secondly*, to make the heart affected with it. For this is the nature of meditation. It is not to settle itself on a known thing, but either to know more *in* those truths subjected to it; or else to labor to gather something *from* them. It is with the truth, as it is with a man who goes into the house and pulls the latch. When he was outside, he might see the outside of the house, but he could not see

¹⁷ My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. (Lam 3:20 ESV)

¹⁸ The Greek is *meno*, to abide in.

the rooms within — not unless he draws the latch and comes in, and walks around the house. Meditation pulls the latch of the truth, and sees *this is my sin, this is the cause, here is the misery, this is the plague*. And thus meditation searches into every corner of the truth.

Lastly, meditation labors to affect the heart. It is not only to know a thing, but to bring it home to the soul. These things are *so*; know it for your good. So when a man has viewed all and considered all, then meditation brings all to the heart, and it labors to affect the heart with it. This is what brings sorrow and regret for sin — a settled exercise of the heart that meditates on sins, and inquires about them. There are **two grounds** for this, and they are very remarkable.

Ground 1. Meditation brings sin home to the heart.

The first is this: meditation makes all a man's sins — and any truth belonging to them — more powerfully and plainly brought home to the heart. Meditation is the action of the understanding when a man gathers all reasons, and musters up a force of arguments, and labors to press the soul, and to lay these heavy upon the heart, *in order to bring it under the power of the truth*. It is with meditation as it is with usurers who grate upon men, and grind the faces of the poor, and suck the blood of the needy. They exact upon men, and take use upon use. They're not content to take back the principal, but want consideration for all the time used, until they have sucked the blood of a poor man who is under such a muckworm. A poor man could be content to pay the principal, but to exact use upon use — this *kills* him. So does meditation. It exacts and slays the soul of a poor sinner. You have committed adultery in a corner (out of sight), but you won't carry it away so. You did this against the revealed knowledge of God, against many mercies received, against many judgments threatened, against checks of conscience, against many vows and promises remembered — an item for this, item for that — and thus meditation on it oppresses the soul.

But then the soul will perhaps say, It is but a foible of youth, or It is my infirmity. No, no, says Meditation, this has been your course from time to time *continually*. That has been your haunt. It has been a riveted corruption that has fastened upon your bones, and will go to your grave with you, and it will bring you to hell. But then the soul says, I will repent. No, no, says Meditation, your heart is hardened in this sin. You have a heart that cannot repent or yield. The Word of God doesn't work, it doesn't prevail. The minister has flung hellfire in your face, and told you that no drunkard or adulterer will go to heaven. And yet you leave no more moved than the seat on which you sat. You have *continued* in sin, and are *hardened* in sin.

Mark how Meditation thus exacts "use upon use." But then the soul replies, I will go to the Word, and wait upon the means, and maybe the Word will prevail. No, no, says Meditation. You have despised the Word, and God will take his word away from you, or you from his word, or his blessing from both. What, is it a matter of *infirmity*? No, it is your *continual course*. And will you repent? No, you cannot, you *cannot*; you are hardened. And you hope the Word will work upon you? No, no, it is cursed to you. Thus meditation exacts use upon use, until the blood of the soul is sucked up. Meditation breaks the soul, and lays a weight upon the soul in this case.

It is a remarkable passage about Peter, when our Savior told Peter that before the cock crowed twice, he would deny him thrice. The text says, when the cock crowed the second time, *Peter remembered the words of our Savior; and went out, and wept bitterly*, Mat 26.75. The Word in the original suggests this holy man heaped all the circumstances together, and reasoned thus:

The cock crows. Now I remember the words of Christ. Oh what a wretch am I, that I should deny such a Master who called me; such a Master who found me, such a Master who was merciful to me! When I never saw myself, or my sins, he plucked me out from my sins. It is that Master I have denied. He came to do me good, and to save me, and I have denied him, even at a dead lift. If ever I should have defended him, I should have defended him now. If ever I should have stood for him, I should have stood for him now. But to deny my master and forswear him, that *I* should do it — an apostle so beloved and honored — that I should do it when I professed the contrary

— what, such a master denied by *me*, by such an apostle, at such a time, before such persons, and forced to do it by such a silly maiden.

All these sinful circumstances, the manner of them, the nature of them, the heinousness of them — the holy apostle laid all these to his heart. And his heart sunk under these circumstances thus gathered together, and *he went out and wept bitterly*.

Look how it is in war. If many scores came against an Army, they might be conquered, or many hundreds might be resisted by that Army. But if many *thousands* came against a small army, that army would be in danger of being overcome. Meditation leads, as it were, an army of arguments against the soul — an army of curses, and miseries, and judgments. Though one misery or plague will not down it (for a man may endure that and get away with it), yet meditation brings an *army* of arguments. It tells the soul, God is against you wherever you are, and whatever you do. And then the heart begins to cry out, as Elisha's servant did, *Master what shall I do?* What, so many sins, and so heinous, and so many judgments denounced upon me for them. Lord, what shall I do? How will I be delivered from these, and pardoned for these? And thus meditation brings sin home to the heart more powerfully.

Ground 2. Meditation fastens sin on the Conscience.

The second argument is this: as meditation brings in all bills of account, so meditation fastens sin upon the consciences of those to whom the Word of God is spoken. It does it more strongly, in as much as the soul cannot escape from the truth of God delivered, and from the judgments of God denounced against him. Sometimes when men hear the Word and the threatenings denounced, their hearts are touched, and they go away resolved not to commit sin as they've done before. But once they're gone, it doesn't work. The heart recoils, and goes back to its old course again. The reason is because you don't *meditate* on the Word.

It's with the Word as it is with a salve. If a man has ever so good a salve, which heals a sore in twenty-four hours, if a man does nothing but lay this salve to the wound, and quickly takes it off again, it will never heal the wound. And this is no wonder. Why? He won't let it lie on the wound. The best salve under heaven won't heal a sore or eat out a corruption, unless it is bound on and left to lie. *So it is with the good Word of God*. Many a soul hears the Word of God, and his heart is touched because of his sin, and his conscience begins to be awakened. But once he goes out of the church, all is gone. His affections die, and his heart dies, and his conscience isn't touched. And it's no wonder. You won't hold the Word to your souls. You *hear* sin, and then *don't* hear it; you *see* sin, but don't *apprehend* it. And therefore the Word doesn't over-power your corruptions. Do you think the salve will work when you don't keep it on? The Word of God is the salve; conviction of your conscience is like binding on the salve; and meditation is like binding it *to the sore*.

Remember the truth which first touched you, and keep that on. Let nothing take it away from your mind. Hold that good word close to the soul, and it will keep your heart in the very same temper *after* its delivery, as it was in its *first* delivery. The apostle James compares a slight hearer to a man who glances at his face in a mirror, and forgets what visage he had. But, James says, *Whoever looks to the Law of Liberty, and continues in it, not being a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word, this man shall be blessed in his deeds*, Jas 1.23-25. The Law of Liberty is the Law of God. And this Law being a mirror, you must not only hear it and be gone — and thus slight and neglect it — but you must *continue* looking. And then you will see the complexion of your sins, and the vileness of your corruptions. When the drunkard hears the baseness of his sins, and the adulterer hears the baseness of his abominations, they only glance at themselves in the mirror of the Law. But they must carry the mirror away with them, and still look at themselves. The adulterer must say, I am a profane creature, and my heart is polluted, my conscience defiled, and my soul hardened, and I will be damned. If a man were to look at and view his sins this way, and if he

carried the mirror away with him continually, he would see his life so ugly, and his heart so base, that he would not be able to bear it.

However bitter the pills are, if a man *swallows* them quickly, there is no great distaste. But if a man *chews* a pill, it will make him deadly sick, because it goes against the nature of it. So our sins are like these pills. They go down somewhat pleasantly if we quickly swallow our oaths and profaneness, our malice and contempt of God and his ordinances; if we make it nothing to mock the religion of God and its professors. You *swallow* pills now, but God will make you *chew* those pills one day. And then they will be *bitter*. Though the swearer swallows his oaths now, at last the Lord will make him remember that He will not hold him guiltless. He will arraign him at the Day of Judgment, and make him plead *guilty* at the bar. Again, He will make you chew over your malice. You hated the Lord's word, and the works of His Spirit — and this will condemn you.

Again, meditation besets the heart of a man, so that he cannot escape. Wherever he is, meditation brings these things to his mind, and the plagues due for it, so that he cannot escape the impact of it. It is the nature of our own hearts that we are loath to read our own destiny. This will be our bane and humiliation. Meditation culls over the thoughts of a man, tells him the reasons are good, the arguments sound, and the Scripture plain. Your sins are evident. *Conscience*, you know it; therefore *heart*, you must do it (says Meditation). Take heed of drunkenness, says Meditation. You heard what the minister said. These sins are against God, and the wrath of God has gone out against you for these sins. These sins will be your bane, and they will bring you to everlasting destruction. And when Meditation thus yawns¹⁹ at the heart — the mind still musing, and the heart still pondering sin — at last the heart is weary of it, and therefore unburdened with it.

The result of these two arguments is this: if meditation brings sin more powerfully and more plainly to the soul; if it is what binds, and fastens, and settles it upon the soul; then the point is clear: serious meditation on sin is a special means to bring a soul to the sight and sorrow for sin.

Uses. There are three uses of this; the third is the main use.

Use 1. If meditation is so powerful and profitable for contrition of the heart, and thus to bring consolation to the heart, what are we to think of those who are *unwilling to practice this duty*? Indeed, what will we think of that untowardness of heart which is in us, against the *command* of this duty? ²⁰ It falls marvelously heavy on us *all* more or less in this kind, for we are marvelously *guilty* in this kind. A man could as well bring a bear to the stake, as a carnal heart to consider its own ways; and much more loath is he to ponder seriously, and meditate continually upon his sins. No, men are so far from musing about their sins, that they *disdain* this practice, and *scoff* at it. They say, What, if everyone was of your mind, what would become of us? Should we always pore over our corruptions? We might go mad, perhaps, if we were all of your opinion. Thus we slight and put it off, and trample on this duty which is so profitable. The poor will not meditate on his sins; he has no time. The rich say they don't need it. The wicked *dare* not. And so in this case, no man will do it. What (they say), should a man set his soul on a continual rack? Should a man drive himself to a desperate stand, and trouble himself unprofitably? Can't men keep themselves well, once they are well?

This is the course and frame of the world; and we may complain of this careless and heedless age, as Jeremiah did of his own time: *No man repents of his wickedness, saying, what have I done?* (Jer 8.6) There's no questioning, no searching, no musing. No man says, *these are my sins, these are my ways*. No man looks over his course and conduct; he doesn't apprehend his sin. And that's the reason we hear of no humbling, no repenting. But every man runs into sin *as the horse rushes into the battle*. This is why there are so many unclean beasts in the ark. Under the old law, if there

¹⁹ *Yawl*: to yell at or cry out, loud and long, like a cat yawl.

²⁰ **Jos 1:8** This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.

were any beasts that didn't chew the cud, it was counted unclean. "Chewing the cud" is serious meditation on the mercies of God to comfort us, and on our sins to humble us.

There are many ungodly persons in the bosom of the church, who don't muse on their sinful ways. The prophet Jeremiah says, *Were they ashamed when they committed abominations? No, they were not at all ashamed; nor could they blush*, Jer 8.12. He has a reason in the eleventh verse. They couldn't be ashamed. Why? Because they cry, *Peace, peace*. Let the minister say what he can, and denounce whatever judgment he will, they yet promise themselves peace and quietness. They don't consider their ways, and therefore their hearts are not disquieted with them, nor troubled at the consideration of them. No, there are many who count it an excellency, a cunning skill, if they can drive away and shake off the sight of sin, if they can put off meditation on anything the Word reveals. They make it a marvelously excellent piece of skill. And what they do themselves, they would have others do also. But those who now will not see, nor consider, nor meditate on their sins — the truth is, they *shall* see them. As the Lord says by Isaiah, *When your hand is lifted up, they will not see. But they shall see and be ashamed*, Isa 26.11. You who will not see your sins, but say, 'What is the need for all this stir? Let the minister say what he will. Shall we be madmen, to be troubled? And shall we be fools, to be disquieted with the consideration of our sins?' — well, you won't muse on your sins now. But the time will come, when the Lord will set all your sins in order before you, and you won't be able to look away from them.

And this is why, when a man has lived wickedly all his days, and comes to lie on his deathbed, all his sins come to his remembrance. And then conscience flies in his face and says, Here is a cup for a drunkard and for an adulterer. Now he sees *nothing but* sin; and hell, and damnation due to him for his sin. And then he cries out, *he is damned*. You might have seen something *before* then. If you had seen him humbled for these things, you would never have seen him damned for them. If there is any occasion for baseness offered to the view of the drunkard, which way does he *not* use to satisfy his carnal delights? If the drunkard and profane wretch is so eager in lingering after sin, that he would commit it, and be damned for it — won't a man so labor to *see his iniquities*, that he may be humbled for them before God, and receive mercy from God in pardoning them? Will the reprobate draw judgments upon their souls, *and bend all their meditations that way*, and yet those who desire to see God in glory, not do the same?

Use 2. The second use is for *instruction*. From the former doctrine that was delivered, we may gather that loose, vain, jovial company is the greatest hindrance to *preparation for Christ*, and the greatest *obstacle to the work of grace*, that can be possible. This isn't forced, but follows clearly from the former truth in the following manner. I reason thus:

That course which takes the mind away from musing, and the understanding from meditating on his evil way, is the greatest hindrance to the heart not being humbled and fitted for the Lord. For meditation ushers in contrition, and that prepares the heart for Christ. But your jovial company and riotous persons ²¹ — there is nothing under heaven that more takes the mind away from musing, and the understanding from weighing a man's evil thoroughly. Therefore, this must be a marvelous impediment and hindrance to those who endeavor to walk uprightly before God in any measure, Amos 6:3-5.²²

There are rules set down for their ribaldry: they thrust and put the Day of the Lord far away from them. That is the first law they make, the first statute they enact. Don't think of sin now, and don't meditate on judgment now (they say), but come, cast care away, fling away and cashier those

²¹ *Riotous*: unrestrained by convention or morality.

²² **Amo 6:3-6** *Woe to you who put far off the day of doom, Who cause the seat of violence to come near; Who lie on beds of ivory, Stretch out on your couches, Eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall; Who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments, And invent for yourselves musical instruments like David; Who drink wine from bowls, And anoint yourselves with the best ointments, But are not grieved for the ruin of Joseph.*

melancholy imaginations. We have many failings; so therefore, let's not ponder them, and make ourselves that much more miserable. This day will be like yesterday, and tomorrow like today — no sorrow or judgment, no sin now considered. This is *remarkable*. And if a poor soul in that drunken state, should be affected by the hand of God, and suggest these words to his drunken companions — 'All of us here are merry and jolly, and let out our hearts in delight, but for all this, God will bring us to judgment. The eyes of God now see our drinking and reveling; and the ear of God hears our blasphemies and swearing. And we will one day be plagued for these!' — why, this would spoil all their sport and jollity! They wouldn't be able to bear him, but would quickly fling him out of doors.

This is that bane of many a soul. Therefore take notice of it, if any of you have had a sight of sin. If a drunkard goes aside and hangs the wing a little, mark what his companions do. If they can but once get him into their company, and make him shake off those dumps, and run on in his former course, then this hinders him from meditating on his sins, and from being prepared for Christ. Hence, many a poor soul who has had the fire kindled, and the terror that the Lord has let into his soul, would have humbled his proud stomach, and melted his stubborn heart — but partly drunkenness on one side, and merriness on another, took away all the amazement by which the soul might have been worked upon, and received everlasting salvation. Therefore *think of it*. It was the course that the Scripture observed in the lamenting church. *The house of David apart, and their wives apart, the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart, Zec 12:12.*²³ There is no taking account of oneself in a crowd. But if a man would take account of himself — if he would see his sins, and consider his base practices — then he must go aside *by himself*. Loose occasions and vain occasions withdraw the mind, and pluck the soul away from seeing the evil, and affecting the heart with it.

Therefore the apostle Peter, a little beyond my text, when he saw the Jews were affected by what he had delivered, and that their hearts were touched, when they asked him what they should do, he says, *Save yourselves from this crooked generation*, Act 2.40. God has now touched your hearts. Don't allow Satan, by these wicked instruments of his, to steal the terror of God out of your hearts. For your drunken companions are just like those ravening fowls spoken of by Christ, that devoured the seed that fell by the wayside, Luk 8.5. The fowl is the devil; the seed is the Word of God. Now, the devil doesn't pluck this seed out of the soul by himself alone, but often by cursed companions. The alehouse is the bush that harbors those ravenous beasts; and drunken companions are those the devil uses to pluck this good seed out of the heart. And therefore, if you love your souls, don't let yourselves to be drawn away by these cursed wretches; don't let them steal away the work of God's Spirit, which he has wrought in your hearts. This I observe to check that cursed practice of men who, when a man is troubled, send him to play cards, or dice, or the like, which is the greatest means to hinder the work of God in their hearts.

Use 3. Thirdly, seeing that meditation brings marvelous comfort and profit to our souls, you are therefore to be *exhorted* — since you see what it is that God requires — that you set upon it with speed; and that with care and conscience, you labor to persevere in the performance of it. I beseech you, *think of it* — what is more usual in the world than this, that men slight and take little account of their sins? Indeed, they stand bolt upright under those execrable abominations for which they stand guilty before God. Look how it was with Samson. He went off with the gates of Gaza, as if they were nothing, Jdg 16.3. So there are many who carry the gates of hell upon their backs, such as drunkenness and adultery, and yet they don't fear, nor are they frightened at this. Even God's own servants, who desire to look towards Zion, isn't this your lament many times?

'I cannot find sin heavy. I confess that the Word discovers and reveals it, but I cannot be troubled by it. I cannot find my soul burdened with it. Sin isn't heavy to me. Rather, I carry it away easily,

²³ If they *do* come aside, then ^{ESV} **Zec 13:1** "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

and make no bones of the matter. Though proud, and lewd, and careless, and untoward, yet my heart is not apprehensive of the weight of it.'

Let me speak to you. Aren't you therefore hindered in the way that God requires of you, because you don't weigh and ponder those evil ways in which you stand guilty of before God? But you are better contented to see them and *slight* them, than to remember them [and *put them away*]. I beseech you to take notice of it!

Look how it is with men in the world. If a five-hundred-pound weight is laid on the ground, and a man never plucks at it, he won't feel the weight of it. Your sins are not many hundreds, but many *thousands* of pounds. The least vain thought you ever imagined, the least idle word that you ever uttered, are weight enough to press your souls down into everlasting perdition. And therefore, so many sins, so great, and so constantly committed against so much knowledge, against so many comforts and encouragements, against so many vows and protestations, are *much heavier* — and yet you don't feel them. The reason is, you don't *see* them. You don't weigh your pride; you don't weigh your malice; you don't weigh your dead heartedness. If you weighed them seriously, and considered them thoroughly, you would find them heavier than the sand on the seashore.

How to meditate on sins rightly.

Objection. But you say, how should we come to meditate on our sins rightly, that we may have a right sight and sorrow for sin?

Answer. To open this point, I will reveal **three things**: *first* the ground on which our meditation must be raised; *secondly*, the way to drive it home to the heart; *thirdly*, how to put life and power into it, so that it may prevail, and work this blessed end in our souls.

FIRST, consider the grounds on which meditation must be raised.

I refer them to these **four heads**.

Ground 1. Labor to see God's mercy, goodness, and patience.

First, labor to see the mercy, goodness, and patience of God, that have been abused and despised by that unkind dealing of ours, and that marvelous carelessness in those duties that God has required of us. The height of God's goodness to us, lays out the height of all our iniquities we committed. The greater the kindness and mercy of God, the greater our sins that don't esteem this mercy, but abuse and despise it. This adds to our rebellions; this makes our sins sinful beyond measure, because God has been merciful beyond measure.

There are many sins in one, when a man sins against many mercies, and doesn't walk worthy of them. We may observe the course God takes to break the hearts of the Israelites when they had neglected his ways, and broken his commandments. What was His message when the Lord humbled the people, and broke them kindly? The Lord says by the angel, *I made you go out of Egypt and brought you to the land which I swore to your fathers; and I said I would never break my covenant with you, and you shall make no league with the inhabitants of the land. But you haven't obeyed my voice. Why have you done this?* Jdg 2.1-2.

Now the Lord presses his kindness upon them, and labors to melt their hearts in the apprehension of *His* goodness to them, and *their* unthankfulness to Him. The text says. *When they heard this, the people lifted up their voice, and wept.* They considered God's kindness to them, and their unkindness to God — how He did all for them, and they did all *against* Him — how the Lord was gracious to them for their comfort, but they didn't walk worthy of it. Why have you done this? asks the Lord? Why was my mercy despised? Why was my goodness slighted? Why was my patience and long suffering abused? And *when they heard this*, they wept in the consideration of their unnatural dealing. This is the remarkable thing in *Moses*. He stabs the heart, and works effectually on the Israelites by this means: *Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise? Isn't*

He your father who has bought you? Hasn't He made you, and established you? Deu 32.6. And will you thus reward the Lord? Thus carelessly, and thus proud, and disobedient? Why he says, *Remember the days of old*, v. 7. And then he reckons up God's gracious dealing with them.

I apply this in particular: there is never a soul present here, there is never a man in the basest estate and lowest condition, who has not experienced God's goodness, and marvelous loving kindness in this way. Were you ever in want, that God did not supply you? Were you ever in weakness, that God did not strengthen you? In sickness, who cured you? In misery, who succored you? In poverty, who relieved you? Hasn't God been a gracious God to you? Every poor soul can say, There was never a poor sinner who has had a more gracious God than me. All my bones can say, *Lord, who is like you?* Psalms 35.10. This heart has been heavy, and You have cheered it; this soul has been heavy, and You have relieved it; many troubles have befallen me, and You have given a gracious issue out of them all.

And shall I thus reward the Lord? Shall I sin against his goodness and his kindness? Then what shall I say? Isa 1.3, *Hear O heaven, and harken O earth. The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib, but Israel doesn't know* God's kindness, nor acknowledge His goodness towards them. The consideration of it (one would think) should break the hardest heart under heaven. If men were but thinking men, if they had received any great kindness from a friend; if they were ever in want that he didn't relieve them, and take them into his house; if they might freely go to his purse or have anything he had — if a man dealt thus kindly with another, and the other denied him an ordinary favor, he would be ashamed to come into this kind man's presence. He would say, His house was mine, and his purse was mine; nature would have taught me otherwise. What are our hearts to God, who has been gracious to us all? He has created us, and serves and keeps us, and affords many blessings to us; he gives us our houses that cover us. It is *God* who affords us all this; and shall we sin against such mercy? Therefore, go to the beasts of the field and they will tell you; and to the birds of the air and they will reveal God's mercy to you. Go to your beds and tables — who gives these, and continues these? Doesn't the Lord? And yet you would sin against this God? O foolish people and unwise! All love on God's part, and all negligence on ours? God exceeds in goodness towards us, and we exceed in unkindness and unthankfulness towards Him. This is the first ground upon which meditation must be raised.

Ground 2. Consider God's Justice.

Secondly, if this won't work on you, if you have no good nature in you, then consider that God is also *just*. If mercy cannot prevail with you, you will have justice enough, and that will be *without* mercy. You must not think to slight God's mercy, and carry it away in that fashion. But God is a *just* God, as he is a *gracious* God. He will be revenged of you. If any stubborn heart says, God is merciful, and therefore we may live as we wish, and be as careless as we please — *take heed*. That just law which has been condemned, and those righteous statutes which have been broken, and that God who has been *provoked* by you, will be revenged of you. Did any ever provoke the Lord and yet prosper? And will you begin? First think, where are Nimrod, and Nebuchadnezzar, and Pharaoh, and Herod, and all those proud persons who set their mouths against God, and their hearts against heaven — what has now become of them? They are now in the lowermost pit of hell.

God sent Pharaoh into the Red Sea, and for all we know, his soul may now be roaring in hell. This is certain, that whoever resists God, will find Him a swift judge to condemn him. The apostle says, *Our God is a consuming fire*, Heb 12.29. And, *If my fire is kindled, it shall burn to the bottom of hell*, Deu 22.32. That Justice of God will not be appeased without satisfaction. That Justice is wise, and cannot be deceived. That Justice is powerful, and cannot be resisted. And not only Justice, but Mercy and Patience will come in, and plead for vengeance against the sinner. And that will be the sorest plague of all. When you appear before God what will you expect? You will call for Mercy to save you, and for Patience to bear with you. 'Not so!' says *Mercy*, 'Justice, Lord. For I have been despised.' 'Justice,' says *Patience*, 'I have been abused.' 'Justice,' says *Goodness*, 'I have been

wronged.' How will it be *then*, when Mercy itself condemns that soul, and Patience is an accuser against it, and Goodness calls for vengeance against it?

Ground 3. Consider the heinous nature of your sins.

Thirdly, consider the nature of your sins, and the heinousness of them. Sin is not a foible of youth or a matter of merriment, but a breach of the law of God. And therefore it is good for a man in this case, to examine every commandment of God, and his breach of it. Thus I would have the soul be well-acquainted with the Law. You don't know your sins; therefore get home to the Law, and look into its mirror. And then bundle up all your sins like this: so many sins against God himself in the first commandment; against his worship in the second; against His Name in the third; against his Sabbath in the fourth. Indeed, all our thoughts, words, and actions, *all of them*, have been sins able to sink our souls to the bottom of hell. Bundle up your sins, and lay one upon the heart, and another upon the conscience, and then it will break your backs. Those small infirmities that you make nothing of, and those sins that you make slight of, and make a foible of youth — if you bestow your mind a little seriously, you will see they are far otherwise. *Every sin deserves death. The wages of sin is death*, Rom 6.1. It is not only the one who murders his neighbor, and takes away his life, but the *malicious* man, and the *proud* man deserve death. Indeed, to come nearer the text, what if I prove you had a hand in the shedding of the blood of Christ? Dwell here a little and consider it, and you will see the point clearly.

If there is any soul here present who hopes to have any part in Christ, and I went from one to the next and asked, Do you have a part in Christ? you would say *Yes*, I surely hope so. *Mark what I say then*. If you hope for any mercy from Christ, then Christ was your surety and bore your sins, and those sins of yours were the witnesses *against* our Savior; they were the soldiers that took him, the thorns that pierced him, the spear that gored him, the cross that took away his life. The truth is, the soldiers, and Pilate, and the scribes and Pharisees, could have done *nothing* to our Savior, but for your sins. Had it not been for *your* sins, had it not been for the sins of the *elect*, the soldiers could not have apprehended him; the Pharisees could not have witnessed against him; there could have been no judge to condemn him.

Very well, then, *your sins caused all this*; your wicked thoughts and wicked actions caused our Savior to cry out, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* Mat 27.46. He sunk under the consideration of your sins. And yet you go away and make them a mere foible of youth, a matter of merriment, of loose talk, and wicked doings. Well, *you had a part in the crucifying of Christ*. When you leave here, *think of this*. And as you are going home, think to yourselves, *It was my sins that had a part in the shedding of the blood of Christ*. And when you are at meal, let this come into your mind, *I have had a hand in the crucifying of the Lord Jesus Christ*. And when you go to bed, think of it, *I am one of those who drenched their hands in the blood of the Lord Jesus*. That Savior who is now at the right hand of God, who has done so much for his servants, who sweat drops of blood — those sweats and drops were for *your* sins. And is this a matter of merriment, and a foible of youth in the meantime? No, no, your soul will find it otherwise one day, unless the Lord removes those sins of yours. Those sins will make you howl in hellfire one day, unless you are burdened with them *here*. Think of this: *I am one of those who by vain thoughts and profane actions have crucified the Lord of life*. And then think if you can make those sins a matter of merriment.

Ground 4. Consider the cost of sin.

The fourth ground arises from the consideration of the punishment of sin. You must consider that sin will cost you; namely, those endless torments that cannot be conceived or prevented. I will spare speaking of the pains of the wicked here (I would have said much about it), and speak only a little of the Last Judgment.

I think I see the Lord of heaven and earth, and the attributes of God appearing before him: the Mercy of God, the Goodness of God, the Wisdom of God, the Power of God, the Patience and longsuffering of God. And they all come to a sinner, a wicked hypocrite or a carnal professor, and they say, Bounty has kept you, Patience has born with you, Long-sufferance has endured you, Mercy has relieved you, the Goodness of the Lord has been great to you. But all these comfortable attributes will bid you *adieu*, and say, Farewell damned soul, you must go from here to hell, to have fellowship with damned ghosts. Mercy will never be enlarged towards you anymore; you will nevermore have Patience to bear with you, nevermore Goodness to succor you, nevermore Compassion to relieve you, nevermore Power to strengthen you.

No, you who up to now have withdrawn yourselves from God's wisdom and the Gospel, you will nevermore have Wisdom to guide you, nevermore Gospel to comfort you, nevermore Mercy to cheer you. You will then go into endless and easeless torments which can never be ended, where you will never be refreshed, never eased, never comforted — *then* you will remember your sins and say to yourself, My covetousness and pride were the cause of this. I may thank my sins for this.

Think of these things *seriously* (I beseech you), and see if sin is good *now*, see if you can take any sweetness in it. I end this all with that saying of Job, *O that my grief was well weighed, and my calamity laid in the balance. For now they would be heavier than the sand of the sea*, Job 6.2-3. So likewise I say, Oh that our sins were weighed, and our iniquities weighed in the balance together. Such mercy we despised; such justice we provoked; such a Lord of life we crucified; such torments we deserved — endless, ceaseless, and remediless. If these were weighed, they would be heavier than the sand, and sink our souls under the consideration of them.

SECONDLY. Three ways to drive the evil of sin home to the heart.

But some may say, I can think of these things, and consider them seriously. And yet for all this, my heart isn't worked upon a whit. I say, therefore, when your meditation is thus raised, you must have this skill: to drive home the blow, and make it work fully on the heart. And that is done by these **three ways**.

1. Let the heart feel the evil of sin.

The first is this, when we've conceived rightly of sin and its nature, and the punishment due to it, then don't rest in the bare consideration of these things. Never leave the heart. Keep musing on these things, and bring these blessed truths home to the soul; bind them on the will and affections. Hold them and fasten them there. *Force* them on the soul, so the heart may not escape. Take notice of this; it is a rule I would have you consider. Never leave meditating till you find your heart so *affected* with the evil, as your mind and judgment *conceived* of the evil before. Namely, let the heart *feel* that evil which the mind conceived; let the soul *feel* that gall to be in sin, which the mind *apprehended* to be in it. You see these sins are loathsome and abominable; now make the heart *feel* them, and be *affected* with them. The heart would rather fly off now. And therefore it is the cunning of a Christian to lay into the heart, and pursue it continually, and hold these truths to the soul — and at last it may be under the impact of the blow. The power of God makes the soul feel, and find, and be apprehensive of the gall, and bitterness, and vileness of the evil, as it conceived it to be before. It is not enough for a man to exercise himself in meditation on sin. Rather, a man must bring his soul into subjection under the *power* of that meditation. A man must not only chew his meat, but he must swallow it also, if he means to have it nourish him. Meditation is when the heart swallows these sins; that is, when a man labors to be so affected with sin, and with the nature of it, as it requires.

MEDITATION in this case, is like the beleaguering of a city. When a City is wisely and strongly beleaguered, and beset all around, the enemy does two things: first, they batter it from without as much as they can; and secondly, they cut off all provision and relief from coming in. And so, when the city sees the enemy is strong, and no provision can come to them, they are content to yield the

city, and surrender themselves. And if they send a parley to the one who besieges it, and say they are ready to perish, why, then the enemy bids them to deliver the city, and they will be provided for. He bids them to yield, and they will be succored. But *before* that day, no supply will be brought into the city.

So it is with meditation — and here is the cunning of a Christian. Do as wise soldiers do: *cut off all provision*. That is, by serious meditation, bring your heart to such a loathing of sin, that it may never love it anymore. Besiege the heart with daily meditation, so that you may cut off any ease and refreshing that the heart may seem to have in any sinful course. If the soul is looking to take any sinful course; if the soul would go out a little to social occasions, and take delight in his corruptions — the drunkard in his company, and the worldly man in his wealth — then *batter* that. When you are thus affected, beleaguer the way, that you may find no comfort, no ease. And when the soul is looking for occasions to sin, and lingering after his abominations, then say to your heart, You would have your sins, though you have your shame with them; you would have your corruptions, though you have your humiliation with them. When the soul would meddle with these, let meditation knock them about. If you are still proud, and malicious, and quarrelling, *take heed*. You cannot have these, without having hell and all; you cannot have these, without having destruction and all. The mercy of God will not be abused. The justice of God will not be provoked. God will be revenged of you. And by this means, the heart will at last be *troubled*. Why, deliver up your sins then, and your souls! Why, then yield your souls to Christ, that you may find as much comfort in a *good* way, as you have found misery in an *evil* way.

2. Keep the heart in the sense of the evil of sin.

Secondly, when you have thus affected the heart with sin, take heed it doesn't fly off, and shake off the yoke. Meditation brings all those sins, and miseries, and vileness home to the heart, and the soul is made sensible of sin by this means. *Hold* the heart there then; labor to keep the heart in the same temper that it was brought into by the consideration of sin. For this is our nature: when the impact is troublesome that lies upon us, and the sins are heinous that lie upon us, and are committed by us — these sins, these sorrows, these judgments — when the heart *feels* this, it is *weary*, and would secretly have the wound healed quickly, the sorrow removed, and the trouble calmed. *Take heed of this*, and labor to maintain that passion of heart which you find in yourselves by virtue of meditation. This is the pitch of the point. As there must be *subjection* to meditation — the heart must be so affected with sin, as it conceived it to be — so there must be *attention* to it. That is, the soul must hold itself to that frame and disposition, so wrought as it should be.

Look how it is with a goldsmith who melts the metal that he is to make a vessel of. If after melting it, there follows a cooling, it might as well never have been melted. It is as hard, perhaps harder; it is as unfit, perhaps more unfit than it was before, to make a vessel of. And so, after he has melted it, he must keep it in that frame until he comes to molding and fashioning it. Meditation is like the fire, and the heart is like a vessel. The heart is made for God; and it may be made a vessel of grace here, and of glory hereafter. Meditation is what melts the soul; the dross must be taken away from the soul; and sin must be loosened from the heart. Now, when you have your heart melted in some measure, *keep it there*. Don't let it grow loose and careless again. For then you might as well never have been melted. That is the reason why many a poor sinner who has at some time been in a good way, and the Lord has kindly come and wrought powerfully on his heart, and yet at last, his heart has grown cold and dumpish again, and as hard as it ever was. And so the work has to begin again.

Take notice of it. Look how it is with the cure of the body. If a man has an old wound, and a deep one, two things are observable. It is not enough to lance the wound and draw out the corruptions.

It must also be tented.²⁴ For if the wound is deep, it must not be healed quickly, but must be kept open with a tent, so that it may be healed soundly and thoroughly. So it is here. Meditation, once set upon, lances the soul; it lances the heart of a man; and it will go down to the bottom of the belly. When a man sees his sin, and weighs his sin, it will go down to the bottom sometimes. And when your heart is thus affected, don't heal it too soon, but hold the soul in that blessed frame and disposition. For as *meditation* lances the soul, so *attention* tents the soul. Therefore, keep the soul so troubled and sorrowful, that you may be healed soundly, thoroughly, and comfortably.

For a city that is beleaguered and won, he who won it sets a garrison over it, that he may keep it forever under. So too, when the soul has been won by the impact of meditation affecting the heart with sin, set a garrison over it, and keep it in awe. Set a garrison over the conscience. Keep it all down, keep it all under, that it may submit itself; and do it kindly under the impact of the truth. For it would be a blessed frame, if we could always be in that same temper we were in, when first humbled for our sins.

3. Keep the soul in such a consideration of sin, that it seeks pardon for it.

Thirdly, the soul must be so far kept as to the consideration of sin, that it may seek *pardon* for sin.

This is a point of marvelous use, and you must give me leave to enlarge this, because there are many deceits this way, in the spirits of a man. For mark this: it is the cunning of the devil, if it is possible, that he will keep a man from ever seeing, musing on, or being troubled by sin. And therefore the devil plucks him away, and sends him to company on one side, and merriment on the other; so that by this means, he may keep him from serious meditation on the evil of sin. But if it is so, that God makes a man meditate on his sins, and that the heart of a sinner is fully resolved to muse on, ponder, and consider his corruptions — that *if he pores upon his sins*, then he will see nothing else *but* sin. And thus the devil has hindered many a poor soul from coming to Christ, and from receiving comfort from Him: he is now always poring upon his corruptions.

And therefore here lies the skill of a Christian: *not to neglect meditation* on PARDON by Christ. And here is the stint of meditation on our sins, as you will thus discover it: so far see your sins, so far be affected with them, so far hold your mind to them, that they may make you see an absolute necessity of a Christ, *that they may drive you to Him for succor*. Here is the main thing to observe — and thus far we *may* go and *must* go, if ever God intends to do good to our souls.

Therefore, when you set your soul, and bestow yourself to muse and meditate on your corruptions, and lay them to your heart — when you find your soul is affected with them, and humbled under them — then labor to see an absolute necessity of a Lord Jesus Christ; and to so far see them, that they may *drive* you, and *compel* you to seek Christ for mercy.

Seeking Comfort in Christ Alone

And this is all God looks for, all the Lord requires and cares for in this preparative work. Therefore, *take notice of it*. See your sins so far as they may make you merely look for a Christ, and to fall upon the arms of God's mercy in and through Christ. For it isn't sorrow for sin, nor humiliation, nor faith itself, that can justify us in itself, but only as they make a way for us to Christ, and *through him* we must receive comfort. For these **two things** are the special extremes that the devil seeks to drive a man to:

- (1) PRESUMPTION: If a man presumes his own sufficiency, and thinks he is well enough, he won't go to Christ, because he thinks he doesn't stand in need of Him.
- (2) DESPAIR: If he despairs of forgiveness by Christ, he won't go to Christ either.

²⁴ *Tent*: a conical, expansible plug of soft material for dilating an orifice or for keeping a wound open, so as to prevent its healing except at the bottom.

The ground of why a sinner despairs, is not because of any sin, except the sin against the Holy Spirit. Despair isn't grounded there, for Cain despaired, and yet Manasseh committed greater sins than Cain, and did *not* despair. Rather, *the soul despairs out of a hard heart*. Because it doesn't have sufficiency in itself, it won't look for help and comfort from another. PRESUMPTION says, I have sufficiency in myself, and I don't need to go to Christ. DESPAIR says, I don't have sufficiency, and therefore I won't go to Christ.

Here is the property of *despair*: to cast away hope, when a man has no hope that God will help him. Now, all the while the soul looks for sufficiency from Christ, there is hope. For however heinous our sins, that's nothing. *The entire question is whether we can hope in Christ*. For if all the sins that ever were, or are, or will be committed, ran into one man, as all rivers run into one sea, then Christ could as easily pardon the sins of one who despairs, as ever he pardoned the sins of any Saints in heaven. *But here is the ground*: when we look into ourselves, we can see there is no sufficiency to comfort us, and yet we won't go to Christ, so that we may be comforted. And so we come to be void of hope, and to despair. *A despairing heart is a proud and stubborn heart*. Because he cannot have what he wants on his own, he will therefore not go to another to receive it; and so he sinks down in his sins.

And therefore, let this be the period and stint of meditation: it is when the soul so far sees sin and the punishment it deserves, that the heart is resolved that none but Christ can take away these sins and the punishments due to them, and is therefore resolved to seek Christ, and to be beholden to Him *for all*. When it is thus with you, fly away to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let this meditation on a man's corruptions be like a Bridge to carry a sinner to Christ, so that he may have salvation, which is promised through Him, and shall be bestowed upon all broken-hearted sinners.

Mark what I say: that soul who will not seek Christ, and will not be beholding to Christ for what he needs — that soul lacks a brokenness of heart. Whatever he is, if he will not seek Christ, and go outside of himself to another, then he lacks brokenness. And this *stubbornness* of his, that he will not go to Christ, arises from some of the following grounds.

Grounds for stubbornly rejecting Christ.

First, the soul won't go outside of itself, because the heart thinks and presumes it has no need of Christ, and therefore won't go. But we won't meddle with that, for it is proper to *carnal* men. So,

Ground 1. It is because the heart is not content in good earnest to be ruled by Christ, or that Christ should come and take possession of the soul and do all in him. If the heart therefore clings to corruption, it will be content that Christ should *ease* it, but not that Christ should *sanctify* it, and remove that corruption that has prevailed over it. And therefore, when a man is under the sight of sin, he would gladly have God show mercy to him. And yet he will not pray, nor read, nor use the means, but merely dwells upon the meditation of his sins, and neglects many ordinances of God by which he might receive comfort. This man would have a Christ *quiet* him, but not *rule* him and take possession of him. And the reason why is this: commonly in these cases, the soul is never fully stricken. These would gladly have quiet and comfort, yet they will not be driven to holy duties, nor be content that Christ should govern them. They are content to commit the sin daily, and want a pardon quickly.

Ground 2. Again, here is another deceit by the soul of a poor sinner. He would gladly join something with Christ, for helping Him in that great work of salvation. And this I take to be the complaint of sinners, and sometimes broken-hearted ones too. They dare not go to expect mercy from the Lord Jesus. Why? Because they are unworthy, so abominable their lives, so wretched in their courses, that they dare not go to Christ, that he may show mercy to them.

I reason the point this way: Is it because of your unworthiness that you dare not go to Christ? So then, if you *had* worthiness, this would encourage you to go. Why then, you think that Christ alone is not able to help you; but you would have your worthiness help Christ to save you. And so you

would join with the Lord Jesus in paying this great price of salvation and redemption. If your sins were but small, and you had *some* worthiness — so that Christ might do something, and your worthiness do something, and thus you might make up the price between you — *then* you could be content to go to Christ. But otherwise you think you may not go to Christ without some worthiness of your own. Again, doubtless you will be beholden to Christ for so much mercy, and so much grace, and so much forgiveness.

One of these two things must be the ground of this complaint: either we would have our own worthiness join something with Christ; or else we are so unworthy that we will not go to Christ for so much mercy. But this unworthiness is indeed nothing but *pride*; a man will not be beholden to Christ for so much mercy, but he will share with Christ in the matter of salvation — or else he won't be a partaker of the great work of redemption.

Imagine if a debtor were in prison, and a friend sends to him, saying that whatever the debt is, if the debtor will but come to him, he will pay it all. The prisoner returns this answer: If he didn't have such a great debt to pay, he would be content to come to him; but the truth is, the debt is so great that he will not come to him, nor trouble him. Now, one of these two things must follow from this: either he thinks his friend is not able or willing to pay his debt, or else in truth, he will not be beholden to him for so much. But if the debt were a *little* one, then he would make a shift to pay some himself, and his friend pay some, and so they would make up the debt between them. *So it is in this case.* This is what keeps the heart from laying hold on the promise. Sinners think they are unworthy to partake of it, which is nothing but pride of spirit. For either they would bring something themselves, and share with Christ in the work of redemption, or else they will not be beholden to Christ for so much mercy.

Objection. O! says one, I never had my heart so broken and affected with sin, as that other person has; and therefore I dare not go to Christ.

Answer. Yes! But is your soul content to go to Christ and yield to Him? Would you keep any corruption? Is there any sin which you would not have Christ come and remove? The soul answers, I would be content to resign all to the Lord Jesus Christ, but I am not so humble as others.

The ground of this complaint is nothing but self-confidence in broken-heartedness. For the soul is not content to have so much broken-heartedness as would be sufficient to bring a man to Christ; but he would have so much that he might *join* with Christ to help Him in the work of redemption. They think it isn't enough to have the soul so humbled as to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ, but they would have so much that they would *join* with Christ in this great work. This is nothing else but carnal confidence.

Therefore the *conclusion* is this: so far see your sins, so far meditate on your sins, so far labor to have your heart affected with your sins, and so far attend to them, that three things may follow. First, that you may see an absolute necessity of Christ. Second, that you may use all means to seek him, never being quiet till you find him. And lastly, let Him be your aim in every ordinance you take in hand.

So *pray*, yet don't rest in prayer, but in a Savior who is obtained by prayer. *Hear*, yet don't rest in hearing, but convey into yourself the One who is revealed in hearing. *Receive the Sacraments*, yet don't rest in them, but seek a Savior who is signified there. This is the very stint and pitch of meditation. Thus far draw your hearts to the consideration of your sins, that the soul may be forced to go to Christ. And use all means to find him. *Pray* for a Christ; *hear* for a Christ. Use all means. *See* a need of Christ to bless all your services and pardon all your sins. *Then* you take a right course.

Objection. But you will say, our thoughts are dull, and our meditation frail, and our wants heavy. And we gain little ground by this meditation, but are ever and shortly falling into sin again. How will we come to get the life of meditation, such that it may be *powerful* in us?

Answer. There are **two special helps** for getting such power.

1. *First*, labor to call in the help and assistance of conscience, so that meditation may be more fruitful and powerful. *Conscience* is a great commander; it is God's vicegerent and chief officer. God is the general overseer of all the affairs of the world. But conscience has authority to execute judgment according to the sentence that God has revealed, and it has a greater command with the heart than bare meditation has. *Understanding* and *Reason* are but the underlings of the *Will*; they are but servants and subjects to the *Will*; they only suggest and advise the *Will* as to what is good. As a servant may suggest to his master what is good, yet his master may take what he wishes, and refuse what he pleases of this kind. But *Conscience* has a greater command. Conscience is said to *accuse or excuse a man*, Rom 2:15. And Conscience comes with a law and a command. As the apostle says, 1Joh 3.20, *If our heart condemns us*; conscience makes the heart yield.

Look how it is perhaps with a person in debt. If a creditor has a writ out for him, he won't go to prison because of that. No indeed, even if he shows it to him, he won't go. But if that creditor brings the Sergeant to arrest him, *then* he must go, and then he must be imprisoned, whether he wills it or not. *So it is here.* *Meditation* brings the writ, and shows a man his sins. It lays open all his neglected duties — so many hundred duties omitted, so many thousand sins committed, so many profanations of Sabbaths, so many oaths, so many blasphemies. But the soul says, what is this to me? Others have sinned as well as I, and I will do as well as them. But *Conscience* is a sergeant, and says, Sergeant, do your duty: 'These are your sins,' he says. 'and as you will answer for it at the Day of Judgment, take heed of those sins on pain of everlasting ruin.' When Conscience thus begins to arrest a man, *then* the heart gives way to the truth revealed. And Conscience thus settles it upon the heart.

2. The *second* means by which meditation may get power over the soul is this: we must cry out and call for the spirit of humiliation and contrition. So that God, by that blessed Spirit of His (which in Scripture is called the spirit of bondage),²⁵ would set His helping hand to it, and assist Conscience His officer, and take the matter into His own hand. And because there are many rebellious corruptions that oppose God's truth, we must call to heaven for help, that God would seize upon the heart, and *break* it. Perverse hearts will blind the judgment; and when Conscience comes and says, 'I will bear witness against you for your pride, covetousness, and profaneness,' they resist Conscience.

Look how it is if a Sergeant arrests a man. The man may escape his hands, or kill the Sergeant. But if the Sheriff or the King himself comes, and takes the prisoner in hand, then he must go to prison, whether he wills it or not. So it is here. Even though a corrupt heart can stop Conscience, or stay Conscience, there is yet a commanding power of God's Spirit, the spirit of *humiliation*. And when God comes from heaven to aid his officer, the heart must bow and be governed.

Look how it is with a child that is under government. His father perhaps bids the servant to correct him. Now, it is amazing to see how the child taunts the servant, and struggles with him mightily. Now when the father hears this, he says, 'Give me the rod,' and he tells the child, 'You would not be *whipped*, but I will *scourge* you.' And he will drive it home, and plague him that much more because he resisted the servant. So it is here. The Lord has revealed his will and sent his ministers to reveal your sins, and terrify your hearts. It is strange to see what resistance we find. One scorns to hear, and rebels against the minister. Well, though the voice of the minister or the Word cannot make the blow fall heavy enough for the time being, yet if the Lord takes the rod into his own hand, he will make the stoutest stomach bow, and the hardest heart yield. When the Father takes the rod into his hand, and lets in hellfire, He will drive it home, fend it off whoever will or can.

²⁵ Hooker isn't saying the Spirit of God is a spirit of bondage, but that the spirit of bondage (being enslaved under sin) is a spirit of fear, for fear of punishment (1Joh 4.18). He explains this at length below.

The apostle calls it the *Spirit of Bondage*. And observe the place, *When the Spirit of Bondage comes, then fear comes*, Rom 8.15. The Spirit of Bondage is said to be the spirit of fear, as if to say, 'The Lord shows a man his bondage by the almighty power of His Spirit, and will make the soul feel it, and stoop under it.' In Job, the Lord *shows men their works, and then He commands them to return*, Job 36.9-10. *He opens their ear to discipline* (the text says) *and commands that they return from iniquity*. He opens the eye, and makes a man see his sins. And then He commands the heart to return, whether it wills it or not. When the Lord shows a man his sins, and holds him to his sins, so that he cannot look away from them, *this* is the work of the spirit of bondage. When Conscience has done its duty, and yet its mouth is stopped, then the Lord himself comes. And however it was that the Word could not prevail by the mouth of the ministry, God will set the sunlight of his Spirit on your souls; and then you will see your sins, and stoop under them.

When a man would *cut off* his sense of sin, yet wherever he is and whatever he does, the Lord presents his sins to him. When he goes in the way, he reads his sins in the paths; when he is at meal, his sins are before him; when he goes to lie down, he reads his sins on the headboard of his bed. 'This is your covetousness and your pride; and for these you will be plagued. Look upon these sins. They are your own, and you have deserved the punishments to be inflicted on you for them.'

Thus we see the grounds, how meditation must be raised. We see how we may bring meditation home to the heart. We also see how we may get the *life* and *power* of meditation.

Example.

I thought to propound an example here, so that you may see the *practice* of the truth delivered. Imagine it was the sin of opposing the Word, that I would break my soul with. First, by meditation, I would cast the compass of this sin — look into the Word, and see whatever the Word has revealed about this sin. The text says, by this sin the anger of the Lord is marvelously provoked, in so far that, *He will laugh at the destruction of such despisers*, Pro 1. 26.²⁶ Indeed, by this sin Christ himself is despised; even more, our condemnation is hereby sealed irrecoverably. The text says, *They despised God's word, until the wrath of the Lord arose, and there was no remedy*, 2Chr 36.16. Indeed, hereby we *aggravate* our condemnation. For Christ says, *Woe to you Bethsaida: woe to you Chorazin, for if the mighty works which have been done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in dust and ashes: but it shall be easier for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you*, Mat 11.22. Moreover, the author to the Hebrews says, *How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?* Heb 2.3.

The case of such a man is desperate. *How shall we escape?* Thus you see the reach — how far this sin goes. Gather it all up, then, and tell your heart of this when it rebels and opposes the Word of God. 'How dare I do this? What, provoke God so far as to laugh at my destruction? What, despise Christ and his Spirit? Even make my case irrecoverable, and aggravate it to my condemnation?' But if the heart will not stoop under this, then call for Conscience to your charge. Then Conscience comes and charges the soul, on pain of everlasting condemnation, to *hear* and be *humbled*. And if this will not do, entreat the Lord to take the rod into his own hand, and bring these truths home to the soul, so that it may never be quieted until it is humbled. This is the course I would have you take, to bring the truth home to your souls.

The Pricking of the Heart — Sound Sorrow.

When the minister has finished his sermon, then your work begins. You must hear all week long. Someone who never meditates on his sins, is never likely to be broken-hearted for his sins. Take notice of this, for the text says of these converts, *They were pricked in their hearts*.

²⁶ **Pro 1:25-26** Because you disdained all my counsel, and would have none of my rebuke, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes.

This clause of the verse reveals to us, what brings this shivering and contrition of spirit which the Lord calls for at the hands of his servants. Now give me leave to make way for myself by opening the words, that having taken away the entire veil from them, you may more clearly see the truth delivered.

First, let me show you what this *piercing* or *pricking* of the heart is.

Secondly, what is meant by *heart*?

FIRST, you must know that what is meant here by *pricking*, is sound sorrow,²⁷ or sorrow that is soundly set upon. And this word *pricking* resembles sorrow in three degrees. For the Word in the original imports not only a *bare pricking*, but *searching quite thoroughly*. We have no word in our English tongue to correspond to the same word, but only a *shivering of the soul all to pieces*. I say there are **three things** in which *pricking* resembles sorrow.

(1) The body cannot be pricked without there being some pain, some grief, some trouble wrought by it, and accompanying it.

(2) It is the separation of one part from another. As the natural philosophers conceive, and as the physician gives us to understand, *it is the sundering of two parts*.

(3) The parts being thus pricked, there is a letting out of blood or water, if any is in that part thus pricked. So correspondingly, in this sound sorrow in the heart, three things are let out — I mean, in that sorrow which is driven home by the Almighty:

First, there is great grief and vexation of soul.

Secondly, because of the burden that lies on the heart, that cursed knot, union, and combination between sin and the soul, comes to be severed and parted in some measure. The soul being thus grieved with the sin, it is content to be severed from it. This is the thing we aim at.

Thirdly, this knot of corruption being loosened, and this closure being broken, and the soldering between sin and the soul being removed, there is now a passage for letting out all these corruptions, so that the heart may be taken from under the power of sin, and be subject to the power and guidance of God. This is the true nature of sorrow.

And by the way, consider this: unless the Lord thus wounds and vexes the soul, the heart that prizes corruption as a god (as every natural man does), would never be severed from it. If the soul saw only the *delight* in sin, it would never part from it. And therefore God is forced to make us *feel* this sorrow, so that we may be severed from our sins, and be subject to Him in all obedience.

SECONDLY, what is meant by *heart*. Not to tire you with any matter of signification, this word implies two things specially, which concern our purpose. The first is mainly intended. It is not the natural part of a man which is in the midst of the body; that is, it is not the fleshly heart. Rather, it is the Will itself, and that ability of the soul by which the heart says, *I will have this*, and *I will not have that*. As the understanding is settled in the head, and keeps his sentinel there, so the Will is seated in the heart. When it comes to taking or refusing something, this is the office of the Will, and it reveals his act there. As our Savior says, *Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*, Mat 6.21. And (as the apostle says) *A man confesses with his mouth and believes with his heart*, Rom 10.9. So then, they were not only pricked as with a pin, but this sorrow seizes upon the soul, and pierces to the very Will. It was not outward superficial sorrow only, but it went to the very root, and entered into the very heart.

By all this, we may see that unpardoned sins are of a *piercing* nature. They gash and wound the soul and conscience of transgressors.

²⁷ *Sound* here means *healthy* (as opposed to a placebo); it is *thorough* and *efficacious*.

Use. This I think should remove the imagination of those who think there is no delight except in sinful courses; they are much deceived. There is no gall but in sin; and there is no sorrow but from sin; and sin only imputed made our Savior buckle under it, Psalm 22. David's heart was crushed with it, Psalm 40. Indeed, the apostle says, *All the creatures groan under it*, Rom 8.22. The earth groans under sinners, and is willing to vomit them up, Lev 20.22. It is a burden to the Sun to give light to the adulterer to see his harlot; and it is a burden to the air to give breath to a blasphemer who belches out his oaths against the God of heaven. Indeed, it is that which sinks the damned into the bottomless pit; it is such that Judas would rather hang himself than endure the horror of conscience for it. Let this therefore dash the foolish conceit of those who think there is no pastime but in sin. However men may glory in sin, and take delight in sucking the pleasure of sin, yet the end will be *bitterness*. Their sweet meat will have a sower sauce, and those sins which are so sweet, will eat out all comfort from their souls, from everlasting to everlasting. *They were pricked in their hearts.*

So that the main point which fits our aim is this *sound sorrow*, the piercing of the soul of those who are affected with it. They were not only pricked in their eyes to weep for their sins, and to say they would do so no more — the adulterer is not only pricked in his eye, that he should see his adulterous quean²⁸ — but it goes further. It sinks into his very soul, and pierces through his very heart. Sorrow that has any substance in it, is like the repentance of Nineveh. Not only the ordinary and trashy sort of people forsook their sins, but even the King himself came from his throne and sat in dust and ashes. Even the nobles and other subjects, and the very beasts of the field fasted. So it is, comparatively, with this sorrow. It is not only for the tongue to *talk* of sins, and the eye to *weep* for its sins; but even the Queen of the soul, *the Will itself*, puts on sackcloth. And the heart and all the affections, like so many subjects, follow after. It breaks out into the eye, and the frame of the heart shakes with it, and the knees knock together, and the hands grow feeble. It is not; *O Lord be merciful to us*, and so be gone. But it must go to your hearts. You may weep your eyes out to no avail, and decry your sins at the Market-cross,²⁹ if you haven't put off the *will* and *affection* of sinning, as well as the *tongue* of sinning.³⁰

The nature of this sorrow is marvelously strange. David says, *Make me hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which you have broken may rejoice*, Psa 51.8. This sorrow that seized upon David, was not slight, but it breaks all the bones which are the main pillars and props of nature. The burden was so heavy and so great, that it made all the burden that was in him, *shake*. And in another psalm, *My moisture is turned into the drought of summer*, Psa 32.4. This sorrow went so deep into his soul, that it not only took away his outward refreshing, but it took away all the moist humors,³¹ the inward juice, the very oil of life. What the prophet Hosea says is notable: *I will meet them as a bear bereaved of her whelps, and tear the covering of their hearts*, Hos 13.8. You must not think to have a whipping and away. But the Lord will break the very covering of those proud hearts of yours, rather than suffer sin to dwell in you, where His throne should be. Hence it is, that this sorrow sinks many.

The Cause and Effects of Sorrow

Did you never see a soul in distress of conscience? He is all turned to dust and ashes. This sorrow goes to the quick. It is not a little touch and away, but it *breaks the heart* inwardly.

For opening this point, let me reveal these particulars:

First, how the Lord works this sorrow, and how it is brought into the soul.

²⁸ *Quean*: archaic term for a slut or prostitute; a young woman of loose morals.

²⁹ A structure marking the market square — usually carved stone spires, obelisks, or crosses.

³⁰ That is, it isn't a bare confession of sin, but a profound conviction of sin, that leads to true repentance.

³¹ *Humors*: the four fluids in the body then believed to determine our emotional and physical state; also, a *mood*.

Secondly, I will show you the behavior of the soul when it is thus pierced, and this will show the soundness.

Thirdly, I will show some reasons why it must be so.

Fourthly, I will answer some questions.

Fifthly, I will make some uses, and in this, lay down some ends — how we may help forward this work once it has begun.

FIRST. How the Lord works this sorrow into the soul.

I know God sometimes deals openly, and sometimes more secretly. But first let us see how this *pricking* comes into the soul, and how the Lord stabs the soul, and comes at a man to thrust him through. This reveals itself in **three particulars**.

I. First, the Lord commonly and usually lets a kind of amazement into the mind of a sinner, and a kind of bewilderment. As it is with a sudden blow to the head, if it comes with some violence, it stuns a man, so that he doesn't know where he is. It is just so generally with the soul. The Lord lets in some flashes of His truth, and darts some evidences of His truth into the heart of a man. The hammer of God's Law lays a sudden blow to the heart — and this reveals the vile nature of sin. It is like when a drunkard is drunk today, and will be drunk tomorrow, and the minister preaches against that sin; and yet the man will be still drunk. And the blasphemer says, Come, let's swear the minister out of the pulpit. Now it may be that the Lord lets in some sudden truth that unmasks the soul, and drives him to a sudden amazement, so that now he sees his corruptions to be otherwise than ever he saw before. Commonly he doesn't yet see the *evil* of sin, but he is driven to a standstill and a pause; and he doesn't know what to say of himself, nor what to think of his sin. There is a kind of tumult in his thoughts, and a confused clutter. He doesn't know what to make of himself, and he goes away in a kind of confused distemper. Thus it was with Paul when he was running along to Damascus, and he had gotten a lusty steed to make haste. Suddenly a light shined from heaven, and he heard a voice from heaven saying to him, *Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?* He marveled at the matter. And yet he didn't know what the matter was, and therefore he asks, *Who are you Lord? What would you have me do?* Act 22.6-10.

As it was with Saul, so it is most commonly with us all. It may be that a poor man drops into the church, and the Lord lets in a light, and the Lord surrounds him with some threatenings of the Law, and shows him the nature of sin, and the damnation that comes by it. And thereupon his thoughts begin to hurry in, one upon another. He retires home, and thinks this way to himself:

Surely the preacher spoke strange things today. If all is true that he spoke, then certainly my condition is naughty; surely there is more in sin than I ever thought of. I always thought that those sins which were gross and punishable by the law of man, were abominable, and that God was incensed against them. But what? Will every wicked thought sink the soul into hell unless God pardons it? And is God so just, and so severe, that He will punish all sinners? And must I answer for all my petty oaths? If I will be condemned for my words, and thoughts, it is a strange thing. Well, I will inquire further about the matter. It is marvelously hard if it is true.

Many a man has been thus amazed, but goes no further for the present.

II. Well then, secondly, he resolves to hear the minister again. And he falls to reading and conferring with others, to test if it is so, as the minister revealed to him before. And commonly he goes to hear the same minister again. And by this means, what with hearing and reading and conferring, he sees that the thing he doubted is too certain; and that the thing he questioned before is without any doubt. The Law is just; the Word is plain. If God is true, *this* is true, *The wages of sin is death*; yes, of every sinful thought. And *He that does not believe, is condemned already*. So that now the sinner begins to consider that the condemnation threatened doesn't sleep; and that God has him in a chase; and that punishment which God threatens, will be executed upon him

sooner or later. Thus the soul, from a general amazement, comes to see that it is so. And by this means, he is surprised by a sudden fear of spirit, in expectation and suspicion of what is discovered — lest God lay it upon him. It is so much that the soul says, *What if God should damn me? God may do it. And what if God were to execute his vengeance upon me?* The soul fears that the evil discovered will fall upon him. The nature of his fear is this: he knows there is cause to fear, and he cannot bear the evil when it comes. He says, ‘I am a sinful wretch, and God may damn me for all I know; and what if God *should* damn me?’ This is the reason for those phrases of Scripture, *We have not received the spirit of bondage to fear again*, Rom 8.15. The spirit shows our bondage, and this fear comes from there.

This is why the apostle says to Timothy, *God has not given us the spirit of fear*, 2Tim 1.7 — that is, the spirit of bondage that works fear. And therefore, the Lord says by Moses, *Your life will hang in doubt before you, and you will fear day and night; you will have no assurance of your life*, Deu 28.66. It is with a soul in this fear, as it was with Belshazzar when he commanded the cups to be brought out of the house of the Lord, so that he, and his nobles, and his concubines might drink from them. He was brazen against the God of Israel. Then came the handwriting against him on the wall. And when he saw it, his thoughts troubled him, and his face became pale; his knees knocked against one another — as if he said, Surely there is some strange evil appointed for me. And with that, his heart began to tremble and shake. *It is just so with this fear*. Someone runs riot in the way of wickedness, and thinks to despise God’s Spirit, and to hate the Lord Almighty, and to resist the work of His grace. And he says to himself, Let’s go and hear the minister, that we may cavil at him, and persecute him.

Now it may be that this fear and handwriting comes against him; and who knows but that it may be this way with you, whoever you are. For this denotes the child of the devil: to hate God’s servants and ministers. Now, when a wicked man hears this, he says,

The Word of God was professedly spoken against me, and these are my sins, and these are the judgments and plagues threatened against me. And therefore, why may I not be damned? And why may I not be plagued?

And thus his heart is full of fear, and he begins to reason with himself:

Is this the nature of sin? And are the judgments of God denounced against sinful creatures? Why then, what if God should lay these judgments upon *my* soul? And who knows if God will do so to me this day? He may pluck me out of the land of the living. I am sure my sins are such, and God’s judgments are so threatened against them. And therefore, why may this not be?

And when he goes to bed, he reasons thus:

What if I nevermore arise? And when he leaves home, What if I nevermore return? God may take me with my food still in my mouth, and cast me down into hellfire forever.

The soul being in this estate, and the heart being thus pestered and plagued with the fear of God’s wrath that follows a man like a jailor, he is kept still, so that he cannot sin so freely. But still the wrath of God pursues him, and says, Don’t you fear that God may take you away in the act of sinning, and in the midst of your chambering³² and wantonness?

The heart being thus pestered with this fear, is not able to endure it. He labors to drive away this trouble and dread from his mind. And *still* he thinks God is against him. And he hears someone behind him saying, You must come to judgment and be plagued. Now the soul labors to *drink away* and *play away* this sorrow. Another man who was perhaps a prodigal before, now rises early and will be exceedingly busied about his occasions all day long, so that these things occupy his mind. The reason is, something lies at the heart, and he cannot tell which way to drive away

³² *Chambering*: a string of liaisons outside of marriage, with various partners.

his fear; but he labors all in vain. For this is to make walls with untempered mortar which will quickly fall down. It is like a man laboring to ease himself of sin by sinning; or giving a man a cold drink for a hot-burning fever.

III. Thirdly, the Lord pursues the soul. And when the *heart* cannot be rid of this fear, the Lord begins to let fly against the *soul* of a sinner. He discharges that evil upon him which was formerly feared; and affliction enters the heart. The nature of fear, is to fear an evil to come. Now the Lord makes the soul see that it is not only great drunkards and adulterers who are threatened, but every sinful thought, and idle word.

The soul would gladly have driven away this fear, but the Lord will not let him. Rather He says, These curses will kindle upon you, and continue forever to your perdition. *And hence comes this sorrow.* The Lord lets in some vein of his vengeance, and some secret displeasure of His, and makes sin *stab* the soul. And then the curse lies upon him, and the Lord, as it were, kindles the fire of His wrath upon him really, and makes him see that *this* is what he feared (Job 3.25).

God's Purposes for Sorrow

Now his conscience is all aflame within him. And he says to himself, You have sinned and offended a just God, and therefore you must be damned, and to hell you must go. This is the particular seizing of the curse upon a sinful soul. *For this is the nature of true sorrow.* If evil is to come, we *fear* it. If evil is upon us, we grieve and *sorrow* for it. Herein is the greatest work of all, and the Lord deals diversely as He sees fit — especially in these **three ways**.

1. First, if God has a purpose to *civilize* a man, he will lay his sorrow like a fetter upon him. He only means to civilize him, and knock his fingers away from base courses, as we have known some in our days. With many desperate persecutors of God's people, God casts his sorrow into their hearts; and then they say they will persecute God's people no more. Perhaps they are still naughty, but God first confines them. God only rips the skin a little, and lays a small blow upon him. But if a man has been uncivil and a great rioter, the Lord begins to serve a writ upon him. He says,

You are the man (2Sam 12.7). Let it be said to you that your sins are weighed, and you are found too light. Heaven and salvation have departed from you. Your sorrow has now begun here, never to have an end hereafter — you must continue in endless torments. You have continued in sin, and therefore expect the fierce anger of the Lord to be upon you forever.

So that, now the soul sees the flashes of hell, and God's wrath upon the soul, and the terrors of hell lay hold of his heart. And he confesses that he *is* so, and he has *done* so, and therefore he is a poor damned creature. And then the soul labors to weather it.³³ It may be that his conscience will be deluded by some carnal Minister who makes the way broader than it is, and bids him to go and drink, and play, and work away his sorrow. Or else it may be that he stops the mouth of conscience with some outward performances. It may be that his conscience says, You have committed these and those sins, and you will be damned for them. And then he entreats his conscience to be quiet and hold its peace. He will pray in his family, and hear sermons, and take up some good courses. And thus he takes up a quiet *civil* course, and stays there a while. But at last it comes to nothing.

2. But secondly, if God intends to *do good* to a man, He won't let him go this way, and fall into a mere civil course. When a man begins to color over his old sins, and God has broken his teeth, so that he cannot worry as he did formerly, yet there is no *power* in him — if the Lord loves that soul, He will much more clearly reveal his sins to him. God will pluck away all his chambering and wantonness, all his pride and peevishness, and pull off his mask, and show him all his sins, and pursue him. Therefore, as God struck the blow before, so now he drives it home.

³³ Originally, "welter it;" welter is to be rolled and tossed uncontrollably.

And hence Job says, *The arrows of the Almighty stick fast in me, and my spirit drinks up its venom, and the terrors of the Almighty encamp themselves against me every way*, Job 6.4.

And as David says, *You keep my eyes waking*, Psa 77.4; and *my sins are ever before me*, Psa 51.3. If God loves a sinner, and means to do good to him, He won't let him look away from his sin. The Lord will ferret him from his den, and from his base courses and practices. He will be with you in all your stealing and pilfering, and in all your cursed devises. If you belong to Him, he will not give you over.

And in another place Job says, *How long will you not depart from me, nor let me alone until I swallow my spittle?* Job 7.19. You would be a great deal better to now have your hearts humbled and broken, and to see your sins, than to see them when there is no remedy.

And in another place the holy man Job says, *You won't allow me to take in my breath, but fill me with bitterness*, Job 9.18. Your eyes have beheld vanity, and therefore you will now see the Lord's wrath against you for your sins. You have breathed out your venom against the Lord of heaven. Therefore he will now fill your souls with indignation, in that He will breathe in his wrath, as you have breathed out your oaths against Him. You have filled the Lord's eyes and ears with your abominations, and the Lord of heaven will correspondingly fill you with his wrath.

And in another place Job asks, *Would You break a dry leaf tossed to and fro?* Job 13.25. And yet the Lord broke him. Now the soul sees all the evil; and the Lord pursues him, and sets conscience to work to the full. Consider that statement of the Apostle, *that all those might be damned who didn't believe the truth, but took pleasure in unrighteousness* — all of them, 2The 2.12. What, will no great ones be saved? No, nor you little ones either. All who do not lay hold of Christ, but take pleasure in unrighteousness — not only great ones and those who are abominably profane, but all those who took pleasure in wickedness. Now Conscience says, Don't you know that you are one of those who have taken pleasure in unrighteousness? Therefore away you must go, and you shall be damned. Now the soul shakes, and is driven beyond itself, and would utterly faint, except that the Lord upholds it with one hand, as He beats it down with the other. He thinks that everything is against him, and the fire burns to consume him, and he thinks the air will poison him. Conscience flies in his face, and he thinks hell's mouth is open to receive him, and the wrath of God hangs over his head, and if God were to take his life, he would tumble head-long down to hell.

Now the soul is beyond all shifts. When it is day, he wishes it were night, and when it is night, he wishes it were day. The wrath of God follows him wherever he goes, and the soul would gladly be rid of this — but he cannot. And yet all the while, the soul is not heavy and sorrowful for sin. He is burdened, and could be content to throw away the punishment and horror of sin — but not the sweetness of it. As with a child who takes a live coal in his hand, thinking to play with it, when he *feels* the fire in it, he throws it away. He doesn't throw it away because it is *black*, but because it *burns* him. So it is here. A sinful wretch will throw away his sin because of the wrath of God that is due to him for it. And the drunkard would be drunk no more — *but*, if he might have his queans and his jugs *without* any punishment or trouble, he would have them with all his heart. He loves the black and sweet of sin well enough, but he doesn't love the plague of sin.

Foolish people (says the Prophet) *are plagued for their sin*, Pro 22.3.³⁴ If you roar from a disquiet of heart, and your bones are broken, it is because of your sin. Your pride, and drunkenness, and uncleanness brought this upon you. If you would be eased of the plague, then throw away your corruptions. If you would have the effect removed, then take away the cause.

³⁴ **Pro 22:3** A prudent *man* foresees evil and hides himself, But the simple pass on and are punished.

There are two things in sin which make a man sorrowful: *first*, the sin itself that defiles a man and separates him from God; *secondly*, the punishment of sin. Now, the sinner looks at sin either so far as causes punishment, or else as it separates him from God.

Perhaps a sinner will come to this: he'll be content to carry his heart furiously against sin, because sin brings judgments and plagues. But even a *hypocrite* may go this far — a Judas, a Cain, a Saul. Cain might say his sins were greater than could be forgiven *because he killed his brother*; but he could never see his sin as so vile *because it separated him from God*.

3. Now in the third place, if the Lord purposes to do good to the soul, He won't allow him to be quiet here, but opens the eye of the soul further. And makes him sorrow, not because it is a great and shameful sin, but because, as the Lord says to the soul, *Even the least sin makes a separation between Me and you*. And the heart begins to reason thus:

Lord is this true? Is this the smart of sin? And is this the vile nature of sin? O Lord! How odious these abominations are that cause this evil! And even if they hadn't caused this evil, yet this is worse than the evil — that they make a separation between God and my soul. Good Lord, why was I born? And why did I come into this world? Why did God continue me here, and provide all the means of grace for my good, and all the comforts of this life, by which my course might be maintained and made less tedious? What if I lacked this horror of heart, and had all the ease in the world? And what if I might be free from all misery on earth? What would this be, so long as I had sin in my soul, that makes a *separation* between God and my soul? I was made to be one with God, and to have communion with God, and to obey his commandments; but I have departed from God by sin and departed from his commandments. A godless and a graceless man is a miserable man, even if he were never plagued at all. I was made to honor God, and I have done nothing but dishonor him: I was made to subject myself to the good will of God, but I have withdrawn myself from his will. This is my misery and my plague. If I had been in hell, and didn't have sin, I would have been a happy man. And if I had been in heaven, but had sin, I would have been a miserable man — because it makes a separation between me and my God.

Indeed, the sinner still pleads with himself thus: What is this to me that I am rich and *miserable*, honorable and *damned*; to have quiet and ease here, and a benumbed conscience — but in the end, to be thrown among the devils for dogs' meat? If I had all the ease, wealth, honors, and friends in the world, so long as I have this vile heart, I could not be a happy man.

If you were never pierced for your sins, your condition is woeful. You shall have enough of it one day. You who are never troubled for your sins, but go on smoothly, *know this*: I charge you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, even if you had all the ease and pleasures in the world, so long as you have these proud, hard, unfaithful hearts, you are creatures as miserable as ever breathed on the face of the earth.

Thus the heart complains as sometimes the lamenting church did, *Woe to us that we have sinned*, Lam 5.16 — not because we deserved plagues, but *because we have sinned*. Woe to us, for the God of grace is gone from us, and the God of mercy is gone from us, *because we have sinned*; and the God of blessedness is gone from us, *because we have walked in cursed ways*.

Hold here, and then your sorrow goes right — if the soul can say, though I have no *horror* of heart, yet if I have this *sinful* heart, I am a miserable man.

Sometimes God deals thus punctually with a man: First, he drives him to an amazement. Secondly, he works in him a marvelous fear of the evil that is to come. Thirdly, he possesses the soul with the feeling of the evil, and so forth, as in the above particulars. But yet, God is bound to no time; and therefore we must not limit the holy one of Israel. It is true, the Lord may press in upon the soul and work all of this suddenly. And yet experience has proved, and reason will confirm it, that however suddenly God works, *he affects the soul thus*. When a poor soul comes into the congregation, God lays some truth upon him that is new and terrible, so that the soul

dares not deny it, nor fully resist it, but is in a maze. And by this, it may be the Lord opens his eyes and awakens his conscience, and makes that truth more evident to the soul. And so He immediately arrests the soul; and then sorrow falls in amain upon it.³⁵ And the heart thinks God meant *his* courses, and the minister spoke against *him*, and he must go down to hell suddenly — so that, sometimes the sinner cries out in the congregation. Even if he contains himself for a time, he buckles under the burden. All this may be done at one *sermon*, in one *doctrine*, or in one part of a *use*. But what I have spoken of is usually God's manner of working.

The Soul Under Godly Sorrow

Objection. How does the soul behave itself under this sorrow?

Answer. I answer, the heart is most of all weary of the burden of sin, *because* it is sin, and thinks it is the greatest burden in the world. A man who has a great burden on his back wrenches this way and that. Even if he cannot remove it, he will ease it. So too, the heart uses all means and takes all courses, that if it were possible, it may cast off and ease itself of the vileness of sin, and the plague of sin. This wearisomeness of the soul, which follows the weight of sin, makes itself known in these **three particulars**.

First, the burdened soul's eye is ever upon it; his mouth ever speaks of it; he always complains against it; and he is readily content to take the shame for it. If a man has a sore place on his body, his eye and finger will ever be upon it. So it is with the soul. Like the people when they apprehended the hideous wrath of God against them, they entreated Samuel to pray for them, for (they say) *We have added to all our sins this specially, in asking for a king*, 1Sam 12.19.

As it is with a man who has kidney stones or some stitch in his side, or wherever his pain or trouble is, *there* he complains most. And when the physician comes to feel on his body, he asks, *Is it here?* No, the man says. *Is it here?* And when he comes to the right place, he says, *There it is*, cut there, and lance there. So it is with a man who is stung with the vile nature of sin. When he comes to complain of sin, he doesn't altogether complain of his *horror*, nor of *death*. But he says, 'O! That chambering and wantonness, that pride and stubbornness and rebellion of heart. O! That rioting, and malice against the saints of God!' The soul sees this, and complains of it, and takes the shame for it. This argues for a heart truly weary of corruption, as Paul says of himself: *I was a persecutor, and a blasphemer*, and the like; *and I was received to mercy*, 1Tim 1.13, 16. He doesn't say, *I was in horror or in trouble*, but *I was a persecutor*. He doesn't say, *I was thus and thus plagued*, but *I was injurious to God's church*. *There* he was weary, and *there* he would be eased if possible. Let all vile wretches tremble at it, for God has enough plagues for all Pharaohs and Nimrods.

Away therefore with all these Lapwing³⁶ cries and complaints. It is the nature of that bird to cry and flutter most when she is farthest from her nest, because by this means she would deceive predators, and save her young ones. So it is with a hypocrite. He complains a great way off from his sin, and will have some secret turning.

It is notable to see how hard it is for a man to lay open his sins before God. It is a sign that he is never weary of sin, that he is not willing to truly confess his sin when he is lawfully called to it, and when he pretends to it. It is true, sometimes God will accept a confession made to Him in secret, if it is in truth. But when God would have a man purge himself and all his abominations, and when a man comes and desires comfort of this kind, for a man to then *cover* his sin, and to complain afar off about some ordinary corruption which every poor child of God is troubled with, and that particular lust of which he is guilty, he is not willing to acknowledge for shame — this argues that the heart is naughty, and never found this wearisomeness of sin. I know that the best heart under heaven will have many windings and turnings; but the Lord will never leave the heart

³⁵ *Amain*: with full speed and force.

³⁶ *Lapwing*: a wading bird, like a plover.

in this case, until the person comes to deal plainly, and says, *These are my sins*, and *This is my uncleanness*, and *This is my secret theft*. And thus he opens himself at large to that Man whom God has appointed for that end. Some are content to confess and complain of their sins when God has them on the rack, as Judas did. But mark this, his *punishment* is the greatest cause of his complaint, and *hell* is his greatest fear. He is weary of sin because of the plague and punishment that are due for it. But he never regards the vileness of sin in *this* respect: because it makes a separation between God and his soul.

Secondly, as the soul complains of the vile nature of sin, and desires to have his face covered with shame, so in the second place, it will never meddle with or give way to anything that is sinful, so far as it is revealed to be sinful (setting aside sudden passions and violent temptations). Rather, when a man has come to himself again, his conscience is awakened. This is sure, the soul will not dare to tamper with anything that is sinful. Why? Because it has been wearied with the burden of it before. It is the practice of the lamenting church in Hosea, *Assyria will not save us; we will not ride on horses, nor say to the works of our hands, 'You are our gods.'* For with You the fatherless find mercy, Hos 14.3. That is, we will meddle no more with anything that is sinful, by which we have dishonored God up to now. For they had trusted in their horses, and made idols and relied on them. But now they cast them clean off.

The reason is because, when the soul sees sin *as it is sin*, and that it is burden to the soul, and the heart is now weary of it, it will lay no more weight upon it — because now the heart is weary enough already. The blasphemer fears an oath, and the adulterer shakes to see his quean, and he trembles to see the place where his abominations have been committed; and now his heart loathes all these. Once a man has been at death's door by drinking deadly poison, he will never taste of it again; indeed, he won't endure the *sight* of that cup. He would rather endure hardship, and starve, than eat and drink what will kill him. So (says the soul) it is sin that has made a separation between me and my God. This pride, or this uncleanness, would have been the death of me if God had not been merciful to me. Therefore I would rather sink and die than meddle with these sins anymore.

And this is why, if anything comes under the color of corruption, the soul who is truly weary of sin says, *Omitting this duty is evil, and therefore I will not omit it; or Doing this action is sinful, and therefore I will not do it*. Because the sin is worse than the plague, he will take the lesser of the two evils, as we used to do in other matters. If a man hates his sin only for the plague, then as soon as that is removed, he returns to his sin again; the blow was but a weak one. This was the fault in Judas. He saw his sorrow and confessed his sins, and bewailed them, and did more than many do nowadays, and takes the shame. But even though he confessed and complained of his sin, yet he would rather commit murder on himself, than undergo the horror of sin. If he had been weary of sin because of the *loathsomeness* of it, he would not have laid violent hands on himself.

These two particulars [that is, the constant *burden of sin*, and the *weariness of sin as sin*] are everywhere that true saving grace is found.

Thirdly. Now in the third place, even if God were to deprive a sinner of his *judgment*, and of the horror of *conscience*, yet if his heart is truly apprehensive of sin *as it is sin*, then he cannot lay aside his *sorrow*. So long as sin prevails and makes headway against him, and dogs him up and down, nothing will content him but the removal of his sin. That soul which was cured by any other means than CHRIST alone, was never truly wounded for sin. If *ease* cures him, then *horror* was his vexation; if *honor* cures him, then *shame* was his burden; if *riches* cure him, then *poverty* most of all pinched him. But if the soul was truly wounded for sin, then nothing can cure him but a Savior to pardon him, and grace to purge him. For what is that to the soul — to have ease and liberty, even to be in heaven — if he has a naughty rebellious heart? Even if it were possible for him to be in heaven with his sinful heart, it would tire him and burden him there. Therefore, those souls who are cured by anything except Christ, were never truly wounded for sin *as sin*. It may be that horror and vexation lay heavy upon them, but it was not the blow of sin that troubled them.

Now then, gather it all up. The one who out of the vileness which he sees in sin, is content to take the shame for it, and will not meddle with his sin (neither carelessly nor willingly), and is not cured by anything except by Christ — this man behaves himself truly in the first place. This much for the trial of *how the Lord works this sorrow, and how it is brought into the soul.*

SECONDLY. The behavior of a pierced soul.

Godly vs. Carnal Sorrow. Again, the soul is restless in importuning the Lord for mercy, and will not be quieted until it gets some evidence of God's favor. The soul will not be contented unless it can find some glimpse of acceptance through the goodness of God in Christ. This is plain. If a man is burdened with a weight or some heavy load that is laid upon him, and he has fallen under his burden, he lies there likely to die. If there is none near to succor him, all his care is to cry out for help. And though he sees no man, yet he cries out, *O help, help, for the Lord's sake!* Saul was without sight for three days, Act 9.9. And no doubt he prayed to God all that while, as if he had resolved to give Him no rest till he had found mercy. This is the nature of *true sorrow*: it ever drives a man *to God*. Whereas reprobate sorrow drives a man *from God*. Indeed, it may be that though the heart thinks it will never find mercy, yet the Lord carries the soul on in an earnest desire, and in using the means. He won't go away from God, and from his word, and sacraments, and ordinances — even though he sometimes concludes that he will never get mercy, nor get power against his corruptions. And then someone says, You had best leave it all. No! (says the soul) I cannot be worse off than I am. If I go to hell, I will go this way. There is a kind of sorrow in the heart, which is heavenly and godly.

But *reprobate sorrow* ever drives a man from God. It makes him say, If I am damned, I am damned; and if I am a reprobate, so be it. O you wretch! *Is this all?* If a poor creature who is pressed under his burden cries for help when nature and strength almost fail — *he still cries for help*, and that is all he can say; and so he dies. And this is the last word that he speaks with a soft still voice: *O help, help...* So it is with the soul of a poor languishing sinner, when the heart is burdened with the vileness of the nature of sin, and the separation from God by that sin. He doesn't now cry *ease*, and *liberty*, and *riches* Lord. No, he cries, Mercy, *mercy* Lord, on this vile heart of mine! And, Give me power against these mighty lusts! And after using many means, when he's going the way of all flesh, his last word is... *Mercy*.

I think I see this poor soul sliding away and saying, How many sins I have committed! Oh mercy, mercy, Christ. And this is the last word he speaks, and so he dies; and there is no question but that mercy shall be given to him. It is not a *Lord have mercy on me*, and *God forgive me*, that will serve the turn. No, it is quite otherwise if God is ever to drive home this work. He will make you *restless* in seeking mercy. Nothing will content you but mercy to pardon your sins, and grace to subdue them. And the soul thinks that if mercy would but shine upon him, and if his sins were taken away that they might never hinder him in a Christian course, he would be a happy man. *This* is the frame of the soul that is truly weary of sin.

When the young man came to Christ, and played fair and a far off, and said he could do anything, Well, said Christ, if you can do anything, then *go and sell all that you have and give it to the poor*. But he *went away sorrowful* from Christ, says the text, Mat 19.22. He didn't *come* to Christ sorrowful, but he *went away* from Christ sorrowful. Where, if he had been burdened with sin *as sin*, he would have *come* to Christ sorrowful, and said, Now I see, Lord, that the world is a heavy burden. O Lord help me against it. Give me mercy to pardon me, and grace to remove it. But our Savior heard no more from the young man. And as it is in the text before us, this pricking of heart made the Jews come to Peter saying, *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* They didn't say, as a great many say nowadays, 'If the minister were far enough away from me, and I from him, I would be happy; I cannot be quieted because of him.' These are *reprobate* statements. But the sinner who is truly humbled and burdened with sin *as sin*, comes home and is resolved to *wait* for mercy until the Lord *shows* him mercy.

When Jonah was in the whale's belly he said, *Lord, though I cannot come to your temple, I will look towards it*, Jon 2.4. So a sorrowful soul who is truly burdened with sin, will say, Though I cannot come to heaven, I will look up to heaven. And even if I never *find* mercy, yet I will *wait* for mercy. Your mercy alone, Lord, will content me.

CARNAL SORROW sent Judas and Ahithophel to the gallows; but GODLY SORROW ever drives a man to God.

THIRDLY. Three Reasons Why Sin Wounds Us

But how is it possible that my sins should wound and pierce my soul in this manner, when of all things in the world, sin is most pleasing to me, and nothing so grievous as God's commandments?

Reason 1. First, the soul must be pierced with sin, because sin is the greatest evil of the soul. If the heart truly apprehends this, it cannot help but be burdened with it *most of all*. If a man bears two weights on his back, the heaviest is the most grievous. If the one is thirty pounds, and the other forty, nature will be most burdened and pressed down with the greatest weight. So there is no evil so properly and directly evil to the soul, as the evil of *sin*. *Punishment* deprives the soul of ease and quiet; but *sin* deprives the soul of God, and of the main end for which it was created, and through which the soul must be happy — or for lack of this, it must be accursed. Now sin is, as it were, a weight of ten thousand pounds; while sorrow, shame, and punishment are but a hundred pounds. If it were possible for a man to have all the *ease* and *quiet* in the world, and to be in heaven — yet if he had a foul heart and a sinful soul — he would be a miserable cursed creature. And if it were possible to be in hell, yet free from sin, he would be a happy man.

There is nothing that can properly do good to the soul but *God*. And nothing can properly do any hurt to the soul but *sin*, which estranges the heart from God, who is the chief good. If a man had all the pleasures and contents that the world could afford, nothing would satisfy his soul but God. And if the soul were in horror, but had the presence of God with it, it could not help but be comforted and quieted with that. It is possible — no, God also *does it* — He *makes* the soul of a man feel the burden of sin because of the *vileness* of it, as well as the plague and punishment of it. Whenever the Lord fastens a man's sin to his Conscience, He is able to force the soul to apprehend the *evil* of sin, as well as the *torment and plague* of sin.

And the ground is this. Take the soul as it is polluted with corruption and all abominations. Sin is very cross to the nature of the soul, which has its *being* from God, and was *made for Him*. No matter how the power of sin has prevailed with it, and made it fall short of God, *still* the nature of the soul — considering it as a creature — is made for God. And so it desires to have fellowship and union with God. Therefore, mark how I argue here. If sin is the worst evil to the soul, crossing its very end and depriving the soul of its chief good, then the Lord, [as its Creator and end,] is able to make the soul see sin as the greatest evil to the soul. And sin indeed crosses the end of the creature (for the end of the creature is *God-ward*, and to have union and fellowship with the Almighty). Therefore, the Lord is able to make the soul see the *evil of sin*, as well as the *evil of punishment*. It is no wonder, then, that the heart is pierced with sin *most of all*.

Reason 2. The second reason is because by *sound sorrow*, the soul is truly prepared and fitted for the Lord Jesus Christ, and in no other way than this. For when the soul comes to feel sin in its proper colors, and to be affected with the loathsomeness of that sin which formerly ruled over it, *now* the soul begins to renounce the *power* of that sin. He withdraws itself from the *dominion* of his corruptions, so that the union between sin and the soul is now broken. A place is prepared and the way is made for the Lord Jesus to come into the soul. When sorrow has wearied the heart, and loosened it from the love of sin, *then* the heart is fitted for Christ. As it is with a vessel that has been used for dishonor, if a man would turn the nature of it, and make it into a vessel of honor, he must not only beat it a little, but he must melt it thoroughly; and then it is fit to be a vessel of honor. So the soul of every sinful man and woman is a vessel of dishonor, and sin has marvelously

polluted them. Now, if you would have your hearts fitted for Christ, then you must not only have your hearts warmed a little by *humiliation*, but you must have them melted all to pieces. The heart must be content to part with all abominations whatsoever, so that the Lord may take His place in it, and rule over it, even forever. First cast out the *strong man*, and then the Lord Christ will come in and *take possession* of the heart. Sin and Satan are the strong man. And the Lord *Christ binds this strong man* and casts him out, when he shows the vileness of sin, and tries the heart with its burden, and binds the soul to good behavior — such that now the heart is readily content to have Christ come and do all in the soul.

Many have gone a great way in the work of humiliation, and yet, because it never went through to the quick, they've gone back again, and become as vile as they ever were. I have known men, that the Lord has laid a heavy burden upon them, and awakened their consciences, and driven them to a desperate extremity. *And yet*, after much anguish, and many resolutions, and the prizing Christ as they conceived it; and after renouncing all else, to take Christ on his own terms as they imagined it — even when they've been eased and refreshed, and God has taken away the trouble — they have come to be as cross to God and all goodness, and as full of hatred towards God's children as ever, and worse too.

Now why did these men fall away? Why were they never justified and sanctified? And why did they never come to believe in the Lord Jesus? The reason is, because *their hearts were never pierced for their sin*. They were never well-loosened from it. This is the meaning of that place in Jeremiah 4.3, *Plow up the fallow grounds of your hearts, and do not sow among thorns*. It is nothing else but this: with sound saving sorrow, to have the Heart pierced with the terrors of the law seizing upon it, and to have the vileness of sin wounding the Conscience for it. The heart of a man is compared to fallow ground that is unfruitful. You must not sow among thorns and thistles. First plow it, and lay it bare and naked; and then cast in your seed. If a man plows a furrow here and there, and leaves a baulk here and there (*i.e.*, unplowed ground), he is never likely to have a good crop. So many thistles and so much grass will grow there, that it will choke the seed. Our hearts are this ground; and our corruptions are these thorns and thistles. Now, if a man is content to find some sin hateful, because it is shameful, but keeps a lust here and there, he will never make any good husbandry (cultivation) of his heart. Even if a faithful minister were to sow all the grace of the promises in his Soul, he would never get any good by them, for the corruptions that remain in his heart will hinder the saving work of that sowing.

Therefore *plow it all up*; and by sound saving sorrow, labor to have your heart burdened for sin, and estranged from it. This is good husbandry indeed. The lack of this was the wound of the *thorny ground*, as you may see in the parable, Mat 13.7. Those hearers had much of the world in them, much ease, and profit, and pleasure; and these choked the Word, and made it utterly unfruitful. And so they never received comfort or mercy afterwards. This is what the prophet David says, *A contrite and a humble heart O God you will not despise*, Psa 51.17. If you would have your heart such that God may take delight in it, and accept it, then you must have them broken and contrite. David says, *The Lord's voice breaks the cedars of Lebanon*, Psa 29.5. So the voice of the Lord, like lightning, must *thunder* into the corrupt heart of sinful creatures.

A contrite heart is powdered all to dust. As the prophet says, *You bring us to dust, and then you say, return again you sons of men*, Psa 90.3. So the heart must be broken all in pieces, to powder; and the union with sin must be broken; and the heart must be *content* to be weaned from all sin. As you may make anything of the hardest flint once it is broken all to dust, so it is with the heart that is thus fitted and fashioned. If there is any corruption that the heart lingers after, it will hinder the work of preparation. If a man cuts off all but one sliver from a branch, that is still enough to make it grow, such that it cannot be engrafted into another stock. So too, even if a man's corrupt heart departs from many sins and scandalous abominations, if he keeps the love of any one sin, it will be his destruction. Many a man after a horror of heart, has had a love for some base lust or

other, and is held by it so fast that he can never be engrafted into the Lord Jesus. This one lust may break his neck and send him down to hell. So then, if the soul can only be fitted for Christ by *sound sorrow*, then this must pierce the heart before Christ can come in there. And the heart cannot be fitted for Christ *without* this. Therefore, of necessity, the heart must be truly wounded with sorrow for sin.

Reason 3. The last reason is this: because by this means, the heart comes to set a high price upon Christ and grace — either the grace of God offered in the Gospel, or that good way which God has commanded us to walk in. If the heart finds the greatest evil to be in *horror* and *vexation*, then ease and quietness from these will be its greatest good. But now, the soul sees *grace* is truly precious, because it sees *sin* is truly vile. And this is the reason why the Lord makes the soul see the vileness of sin: so that the heart may be brought to see the excellency in Christ, and prize Him above all.

FOURTHLY. Some Questions to be answered.

Now here are two questions to be answered.

Question 1. Whether this sound sorrow is a work of saving grace, and such a work that it cannot be in a reprobate?

Question 2. Whether God works this in *all* men who are truly converted and brought home to Christ, and whether He works this in *all alike* or not?

Answer. As to the first question, whether this is a work of saving grace or not, and such that it cannot be in a reprobate, for my answer,

First, I will show the **order** (the relation) that this work has to the other works.

Secondly, I will show the **difference** between this and *sanctifying* sorrow; and yet it comes to be sanctifying sorrow.

1. For the order: First, the heart in this work is not yet conceived to be *in* Christ, but only to be fitted and prepared *for* Christ.

If you stop here in your consideration, and don't argue about any work to come, then the heart is only *on the way* to be engrafted into Christ. But undoubtedly, that soul which has this work done upon it, will have faith poured into it. For this is the meaning of that verse, *The Lord Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost*, Luk 19.10. Now, to be lost is not merely because a man is sinful and miserable in himself. Rather, whoever is lost, sees the evil of sin, and the punishment that comes by it; and he comes to be lost in his own apprehension, in regard to his own estate.

Whoever is thus lost, will be sure to have Christ and salvation by Him. It was the end for which Christ came, and therefore it will be fulfilled. And whoever is truly sensible of his sin and the vileness of it, and abhors himself for it, is truly *lost*. He has not yet settled on Christ, for then he would be safe enough (no longer lost). But he is truly sensible of his lost estate, and therefore he shall have *faith* and *Christ*. Though he hasn't yet partaken of them, yet he *shall* be everlastingly saved and redeemed by Jesus Christ.

And therefore, this would be an idle question: What if a man dies in this work of preparation, *before* he comes to have faith? I say this is an idle question, because it is impossible that the one who is thus *prepared* for Christ and grace, should not *have* them before he dies. As the prophet says, *Behold I will send my messenger before me to prepare my way. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple*, Mal 3.1. When the heart is fitted and prepared, the Lord Christ comes immediately into it. The *Temple* is the soul, and the *way* is the preparation for Christ. So that this dying soul is still to be conceived as being in the way of preparation for Christ — but not yet to have any formal work of grace by which he is able to do anything for himself.

A Two-fold Sorrow.

2. For the difference: The next thing is the difference between sound *saving* sorrow and *sanctifying* sorrow. And for this, you must know there is a double sorrow. First there is a sorrow in *Preparation*. Secondly, there is a sorrow in *Sanctification*.

What preparative sorrow is.

The sorrow of the soul in this preparative work, is thus to be conceived: when the Word of God leaves an impression on the heart of a man. So that the heart of itself is a patient, as it were; and it alone bears the blow of the Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord, and the over-powering force of it, forces the Soul to bear the Word, 1Pet 1.23. This is where all those phrases of Scripture come from, such as *wounded, pierced, pricked*, and the like — only in the *passive* voice. This is because the soul is a patient; and the Lord by the almighty hand of his Spirit, breaks in upon the soul. So that this sorrow *in preparation*, is a sorrow that is wrought upon me, rather than any work coming from any spiritual ability in myself.

This is sorrow in preparation: when I am a patient, and as such, I receive the work of the Spirit, and am forced and framed by the Spirit, to do what I do in this kind, Joh 1.13.

What sorrow in sanctification is.

But then, secondly, there is a *sorrow in Sanctification*. It is that sorrow that flows from a spiritual principle of grace, and from that power which the heart has formerly received from God's Spirit. For sanctification comes *after* justification, and *after* the soul has received faith and grace. Then the heart has a new power given to it, by which it is able to set itself forth into any holy action; and a man is a *free worker* in this. Whereas, *sorrow in Preparation* is a work wrought on me — I am a patient, and can only endure it; but I don't have any spiritual power to do anything of myself.

FIFTHLY. How to help forward this work, once begun.

Now mark what I say: both these are saving sorrows, but they differ marvelously. Many think that every saving work is a sanctifying work, which is false — for every saving work is *not* a sanctifying work. As the apostle says, *Those whom he calls, he also justifies, and whom he justifies, he also glorifies*, Rom 8.30.

Now, *glorification* implies sanctification *here* in part, and glory forever *hereafter*. There is a saving work & calling, but not yet a sanctifying work. For *vocation* (calling) is when God so far enlightens the mind, as to buckle the heart and turn it away from corruption, to Him. And then afterwards, God brings the heart to be *justified*, and then *sanctified*. They are first *called*, and then *justified*, and then *glorified*.

The difference between these two workings is thus to be conceived in this *similitude* — as it is with the wheels of a clock that runs quite wrong.

Question 1. What must a man do to set this clock right again?

First, he must stop it so that it no longer runs wrong. And then he must turn it and set the wheels right. Now, all this while the clock is the patient; and the workman does it all.

Secondly, when it is set right, *then* the workman puts the plummets and weights on it. And now the wheels can run by themselves by virtue of that poise and weight which they have received. So that, these two are plainly *different* actions.

It is just so with the frame of the soul. The will and the affections are like the wheels of this great and curious clock. For the soul goes hell-ward and sin-ward — and the mind knows nothing, and the will and the affections embrace nothing, except sin and hell. Now, to bring these into any holy order, the Lord must stop the soul. And that is done by the revealing of sin and by this humiliation of heart. This is when the Lord lets a man see his sin, and says to him, If you would have sin, then

you must have hell and all *together*. And then the soul says, *If this is so, then I will meddle with sin no more*. The adulterer will be unclean no more; and the drunkard will be drunk no more.

Now, when the soul is thus turned, it looks Heaven-ward, and God-ward, and is content that Christ should rule over it. All this while the soul is a mere patient. This is a saving work, and a work of God's spirit wherever it is soundly wrought. And in the end, it will be *faith* and *grace*.

But now, when the soul is set Heaven-ward and God justifies a poor sinner, and plucks him to Himself by faith, and adopts him to be His child — *then* the LORD gives him of his Spirit. This is like the *weight* of the soul. And *then*, by the power of that Spirit, the soul is able to run right, and it has a principle of grace in it. And the *poise* of the Spirit of grace which possesses the soul, makes it able to freely mourn for sin, and to have the heart enlarged in the service of God.

This mainly is the sanctifying work.

Question 2. The second question is this: Whether the Lord works this in *all*, and whether He works it in all *alike*? For I perceive the hearts of many poor Christians are gasping for this: The Lord never worked on me in this manner, and my heart was never thus battered and bruised.

Answer. For the answer to this question, I will handle three things: *first*, that the work is the same in all; *secondly*, that the manner is different in most; *thirdly*, that many have it in them, yet they don't perceive how or when it was wrought.

1. *First*, this work of contrition of heart is wrought in each one as to the substance of it, before that person is or *can* be planted into Christ. For the truth of this, the Scripture is plain and reason is pregnant. There are many Scriptures. I will only name three, such as this one in Luke: *Our Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost*, **Luk 19.10**.

We may observe two things. *First*, the QUALIFICATION of that party whom Christ will seek and save. He must be a *lost* man in his own apprehension. *Secondly*, the CERTAINTY OF SALVATION of such a lost sinner. Christ came for this end: he came to seek and to save that which was lost. Now, Christ will not miss his end. If He *came* for the lost sheep, then he will *have* the lost sheep. And though the lost sheep cannot seek nor save themselves, yet *Christ* will save them.

Thus you see, all men must be thus *disposed* before they can be saved. And if thus fitted and disposed, they will *certainly* be saved. It is not enough for a man to be in a miserable estate and damnable condition. He must also *see* it, and his heart must be truly *affected* with it, and find and feel the *burden* of it — not so much for the punishment of it, but for the sin by which his heart is estranged from God, and also God estranged from his soul.

Now, it is apparent that the *sensibleness* of his LOST CONDITION is spoken of in this verse, and that this man who has it *will be saved*. This is because the mere sensibleness of a man's condition in regard to the punishment of sin, is such that a man may have it, and yet never have grace and salvation. Cain had the feeling of God's wrath, and felt the punishment of it, and so did Judas also; and yet they were never sought for nor saved.

The second place of Scripture is out of John, *No one comes to me unless the father draws him*, **Joh 6.44**. By *coming* you must conceive *believing* — as in that famous place in John, *He that comes to me shall never hunger, and he that believes in me, shall never thirst*, Joh 6.34. Now, this text implies two things, and they are expressly granted by the intendment of the apostle. For the people murmured as to why the Pharisees and the great ones did not believe and did not follow Christ. Christ answers them, *Unless my Father from Heaven draws them, they cannot come*, Joh 6.35. So that these two things are clear — first, a man must be *drawn*; secondly, if he is drawn, then he will surely *come*, Joh 6.37.

This *drawing* is when God opens the eye of a man, and makes known his sin to him, and humbles the heart in the acknowledgement of sin, so that he feels the vileness and the burden of it, and is content to part with it.

When the Lord lays all a man's abominations on him, all his adulteries and all his thefts, and now he sees what it means to depart from a blessed and a pure God — O, *then* he will be drunk, and unclean, and malicious no more, because the heart is weary of it, and is content to part with it.

From this I reason that *true drawing* is ever accompanied with *true believing*; but a sense of sin merely in regard to its *punishment*, is *not* always accompanied with true believing. A man must further see his sin in the *vileness* of it, and in the *abomination* of it — and *then* he will undoubtedly believe.

The stream of the whole Scripture runs this way, as that verse in Matthew, *Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will ease you*, **Mat 11.28**. And this is what Isaiah says,

The spirit of the Lord is upon me: because he has anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek. He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable Day of the Lord, and to comfort those who mourn, Isa 61.1-2.

Indeed, the garment of gladness is fitted *only* for the broken hearted, as in the third verse of that chapter: *To appoint to those who mourn in Zion — to give them beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness*. Indeed, the promises of largest extent in Scripture, either expressly belong to the broken-hearted, or else they imply that a man must be so, before God ever can or will accept him.

Not all who are broken-hearted, take the Water of Life.

As in the Revelation 22.17, *Ho, everyone who will, let him come freely, and take of the water of the well of life and live forever*.

Objection. So then (some may say), even if a man were *not* broken-hearted, if he takes this water of life, he will live forever.

Answer 1. No, but unless he is broken-hearted and humbled, he will never *take* it. As a man must have grace, so too he must *will* to take the water of life. Now, to *will* the water of life is this: to choose grace as the chief good; and to prize grace more than anything else in the world; and to esteem the Lord Jesus and his grace, as truly precious.

A man is said to choose a woman when he is content to part with all for her, and to have her for the sake her grace.³⁷ So a man must part with sin and himself, and whatever is dear to him, so that he may have grace. Now he will not part with sin, unless he is weary and burdened with it. And therefore this wearying implies the burdening of the heart with sin.

This much for the proof of Scripture.

Now to add some reasons that may compel our judgments to yield to this truth. And they are taken *first*, from the qualification of man's heart naturally, and *secondly* from what he must be, before he can receive Christ.

I will reveal my thoughts in four conclusions or reasons, and I reason as follows.

Reason 1. Man himself, and his sin, is his God.

It is a confessed case (I conceive) that every man by nature entertains sin as his God; and he seeks and loves that most of all — himself and his sin, is his God. In this case it is his chief good, and the

³⁷ *Grace*, as used here, means for her elegance and beauty of movement or expression.

heart will not, indeed, it *cannot* be content to part with it. We propound Christ, and grace, and salvation, to a company of poor simple creatures. And yet the counsels, the promises, and the commandments of God don't prevail with their hearts, nor awe them. Rather, they would still have their sins; and the offer of Christ and grace lies in the dust! The adulterer will have his queans, and the drunkard his cups, and they won't suffer the Word to pluck away their corruptions. They will have them even though they are damned for them. What does this argue for, if not that sin is their God? No, it is clear not only in palpable reasoning, but the Scripture is evident this way. It is the match Christ offers to the young man: if he would *sell all he has and follow him, he would have treasure in heaven*, Mat 19.22. He was covetous, and this was a fair offer for a little trash: he would have everlasting life! Now, the text says, *he went away sorrowful*. He would rather have his covetousness and his wealth, than heaven.

Reason 2. There cannot be two Gods in one heart.

There cannot be two Gods in one heart, two Kings on one throne, nor two suns in one firmament. You cannot have Christ, and yet be an underling to sin. Will Christ be a physician to heal you, that you may still have your sins? No, our Savior is plain to the contrary, *You cannot serve God and mammon*, Mat 6.24. If the adulterer would have his queans, then he must forsake the Lord. And if he will not part with his lust, nor have his heart circumcised or broken, then he must go down whole to hell. As the prophet said, *Why do you halt between two opinions? If God is God, serve Him*, 1Kng 18.21. God will be chief in the soul.

It is not possible to have heaven and hell together. It is impossible for a man to look up to heaven steadfastly with both his eyes, and also down to the earth, both at one time.

Reason 3. Sin must be dethroned before Christ can rule.

Thirdly, you must of necessity cast off the yoke of corruption, and rebel against that. You must have your first God — pride, malice, and the like — dethroned, before the Lord Christ will set up his scepter, and before He can be welcome to your souls. You must have your hearts divorced from your first husbands — from sin, and all those abominations which you have loved and hugged as your life — if ever you would have Christ make a match with you, and take possession of your souls. As the Lord says, *You will be like a widow and fit for me*, Hos 3.3. As the original has it, *You will be separate from all, and fit yourself for me*.³⁸ *Then I will marry you to myself in righteousness*, Hos 2.19.

Reason 4. Man will not abandon sin till he wearies of it.

Lastly, the soul will not part with his corruption and lust, which are his God, unless he is *weari*ed with them, and finds the gall and bitterness of their evil nature. I say until *then*, it is impossible that the soul should ever be separate from that sin in which it has found such contentment. Therefore it is of necessity that they be parted. But before the soul sees the venom of sin, it will not part with it; and so he cannot come to receive the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is why the Lord in his infinite wisdom, is thus not only willing to *do* for a poor sinner, but to *force* him to it. For there is such love and liking for sin, that if you pull away the adulterer's queans and the drunkard's jugs, you as good as kill them. They begin to say that the town was fine before the minister came there. The reason is, because they would live in sin.

Now the Lord is pleased to lay a heavy weight upon the soul, and to force the burden of sin upon it. So that, whereas before, the heart found much sweetness in these base courses, the Lord makes them as bitter as gall or wormwood. And then the soul begins to reason this way with itself, and it says, *Is it such a sinful thing to be drunk, and is it murder to envy my brother? And can none like them enter the Kingdom of Heaven?* When the soul sees God taken away, and Heaven separated

³⁸ **Hos 3:3**, "You shall not play the harlot, and you shall not be for another man: so *will* I also *be* for you."

from him, he says, *Is this the pleasing sin that I have loved? And is this the nature of my pride to have God resist me?* This lies heavy on the heart. And at last the soul is resolved to part with his sin and never more to love it. *Good Lord, do what you will with me; only take my soul and save me, and take away my lusts and corruptions.* The heart is content at length that Christ should do all — and now the match is made.

But the sight of sin, merely from the punishment of it, will never separate the soul from sin, nor break that union between them. Judas had sight of it in a great measure. And God plucked his sweet morsels from his mouth, and made him confess his sins, and take his shame. And so God does with many, and makes them say, *I have been a drunkard and an adulterer, and a desperate opposer of God and his ordinances.* But though Judas loathed the horror and punishment of sin, he still had a murderous disposition; the one who killed Christ went and murdered himself too.

Now, from these former conclusions I reason thus: if a man's sins are his God; and if there cannot be two Gods in one heart; and if those corruptions of the heart must of necessity be cast out; and if the heart will not part with sin until it is wearied with it; and if that is done by *godly sorrow* — then it is a matter of necessity, that the heart must be pierced; and there must be a separation between sin and the soul, before Christ will marry the soul, and rule in it. Otherwise there will be two Gods in one heart, which cannot be.

Not all alike are wounded for sin.

2. The SECOND thing in answer to the above question is this: some may say, *Oh, I never found this work in me.* Therefore you must know that however this work is wrought in *all* for the *substance* of it, yet it is wrought in a different *manner* in most.

For the fashion that God uses in framing the heart is different. Two men are pricked, the one with a pin, the other with a spear. Two men are cut, the one with a pen knife, the other with a sword. So the Lord deals kindly and gently with one soul, and roughly with another — handling it marvelously sharp and breaking it all to pieces. There is the melting of a thing, and the breaking of it with hammers. I say this rather to check the imagination that harbors in the heart of some men, otherwise holy and wise (and yet mistaken in this point), who think the Lord never works grace, except in this extraordinary manner.

It's true, God must sometimes use this frightening of the spirit. And when proud spirits come to grapple with the Lord, He will make their hard hearts buckle. And it's true, there must be a clear sight of sin, and the heart must be wearied with the vileness of it, and be content to part with sin. This is wrought in *all*. But the Word doesn't say that this extraordinary fearful manner must be wrought in *all* as it is in *some*. Nor is God bound to any manner; there is a difference among persons. For example,

First, a person may live scandalously; he may be an opposer of God and his grace, and set himself against the Lord Jesus Christ. He sets his mouth against heaven, and professes himself to be an enemy to God and to His truth.

Secondly, a man may have harbored a filthy heart, and continued long in sin; and he has been a secret adulterer, and continued long in that.

Thirdly, a man may have been confident in a civil course.³⁹

Fourthly, God may purpose to do some great works by him.

In all four cases, God lands a heavy blow upon the heart — and commonly, the nature of these persons requires it.

³⁹ That is, he is self-righteous, trusting in his own external moral and civil behavior.

First, when anyone has been an opposer of God and his grace, and the Lord deals gently with him, other vile wretches would be ready to say, ‘Such a man has gone to heaven, even though he is thus and thus. And yet the Lord dealt lovingly with him. Therefore, even though I continue in these courses, I will do well enough too.’ No, don’t delude yourself. For the Lord will bruise him, and tear the covering of his heart, and make him seek a faithful minister for direction, and seek counsel from a poor Christian whom he despised before. And the world will know what it means to oppose God, and to persecute his children — as he broke Paul’s heart, and made him say, *I am one who persecuted the saints*, 1Cor 15.9.

Commonly the Lord will not show mercy to those who openly deceive,⁴⁰ but will make the world see their *humiliation*, as they have seen their *rebellion* and *opposition*.

Thus the Lord deals with the secret thief and close adulterer. He plucks away their corruptions, and makes them vomit up their sweet morsels. And then they will say, These are my sins, and this heart of mine is hardened by continuing in them. And this is why the Lord works in this manner.

But if the soul is otherwise trained up among godly parents, and lives under a soul-saving ministry that says, you cannot go to heaven by a civil course, and you cannot have a dispensation for your profanation of the Sabbath — I say, if a man lives under such a ministry, and keeps good company, the Lord may reform this man, and cut him off from his corruptions in a kindly way, and secretly break his heart in the apprehension of his sins; and yet the world will never see it.

We have an example of both these, in Lydia and the jailer (Acts 16). Lydia was a sinful woman. But God *opened her eyes* and *melted her heart* kindly, and brought her to a taste of his goodness here, and glory hereafter. But the jailer was an outrageous, rebellious wretch. For when the apostles were committed to prison, he put them in stocks and whipped them sorely, Act 16.22-23. O, he says, now that I have these precise (strictly correct) fellows in my hands, I will have my penny’s-worth of them.

Now, there was much work to bring this man home. When the apostles were *singing Psalms*, an earthquake made the *prison doors fly open* and the prisoners’ fetters fall off. Yet the jailer’s heart would not shake. At last the Lord shook his heart too, and he came trembling, ready to lay violent hands on himself because he thought the prisoners had fled. But the apostles cried out to him, *Do yourself no harm: for we are all here*. And with that, he fell down before them and said, *Men and brethren, what shall I do to be saved?*

I conclude this: naturally, all men are locked up under infidelity. Now the Lord opens their hearts severally. You know some locks are new and fresh, and therefore a key may easily open them. But some locks are old and rusty, and therefore must be broken open by force of hands. So it is with some men’s hearts. However sin might prevail over the hearts of civil men, and they are full of pride and the like, yet their hearts are kept clear from rusting, by *restraining grace*. Now the Lord will draw that man by the key of his Spirit, and kindly withdraw him from his sin. But if a man has been an old rusty drunkard or adulterer, no key can open his heart. Alas, it is not a little matter that will do the deed. It isn’t a gracious promise now and then, that will break his heart. But the Lord must come down from heaven, and break open the door by a strong hand, by awakening his conscience, so that the whole Country rings of him.

You know all men’s hearts are compared to stones. Some stones are soft; you may crush them to pieces with your hands. And some are flints, which must have many blows before they will break. So it is with some hearts. The Lord must break them by intense force. As it is with a tree, some branches are young and smooth, without knots; and some are old ones, and full of knots. Now, if a man comes every day and gives a little cut at the tender branch, at last it will come off easily. But

⁴⁰ Originally, in *hugger-mugger*: conducted with or marked by hidden aims or methods.

there is no cutting an old tree with a penknife. A man must take an axe, and give many a forceful cut, such that all the people in the town may hear it.

All men grow upon the *root* of sin, which is Adam's rebellion. Some are young, and haven't grown knotty in a rebellious course. Every Sabbath day the Lord gives a cut at him by His counsels, and by His threatenings, and by His promises. At last, it falls off kindly — he is content to part with his sins, and to rest upon Christ for mercy. Another man is an old, sturdy, vile wretch — an overgrown adulterer and drunkard; and his heart is blinded in sin. I tell you, if ever the Lord cut this man off from his base course, He must come with a mighty hand, and with his Book of the Law. God is ever laying into his soul, blow after blow, until at last he begins to forsake his wicked courses. Someone asks, 'What, is such a man turned? He was as heavy a persecutor as the Sun ever saw. His father was an enemy to all goodness, and he was just as bad. Like father like son. Has the Lord brought *him* home?' Yes, now this man sends to faithful ministers, and to God's people, to obtain comfort and direction.

3. The **THIRD** and last part of the answer is this: that when God works *gently* with Christians, they hardly perceive the work, though wise Christians may confirm what is done. For this is certain, wherever Christ is, there was *preparation*. If ever a man is saved, Christ has made him see his lost estate.

Sometimes the work is secret, and the soul doesn't apprehend it *because* it is secret. And even if he does, it is still an unknown work to him — he doesn't know what to make of it. He can find it in his heart to hate sinners and their sinful courses, yet he cannot see how this hatred was wrought in him. Man's spirit is such that he misjudges the work. But give me a Christian whom God is pleased to work on in this extraordinary manner — to break his heart soundly, and to throw him down for some purpose — even if it cost him dearly, this man walks with more care and conscience. He has more comfort coming to himself, and gives more glory to God. Whereas the other manner does but little good in his place, and he has little comfort coming to him.

Therefore, labor for soundness in this work, and then be forever sound. But if once deluded *here*, then be forever deceived, and everlastingly damned.

How to act towards those wounded for their sins.

Use 1. The first use is for *instruction*. Is it true, that the soul of a man is thus pierced to the quick, and is run thorough by the wrath of the Almighty? Then let this teach the saints and people of God, how to carry themselves towards those whom God has thus dealt with. Are they pierced men? Oh, pity them. Let our souls, and the heart of commiseration and compassion be let out towards them. And let us never cease to do them good, to the very utmost of our power and strength. And to perform this, not only **REASON** *persuades* us, but **RELIGION** *binds* us, and **PITY** *moves* us.

See what the Lord says by Moses: *If a man sees his neighbor's ox or ass fall into distress by the wayside, the Lord commands him to ease him, and succor him, indeed to lay all business aside, and not to hide himself from him, Deu 22.1-3.*

Thus the Lord commands mercy to the unreasonable creature that is thus wearied with the weight that he carries. Does the Lord take care of oxen? As the apostle says in another case, *It is for our sakes that the Lord requires this duty*, 1Cor 9.10. The meaning is this: won't the heart of your brother be eased, who is thus tired with the wrath of the Almighty? Shouldn't this poor fainting creature be succored? Are you men, or are you *beasts* in this way? If even a hog is in distress, it is strange to see how folks come around it. Are we devils, then, that we can see poor creatures burdened with the inconceivable wrath of the Lord, and not pity them? Do you *see* these, and not mourn and succor, and pray to heaven for them? See what Job says — and let him speak on behalf of all distressed souls — *O* (he says), *that all my sorrows were weighed, they would prove heavier than the sand*, Job 6.2-3. Mark how he cries for succor, 'Oh you, my friends, have pity on me, for

the hand of God is heavy upon me.’ Imagine you saw him sitting on the dunghill *mourning*, ‘It isn’t the hand of a man, or an enemy, but the heavy hand of God. And therefore, all you my friends, who see my anguish and my sorrows, *have pity on me*.’

Those pale faces, and blubbered cheeks, and feeble hearts, and hands of theirs say this much to you: Have you no regard for a man in misery? Have you no pity, says the *Lamenting Church*, for every grieved and humbled soul? Their sighs and sorrows in secret say this much. Oh, all you who walk in the streets, have you no remorse for a poor desolate forlorn creature? Had I been only wounded, or had my nature grown weak, some physician might have eased me. Had I been poor, some friends might have enriched me. Had I been disgraced, the King might have advanced me to honors. But was there ever any sorrow like *my* sorrow of soul? It is the God of mercy who shows He is displeased with me. It is the God of all grace and comfort who has filled my heart with the venom of his wrath. If there is any pity or compassion in you, lend your help, and succor such poor distressed souls. If a woman is in travail, and her strength fails her, oh! what bitter cries she puts forth, that all her neighbors might come to help her. And when they have done all they can, they pray to heaven for what they cannot do themselves.

As it is with a man who is swooning away, they run for strong cordial water (a stiff drink), and for this man and that friend to succor him; and they all cry, ‘Help, help! For the Lord’s sake, he is clean gone.’ This is all well; it is a work of mercy and pity.

But men, brethren, and fathers, you don’t know the heart-breaking sorrows that are in the souls of these poor creatures. He lies, as it were, in childbirth, in the very pangs of conversion, and his heart is even now at a crisis, even now to be converted and loosened from sin, and to have Christ brought into his soul. O that God would send some among you, that you might experience it! ‘Oh,’ says the poor soul, ‘Will these and those sins never be pardoned? And will this proud heart never be humbled?’ Thus the soul sighs, mourns, and says, ‘Lord, I see this, and feel the burden of it; and yet I don’t have a heart to be humbled for it, nor to be *freed* from it. Oh when will it once be done? If you but knew this, it would make your hearts bleed to hear him. It is not the swooning away of a man in a qualm. No, no, the sword of the Almighty has pierced his heart through, and he is breathing out his sorrow as though he were going down to hell. And he says, ‘If there is any mercy, any love, any fellowship of the Spirit, have mercy on me, a poor creature that is under the burden of the Almighty. O pray and pity these wounds and vexations of spirit, which no man finds nor feels, except one who has been thus wounded.’

It is the sign of a soul wholly denoted to destruction, that has a desperate disdain against poor wounded creatures. ‘O,’ says one, ‘I hope you have hearing enough, don’t you? It may be that you’ll tumble down a well, or hang yourself, won’t you?’ Oh, this is *fearful*. Is it possible that such a spirit should harbor in any man? There isn’t a greater brand of a man denoted to destruction than this. I don’t say he is completely at a loss ⁴¹ for the present, but it is a fearful brand of a man that is denoted to eternal destruction. If the devil himself were on earth, I cannot conceive what he could do worse.

When the woman was about to be delivered, Rev 14.4, the red dragon was there ready to destroy the child. And see what the prophet David says of such, *Lord pour out your wrath upon the heathen who don’t know you, and the kingdoms that haven’t known your name*, Psalms 79.6. *Let your wrathful displeasure take hold of those who add iniquity to iniquity, and don’t let them come into your righteousness. Let them be blotted out of your book*, Psalms 69.27-28. What’s the reason for this? Why did David make this imprecation, and say, Lord set open the gates of hell, that your wrath may fall upon the souls of such as these. The text says, *They persecute him whom You have struck*, Psalms 69.26. The Lord strikes a poor sinner, and are you ready to persecute him

⁴¹ Originally, “I do not say only he is stark naught for the present.”

too? The *Lord* has wounded him, and would *you* stab him in the heart? Good Lord! Add iniquity to iniquity! The sin is marvelous, and the curse inconceivable.

When Amalek met Israel and took advantage of them because they were weak and weary, *Remember* (says the text) *what he did to you on the way, how he did not fear God*, Deu 25.17-18. And the Lord says, *I remember what Amalek did to the people of Israel. Go therefore and blot out his name from under heaven, and kill all, both young and old*, 1Sam 15.2-3. This is a true type of those who are enemies to the poor saints of God, who are thus desolate and wounded in their consciences. Being in the wilderness was a type of the Saints' conversion; and their coming to Canaan was a type of the Saints arriving at the Heavenly City, Jerusalem.

Now can you jeer at the Saints who are thus wounded? And would you wound them further? And pierce them to the heart, and discourage them? The Lord will remember you in the day of your death. As you have shown no mercy, so you will receive no mercy in that day. I have known many such opposers of God and his Grace, who have been forced to lay violent hands upon themselves. And when the LORD has gotten some of them on their sickbed, they lie there *roaring*; and the Lord lays his full wrath upon them. If there are any such in this congregation, I pray God lets them see some sudden vein of His vengeance; that if it is possible, they may find and feel the weight of this trouble of conscience; that they themselves may also find mercy from the Lord.

The second part of the use is this: we must *pity* those who are thus wounded. By this we see the best way to send help to those who are wounded in their hearts. The wound is in the heart; and therefore let the salve be *applied* to the heart. It is in vain to tell a poor wounded soul about hawks or hounds, or the like.⁴² He isn't wounded in his body, but in his heart. The medicine must be applied to the part that is diseased. If the head is sick or sore, you must not apply a salve to the arm; and if the breast is ill, you must not apply a salve to the foot. So too, it is a vain thing to offer riches, or pleasures, or profits, to a man who is wounded in his conscience for sin — the wound is *not there*. If the wound were disquiet, then pleasure will cure him; if the wound were poverty, then riches would cure him; if the wound were in baseness and contempt, then honors would cure him. No, your *heart* is wounded, and the *conscience* is terrified in the apprehension of God's wrath. And therefore apply the spiritual *Balm of Gilead*, even the blood of Christ. The case is clear that all the self-crosses, crucifixes, and *Agnus dei's* ⁴³ in the world, and all the popish pardons, can do no good to a wounded conscience. There is never a popish shaveling ⁴⁴ under heaven who can cure a wounded soul. He cannot apply that spiritual salve which would comfort him. He may delude him, and lead him into the commission of sin, but he cannot minister any true comfort to him. Thus they cure a poor Christian by searing his conscience. And so they make him sin that much more, and never be troubled for his sin. It's as if a man killed a sick person, saying that now he feels no hurt. So it often happens that a man feels no sin, and yet he is not cured of it. This is because his sin is not removed, and his heart is unpacified in the blood of Christ.

Use 2. Secondly, is it true that the wound of a sinner is in his heart? Then here we have a matter of complaint that we may justly take up against the secure ⁴⁵ generation in which we live. There is but little saving *sorrow*, and therefore but little saving *grace*. If there is no preparation for Christ, there can be no true evidence of grace, nor of God's love in Christ. If there is no preparation for a building, then no building can be set up. The Lord is merciful to a world of men who live in the bosom of the church. If we had a fountain of tears as Jeremiah did (9.1), to bewail this age in this

⁴² Hawks attack from above, and hounds nip at our heels; these are external attacks against the body for our sin. But in godly sorrow, it is the *heart* that is pierced.

⁴³ *Agnus Dei*: a Roman Catholic liturgical prayer said in the Latin Mass, by rote. "*Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi. Beati qui ad cenam Agni vocati sunt.*" — Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

⁴⁴ *Shaveling*: a derogatory term for a monk; the crown of a monk's head was shaved.

⁴⁵ *Secure*: complacent; free from fear or doubt; easy in mind.

respect, it would be worthwhile. And if the Lord were to send some Ezekiel and say to him, Go to such a country, or such a shire, and see if there are any who mourn for their sins, and comfort them — Alas! what would become of a *world* of such persons?

This is a bill of indictment against **three sorts of people**. It arraigns and condemns them, as those who have never yet shared in this work of preparation, and of saving sorrow; and therefore who were *never in Christ*. These swarm in our streets.

1. And first it falls marvelously heavy on those who take contentment in their base courses, those loose epicures and convivial gallants of our time, who go staggering in our streets. They are so far from grieving for their sins, that it is their greatest vexation if they cannot *commit* sin, and have elbow room to sin *freely*. O what a grief it is to them to have a minister check them, *and* that there is a law to punish them for sin. Though sin *should be* poison in their souls to wound them, it becomes like meat to nourish them. *They don't sleep unless they've done mischief* (says the wise man), *and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall; they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence*, Pro 4.16-17. It is so far from being poison to them, and they are so far from being troubled by sin, that it is their meat and pastime to sin. Just like Esau, what did he do? *When he had eaten and drunk, he rose up to play*.⁴⁶ And this was all he looked for. When he had given away his title to heaven and happiness, and esteemed Christ and heaven no more than a mess of pottage, he ate and drank. His heart was never touched by what he had done. He didn't strike his thigh as Ephraim did, and say, *What have I done?*⁴⁷ Have I sold my birthright for nothing? You who know the world, you know there are many who sit on the ale-bench, and swear, and drink, and rail against God's servants, and are never troubled by it. No, the world has come to this, that their greatest vexation is that they are hindered in their sinful courses.

It was the custom of the old world. Haman went home sick, because he wanted the cap and knee from Mordecai.⁴⁸ Amnon was sick by incest, and Ahab was sick by covetousness, and Ahithophel was sick because his counsel wasn't followed. The Lord of heaven knows, the adulterer is sick because he cannot get the heart and company of his quean. Many a man is sick because of envy; it is rottenness to his bones. Yes, many a man goes up and down sick of it, and isn't quiet, because he cannot vent his rage against a faithful minister who checks him. You swearers, don't your hearts rise against the king and state for making a law against that sin? Don't you hate the constable and witness who come against you? You consider them the greatest plague to you in all the world. I appeal to the hearts of all of you who hear me this day: can you say that you are troubled for sin, and yet grieve because you cannot still commit it? Woe, *woe* to your souls who thus delight in sin.

There are many who spite the spirit of grace, and don't hesitate to say, I swore such a man out of the house, and I drank such a man under the table, dead. Read that verse of the apostle, 2The 2.13, and there you will see your doom. If there are any such persons in your families, or among your neighbors, throw this in their faces. And if they go down to hell, let them go with pain, *that they might all be damned* (says the text) *who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in unrighteousness*. God is not partial; but He says, *That all might be damned*. It would almost shake a man's heart to think of it.

How many notorious vile wretches may say, 'Good Lord, what will become of our families, and villages? We are *all* opposers of God and his grace. Will *all be damned?*' I dare not say what God will do to you — but the *text* says. This, I think, might lie like poison and ratsbane on the heart of

⁴⁶ Gen 25.34; Exo 32.6; 1Cor 10.7.

⁴⁷ **Jer 31:18-19** I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself: 'You have chastised me, and I was chastised, like an untrained bull; Restore me, and I will return, For You *are* the LORD my God. Surely, after my turning, I repented; And after I was instructed, I struck myself on the thigh; I was ashamed, yes, even humiliated, Because I bore the reproach of my youth.'

⁴⁸ That is, to tip the hat and bend the knee in deference.

a sinful creature. May the Lord look upon you in mercy, and make sin as loathsome and bitter to you, as it has ever been sweet and pleasant. You see how the matter will go with you — *you*, who thus jibe and jest at the saints, and entertain yourselves in sin. The time may come that it will be a dry feast, as it was with Dives,⁴⁹ who was drunk, and *fared deliciously every day*, Luk 16.19. He had a dry feast in hell, and could not have a *drop of water to cool his tongue*. So it will be with you. You must either buckle and mourn for sin, or else burn forever.

2. Secondly, it condemns those who are in a fair state — such are those who have a *slight* sense of sin, but it never goes down to the heart. The skin is rippled a little, but the covering of their heart was never broken for their abominations. Naaman was to wash seven times in the Jordan. Likewise, this water of *godly sorrow* has a healing nature; but these men don't rub and rinse their souls in it — they only dip them in a little sorrow. But you must wash it *thoroughly* and *fully* if ever you desire to have the leprosy of sin purged out. Men *bathe* their sins with tears, but they don't *drown* them. They do as parents do with their children; they will correct them a little, and then quickly coddle them again. So the hypocrite usually troubles his corruptions, and complains about them, and vexes them a little with sorrow. But in the meantime, he coddles and fondles them again. But sin will not be killed this way; and the heart will not be so easily broken. *This* kind of sorrow is too slight and superficial.

As it is with a debtor who has borrowed money, he complains that he had a bad bargain, and desires that either he might have the debt abated, or the day put off — he puts it off with mere talking. There is such a generation of whining hypocrites, who outwardly complain of their corruptions, but still keep them, as Ahab did. He hated Micaiah, 1Kng 22.8; and afterwards he fasted and prayed that he might sin more freely without suspicion. So there is many a cursed hypocrite who lives in a fair course, and yet will cheat, and lie, and deal marvelously unjustly. And then he complains of his sin, and confesses it, only to *bathe* his sins. But he won't *drown* his sins and subdue them. And he does this, so that he may sin more freely again. It is but fasting and praying, and so forth.

O brethren, it is a desperate hypocrisy that the sorrow which God has appointed as a means to *purge* our sin, should be a means to *cover* our sin. Will a few trickling tears do the deed, and break the heart? Is this acceptable sorrow? You yourselves are ashamed of this work; and do you think that *God* will accept it? No, no, it is not the tearing of the garments, nor the weeping of the eyes that will do the deed, but you must break your hearts. If you only cut off the legs or wings of a fowl, it will live despite all that. So you may cut off the arms or hands of sin, but so long as the heart isn't wounded and driven to amazement for sin, it will live with you *here*, and in *hell* too.

Oh, don't deceive your own souls. It isn't the tears of the eye, but the blood of the heart that your sins must cost. And if you don't come to this, then never think that your sorrow is good. And therefore, you who find yourselves guilty, lay your hands on your hearts and say, 'Good Lord, this is my portion. The Lord knows that I have confessed my sins, and yet I have taken liberty to sin. But my heart was never burdened with this evil and vileness of sin. And therefore, to this day I never had this *true* sorrow.'

3. There is a third sort of sorrow, which is the worst of all. They are those who up to now have drunk deeply of this sorrow, and have been extraordinarily stricken. And yet they have grown that much more hardened in their sins, by all these blows that God has laid upon them. They are in a desperate condition, even those that God has made howl in the congregation. And yet afterwards, they fall into the same courses again, and return to their old bias. And now they can stare down God and his ministers and all;⁵⁰ and think it's unworthy to be disquieted in heart, as they have been. Once, they were such novices and children, that they couldn't sleep or be quieted. But now

⁴⁹ Traditionally, *Dives* is the name of the rich man in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man.

⁵⁰ Originally, "outface God" — to brazenly confront without blinking.

they don't care what all the ministers under heaven say against them. Indeed, they can smirk in our faces, and be drunk and vile, and never be troubled by it. They've gotten the skill of it. This is the most fearful condition that almost any poor creature can fall into.

You consider it your glory and credit that you can bear it all, and you're proven metal, and no bullets can pierce you. You were troubled before, but now you've shaken it off. This, I say, is your shame, and it will aggravate your condemnation. Indeed, I take it to be one of the sorest tokens under heaven, of a graceless heart. If you have had your conscience awakened, and been troubled for sin, and now fly off, it's a sign of God's high displeasure towards you. You take the right course, as if God had invented a way to destroy your soul, as you may see in Isaiah. *Go your way*, says the Lord, *speaking to this people. But they will not hear; make the heart of this people fat*, Isa 6.9-10. It's as though he said, There is a company of people in such a place. Go to them. Open their eyes, and touch their hearts, and awaken their consciences. And when you are done, then let their consciences be seared and fattened, and then they will go the right way to destruction. For if they would awaken, and sorrow well, and repent, I must save them.

Let these men remember that this is a heavy sign that God has *forsaken* them. I think this should trouble their souls exceedingly, and force them to cry out, *I am the man whose heart is fattened, and would not be touched and converted*.

Now, if all that I have said is true, there are but few sorrowers for sin, and therefore few are saved. Here we see the ground and reason why many flee godliness and Christianity. This is the cause: their souls were only troubled with a little hellish sorrow, but their hearts were never fully grieved for their sins. If a man's arm is broken and disjoined a little, it may grow together again. But if it is quite broken off, it cannot grow together. So the terror of the law frightened his conscience, and a powerful minister disjoined his soul, and the judgments of God were tearing him apart — but he was never cut off altogether. And therefore he returns as vile, and as base, if not *worse* than before, and he grows more firmly toward his corruptions.

It is with a man's conversion, as it is in some men's trenching. They don't pull up all the trees by the roots, but plash⁵¹ them. So when you come to have your corruptions cut off, you plash them, and don't wound your heart fully; and you don't make your soul truly feel the burden of sin. This will make a man's sin grow and flourish *still*, but more cunningly and subtly. This lopping professor grows more subtle in his wickedness. The soul who has been terrified by his lusts, now is grown into a plashed adulterer, and ale-house haunter. He will be drunk more cunningly and secretly. And so, the one who has been an open opposer of God's children, will now jibe and jest at them in a corner; and when he comes among his old companions, he can vent all his malice.

This is the reason why all wicked men who were in some good way of preparation of their souls, turn their backs on Christ. It is because they were never fully cut off from their sins, but only disjoined; and that is the reason why they fall back into their old corruptions again. This is the main cause of all the hypocrisy under heaven. There was never any soul who made a profession, and fell away, that the ground of it is not here.

Use 3. The third use is for *exhortation*. If every sorrow will not do it, and if slight sorrow will not do it, what then remains to be done? If ever you would be comforted, and receive mercy from the great God, labor to take the right way, and never be quieted till you bring your hearts to a right pitch of sorrow. Let it never be said of you, as it was of those in Hosea, *They have not cried to me with their hearts, when they howled on their beds. They assembled themselves for corn and wine, but they rebel against me*, Hos 7.14. You have a little and *slight* sorrow, but oh, *labor* to have your heart truly touched, so that at last it may break in regard to your many distempers. The longer the seed time, the greater the harvest. And so, however troublesome this sorrow is now, it will be very

⁵¹ *Plash*: To cut partly, or to bend and intertwine the branches.

comfortable in the end. And though it is tedious to lay all these cursed abominations on your heart, it will not be harsh when the Lord remembers you in his kingdom. You will never regret that you have had your hearts humbled and broken, when the Lord comes to heal you. And you will never regret that you have wept, when the Lord comes to wipe away all tears from your eyes. *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*, says our Savior, Mat 5.4. But, *Woe to you who are at ease in Zion*, Amo 6.1. There is a time of mourning for sin; you cannot always have ease and quietness. You had better now be wounded, than everlastingly tormented. And therefore, if you desire to see the face of God with comfort, and to have Christ speak for you and say, Come you poor heavy-hearted sinners, I will ease you — if ever you desire this, then labor to lay a load on your hearts with sorrow for your sins. Oh what comfort a poor broken heart will find in that day! David says, *A broken and contrite heart, O Lord, you will not despise*, Psalms 51.17.

When men go into a far country for merchandise, they won't take rattles and such toys for their money; but only such commodities as they may get something by. So too, when the Lord comes for broken hearts, you must not think to put the Lord off with a little painted sorrow. No, no, *it is a broken heart* that the Lord will not despise. Would you know what kind of heart the Lord will accept and never cast off? *It is a broken heart*. Tell your friends and neighbors of it. I think you look as if you would gladly find acceptance with God, and go to heaven. O then, get a humble, lowly, broken heart. The Lord doesn't regard all the rivers of oil in the world; nor a hundred thousand fasts; but it is a broken heart that God will bless and glorify.

Look how it is with a woman's conception. Those births that are hasty, the children are either stillborn, or the woman most commonly dies. So don't think to fall upon the promise quickly. Indeed you cannot fall upon it too soon upon good grounds; but it is *impossible* that a full soul⁵² or a haughty heart should ever believe. You may be deceived, but you cannot be engrafted into Christ. Therefore, when God begins to work, never rest until you come to a full measure of this brokenness of heart. Oh follow the blow, and labor to make this work sound and good to the bottom, and then you will be sure to receive comfort. As the prophet David says, *Our eyes look up to You until you have mercy on us*, Psalms 123.2. Let your consciences be wounded thoroughly and fully, and resolve not to hear the cursed counsel of carnal friends who say, Why do you need to mourn? O poor fools. There is none, not even the most civil professor in the Kingdom, that if God discharges his sins at his heart as He could do, it would be enough to make him go howling with sorrow to his grave. Therefore, humble yourselves before God, and never be at rest until the Lord shows mercy to your souls. Never unburden your souls before God eases you; and don't break out of prison. For if you do, God will send after you with a witness. No, no, when God has put you into prison, don't break out till God sends to deliver you; and then your hearts will be filled with comfort — soundly humbled, soundly comforted. If a man is lost, Christ will seek and save him.

Three means by which the heart is brought to sound sorrow.

Question. Now it may be that some poor soul will ask, How will I bring my heart to this sound work of sorrowing for sin?

Answer. I will show three means by which the Lord works it.

Means 1. First, when the Lord first begins to work on you, and you begin to see your corruptions, then possess your souls with the apprehension of the ticklishness of the condition you're in. This work is great and inwardly marvelous, and you may be easily deceived — and the danger is great if you *are* deceived. In this case, the soul is like a ship at sea, when the mariners pass by and see the rocks where such and such ships have been split, and men and all were lost. They are very wary to steer aright, and direct their compass aright — they won't come near sands and rocks. So it is with this humbling of the heart. Many have been misled and deceived in this.

⁵² *Full soul*: entire and unbroken; that is, self-satisfied.

Therefore, now hold this rule: let that soul whose eyes God has opened, and brought under His blows — let him fear (I say) that he is not sound in the work, rather than fear he won't be at ease. For every man says, 'I pray you Sir, comfort and refresh me; and will *God* never give me comfort?' But they go wrong in this. Many perish because they leave this work too soon. None ever perished because he received the work soundly. Therefore, reason with your own heart and say, 'Good Lord, be merciful to me; my condition is very ticklish. If I am now deceived, then farewell comfort.'

Weren't Cain and Judas vexed and disquieted, and yet damned?

This is a great point of wisdom, and it sinks many a Christian (I know what I say). As it is with childbearing, when a woman's throes come often and strong, there is some hope of deliverance. But when her throes go away, commonly the child dies, and her life too is lost. So it is in this great work of contrition, which is nothing else but the childbirth of the soul. When your throes go away, take heed that your salvation doesn't go too. Once you could say, 'The minister spoke home to my heart. I remember the time full well.' Why then, what has become of all your sorrow? Can you now be as carnal and secure as ever? It is certain that you are in childbearing, but your throes have left you, and the brokenness of your heart is gone. And therefore your case is bad — surely at some low ebb of grace.

Again, if a man's heart is soundly broken, even if he falls into some sin, he may be recalled. But if he doesn't have his heart soundly broken, he is undone. If the foundation fails, the building must fall. So it is in this preparation of the soul for Christ; if this fails, it all comes to nothing. Therefore be that much more fearful for your souls, because your condition is so much more ticklish in *this* than in anything else. Desire soundness rather than quietness.

Means 2. Secondly, when God stirs, stir your heart too — be stabbed further; and make the blow go deeper. Therefore, wherever any truth goes near the heart and awakens you, look up to heaven and bless God for it. Labor to drive the nail home to the head, and make the salve work to the bottom. And let me advise you to do this: when your soul is worked upon by any reproofs or admonitions, *take* that truth, and labor to maintain its power on your heart the whole week after; and let your *soul* be awed by it.

Means 3. Thirdly, consider what your soul finds to be most evil and detestable — whether poverty or disgrace, or loss of liberty. And then (mark what I say) get your heart higher up in the very apprehension of sin, *as it is sin*. And let your soul be more affected with the vileness of sin, than with any other hardship whatsoever. Like this: suppose your heart is very proud. If shame and disgrace befall you, Oh how your heart shakes in the apprehension of it. You can live no longer unless some honor comes. Now, *sin is worse than shame*. Therefore, look up to heaven and say, 'Oh, my heart shook with shame, but sin is far worse.'

[On the one hand], what if the Lord takes away my honor that He has promised to those who fear his name? And [on the other hand], what if He blots my name out of the Book of Life? ⁵³ Therefore, *sin is worst of all*. This is certain: there is no evil that the soul fears or finds, that sin is not the cause of it. But the separation of the soul from the Lord is the *greatest* evil; and *sin* is the cause of that. Therefore, don't rest until your soul shakes in the apprehension of it. This is the next way to be above punishment or anything else.

The fruits of godly sorrow

Now I come to the fruits of godly sorrow, which are taken from these words, Act 2.37, *They said to Peter and the other apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do?* In these words, three things are **presumed**, and three things are plainly **expressed**.

⁵³ **Exo 32:33** Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.

First, the *three things* that are *presumed*.

(1) They saw themselves in a miserable and damnable condition — as if they said, Hell is now gaping; it is but a turning of the ladder, and we go to hell forever. *Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

(2) They themselves were ignorant, and couldn't direct themselves as to what to do to come out of this estate. And therefore they said, *Men and brethren*, advise us what to do: if there is any help, you know it.

(3) Yet there is still a secret kind of hope, and the heart suspects that it may and will be otherwise with them. They don't say, there is *nothing* to be done. No, they say, *What shall we do?* Surely there is some way to find help, if only we could tell what it is.

Again, there are *three things plainly expressed* in these words:

(1) First, they make an open and plain confession of their sins. When they were sick at heart, they could make an open confession, and lay their hand on the sore and say, if there are any vile wretches under heaven, *we* are them.

(2) Secondly, a thorough resolution against their sins, and a hatred of them — as if they said, We are resolved to do *anything*, whatever it is. We don't care, just so we may thwart our sins.

(3) The last thing expressed is a sequestration of the soul from this sin. The soul falls away from them, and bids farewell to all cursed courses.

First, I come to the three things *presumed*. And because I will have occasion afterward to handle the former two, I will begin with the last of the three, which is this: *Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Surely there is some course to be taken, isn't there? You who are *God's prophets*, tell us if there is any hope for such poor distressed sinners as we are.

So the DOCTRINE derived is this: there is a secret hope of mercy, with which God supports the hearts of those who are truly broken-hearted for their sins. Though these men saw themselves as miserable, yet they didn't throw it all away and say, *Men and brethren* there is no hope for us, and therefore we will hear no more. But seeing we must go to hell, we will take our pleasure while we live here in the world, while we may. And if we must be damned, we will be damned for *something*. No, these people had some hope that they would find mercy. The Lord will not quench the smoking flax, but kindles it further. And the Lord draws the soul, and plucks it to himself, and makes it look up to him, and to wait upon Him for help and mercy.

I confess, it is true that sometimes the soul in some desperate fit, and in some horror of heart — when temptation grows violent and long, and the distempers of a man's heart stir exceedingly — a man may then seem to cast off all, and resolve with David, when he had been long pursued by Saul, *I shall one day fall by the hand of Saul*. So the soul says, God will one day leave me, and I will perish. And as David says in another place (Psa 116.11), *All men are liars*; that is, they said I shall be King of Israel, but they are all deceived; *they are all liars*. But it was in his haste, in a proud, impatient, and haughty humor of soul.

This is our nature. If God doesn't buckle to our bow, and doesn't hear us when we will, then (in a proud humor) we are apt to say, Oh my sins will never be pardoned, and I will never gain ground against my corruptions. A man who is in a swoon, lies as if he were dead; yet he comes to himself again, and looks up and speaks. So too, however the soul in some unruly humor may be driven to swoon, and think it's impossible to find mercy, or to overcome his corruption, yet still he recovers again; and the soul that is truly broken for sin, is upheld. As Jonah said, *I am cast out of your presence, I am ever sinking, yet will I look towards Your holy temple*, Jon 2.4. So too, however the soul might be overwhelmed in a drunken fit of pride, or impatience, yet after the soul has prayed, it says, I will *wait* upon God for mercy.

God deals with poor sinners in this case, as men do who pound precious powder, such as bezoar stone or the like, to make some potion with it. They will break it, and pound it all to pieces. Yet they cover it up tightly, and won't lose the least sand of it. As they break it, they keep it close, so none will be lost. So too, when God purposes to do good to your souls, He will break you, and melt you; and then you think He has cast you off in his anger. No, no, He is pounding you, but he will preserve those souls notwithstanding. He won't lose those poor sinners to whom he purposes to do good.

Two reasons why God limits our shaking.

As it is with pocket compasses, a man may shake them this way and that, but they still point northward by virtue of the loadstone (magnet). So there are many shakings in the soul. Sometimes it fears God will not be merciful; sometimes it hopes that He will. Thus it is tossed to and fro, but *still* it is Heaven-ward, and there is a hope that this shaking may be otherwise. For the Lord holds the soul by a secret virtue to Himself, and He draws the heart to seek mercy.

When the *Prodigal* child was brought to a desperate strait, he began to consider what he had done. Though he said before, Will I always be a slave in my father's family? at last when all his money was spent, what does he do? He says, It is true, I can look for no help and favor, and I cannot tell whether my Father will receive me or not. Yet *my Father's servants have bread enough, and will I starve for hunger?* O wretch that I am, I have left a kind father's house. Yet come what will, *I will go home again, and say, Father, I have sinned*, Luk 15.18. Thus the soul thinks to itself, Oh the many sweet and gracious calls that I have had! How often Christ has come home to my heart, and desired entrance, and yet I shut the door on him. Will I now go home to the Lord Jesus Christ? How justly may he reject me, who have rejected him? He may *damn* me — and yet, he may *save* me. And therefore I will wait upon him for mercy. Thus the soul will not depart from God, but it has a secret hope with which the Lord keeps the heart to Himself.

The first reason. Because unless the Lord leaves this hope in the heart, it would be utterly overthrown with despair. You who make nothing of your loose thoughts and vain speeches, I tell you, if God set but one sinful thought on your heart, your soul would sink under it; and the Lord's wrath would drive you to marvelous desperation. If it were not that the Lord upholds you with one hand, as He beats you down with the other (I say), it would be impossible for the soul not to despair. As the proverb goes, *But for hope, the heart would break*. Who can stand under the almighty hand of God, unless He upholds him? God has broken off the sinner by this sorrow, but He will not throw him to hell. The gardener cuts off a graft to plant it into a new stock, not to burn it. So the Lord cuts off a sinner from all abomination, but He will not cast him into hell. And the Lord melts the heart of a poor sinner, but does not consume him. As the goldsmith melts his gold, not to consume it all away but to make it a better vessel, so the Lord melts a poor sinner to make him a vessel of glory. The Lord will fire those proud hearts of yours, and clip off those knotty lusts. But if you belong to Him, he will leave a little remainder of hope that you will be formed and fashioned, and not consumed.

It is the argument of the Lord by the prophet, *He will come and dwell with, and refresh the broken soul; and He will not contend forever, lest the spirit fail before him*, Isa 57.15-16. If the Lord were to let in but one scattering shot of his vengeance into the heart, it would be enough to drive the soul to despair. But God will lay no more upon us than will do us good.

The second reason. If the Lord didn't leave this hope in the heart, a man's endeavors in the use of the means would be altogether killed. If there is no hope of good, then there is no care to use the means by which any good may be obtained. Good is the loadstone of all our endeavors. A man will not labor for nothing. Therefore despair kills a man's labors, and plucks up the root of all his endeavors. If there is any good at present, hope makes us labor to increase it. If there is any good to come, hope labors to attain it. But there *must* be good.

So hope provokes the soul to use the means, and to say, 'I am a damned man. But if there is any hope, then I will *pray*, and *hear*, and *fast*. Who knows but God may show mercy to my poor soul?'

Use 1. First, we may take notice here of the marvelous tenderness, and the loving nature of God in dealing with poor sinners. In all his courses of justice, He remembers some mercy; and in all the portions of his wrath, He still drops in some cordials of comfort. He doesn't deal with us as he might, but as might be most comfortable every way, and useful to work upon our hearts, to draw our souls home to himself. If the Lord were to come out against a poor sinner, and in His wrath let fly against him, his soul would sink down under him. But blessed be God, that he doesn't deal with our hearts as we deserve. If he were as rigorous against us, as we have been rebellious against him, we would sink in sorrow and fall into despair, never to be recovered anymore.

But as the Lord batters us, so he relieves us. As we may see in Saul, he had obtained letters to Damascus. And now he hoped, being General of the field, to bind and to imprison all; and he wouldn't spare the poor Christians a jot. But Christ meets him in the field, and throws him down, and might have killed him too. But the Lord desired that he might be humbled rather than confounded. I don't read that he ever showed his letters. But he laid all flat down before the Lord, and so he was accepted. The Lord showed him his misery; yet He doesn't let him perish there, but gives him a little crevice of comfort.

When the Lord dealt with the children of Israel, he said, *I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and there I will give her the valley of Achor for the door of hope*, Hos 2.15. *When Achan was stoned for stealing the wedge of gold*, the Israelites called it the valley of Achor, and so it is called to this day, Jos 7.25.

The valley of Achor is the valley of trouble, of stoning or consternation. So the Lord does here. He draws the soul into the wilderness of sorrow for sin, but does he leave the soul there? No; there is also the door of hope, and there the soul will sing as in former times. And upon this, the soul says, There is some hope that God will do good to me for all this; there is hope the Lord is melting me, to make me a vessel of glory. It's a gloomy night when there is neither moon nor candle to be seen. So too, though the soul is marvelously gloomy and heavy, yet there is some crevice of light and consolation let into the heart, still cheering and refreshing it. The Lord knows what metal we are made of, and *He remembers that we are but dust*, Psa 103.14. Therefore, He so corrects us, that he may leave an inkling of mercy and favor in our hearts.

O, therefore, let us continually admire and bless this good God; and not quarrel with his ministers nor with providence, and say, Other men have comfort, and therefore why am I so troubled and disquieted? How is that? It is endless mercy that you *live*. Therefore, down with your proud heart, and stifle those distempers of spirit, and say, The Lord has broken and wounded me, but blessed be his name that I may come to church; and that he hasn't dealt with me as I have deserved, but in goodness and mercy. I hope God in his season will do good to my soul.

Use 2. Secondly, let us be wise to nourish this same blessed work in our hearts forever. Let us have our hearts more and more strengthened, because thereby our hearts will be more and more enabled to bear and undergo *anything*. If you have but a little glimpse of hope, cover it, and labor to maintain it. And if ever God lets any glimpse of mercy into your hearts, don't let it go out. It is ever good to take that way which God takes. The Lord sustains our hearts with hope. Hope is the sinews of the soul, therefore strengthen it.

Like a Mariner who is tossed by a tempest on a dark night, when he sees no stars, he casts anchor, and that cheers him. This hope is the anchor of the soul, by which it looks out and expects mercy from God. The poor soul sees no light or comfort, nothing but the wrath of an angry God. And he says, 'God is a just God, and a jealous God — even that God whose truth I have opposed, is displeased with me.' Then the soul is tossed and troubled, and runs upon the rocks of despair. How will the soul be supported in this condition? You will find this true one day, and therefore

look to it *before*. You vile drunkards are now sailing in a fair gale of pleasure and carnal delight. But when the Lord's wrath seizes you, when He lets in the flashes of hellfire, then you are tossed — sometimes up to heaven, now down to hell. Therefore cast anchor *now*, and this hope will uphold you. For this hope is called *the anchor of the soul*, Heb 6.19. You don't yet see the Lord refreshing you, but it may be otherwise. The people of Nineveh said, *Who knows but God may repent*. This upheld their hearts, and made them seek the Lord in the use of the means, and the Lord had mercy on them. If you belong to the Lord, he will come against those drunken, proud, and rebellious hearts of yours, and drag them down to hell, and make them sorrow for their sins.

And remember this against that day, *Who knows but that the Lord may show mercy?* And therefore *yet* hear, and pray, and fast, and seek Him for mercy. We must guard those parts of our bodies that are most precious, and the hurt of which is most dangerous. Hope is called the *helmet of salvation*, 1The 5.8; and the assurance of God's love is the head of a Christian. Now, take away a Christian's head, and he is clean gone. The devil ever labors for that, and says, 'You come to heaven? *Prove* it. Look, do you think God needs drunkards and adulterers in heaven? And will God provide a crown of glory for his professed enemies? Has God made heaven a pigsty for such unclean wretches as you? No, no, there is no such expectation of mercy.'

This wounds the head of the soul. But *hope* is the *helmet* that covers the head of a Christian, and makes him say, 'I confess, I'm as bad as any man can say about me. Heaven is a holy place, and I have no goodness at all in me. Yet there is hope that the Lord may break this proud heart of mine, and take away these distempers of spirit.' Now, by this means the head of a Christian is kept sure.

Three means to maintain our hope.

Question. But some will say, How will we maintain and cherish this hope in our hearts?

Answer. The means are especially **three**.

MEANS 1. First, take notice of the All-sufficiency of God, as he has revealed himself in his word. Don't say, as many do, I cannot conceive it, or I cannot find it; but *What does the Word say?* Isn't God able to pardon your sins? (Away then with those who say, I cannot conceive it, and the like.) *Is there anything too hard for me?* says God, Jer 32.27. Whatever your estate is, there is nothing too hard for Him who has hardness at his command. When our Savior said, *It is as easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, as for a rich man to go into heaven*, Mat 19.24. Good Lord! they said, *Who then can be saved?* But Christ said, *With God all things are possible*. If you look at how Man is glued to the world, so that all the ministers under heaven cannot pull him away — he will still lie and deceive. Reason and judgment cannot conceive how this man should be saved. But with God, *all things are possible*. See what the apostle says: *Abraham above hope believed under hope, that he would be the father of many nations*, Rom 4.18. He did this because he knew that the One who had promised was able to perform it, Rom 4.21; and this fed his hope. He believed *above* hope in regard to the creature, and *under* hope in regard to God — as if he said, 'I have a dead body, but God is a living God; and Sarah has a barren womb, but God is a fruitful God.'

Objection. It may be that you say, If any exhortation would have worked on me, then my heart might have been brought to a better pass. But can this stubborn heart of mine be made to yield? And can these strong corruptions of mine be subdued?

Answer. Though *you* cannot do it, yet *God* can quicken you. And although you are a damned man, yet he is a merciful God. This All-sufficiency of God is a hook on which our souls hang. When the apostles had prayed that the minds of the Ephesians might be opened, and that they might be able to know the love of Christ (because someone might ask, How can we know that which is above knowledge?), the text says, *Now to him who is able to do abundantly above all that we can think or ask, according to His mighty power that works in us, to Him be glory*, Eph 3.20-21. It is as

though he said, Though you cannot think or ask as you should, yet God is able to do exceedingly abundantly more than we can think or ask. So then, it is no more than this: we are not able of ourselves to think a good thought; yet there is sufficient power in God. And though we are dead-hearted and damned wretches, yet there is sufficient salvation in God. Let us hang the hand of hope on this hook.

MEANS 2. Secondly, the freeness of God's promise marvelously lifts the head above water. As the beggar says. The dole is free. Why may I not get it as well as another? This sometimes dashes our hopes. When the soul begins to think of what mercy is offered, he says in objection:

Objection. Oh! There are many who have it. If I could fear God as I should, and seek mercy as I should, then there would be some hope. But I have no heart to endeavor after or desire any mercy; and I cannot bring my soul nor submit my will to yield. And therefore, will I ever have any mercy?

Answer. Why not you too? Does God *sell* his mercy? No, he gives it *freely*. God keeps open house. Oh the freeness of that mercy and goodness that is in God! He requires nothing of you to procure it, but he shows mercy because He will show mercy, Rom 9.15. You have no will, but *God* has a will. And His showing mercy doesn't depend on *your* will, but on His *own* free will. It is true, God will make a man will something, and then break his heart, because no man can otherwise be saved. But it is just as true that Christ will give you brokenness of heart as well as heaven and salvation. *I will take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh, and cause you to walk in my ways*, says the Lord, Eze 36.26-27. Hold this truth in your soul. As there is no worth in the soul that can deserve anything at God's hands, so there is no sin (the sin against the Holy Spirit excepted) that can hinder the freeness of God's grace from saving of us. If you belong to Him, he will hale you to heaven and pull you from hell. He will make you lie in the dust, and wait for mercy, and come groveling for His grace — and do that freely, without anything on your part. *Who is a God like you* (says Micah), *who pardons iniquity, because mercy pleases you?* Mic 7.18.

The Lord shows mercy, not because *you* can please Him, but because *mercy* pleases him. And in Isaiah he says, *I am He that blots out your offences, for my own name's sake*, Isa 43.25.

Objection 2. But the soul may say, They were God's people who humbled themselves, and they had hearts to fear him.

Answer. See the twenty-fourth verse: *You have brought me no cane, nor have you filled me with the fat of your sacrifice; but you have wearied me with your transgressions*, Isa 43.24. Yet the Lord says, *I am he who pardons your sins*. You say that if you could pray, and humble yourself, there would be hope of mercy. But the text doesn't say it is a *sinner*, but it is *I*, God, who must do it. This is the freeness of His grace.

Objection 3. But some may object, Is it possible that a man should receive any mercy, and yet be so stubborn and rebellious? This makes way for drunkards to live as they wish, and yet think to go to heaven.

Answer. It is true, the Lord will pardon them if they belong to him, but He will do it with a *witness*. The Lord will douse that soul of yours in the vein of his vengeance; but He will pardon you too. God will pardon your sin in Christ, but he will make you feel the *bitterness* of sin.

MEANS 3. Lastly, consider the abundance of mercy and goodness that is in God, by which He not only strives with us in the midst of all our rebellions, but he is more merciful than we are or *can* be rebellious. This helps the heart with another thing that cuts it. For when the soul sees all his sins for their number, for their nature — so many, and so abominable — he says,

Objection 1. Can mercy be shown to such a wretch as I am?

Answer. Yes. For as God is All-sufficient, and His promise is free, so he has plenty of mercy for the worst. He exceeds in mercy all the sins that can be (except that against the Holy Spirit). And

therefore the soul throws itself upon this. The apostle says, *Where sin abounds, grace abounds much more, lest any man say, let us sin that grace may abound*, Rom 5.20, 6.1. The text says in another place, *whose damnation is just*, Rom 3.8. This knocks off the fingers.⁵⁴ Though a sinful wretch abuses God and grace, yet mercy will overcome the heart in this case; but it will cost him dearly. Though you turn the grace of God into wantonness, the Lord will turn that wantonness of yours into bitterness. The Lord will sting that heart of yours one day, and make you see whether it is good to forsake mercy when it is offered. *It will be easier for Sodom than for you*, when you see a company of poor Sodomites fry in hell. Though God brings you to heaven *in the end*, yet He will make you “fry in hell,” and make you think a sodomite is in a better condition *for the present*, than you are.

Objection 2. Oh, but some will say, God cannot in justice save such a wretch as I am.

Answer. For the answer to this, see what James says: *Mercy rejoices, or triumphs, over justice*, Jas 2.13. Though *Justice* says he must be plagued, yet *Mercy* says, Christ has made a plentiful satisfaction for him. So then, if God is All-sufficient, and his promise free, and his mercy superabundant, then we may be stirred up to hope for mercy from God. Our hearts may be supported in this forever.

— Now I come to some other particulars that are plainly expressed in our text.

First, *they made a free and open confession of their sins*. They didn’t wait until the apostle went to their houses. But they went to *him*, and said, *Men and brethren*, you have spoken against the sin of murder, and we confess we are guilty of this sin.

The DOCTRINE derived is this: When the heart is truly broken for sin, it will be content to make open and free confession of it; or say, sound contrition brings forth complete confession. *Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?* — as if they said, The truth is, we’ve heard of the fearful condition of those who killed the Lord Jesus, and we confess to whatever you said. He was persecuted by us, and blasphemed by us. We are the ones who cried, Crucify him, crucify him. We would have eaten his flesh, and made dice of his bones. We plotted his death and gloried in it. These are our sins, and perhaps a thousand more that they then revealed. And this is remarkable: *they went to Peter and the other apostles*. They didn’t go to the scribes and Pharisees and that cursed crew.

Note: From this observe, by the way, that when the soul is thus truly broken, it will generally never repair to those who are carnal and wicked men. For these people knew that the scribes and Pharisees had their hands as deeply drenched in Christ’s blood as themselves. And besides, they knew them to be such naughty-packs, that they would rather encourage them in their sins, than in any way ease and recover them from those sins. Therefore they went to the *Disciples*, because they were holy and gracious persons, and willing to succor them. And it is certain, that soul was never truly broken for sin, who goes for help to those who are guilty of the same. It is to be suspected that such men would go only to stop the mouth of conscience, but never to have conscience awakened. Thus you see our converts here went to the *Apostles*, not to the *Scribes* and fellow murderers. But this is only by the way. I will go on in the former point.

A broken-hearted sinner knows more by himself than any man can do. When a man is pinched with famine or drought, he will open his wants fully and freely. And so a man who is sick and has some heavy disease upon him, will tell of more pains and gripings than any physician can do. So it is with the soul who is deadly sick in the sight of his sins and abominations.

⁵⁴ *Knocks off the fingers*: meaning it takes away the argument or excuse for sin that they’re holding onto.

Question 1. But may not a wicked man who was never truly broken-hearted, make a large and open confession of his sins?

Answer. I confess that in the horror of conscience, he may do it. But as with the dog, he returns to his former vomit, and with the sow to her *wallowing in the mire*, 2Pet 2.22. The hog that is kept in a clean meadow, will look somewhat white; but if he comes out from there, he will lie down in the first dirty puddle he comes to. So there are some sinners who have been raised well, and live in a good family; they are a little cleansed. But when they come to live among wicked companions, they grow as profane as the rest. Yet all this while they are hogs, and will murmur at others who are more holy than themselves.

Now, the dog is someone who has had his eyes opened, and his conscience awakened, and some horror laid upon his soul. And this makes him disgorge himself for a while, to ease himself of his horror. But when that man returns to his sins, he will snarl and bite too, and fall heavily upon God's people, and so much the more because he has confessed his sins. Thus it was with Judas. He swallowed down his *thirty pieces*, but God made him come and acknowledge his sin, and take the shame to himself — and yet he was a Judas, a devil, and at this day in hell. I tell you, his confession outbids most people in our generation. The fish is content to nibble at the bait, and so it is taken with the hook. And when it has the hook and the bait too, it would be rid of both. So when horror of conscience has fastened upon the soul of a man because of sin, he could be content to vomit up his sin and all; and yet he is a true beast.

Question 2. But does a hearty *confession* argue for true *contrition*?

Answer. I answer, there is a kind of confession which no man attains to, unless he has a broken heart. Neither Judas nor any carnal heart under heaven comes to this. And you must know, there is no word spoken by the one that may not be spoken by the other. And therefore, the difference is not from the *words*, but from the inward frame of the *heart*.

And for the opening of this truth, I will propound and show these two things: FIRST, the confession of a poor broken-hearted sinner; SECONDLY, when the saints of God are called to confess. For the first, the difference between a true and false confession is revealed in **three particulars**.

Differences between a true and false confession of sin.

Difference 1. They differ in their ENDS. A broken-hearted sinner confesses his sins, so that he may take the shame to himself, and glorify God, Jos 7.19. This is the frame of the soul that truly confesses his sins: he does it to honor the Gospel which he has so much dishonored, and to reveal the vileness of his person and his sin that he has so much set up. He is willingly content that the glory of it may be God's, and the shame his own. Consider that passage about the good thief on the cross. When the reprobate thief was going to be executed for his sin, he railed upon Christ. Now, when he was railing, see what the good thief replies, *Don't you fear God? We have sinned and are justly punished for our sins*, Luk 23.40 — to die and go to hell too, if God is not the more merciful. This man, you see, was content to fall out with himself and his sins, and to honor the justice and holiness of God in condemning him.

Note. Observe by the way, a wicked man will be a wretch, even though he goes to hell shortly.

It is said in Ezekiel, *They shall remember their ways that were not good, and shall be ashamed*, Eze 16.16. That is, they will take shame to themselves; they will not shrink from it. A gracious heart cannot tell what to do to make sin and itself base enough before God, so that his soul and sin may fall out one with another. Take the example of Zacchaeus, Luk 19.8.

But the confession of a carnal HYPOCRITE doesn't come out so quickly; it sticks in his teeth. He begins to confess something, and then he stops. He says something, and calls it back again, and is loath to take any shame for the evil committed. And therefore, he will perhaps come when he is

called, but he will go away and confess nothing at all. Indeed, if a minister hears anything about him, he will hide it and tell a flat lie, rather than take the shame for it. It is true, a carnal hypocrite may sometimes confess to content the minister, as some commonly do. He may confess to get in tight with a man, and to get commendations. Indeed, he may confess in order to sin more freely without suspicion. For charity believes that once a man has confessed his sin, he will never sin in that way again. Again, sometimes he does it to stop the mouth of conscience. And therefore, when conscience is full of horror, in order to quiet conscience and still its clamor, he is content to reveal his sin so that he may have some secret *peace* for his sin. They differ that far in their ENDS.

Difference 2. Secondly, they differ in their GROUNDS. The cause and ground of a broken-hearted sinner is from the loathsomeness and vileness that the heart sees in sin. And therefore it confesses to free itself from that sin, and to let out all those abominations that are so loathsome and tedious to him. As the sinner who is truly burdened confesses all his sins, so especially he confesses those which are most loathsome and secret — even those sins by which the heart has been most estranged from God. For as before, the soul confessed sin freely because he was content to *take shame* to himself, so now he does it to *rid himself* of the shame. When it goes to the very inwards of the soul, *then* a man feels sin fully. In this case, it is with a broken-hearted sinner, as it is with that part of a man's body which is abscessed, or the like. When the abscess is ripe, if it is lanced to the quick, the very core and all comes out. But if it is pricked with a pin, some corrupt matter may come out, but the core still remains in it. So it is with an abscessed heart. When a man is truly pierced for his abominations, he is content to lay open the most inward corruptions of all, so that there may be a perfect killing of it all. Indeed, it labors to sweep out the most secret sins of all, without any ifs or ands. And he says, Oh this proud, wretched, adulterous heart of mine has been my bane, and it will be my destruction forever if God is not more merciful. Now the core and all comes out.

Whereas the HYPOCRITE, who feels only the fear, horror, and punishment of sin — executed or threatened — confesses no more than may procure his case. He doesn't desire so much to have his corruptions *removed*, as to be freed from their horror. And therefore a hypocrite will skim over all his confessions. His talk will be a hundred miles away from his sins. He never comes to that main sin which keeps his heart from God. It is remarkable that one man complains he is troubled with wandering thoughts in hearing the Word, and his soul is taken aside with strange distempers. But if you follow that soul home, you will commonly find some base corruptions that take up his heart. Another man complains of his hard heart, that it doesn't stir at the Word of God, and God's judgments don't melt him. Yet in the meantime, he nourishes that pride and self-uncleanness that is the *cause* of it. And there are many besides these. As with a dog, it stops gorging its food, not because it loathes it, but because its stomach is troubled with it. And therefore, when its pain is over, it takes it with greediness again. So it is with a hypocrite. His heart is burdened with extreme sorrow. And therefore he throws out as much as troubled and galled his conscience, and that may work some ease for him. But afterwards, he returns to it again. And this is the reason why we have so many revolvers and backsliders after such open confessions. They confess only to ease themselves of the horror. And therefore, once the horror is gone, they fall back into their old sins. By contrast, a sound Christian confesses his sin *only* from the loathsomeness of it.

Difference 3. Thirdly, they differ in their FEARS. The soul that is *truly* broken, confesses with an inward resolution *never to meddle with sin anymore*. Yet all this while, the soul is full of fear and suspicion — for fear of falling into those sins again. And therefore it desires to reveal itself by its desires and wishes, rather than having any confidence in itself. And therefore the soul says, O that the Lord would once give me power against these corruptions. Oh how happy I would be! But alas! *I have no power in myself*. The soul is willing to fling himself into the arms of God's mercy, and to commit himself wholly to the means of grace, so that God may be honored by him. He only desires God to be good to him by giving him power against his corruptions.

Whereas the HYPOCRITE who is in fear of some judgment, and the wrath of God has seized upon his soul, in order to get ease, he will promise anything and be marvelously open. And yet *his confidence is in himself*. And so he says, ‘If God would give me health, and raise me up again, all the world will see that I will be a new man. And they will see how holy, and how careful, and how exact I will be.’ Yet, poor soul, when he is out of his trouble, he returns to his vomit, and is worse than before — and so much the worse, because he has made an open confession. As it is with a debtor, an honest man comes freely, and acknowledges his debt, and desires the creditor to satisfy himself with his body and goods. He desires that the creditor may not be a loser by him. If he suspects he won’t be able to pay him, he hopes so far as he is able, to make him content. But another cunning mate promises to pay all, if the creditor will give him a further delay — but he intends no such thing. It is just so with a soul who is truly broken for sin: he lays himself open in God’s presence, refers himself into God’s hands, and says, The truth is, Lord, I know this proud corrupt heart of mine will not yield; it will deceive me: I am afraid I won’t be able to walk holily. Take this heart of mine, and do what you will with it; only purge out my sin and corruption. This is the manner of *his* confession.

When a man is bound to confess his sin.

Objection. But is every man bound to confess his sins this freely and openly?

Answer. I answer, the doctrine says, *When he is called to it*.

Question. But you ask, When is a man bound and called to make a confession?

Answer. I will show the answer in **four conclusions**.

1. *First*, when the soul has had a true sight of sin, and has confessed it to the Lord abundantly, and through God’s mercy has gotten some assurance of the pardon of it, then he need not look to *men* for pardon, because the end of confession is accomplished already. A man therefore confesses his sin, that he may find some help against it. It’s not that a minister can absolve or pardon anyone (as the popish shavelings imagine), but that the sinner may have the direction, help, and prayers of a godly minister.

2. *Secondly*, if we have wronged anybody that we have dealt with, even though God has pardoned the sin, yet we are to confess it, that we may make peace, and pray one for another. This is the meaning of that verse, *Confess your sins one to another, and pray one for another*, Jas 5.16.

3. *Thirdly*, if a man has used *all* means, ordinary and extraordinary, and has fasted, and prayed, and sought the Lord for pardon of sin, and for strength against it, and yet his conscience remains troubled, and he sinks under the burden of his corruptions — in *this* case a man is called to confess his sins to a faithful minister. Indeed, a man may confess them to a faithful Christian, but it is God’s ordinance to confess them to a faithful minister. It’s not that a minister can pardon his sins, but only to declare when he is *fitted*,⁵⁵ and to apply mercy accordingly. It is not a matter of complement, but of a duty commanded. It is in this case with the *soul*, as it is with a man’s *body*. The one who is able to cure himself by his own skill and his “kitchen-medicine,” has no need to seek the Physician. But if it is beyond his own skill, and if kitchen-medicine will do no good, then he is bound to seek out a physician, unless he would be his own murderer. It is just so with the soul of a man who is sorrowful for sin. When he has conscionably used all means, and yet his private prayers and fastings will not do the deed, then he is bound to seek out a faithful minister. For he is the physician that God has appointed, by which all the sicknesses of the soul may be eased and cured.

4. *Lastly*, if a man has been guilty of public *open* sins, and it is known abroad that he has been an open swearer and adulterer — and if God has broken his heart thoroughly for his sins, and he lies

⁵⁵ *Fitted*: made fit, i.e., equipped and prepared to deal with this particular sin; or conformed to godly sorrow.

(it may be) on his deathbed, and now enjoys the company of a faithful minister or some holy Christian — then he is bound to acknowledge his sins. For as God has been dishonored by him, so now he may honor God and shame himself, and discourage the hearts of those wicked wretches who have shared with him in the sin. If he will ever be truly broken, and if God throws him on his sickbed, and these things are laid to his charge, he will cry out about himself and say, Oh I have hated the light of God's truth. I persecuted the cause of godliness. *I was a persecutor and blasphemer*, says Paul. So it will be with your proud and rebellious hearts, if ever God opens your eyes and awakens your consciences, as they must be, either *here* or in *hell*.

Therefore, when your companions come around you, cry shame on yourself, and say, 'The Lord knows, and all the country knows, that I have been a drunkard, and an adulterer; it is the gall of my heart. Now, if God had not been merciful to me, I would have drunk, and drunk my last. It has cost me dearly, and so it will be with you too.' It is strange to see how God throws some upon their deathbeds, and fills their consciences full of horror, and yet a man cannot wrest a word from them. No, though all their drunken companions come around them, they don't have a word to say to them. I don't think the heart of any Christian will endure it, if God ever breaks his heart fully.

Thus you see when a man is bound to confess his sin. This is far enough from the tyrannical confession of that strange popish doctrine of *auricular confession*. They hold that all men are bound — whatever their condition, whether their sins are pardoned or unpardoned — they are bound to confess all their mortal sins, and to expect their pardon authoritatively from the priest's hand, upon the pain of great matters.

What is Popish Confession of sin.

The aim of the Papists in this is first, to snare men's consciences; and secondly, to pick men's purses. For when a man has confessed his mortal sins, his conscience is snared. And then they must give so much money for the pardon of them, corresponding to the offence. Now, *we* bind no man upon pain to come *necessarily*. But if he can get pardon from God in the use of the means, and get power against his corruptions — in this case we enjoin no man to confess. But when the saints do come, it isn't because we will or can sell pardons, but only to fit them for mercy. And this is the truth, and our church holds that truth.

This falls marvelously heavy and foul upon those who are so far from this duty, that they are opposed to it. They account it a matter of madness and childishness, to acknowledge their offences to any man. Men would be comforted in regard to the sorrow they feel, but they would not be content to open their sins, and take shame to themselves. This harbors in the hearts of many carnal wretches, so they are deprived of the fruit of the Gospel. They think it cunning to shift and mince (minimize) their sins, and to keep them secret from the knowledge of the minister.

It may be that the wife is sick, and the husband says, 'I pray you, show her some comfort.' The minister says, 'Why does she need any comfort, seeing she was never in distress?' 'Oh!' the husband says (hiding it), 'She has lived an honest quiet woman.' And so by this means, we hear of nothing but good. I would gladly wrest this madness out of the hearts of carnal wretches. When the Lord has them on the rack, then their consciences are full of horror, and they don't know which way to take; yet they scorn to acknowledge anything. Will they be such babies, to decry their sins at the Market-cross? No. They have a better course than this. They say, *who knows it?* and *let him prove it*, or the like. What if no man *ever* knew it? Your own conscience knows it — and God.

If you go to a physician, you will lay open all your sores and all your pains to him, or else you can expect no help from him. And can you look for any comfort from a minister, and never reveal your sins by which you are hindered in a good course? Men would be comforted, and yet the minister never knew why they were afflicted.

Use 1. You who keep your sins so close, and maintain them so tenderly, the God of heaven will pluck those sweet morsels from your mouths, and lay them upon you, when you would be rid of

them. It is like a man who is sick. He won't send to the physician because he thinks he is able to bear it out — till at last the disease begins to fester inwardly, and all the Physicians under heaven cannot cure him. If he had sent in time, he might have been eased. So it is with many sinful creatures. Out of a sturdy hardness of heart, they scorn to confess their corruptions. Well, now God opens their eyes, and they begin to say, 'This is not well, and that is not well.' But you will not send for the minister all this while. If it is horror of conscience, you will bear that. Well, at last you come to your deathbeds, and the Lord lays his heavy hand upon you, and *then* you cry for the minister and all. 'Oh,' says one, 'Woe to me because of this adulterous heart, this drunkenness, and this malice, and this madness against God and his people. I was a cunning persecutor, and I committed adultery with such a woman.' And at last, when he has ended his confession, he sinks and dies. Now the minister comes too late. You will bear the check of conscience, and in time the wound grows sore, and your soul sinks into irrecoverable misery. Oh, woe to that soul! This is all because he would not have his heart lanced. Well, if you will not, then take that cursed heart of yours, and expect God's wrath with it, if you don't repent.

See how God deals with a sinner in this way. The text says, *His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which will lie with him in the dust. Although sin is sweet in his mouth, though he spares it, and keeps it close like sugar under his tongue, it is like the poison of asps within him,* Job 20.11-14. Take heed how you keep your sins close, when conscience and horror call upon you to confess them; and when God has you on the rack and says, These sins you have committed in secret; either confess them, or they will turn to the poison of asps. If you would still have your sins, remember that the God of heaven bears witness this day against that soul, who will not come off his sin, but hides it. Take heed that God does not say *Amen*. When you are going the way of all flesh, then you will cry for mercy. But then the Lord will say, Remember, that abscessed heart of yours might have been lanced and cured; but you still needed to keep your lusts and corruptions.

For the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, now pity yourselves. If you desire your everlasting comfort, now take shame to yourselves, that you may be forever glorified. Oh, now lance those proud rebellious hearts of yours, that you may find some ease. Now tear into pieces those wretched hearts, so that the core being let out, the cure may be good and sound.

Use 2. Secondly, this reproves the cunning hypocrite. However content he is to be ashamed for his sin, and to show the foulness of it, yet it is notable to consider what sly passages and tricks he will have before he comes to open anything. Sometimes he sends for a faithful minister, and it is his intent to confess his folly. And yet he goes back again, and confesses nothing at all. But if the Lord follows the close-hearted hypocrite, and lets in some more of His indignation, and makes His wrath seize upon his soul — then the hypocrite sets down a resolution to confess all. And yet there is such daubing, and such a cloaked acknowledgment of sin, that it sticks in his teeth. He says something that maybe *every* man can say against him. And then he speaks of hardness of heart, and of wandering thoughts, and that which even the best of God's people are troubled with. But he never comes to those sinful lusts that lie heaviest on his soul.

If a man who is sick has a foul stomach, and yet is unfit to vomit, he may throw up the uppermost part, but the spawn of it remains. So it is with the hypocrite. He says something, and now and then a word falls from him, and he would gladly take it back if he could. But there is a witness within, that (for him) must not be seen.

When Rachel had stolen her father Laban's idols, he followed after Jacob to get them back. And he searched among the stuff. But Rachel being somewhat foolishly addicted that way, sat still upon them, *and Laban must not search there*. So it is with the close-hearted hypocrite. He is content to confess what all the world might cry shame on him for; but there is still some idol-lust — such as secret uncleanness, or private theft — that he *will not* confess.

To hide our sins, is a fearful sin.

Now for the **TERROR** of all such graceless persons, I desire to reveal two things in this point: first, that [*hidden sin*] is a marvelously *fearful* sin; secondly, that it is a *dangerous* sin.

1. **First**, the sin itself is *vile and odious*. I think it is like the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, Act 5.3. He sold all that he had; and as the Lord moved him and commanded him, he gave way that it should be given to the poor. But when it was sold, he kept back one part of it. And when Peter asked, *Did you sell it for so much?* Is this the whole price? *Yes*, he says. Now mark what Peter says, *Why has Satan filled your heart, that you have not lied to man, but to God?* Satan many times steps *into* the heart. But when he is said to *fill* the heart, he shuts out the work of judgment and reason, and the Word and Spirit, and all good resolutions on those particular occasions which concern a man.

It's as if Satan said, Knowledge will not direct him, the Spirit will not persuade him, and the Word will not prevail with his heart. But I will take possession of him in spite of all these. This is Satan's *filling of the heart*.

Thus it is with the hypocrite: his conscience is awakened and says to him, You must confess your sins, or else you will be damned for them. The word commands you, and the Spirit persuades you to confess your sin. And upon this you say, This is my condition, and there is no ease or comfort to be had in private means. And therefore I must go to some faithful minister, and reveal myself to him. And when you do, you keep back half from him; and you lie against conscience, the Word and Spirit, and all. And when the minister says, is this the bottom of your sin? Didn't you commit such and such a sin? Oh no! I was never guilty of any such matter. And yet you *lie*. Mark what I say — *this* is to have Satan *fill your heart*. You give your heart into the possession of the devil. Knowledge doesn't direct you, the Spirit doesn't persuade, and the Word doesn't prevail — but the devil crowds into every corner of your heart. And you would cover your sins, and so perish for them everlastingly.

2. But **secondly**, as this sin is vile and odious, so it is *dangerous*. *Whoever hides his sins, shall not prosper*, says the wise man, Pro 28.13. However still your heart may be for a while, yet you will not prosper in your family, nor in the Word and sacraments; but all means are accursed to you — you will receive no mercy at all. *Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins shall find mercy*; but whoever does not confess his sins, shall not find mercy.

As we used to have a nest egg to breed with, so it is the devil's cunning to leave a nest egg ⁵⁶ — some bosom lust or other in your soul. And the devil sits on this, as upon a nest egg. And when the devil is cast out by a slight superficial confession of your sins, there is some secret lust still left in the heart. And that will breed a thousand abominations more in you. For (I beseech you, take notice of this) the devil returns and brings seven more devils than himself, Luk 11.26; and he hatches seven times more corruptions than there were before.

Use 1. The first use is for *caution*. Therefore, as you desire that Satan may not fill your hearts, and as you desire to have any means blessed to you, come off fully and currently. Either don't confess at all, or else confess *currently*, so that you may find mercy in time of need.

Use 2. The second use is for *instruction*, to show us that a broken-hearted sinner is easily convicted of his sins, and willing to undergo any reproof. Whoever confesses his sins freely, of himself, will easily yield when he is called upon to do it. If the Word lays anything to his charge, he won't deny it. A man need not bring any witnesses against him, for he will never seek to cover his sin. But if any occasional comment comes that may reveal his sin, he takes it quickly, and yields to it, and says, *I am the man. I confess, this is my sin and my folly*. He doesn't fence (close off) his heart against the truth.

⁵⁶ *Nest egg*: an artificial (or even real) egg left in a nest to induce hens to lay their eggs in it.

To whom shall I look? (says God). Even to *a man who has a contrite heart, and trembles at my word*, Isa 66.2. This is the root, and this is the fruit.

The heart must first be contrite and broken by the hammer of God's Law, before it can shake at the hearing of the word. A broken heart doesn't come to flout (scoff) at the minister (no, that is a *hard* heart); but a broken heart *shakes* at the Word of God. If a promise comes, a broken heart trembles lest he have no share in it. And if there is any command, he trembles lest he not be able to obey it. But if the Lord addresses some main lust, such as secret malice against the saints of God, a secret uncleanness, or the like — if the Lord gives a reproof at these things in the Word — then this broken heart has enough. He has his load, and he longs to be alone. He remembers that truth. And the wound being fresh, it bleeds again; and he mourns again; and he lays hold on his heart, and says, 'Good Lord, *I was this malicious wretch*. I intended this mischief to your saints; and if possible, I would have sucked their blood. *I was that unclean wretch*. Will all these sins be pardoned? And will all these cursed abominations be removed? Can these corruptions be *subdued*?'

Brethren, you cannot be ignorant of how a wounded heart is affected with every touch. You who have broken hearts know it; I won't need to tell you. Therefore, whenever the Lord comes to take in those filthy and drunken hearts of yours, they will shake within you. And you will say, This is my sin, and these are my abominations by which God has been so dishonored.

Use 3. The third use is for *exhortation*. If you know these things (as I am persuaded you do) then be entreated in the name of the Lord Jesus to walk in that way which God has revealed. This is the baseness of our hearts: that we are loath to unbuckle our vile and secret distempers. They are shameful in themselves; and yet we are loath to take shame for them. Therefore, deal openly and freely with your souls. Confess your sins freely, so that God may deal comfortably with you. Has the Lord at any time let in this horror into your soul; and is your heart now troubled at the word; and after all your tears, and pains, and using means with uprightness, do your corruptions still remain? Aren't they yet as subdued as they might be? Can you not get any assurance of their pardon? I say then, cast away your shameful hiding and concealing of sin. And don't say, *What will the world and ministers say of me?* Away with these shifts! God calls you to confession. The Saints have done it, and you must — no, you *will* do it (if ever your heart is fully broken as it should be). In some measure, it is pleasing to God, and profitable to yourself.

To whom we should confess our sins.

Objection. But some will ask, *How* may we do it?

Answer. For an answer, I will *first* give DIRECTIONS for how to do it; *secondly*, I will give some MOTIVES to work our hearts toward it.

Directions. First, be wise in choosing the party to whom you must confess your sins. For every wide-mouthed vessel is not fit to receive precious liquor. So this confession is not to be opened to every carnal wretch who will blaze it abroad. The minister to whom you confess, ought to have the following **three graces**.

1. First, he must be a *skillful and able minister of God* — one who is trained up, and is master of his art, and so experienced that he may be able in some measure, to find out the *nature* of the disease. It's not that any minister under heaven can be so wise and holy, as to give pardon to a poor sinner. He is only able to do it ministerially, under God. He must be able to prove himself the minister of God. He must have the tongue of the learned, and be able to break the heart, and prepare the soul for Christ; and then to apply the cooling promises of the Gospel to him.

There are many who, instead of *curing* of the soul, *kill* it; and by popping the sacrament into a man's mouth, they think to send him to heaven. But in its conclusion, they send him to hell.

2. Secondly, he must be a *merciful physician*, one who will pity a poor soul. Those who have experienced trouble and misery in themselves, are most compassionate to others in distress. Someone who has been tossed in the sea, will pity others who have been in the same danger. If these people in the Acts had gone to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, would they have been well helped? No — instead they went to *Peter*, and therefore found help. When Judas sinned, and *betrayed his Master*, and his soul was full of horror, he went to the *Pharisees* and confessed his sins. But what succor did he find? They answered, *What is that to us?* Mat 27.4. Have you sinned? Then bear it, and look to yourself. So it is with carnal wretches. What comfort do they yield to a poor distressed conscience? They add sorrow to sorrow, and say it is nothing but melancholy, and he has gotten this by hearing some fiery hot minister, or by reading too much in some books about Election and Reprobation.

3. He must be a *faithful minister*, one who won't oblige men's humors, nor answer the desires of their hearts by saying what they want him to say; but his faithfulness must appear in two things:

First, in dealing plainly with everyone, even if a man is his patron, or whatever place or condition he is in. If a person has a proud heart, the minister must labor to humble him.

And secondly, as he must apply a salve that is fit for the sore, so he must be faithful in keeping secret the sin that is laid open to him, so that nothing may fly abroad, not even after his death, except in rare cases.

MOTIVES. Now what remains, but that you all be moved to take up this duty, and provoke your hearts to freely confess your evil ways. To this purpose, let me give you **three motives**.

Motive 1. Because it is a very honorable thing, and it will exceedingly promote the cause of a Christian. You will hardly yield to this all of a sudden. A man thinks that if the minister knows his vileness, he will abhor him for it.

But I assure you brethren, there is nothing that more displays the honor of a Christian, and wins the love of a minister, than this. Indeed, it is a shame to commit sin; but it is no shame to confess it on good grounds. In fact, when the heart comes off sin fully, it is admirable to see how a faithful minister will approve of such persons, his love being so great towards them. O, says the minister, it did me good to hear that man confess so freely. I hope the Lord has worked fully in him, certainly now that he is on the way to life and happiness. Oh how I love him! I could even be content to take that man to my bosom.

Whereas this superficial and loose dealing is loathsome to us. Do you think we don't perceive it? Yes, we may feel it with our fingers (it's palpable). And we think, surely that man is a hypocrite. He has a hollow heart; he's not willing to take shame to himself for his sin; his confession never gets to the bottom of it.

Motive 2. Confession is a matter of great safety. I take this to be the only cause why many a man goes away troubled, and gets neither comfort in the pardon of the sin, nor strength against it — it's because he doesn't come off fully in this work of confession.

When you nakedly open your sins to a faithful minister, you go out in battle against sin, and you have a second in the field to stand by you. But there is especially comfort in *this* particular: for the minister will discover the lusts, deceits, and corruptions that you couldn't find out. And he will lay open all those holds of Satan, and that means of comfort that you never knew. I am able to speak of this by experience. This has broken the neck of many a soul — because he went out in single combat against Satan; and not revealing himself to others for help, he was overthrown forever.

It's like the abscessed part of a man's body, when a man lets out only *some* of the corrupt matter. And so he skins it, never healing it to the bottom. And at last it cankers inwardly, and turns gangrenous. And then the part must be cut off, or else the man is in danger of his life. So when you let out some corruptions by a superficial confession, but permit some bosom lust to still

remain — such as malice, or uncleanness, and so forth — then the soul cankers. And Satan takes possession of it, and the soul is carried into fearful abominations.

Many have fallen foully, and lived long in their sins, and all because they would not confess freely. Therefore, if you desire to find out the deceitfulness of your corruptions, confess them from the bottom of your soul.

Motive 3. This open and free confession may keep the sin secret. For the only way to have a man's sins covered, is to confess them, so they may not be brought upon the stage before all the world.

Objection. Oh, says one, this is contrary to common reason. We're afraid to have our sins *known*; that's our trouble. We keep our sins close, because we would preserve our honor.

Answer. I say, the only way for secrecy, is to reveal our sins to some faithful minister. For if we confess our sins, God will cover them. If you take shame to yourselves, God will honor you. But if you will *not* confess your sins, God will break open the door of your heart, and let in the light of His truth, and the convicting power of his Spirit, and make it known to men and angels, to your shame forever.

If Judas had taken notice of his sin, and yielded to Christ's accusation, and desired some conference with Christ privately, and said, 'Good Lord, *I am that Judas*, and that hellhound who received mercy from you in the outward means; and I have been entertained among your people. Yet it is I who have taken the thirty pieces. Lord, pardon this sin, and never let this iniquity be laid to my charge.' I have no doubt that even though Judas' soul could not be saved (because now we know God's decree about him), yet God would have saved him from the public shame that was cast upon him for it. But Judas didn't do so. Instead, he hid his malice in his heart, and professed great matters of love to Christ, and kissed him. And thus he thought to cover his sin craftily. But what became of that? The Lord forced him to come and to indict himself in the High Priest's hall, before the temporal and spiritual Council.

So you who keep your sins like sugar under your tongues, and would be loose, and malicious, and covetous still — well, you will have your *thirty pieces* still, and they are laid up safe, as *Achan's wedge of gold was*. Remember this, God will one day open the closets of your hearts, and lay you on your deathbeds, and then perhaps you will prove mad, and vomit it all up. Wouldn't it be better to confess your sins to some faithful minister *now*?

If you won't give the Lord his glory, he will distraint for it,⁵⁷ and have it from your heart blood. As with Julian the Apostate, when an arrow was shot into his heart — he plucked it out and cried, *You Galilean, you have overcome me!*⁵⁸ The Lord distrainted for His glory, and had it from his heart blood.

Now I come to the SECOND FRUIT OF CONTRITION which is plainly expressed here. And it is this: they had a *restless dislike of themselves and of their sins* — as if they said, *Men and brethren*, we don't care what we must do against those evils of ours, by which the Lord has been so dishonored, and we so endangered. Command us what you will. We must not rest here. So loathsome are our sins, that we will do anything rather than stay as we are.

⁵⁷ *Distraint*: to legally take something in place of a debt payment.

⁵⁸ Roman Emperor Julian (361-363). His rejection of Christianity, and promotion of Neoplatonism in its place, led the Christian Church to call him Julian the Apostate. In March, 363, he fought a successful battle with the Persians. Burning his supply fleet, he marched into the interior of Persia. But the lack of provisions forced a retreat, during which he was beset by the Persian cavalry. He was wounded in the side by an arrow in a small cavalry skirmish, and died during the night. Both Christians and pagans believed the rumor that he cried out when dying: *Nenikekas Galilaie* ("You have conquered, O Galilean").

The DOCTRINE derived is this: The soul who is truly pierced for sin, is carried against it with a restless dislike and distaste of it. Or say it thus: Sound contrition of heart, ever brings a thorough detestation of sin.

They expressly proclaim this before the apostles. As if they said as much, but in more words:

You say we are those who have crucified the Lord of life, and we confess it. Oh, happy it would have been for us, if we had never listened to the plots of the Scribes and Pharisees. But that which is past cannot be undone or recalled. What must be done *now*? If we rest here, we perish forever. Can nothing be done against these sins of ours, that have done so much against the Lord Jesus? We must loath ourselves and our sins, and we must get out of this estate, or else we are undone forever.

Now to further open this point, I will reveal these **three things**:

First, I will show what a distaste and dislike this is.

Secondly, what this hatred and dislike of sin consists in.

Thirdly, I will show the reason why it must be so.

What a distaste and dislike of sin is.

1. For the first, namely what this dislike is. For clearing this, you must look back to what I said before about godly sorrow. For this dislike and hatred of sin has the very same stamp and nature. And it has this much in its effect: first, there is a hatred in PREPARATION; and secondly, a hatred in SANCTIFICATION. Both are *saving* works, but both are not *sanctifying* works. Vocation (calling) is a saving work, but it is not a sanctifying work. These are two distinct works.

This hatred in PREPARATION, is what the Lord *works* upon the soul and *strikes* upon the soul. And thereby He puts this kind of turning into the heart — not that the heart had any powerful inward principle of grace before (for this is the first grace that the Lord works). So that, as before the *soul* was forced to see sin and to feel its burden, so the *heart* is now brought to dislike sin. This is a work wrought upon the soul, rather than anything done *by* the soul. The Lord is now fitting and preparing the soul for the presence of His blessed Spirit.

Hatred of sin in PREPARATION.

And in this great work of preparation, the Lord works these **three things**:

First, he stops the soul from going on any longer in sin.

Secondly, he wearies the soul with the burden of sin.

Thirdly, by hatred of sin, the soul is brought to go away from those carnal lusts and corruptions, with a secret dislike of those sins with which he has been wearied.

In all these, the soul is the patient; it undergoes the work of humbling and breaking, rather than being in any way active and operative.

1. *First* the heart is turned away from sin, and set against those corruptions which up till then it was burdened with. As it is with wheels of a clock, when the wheels have run wrong, before a man can set them right again, he must stop the clock, and turn it to its right place. And all these actions are merely worked on the wheel by the hand of the workman. For of itself, it has no poise or weight to run right. But once the clock-master puts to his plummets, then it is able to run by itself, even though the workman's hand is not there. So the will and affections of a man — which are the great wheels of this curious clock of the soul — these wheels, of themselves, naturally run all hell-ward, and sin-ward, and devil-ward. Now, before the soul can receive a new principle of grace, the Lord first unmasks a man, and makes him come to a standstill, and makes him see hell gaping before him; and thus the heart is at a maze.

2. *Secondly*, the Lord lays the weight of sin and corruption upon him, and that sinks the soul with the horror, and vexation, and loathsomeness of his sins.

3. *Thirdly*, the soul is then carried away from sin by hatred and dislike, and it says, Is this the fruit of sin that delights me? Oh then, no more malice, no more drunkenness. Thus the heart is turned away. But once the soul is brought on to God by faith, and goes to God, and receives the spirit of sanctification (which we will speak of afterwards), there is a new principle of life. And out of this gracious disposition, the soul is now grown to hate sin freely, and to knock the fingers away from corruptions, and beat down his lusts, and to love God strongly out of that power of grace which the Lord has put into the soul.

*There is this difference between **sorrow** for sin, and **hatred** of sin: sorrow feels the burden, but hatred flings it away; sorrow loosens the heart, but hatred lets out the corruption; sorrow says, does sin pinch the soul this way? And hatred says, no more sin then.*

Thus the Lord, by his Spirit, PREPARES the soul.

Hatred of sin in SANCTIFICATION.

For the proof of this point, see what the prophet says: *You shall consider your ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves*, Eze 36.31. A poor Christian would tear his heart to pieces in the apprehension of his own vileness, and says, Good Lord, will I always be plagued and annoyed by this hard and malicious heart? And will I always carry this vile heart about with me, that will one day carry me to hell if you aren't the more merciful? This makes a man fall out even with himself.

Again, see what the apostle says, 2Cor 7.11. You've had godly sorrow for this thing, but what has it wrought in you? Does it work *a holy indignation and revenge against your sinful courses*? So that, when your soul sees its filthy abominations rising, swelling, and bubbling within your heart, it carries on exceedingly, and will scarcely own itself. Rather, it looks away from sin, and is weary of itself in regard to sin. Indeed, if it were possible that you could be content to live without a heart, even to forego *yourself*, so that you may not be troubled with that vile heart of yours, and no longer so dishonor God, then I beseech you to observe what happens when a man is brought this far. Oh, he cries out to God, and says, 'Lord was there ever any poor sinner thus pestered with a vile heart? Oh, must this heart always be so opposite against You? Lord, unless I have a better heart, I would rather have none at all.' Thus the heart loathes itself.

And in whatever measure the soul is carried with a restless dislike of sin *as it is sin*, in that same degree it is most violent against those sins by which he has most dishonored God. As you may see in Zacchaeus, Luk 19, his heart most rose against his master-sin. So also, having humbled the repentant Church, the Lord says, *You will defile your graven images of silver, and the ornaments of your golden images. You will cast them away like a menstrual cloth, and say, Get away from here*, Isa 30.21-22. They hated all sin, but especially their idolatrous courses. So it will be with one whose heart is truly broken. He will cast away with hatred all his pleasing and profitable sins. This much about the first passage.

What true hatred of sin consists in.

Question. The second passage is this: What does this true hatred of sin consist in?

Answer. I answer, this hatred consists in these **four particulars**.

1. First, if the soul truly abhors sin, it is very willing to search for it in every corner of the heart. And any sin that he cannot know himself, he is willing to have any Christian or any friend make known to him. A king who hates a traitor who would kill him, and a man who hates a thief who

would rob him, they are willing to have any man reveal that traitor or thief, and they will entertain him kindly, and reward him for it.

When the Ziphites came to Saul and told him where David was, mark what he says: *Oh blessed be you of the Lord, for you have had compassion upon me*, 1Sam 23.20.21. It is just so with a broken, bleeding heart who has an open hatred against his corruptions. If any minister or Christian makes known some base lust that lurks in a man's soul, he won't fly at him and say, 'What is that to you? Every tub must stand on his own bottom, and if I sin, I must answer for it.' Indeed, he will bless the Lord for it, and say, blessed be the Lord, and blessed be such a minister, and blessed be such a neighbor, for they have shown me my sin, and had compassion on my soul.

2. Secondly, as the soul desires to have sin *revealed*, so it desires to have sin *killed*, and it doesn't matter how it is killed, or by whom, just so it is killed at all. Hence it comes to pass that the soul who truly hates sin, ever seeks those means that are most able to give strength to him, and to overcome his corruptions. And he is well pleased that any minister should meet with the base haunts of his heart. And if the Word hits and wounds that master-sin of his, he is marvelously content with it; he doesn't care from whom the help comes. He likes best the sharpest and keenest reproofs, those that will shake his very heart, and draw blood out of sin. And he likes best the most powerful deliverer of God's word, which divides between the marrow and the bone, Heb 4.12.

Indeed, though the great cannons roar, and God's ordinances work mightily on his heart so that his corruptions may be killed and subdued, he *blesses* the Lord. And he says, Blessed be the Lord. I have had a good day of it. The Lord laid battery against this wretched heart of mine. I bless God for these reproofs and threatened judgments. My heart is in some measure broken under them. I hope my corruptions have gotten their deadly wound this day.

3. Thirdly, as he desires to see sin killed in himself, so he is not able to overlook sin in others. But so far as God has put authority and opportunity into his hands, he pursues it with deadly indignation. As a man who hates a murderer, he will not only keep the murderer from his own house, but he pursues him even to the place of justice. So the soul who truly hates sin, will not only keep sin from his own heart, but he will pluck it from the hearts of others, so far as he possibly may.

When Haman resented Mordecai, he not only desired to kill him, but he would kill the entire nation of the Jews, Est 3.6. This was hatred indeed. So it is with a broken heart. If a broken-hearted father has had a proud heart, and been wearied with it, he labors to kill the whole brood of those cursed distempers in his children.

4. Lastly, he labors to cross and undermine all those occasions and means that have given any succor to his corruptions of heart. The soul has such a secret grudge against the thriving of sin, that it loathes all occasions that may maintain his sin; just as the drunkard and adulterer hate the place where they went in to commit sin.

As in war, perhaps they cannot take the enemy, but they will drive him out of the country, and burn down all his forts, and fill up all his trenches, so that he may find no provision. So the heart that truly hates sin, and has been truly broken for it, will hate all occasions and whatever may be any means to strengthen it. Even all these proud and whorish locks, and these Spanish cuts, and all these wanton and garish attires, and light behaviors, which were nothing else but the Tent in which his vain, filthy, light heart has lodged.

The reason this is so.

Thus it was with Mary Magdalen, Luk 7.38f. And the reason why it is so, is this: because the heart that has been broken for sin, and burdened with the evil of it, has now found by woeful experience, that sin is the greatest evil of all others. And therefore (for the preservation of itself) it will hate that sin which separates God and the soul, and with which the safety of the soul cannot stand.

Everything in reason desires the safety and preservation of itself. The soul knows sin is the greatest enemy, and therefore it is most envenomed with violence against sin, and says, Where did all these miseries come from? And what is the mint out of which all these plagues and judgments come? Isn't it my sin? It isn't poverty; it isn't sickness or disgrace that pinches me — but *my sin* first caused all these.

It is the poison of sin in poverty, and the poison of sin in shame, and the wrath of God in all these *because* of my sin. These evils were not evil to me, except that my sins make them so.

If I had a heart to fear God, and to love him, and depend on him, then in poverty God would enrich me, and in shame he would honor me, and in misery he would comfort me. It is not poverty or shame that hurts me; but sin lies, and it poisons my soul.

And therefore the soul now cries, *Men and brethren, what shall I do* to be freed from these corruptions? Great are the evils that I have found, and marvelous are the plagues that I have felt because of my sins. But far worse will that portion be that I will have in hell, in endless torments hereafter. This will be the perfection of all misery. Let it be *anything* rather than this. It is better to be plagued here now, than to be everlastingly damned.

How to know your heart is truly broken for sin.

Use 1. The first use is a ground of admirable *comfort* and strong *consolation* to all those who have found this dislike and hatred of sin. He may be sure that his heart has been broken for sin, and so consequently, he will *certainly* have Christ and grace.

Objection. I don't doubt that every soul is persuaded of this, and says, Indeed, if I could find my soul grieving within me for my rebellions and sins, I wouldn't doubt it. But how will I know whether my soul has ever yet been truly wounded for sin, *as sin*?

Answer 1. I answer, if your heart is carried against your sins with an utter indignation against them, then certainly your soul has been truly broken. Indeed, sometimes a man *hates* his sins more than he has ever been *burdened* with them. But commonly it is this way: if your hatred is good, your sorrow has been sincere. For how can your heart go against sin, unless you have found some evil in it? And how can you be an enemy to corruption, unless your heart has been wounded with it? Therefore let me advise all those who desire to have evidence of the work of grace in their souls, to go in secret, and examine their hearts, whether they can make hue and cry after their corruptions. Can you be content that all your sinful distempers (even those that would affect you most) should be made known, either in *public* by the ministry of the Word, or in *private* by some faithful Christian? And can you be content if he should come home to your hearts, and drag your corruptions out before the world? If so, then you have been wounded for sin, and are enemies against it.

As David says, *Try me O Lord, and examine me, and prove my heart, and my thoughts; and see if there is any wickedness in me*, Psa 139.23-24. He deals like a good subject who locks all the doors, and bids the officers to search, to see if there is any traitor in his house. If anyone hides the traitor, he is a traitor himself in doing so. David, as it were, sets open the door of his heart, and says, Good Lord, if there is any wickedness in me, not yet discovered, Lord let that word, that spirit, and that messenger of yours, find it out. Reprove me; convince me Lord; and reveal my hypocrisy and pride of heart. *This* is an honest heart certainly.

Answer 2. Secondly, once you have found out your sin by the help of the minister, you will not rest here, but hunt for the blood of your corruptions. You cannot be quiet until you see the death of them. The soul can do little of itself, but it would have the Lord do all *for it*. So, though you don't have sanctifying grace, and don't have power of yourself to kill your corruptions, yet you make all the friends you have, use all means to sink your enemies, who otherwise would sink you.

As it is among men, once a man has found his enemy, he follows the Law hotly. He will have his enemy's life, or it will cost him a fall. He pursues him from one Court to another, and makes all the friends he can, so he may plague his enemy. And if all the Law in the land will do it, he will have him hanged. This is a right hatred indeed. So likewise, the soul can do little of itself. And yet it endeavors, and levies its forces and prayers, and will not leave sin with life. It pursues sin hotly. And if all God's words, and all the promises, and if the grace of Christ will do the deed, it will not rest till it sees the decay of sin. And therefore it will even drag sin before the Lord's tribunal, and there cry for judgment, and say, 'Lord, *kill* this proud malicious heart of mine. These are your enemies, and the enemies of your grace. Lord, they sought my blood — let me have *their* blood — blood for blood, tooth for tooth. O let me see their destruction!'

Use 2. Secondly, *is this contrition*, and does it bring forth such fruits? If so, then true, broken, godly sorrow is rare in the world, and there are few who have it, even among those who think of themselves as somebody in the bosom of the church. Therefore save me some labor, and cast your eyes abroad in the world. Inquire in the houses and villages where you dwell, and knock at your neighbors' hearts, and say, Are there any broken hearts here? It will appear there are but few broken hearts to be found here among the professors of the Gospel — and so, few will be saved.

If this *hatred of sin* is a true evidence of *broken-heartedness*, what will become of a world of profane persons, who are carried on with the pursuit of sin from which they will not be plucked? The drunkard will have his cups, and the adulterer his queans, and the peddler his false weights. They are so far from this dislike of sin, that they hate everything *except* sin. They hate the godly magistrate who would punish them. Indeed, they hate the Lord himself. They say it was a pity that such a law was made to punish sin. *What shall we do?* Let us do anything rather than be hindered in our pleasures. *What shall we do*, that we may not be checked and reproved?

Get down to hell, and *there* you will have elbow room enough. *There* you may be as wicked and as profane as you will, and that will be your portion, unless the Lord is merciful to you. Consider what the Wise Man says, and don't think that a little humbling of your souls before God, and a few prayers, will serve your turn. No, no, *Then they shall cry* (says the text) *but I will not answer, they will seek me early, but shall not find me, because they hated knowledge, and did not seek the fear of the Lord*, Pro 1.28-29.

Oh how fearful is the doom, and how certain is the desolation of such poor wretches!

Now the LORD, for His mercy's sake,
settle these truths in every one of your hearts.

AMEN, AMEN.

SOLI DEO GLORIA