

A DISCOURSE
Concerning
TROUBLE of MIND,
AND
The Disease of Melancholy.
In Three PARTS.

Written for the use of those who are, or have been exercised by the same.

By TIMOTHY ROGERS, M. A.
who was long afflicted with both.

To which are Annexed,
Some LETTERS from several DIVINES,
relating to the same Subject

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at the *Bible and Three Crowns* in *Cheapside*;
and at the *Three Legs* in the *Poultry*,

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Editor's Preface

*Why are you cast down, O my soul?
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him
For the help of His countenance. (Psa 42.5)*

We all get depressed from time to time. But Melancholy, or what today we call *clinical depression*, is quite different. Timothy Rogers suffered from it himself. So he speaks of it with a familiarity and compassion that is often missing in medical texts. And the solution he offers is not psychiatric or pharmacological; it is *spiritual*. He offers a cathartic, drawn entirely from the word of God, designed to restore order to the soul, when it has fallen into confusion.

How? Rogers takes us on an exploration of the inner workings of the mind, and of the corruptions of the human heart. He touches each diseased part, and there applies the grace, mercy, and love of God. He proclaims there is a balm in Gilead, whose name is Jesus Christ. A Christian's depression is very often the result of forgetting or disbelieving the fundamental truths of the faith. And so Rogers reminds us of those extraordinary truths, time and time again, in various settings.

What makes this an exceptional work, isn't just that he is ahead of his time in examining the topic, but that his expression of the truth of God, is itself conveyed in a powerfully poetic form. It is rich in imagery and illustration. His claim that it lacks eloquence is unfounded; I found it captivating.

I know from experience that depression is a dark and lonely place to be; we can lose our sense of direction. Persons who suffer from it withdraw from the society of friends and family, cast adrift in a maze of incoherent thoughts, irrational fears, and internal conflicts. Rogers navigates this maze for the reader, having found his way back to the Light.

He addresses two distinct audiences. The first is comprised of friends and family of the sufferer. They want to know how to minister to their loved one; and for that, he gives practical guidance. The second audience is the sufferer himself. Rogers takes both parties by the hand down these darkened corridors. The candle he holds, is the word of God. He knows that reasoned arguments and forceful castigations do little good. Instead, he brings the Gospel to bear. He lets it hold sway in the mind and soul of the sufferer. He reminds Christians of what they already know, and warns unbelievers of the danger ahead – that their fears are warranted.

Sufferers are (1) those who have been faithful followers of Christ, but are overcome with doubts and fears about their salvation; (2) those who failed to attend to the means of grace, and have lost their *assurance* of salvation; (3) those who at one time had a firm conviction of their salvation, but some awful sin has now beset them, and cost them their peace of mind – they doubt that forgiveness is yet available by God's grace; and (4) those who, like Job, have been deeply hurt by some trauma, loss, or adversity that convinces them that God is their *enemy*, and not their *friend*. These four categories of counsel are woven throughout.

Rogers lays a firm foundation for our assurance of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. But more than that, he assures us, or rather *reassures* us, of the unfailing love of God for His people – *especially* in the face of sin, adversity, divine correction, and personal suffering. God remains our heavenly Father in every crucible of life; and we remain His dearly beloved children. For none can pluck us from the hand of Christ, or from the hand of the Father who gave us into his care (Joh 10.28-29). The Lord our God is ever jealous for us, and we are ever secure in Christ, who died to bring us to God (1Pet 3.18). By the will of God, *none* has been or can be lost (Joh 6.39). Let us *rest* in that.

I've added a *Biographical Sketch* drawn from several sources, to give a broader view of this man, and of his life beyond the scope of this text. Depression can be seasonal, and its relief seasonal. In Rogers' life, such seasons came, and went, and came again, as the *Sketch* reveals.

Charles Spurgeon, who also suffered from melancholy, wrote this: "Yes, a child of God may be in despondency for many a year. Timothy Rogers was the victim of despondency for many years, and yet he came out into the light; and then wrote his experience in his memorable book upon 'Trouble of Mind,' which has been of great service to others in like condition." ¹

Rogers writes, "I beg of you who are at ease now, to regard these things. For if you fall so low, the anguish and bitterness of your spirits will not allow you to give such a distinct and careful attention to what will be spoken to you *then*, as you may *now*." Those are words of wisdom.

Whether you're interested in knowing how to minister to those suffering with depression, or you are yourself depressed because God seems to have withdrawn from you, this is medicine for your soul, preventative as well as curative. If it sounds evangelistic at times, it's because the Gospel is not only redemptive for the lost, but restorative for the found.

William H. Gross

June 1, 2021

¹ Charles Spurgeon, *Our Leader Through The Darkness*, no. 3370, 1890.

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Biographical Sketch

Timothy Rogers (1658–1728) was an English nonconformist minister. The son of John Rogers (1610–1680), he was born at Barnard Castle, County Durham on 24 May 1658. He was educated at Glasgow University, where he matriculated in 1673, and then studied under Edward Veal at Wapping.

Rogers began his career in the dissenting ministry as evening lecturer at Crosby Square, Bishopsgate. Some time after 1682 he was struck down by a form of hypochondria, from which he recovered in 1690, and then became assistant to John Shower. Shower was then minister of the Presbyterian congregation in Jewin Street, and moved in 1701 to the Old Jewry Meetinghouse.

Rogers's hypochondria returned, and in 1707 he left the ministry. William Ashhurst and Thomas Lane, two London Whig politicians, helped Rogers in his condition, now identified as a form of clinical depression; and the Old Jewry congregation gave him a pension.

Retiring to Wantage, Berkshire, Rogers died there in November 1728; he was buried in the churchyard on 29 November.²

Timothy Rogers describes depression (melancholy) as *caused by a sin problem*: “A sense of sin, and great sorrow for it,” “a sense of the wrath of God, and a fear of hell,” “terrors of the soul,” “trouble of conscience,” “terrors of conscience,” “anxieties of soul,” “sinking and guilty fears,” “sense of tormenting,” “racking pain, the immediate prospect of death, and together with this, an apprehension of God’s displeasure, and the fear of being cast out of his glorious presence forever,” “anguish and vexation,” “raging fever,” “lack of sleep,” “real misery that they are tormented with,” “fears and terrors that overwhelm our souls,” “fills them with anguish and tribulation.”

He describes how the mind can make the body sick: “If a man who is troubled in conscience, comes to a minister, it may be he will look entirely to the soul, and not at all to the body; if he comes to a physician, he considers the body, and neglects the soul. For my part, I would never have the physician’s counsel despised, nor the labour of the minister neglected; because the soul and body dwelling together, it is convenient that as the soul should be cured by the word, by prayer, by fasting, or by comforting, so the body must be brought into some temperature, by medicine, and diet, by harmless diversions, and such like ways.” Rogers cautions us not to blame the devil for this depression: “Do not attribute the effects of mere disease, to the devil.”

Rogers’ *Discourse* is a classic statement of melancholy in its religious framework. From his opening dedication to Lady Mary Lane, through the preface of advice ‘to the Relations and Friends of Melancholy People,’ and throughout its 31 chapters, the context and explanation for suffering is humankind’s fall from paradise and consequent distance from the grace of God, an awareness that is present behind even some of the apparently less religious accounts of melancholy that follow from the eighteenth century. As a Nonconformist minister, Rogers was clearly alert to this framework; but what makes his account and advice more than just doctrinal, is the fact that they are rooted in personal experience. His ministry was in London, but continuing ‘trouble of mind’ forced his removal to a more rural area, Wantage in Berkshire. Even the gratitude for recovery expressed in the *Discourse* proved to be ill-founded, for Rogers’ periods of melancholy persisted throughout his life. The experience of suffering, however, not only authenticates his descriptions

² From the *Dictionary of National Biography*, published since 1885.

and informs his sympathy, it actually makes his advice resolutely practical, indicating a clear-sighted capacity for observation and analysis even while undergoing the sufferings he recalls.³

“Rogers’ detailed instructions on how to care for patients suffering from ‘trouble of mind,’ especially from ‘melancholy’ of the religious kind, are particularly valuable because they were written from personal experience; as the extract shows much of his advice can still be usefully applied by the psychiatrist and the psychiatric nurse today. It appears from his biography prefixed to the third edition of his book (London 1808; a second edition appeared in 1706) that he came from a family in which several near relatives were similarly affected, ‘so that his case might properly be called *natural* or *hereditary*.’ In his late twenties he had his first breakdown, ‘a deep and settled melancholy’ lasting two years. On his recovery he wrote this book as an offering ‘for his wonderful restoration’, to discharge ‘the duty of those persons whom God has delivered from Melancholy, and from the anguish of their consciences’ and to show, ‘what is to be thought of those who are distracted with trouble for their sins’. However, he continued ever after subject to ‘a very unhappy dejection of mind ... a prey to gloomy fears and apprehensions,’ so that he was forced to retire into the country where he continued to manifest ‘though in a more contracted sphere, the same zeal for the honour of God, and for the salvation of the souls of men.’”⁴

Source: <https://www.bible.ca/psychiatry/a-discourse-concerning-trouble-of-mind-and-the-disease-of-melancholly-timothy-rogers-1691ad.htm>



³ *Patterns of Madness in the Eighteenth Century, A Reader*, Allan Ingram, 1998 AD, p 36.

⁴ *300 years of Psychiatry*, Richard Hunter, 1963, p. 248.

DEDICATORY

To the very much *honoured and respected Lady,*
The Lady Mary Lane.

Madam,

Your Ladyship has a very just claim to this Dedication; and under your patronage this book can with good assurance venture abroad. You, more than any other, have inquired of me concerning the following treatise, and more frequently urged me to print it. You were pleased to honour me during my long affliction, with your kind visits; and though I was greatly afflicted, and in degrees beyond what are very common to men, yet you revived me, and not a little, by your compassionate and gentle words, and by the charitable hopes that you had of my deliverance, though you have often heard me say that I would never be delivered. I thought that I would never have any more ease in my pained body, nor ever any more hope or quiet in my troubled soul. But that God who is omnipotent, and who heard your prayers, and the prayers of many others on my behalf, has wrought a double salvation for me. He who is the Lord of Nature, has healed my body; and He who is *the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Grace*, has given rest to my weary soul. None have any cause to be presumptuous when they consider what miseries I felt for a long time, and how I was overwhelmed with the deepest sorrows for many doleful months together. Neither do any have cause to despair. They cannot be lower, more near to death and hell than I thought myself to be. And yet *I live*, and I am not without some refreshing hope of God's acceptance. And I can say with the Prophet, *Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy. And with him is plenteous redemption* (Psa 130.7).

Your Ladyship has never, indeed, been afflicted with that distemper and those anxieties of soul which I treat in the following book, and I heartily pray you never may. For Melancholy is the worst of all distempers; and those sinking and guilty fears which it brings along with it, are inexpressibly dreadful. But I know that you have been in manifold afflictions, and you have had several very great losses. You lost some years ago a father who was, indeed, in all respects — for his holiness, his even-temper, and his public and charitable spirit — worthy to be loved. And I am sure you greatly loved him, as he loved you, to the very last. You lost a mother whom all who knew her, greatly valued for the skill and experience that she had in matters of religion, and especially for her admirable acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures. And though in the latter part of her life she did not see the light of this world, yet her soul was recreated with a light spiritual and divine. And the loss of her sight was abundantly recompensed to her by the clearer views which she had of God, and of a life to come. And not to mention other losses: you have lost several children, in whom there was all the sweetness of youth, all that good temper and those blooming appearances of hopefulness which could make such little plants desirable. But you have borne even so great a loss with a submissive and a Christian patience, knowing that you have not so much cause to mourn for those who are gone, as to rejoice in those who are left, and who are a very great comfort to you — and may they long be so.

As I have had for some time before this, the honour to sojourn in your family, I always observed in you that meekness and good temper, that affability and condescension to your inferiors, which made your conversation very exemplary, and made it easy and pleasant for any persons to be in your house. If all the ladies and women in the world who are called *good*, were of a temper so happy as your Ladyship's, what a quiet and peaceable world we would then have! The mutual love in which Sir Thomas and you live, indeed renders the married state very excellent and honourable.

I thought, when I came to describe my inward troubles, I would have described them much more largely. But I dared not review them too particularly, lest the very thoughts of them should again, in some measure, overwhelm me. And, indeed, *inward terrors are things that may be sadly felt; but they cannot be fully expressed.* To have the sense of tormenting, racking pain, the immediate prospected of death — and together with this, an apprehension of God's displeasure, and the fear of being cast out of his glorious presence forever — this was a part of my case. And who can describe that anguish and tribulation which such apprehensions cause in a desolate and a mourning soul! In the following treatise I have said as much as will, I suppose, be believed by those who have never been in such a woeful state. And if I had said more, it might perhaps sink some poor souls who are already low enough. And if I cannot help them, which I design, yet I will be sure, as far as it lies in me, not to make them worse.

Madam, I could say a great many excellent things of your Ladyship, and which, in the opinion of all who have the happiness to be acquainted with you, would be no flattery. But I know your virtues are illustrious and evident enough of themselves, without my endeavouring to place them in a more open light. Excuse, I entreat you, the boldness of this *Dedication* in which, to speak sincerely, I have a great deal of selfishness. For I do not question that, by means of your name, this book will be more public, and so be more serviceable to people under long and sore afflictions, of which this miserable world is very full. I wish you a continuance of the *blessings of heaven* with those of this earth, which you have in great abundance; and that the *candle of the Lord may constantly shine on your tabernacle, on Sir Thomas, yourself, and all your children.* And I desire you to be assured that there is none who more heartily prays for your present and eternal welfare, than,

Honoured Madam,
Your Ladyship's Most Obligated Servant,

TIMOTHY ROGERS.

LONDON, *Sept.* 8. 1691.

THE PREFACE.

CONTAINING Several Advices to the *Relations* and *Friends of Melancholy People*.

THERE is a very great difference between those who are only under trouble of conscience, and those whose bodies are greatly diseased at the same time. A sense of sin and great sorrow for it, may in some persons not change their former state of health at all. And the mercy of God may so speedily relieve them, that they suffer no visible decays in their constitution, but are so happy as to have a sound mind and body, both at once. It's not with relation to those that I write this Preface; but for those who are under a *deep and rooted* melancholy. And to their friends, I think it is very necessary to give the following advice.

I. First, *look upon your distressed friends as being under one of the worst distempers to which this miserable life is liable*. Melancholy seizes on the brain and spirits, and incapacitates them for thought or action. It confounds and disturbs all their thoughts, and unavoidably fills them with anguish and vexation. There is no resemblance of this in any other distemper, unless it is that of a raging fever. I take it for granted, and I truly believe, that I say nothing but what is true. When this ugly humour⁵ is deeply fixed, and has spread its malignant influence over every part, it is as vain a thing to strive against it, as to strive against a fever, or a pleurisy, the gout, or the stone. These are very grievous to our nature and cannot be helped by resolution, nor by the force of briskness and courage. One would be glad to be rid of such oppressing things; but all our striving will not make them go away. And of all the inconveniences of *Melancholy*, the *lack of sleep*, which it usually brings along with it, is one of the worst. It is very reviving to a man who is in pain all day, to think that he will sleep at night. But when he has no prospect or hope of that for several nights together, Oh, what confusion then seizes upon him! He is like someone on a rack,⁶ whose anguish will not allow him to rest. By this means the faculties of the soul are weakened, and all its operations are disturbed and clouded; the poor body languishes and pines away at the same time.

This disease is more formidable than any other, because it commonly *lasts very long*. It is a long time before it comes to its height, and usually as long before it declines again. And all this long season of its continuance is full of fear and torment, of horror and shock. It is in every respect sad and overwhelming. It is a state of darkness that has no discernable beams of light. It's like a land of darkness on which no sun at all seems to shine. Indeed, it generally first begins at the body, and then conveys its venom to the mind. And if anything could be found that might keep the blood and spirits in their due temper and motion, this would obstruct its further progress, and in a great measure keep the soul clear. I do not pretend to tell you what medicines are proper to remove it, and I know of none. I leave you to advise with those who are learned in the profession of *Medicine*, and especially to have recourse to those doctors who have themselves felt it. For it is impossible to fully understand the nature of it, any other way than by experience. And that person is to be highly valued whose endeavours God will bless to the removal of this obstinate and violent disease.⁷ As old Mr. *Greenham* says, there is a great deal of wisdom requisite to consider both the state of the *body*, and of the *soul*:

⁵ Humour can mean a mood, but also a malady (see sec. IV. below). In Roger's day, it was believed that the balance of four fluids in the body determine your emotional and physical state: blood, phlegm, yellow and black bile. – WHG

⁶ *Rack*: an instrument of torture that stretches, disjoints or mutilates victims. – WHG

⁷ *Violent*: acting with, marked by, or resulting from great force or emotional intensity. – WHG

If a man troubled in conscience comes to a minister, it may be that the minister will look entirely to the soul, and nothing to the body; if he comes to a physician, he considers the body and neglects the soul. For my part, I would never have the physician's counsel despised, nor the labour of the minister neglected, because the soul and body dwell together, it is convenient that, as the soul should be cured by the word, prayer, fasting, or by comforting, so the body must be brought into some temper by medicine, and diet, by harmless diversions, and similar ways — providing always that it is done *in the fear of God*, so as not to think to quite smother or evade our troubles by these ordinary means, but to use them as preparatives by which our souls may be made more capable of the spiritual methods that are to follow afterwards.⁸

II. Secondly, *look upon those who are under this woeful disease of Melancholy, with great pity and compassion.* And pity them the more by considering that you yourselves are in the body, and liable to the very same trouble. For however brisk, however sanguine, and however cheerful you are, yet you may meet with those heavy crosses, those long and painful and sharp afflictions which may sink your spirits. Many who are far from being naturally inclined to Melancholy, have been accidentally overwhelmed with it by the loss of children, by some sudden and unlooked for disappointment that ruins all their former projects and designs. O let every groan that you hear from persons so afflicted deeply affect your hearts; and never look upon them but with a compassionate and a concerned eye; never look upon them but to make this use for yourselves. *Man at his best estate is altogether vanity.* Let it wean you from the world when you see that by such a disease as this, a man is quickly taken away from all his business, and made unfit to manage his affairs, or to pursue his former most delightful work. *Melancholy is a complication of violent and sore distresses.* It is full of miseries; it is itself *a fierce affliction*, and it brings to our thoughts and our bodies one evil fast upon another.

Any other distemper may trouble us, but this astonishes and confounds. O look upon your friends in this case with great tenderness. For alas, they are wounded both in soul and body; and in all the world there are none for the time being, in so doleful a state as they. They usually walk as in the midst of fire and brimstone; and most frequently under the very pangs of death, and the pains of hell — in great bodily danger, and in no less spiritual calamity. Their burden is very often heavier than their groaning. Their sighs are deep, their hearts are sunk, their minds are aflame, and they have fallen very low. They are thinking about what is sad and frightful, and they cannot banish those ideas that are so terrible. If you saw a person wounded, and torn, and mangled on the highway, the sight of so deplorable an object would fill you with compassion. The sight of your friends under this disease which I am now speaking of, ought to move you much more. For every moment it is tearing them to pieces; every moment it preys upon their vitals; they are continually dying — and yet cannot die. When you *visit a melancholy person*, make this reflection: this friend of mine awhile ago rejoiced in the love of God, as I do. He met with me in holy assemblies, and sang *the praises of the Most High* with as pleasant a countenance, and as cheerful a heart as I. And now he is in despair, and horror, and mourning. Now his visage and his language is changed, and he is all dissolved in bitterness, and tears, and woe. Oh how vain a thing is man! How terrible it is to fall into the hands of the Living God! My poor friend, under a sense of God's displeasure, *never eats or drinks with pleasure.* He is covered with sadness, while I rejoice in the blessings of providence. By this example, I will learn to improve my own mercies, and to have a great tenderness for those who are brought so very low.

⁸ Richard Greenham (1531-1594), in his *Comfort for Afflicted Consciences*, p. 137.

If (as Mr. Peacock said in his distress ⁹) you but felt their grief for one hour, you would have great compassion on them. Every one of their tears and sighs has this language in which the poor afflicted Job spoke to his hard-hearted visitors, *Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me!* (Job 19.21)

III. Thirdly, *Do not use harsh speeches with your friends when they are under the disease of Melancholy.* This may fret and perplex, and enrage them more, but never do them the least good. Some indeed will advise you to chide and rebuke them on all occasions; but I dare confidently say, such advisers never felt this disease. For if they had, they would know that by such a method they only pour oil into the flame, and chafe and exasperate their wounds instead of healing them. Mr. Dod, because of his mild, meek, and merciful spirit, was reckoned one of the fittest persons to deal with people thus afflicted. Never was any minister more tender and compassionate, as those will find who read the account of Mr. Peacock and Mrs. Drake, who were very much revived by his means. If you would be serviceable to such persons, you must not vex them with harsh and rigorous discourse. It causes many poor souls to cherish and conceal their troubles to their greater torment, because they meet with very harsh entertainment from those to whom they have begun to explain their case. Our blessed Lord and principal Physician was meek and lowly, and would not *break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.* The first visit that the forementioned Mr. Dod made to Mr. Peacock in his anguish, was to put him in mind of God's kindness,¹⁰ of which he showed him four parts,

1. To take small things in good humor,
2. To pass by infirmities.
3. To be easily entreated.
4. To be entreated for the greatest.

You must use a great deal of prudence and gentleness with such persons, not to thwart and contradict them on every occasion. You may do them much good with love, but in anger, none at all. If you are severe in your speeches, they'll never be persuaded that it is done in kindness, and so they will not regard at all what you say. No, your sharp words pierce their hearts like so many daggers, and make that inward fever that burns them, hotter and more scorching.

But of all persons, ministers are especially to be blamed when they find poor sinners overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, with the terrors of God, and slain by the Law, who still drive the Law more and more home to them. This is indeed to throw them down lower, and not the way to raise them up; it is to widen and enflame their wounds, but not to remove and heal them; and it is to such persons as these that the words of the Prophet may be very justly applied. Eze 34.4. *The diseased have you not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick; nor have you bound up those who were broken; nor have you brought back those who were driven away; nor have you sought those who were lost, but you have ruled them with force and with cruelty.* And then the poor distressed soul is more distressed by their harsh language, and is apt to conclude against itself and to say, "If the Ministers of Christ speak so severely to me, what will Christ himself do?"

⁹ Thomas Peacock was tutor, friend, and spiritual father to the famous Robert Bolton (1572-1631). At Peacock's death, Bolton wrote a memorial, "The Last Visitation, Conflict, and Death of Mr. Thomas Peacock, B.D." In his last sickness, Peacock endured "the most remarkable spiritual conflict. He was brought to the suburbs of hell, and thence plucked as a brand from the fire. The enemy of his peace was permitted to come upon him as an armed man; but God restored comfort to his dejected soul, bound up his broken spirit, and poured the precious balm of Gilead into his wounded and bleeding conscience." *Lives of the Puritans*, vol. 2. – WHG

¹⁰ See *Mr. Peacock's Visitation*, p. 6.

This is raking in the wounds that are already very sore and smarting.¹¹ Such a minister is like an angel who troubles the waters more, that were already troubled; not an angel of peace to bring glad tidings to a weary soul. Sufferers would not complain — no more than you — if they were not in violent anguish and perplexity. For as *Job* says, *Does the wild ass bray when he has grass? or does the ox low over his fodder?* And again, to the sharp expressions of his friends, *Job* says, *You are all miserable comforters! Will vain words have an end? I too could speak as you do. If your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake my head at you. But I would rather strengthen you with my mouth, and have the moving of my lips assuage your grief,* 16.3-5. When their souls are already full of sorrow, a little more will make them overflow. When they are weakened with several assaults, a small stroke will throw them to the ground. And a sore that is continually rubbed and chafed, cannot be cured. But I have spoken of this in the following treatise, p. 80.¹²

IV. Fourthly, you must be so kind to your friends under this disease, as to *believe what they say*. Or at least believe that their apprehensions are such as they tell you. Don't think they are at ease when they say they are in pain. It is a foolish course which some take with their *melancholy friends*, to answer all their complaints and moans with this: *It's nothing but fancy; nothing but imagination and whimsey*. Melancholy is a *real disease*, a *real misery* that they are tormented with. And if it is fancy, it is yet a *diseased fancy*, as great a disease as any other; it fills them with anguish and tribulation. But this badly disordered fancy is the consequent of a greater evil, and one of the sad effects produced by that black humour which has vitiated all the natural spirits. If you don't credit what they say, these afflicted persons can never possibly believe you pity them, or that you are heartily concerned for them. And truly, it often falls out that because melancholy persons do not always look very ill, or they have pretty good appetites, and do not at first decline very much in their bodies, other persons who know nothing of the distemper, are apt to think that they make themselves worse than they are. Whereas, alas, they are so grieved that they don't need any more grief, nor will they counterfeit it. In all other evils, people take for granted what others say, and accordingly they sympathise with them. But in this case, people are apt to contradict and oppose those who are distressed; and as long as they do so, they cannot pity them as they should. This makes the grief such as to overwhelm and strangle them within, because when they disclose it, they find it is to no purpose. Only in this case, do as you would have others do to you. Suppose you have a toothache or headache, and when you complain, people tell you it's nothing but fancy; wouldn't you think their carriage is full of cruelty? And wouldn't it *vex* you to find that you cannot be believed?

V. Fifthly, *do not urge your friends under the disease of Melancholy, to do what they cannot do*. They are like persons whose bones are broken, and who are in great pain and anguish; and consequently, they are incapacitated for action. Their disease is full of perplexed tormenting thoughts. If it were possible to innocently divert them by any means, you would do them a great kindness. But by no means press them to do anything that requires more intense thinking; or by fixing their minds on it, you force them to muse and pore over it even more. They are already very miserable. By doing this, it puts them into a more anxious ferment when you continually fret them with doing this or that, for which they may have no more power than a man with a broken leg has power to run. Don't be noisy or clamorous with them; but know that silence and quietness are most favourable to their desolate condition. You know that they are overwhelmed with sorrows,

¹¹ *Smarting*: hurting and in pain. – WHG

¹² See Part I, chap. 6, par. VI. – WHG

and grief is a very inactive *sluggish* thing. The vehemence of this weakens the natural spirits, and blunts the soul, and renders its conceptions very languishing and confused. But perhaps you ask, *Must we not urge them to hear the Word of God?* I answer, If they are so far gone in the disease, as to be in continual unintermitting anguish, they are not *capable* of hearing, because of the many great pains which they most frequently have at the same time. But if their distemper has not yet come to such a terrible height, you may indeed press them to hear. But at the same time, you must use a great deal of prudence, and not persuade them with too much peremptoriness (bossiness) or vehemence. Strive to convince them of their duty *by love*, and *by good words*. In which case, Jacob's pace with those in his flocks, is the best and safest way — to drive them gently, especially seeing that they are big with fear and perplexity. You may win much by a mild, sweet, and affable carriage with them. And if you imitate the friends of Mrs. Drake, you will not do amiss. Therefore I will mention their practise, as I find it in her life:

“The burden with which she had overloaded herself was so great that we never dared add any to it, but fed her with all encouragements. She was too apt to overcharge herself, and to despair upon any addition of fuel to that fire which was already kindled in her. And so, wherever she went to hear, notice was given to so manage the business, that the Minister might know he had a hearer thus qualified. And by this means, she received no discouragement in hearing the Word.”¹³

VI. Sixthly, Do not attribute the effects of mere disease, to the devil, though I don't deny that he has a hand in causing several diseases. The envy and rage that he is filled with, prompts him to disturb the health and peace of men. And by God's permission, no doubt he brings a great many sicknesses upon them. As we know in the case of Job, he filled him all over with tormenting sores which brought the poor man into a very great melancholy, and by that means woefully perplexed him with spiritual terror and shock. But notwithstanding all this, it is a very overwhelming thing to attribute almost every action of a melancholy man to the devil, when there are some unavoidable expressions of sorrow which are purely natural, and which he cannot help — no more than any other sick man can forbear to groan and sigh. Many persons will say to such persons, *Why do you so pore over and muse, and gratify the devil?* Whereas it is the very nature of the disease to cause such fixed musings. They may as well say, *Why are you diseased? Why will you not be well?* The sufferers' excessive musing proceeds from a violent pressure on their spirits, which they are not able to remove. Some think that melancholy persons are pleased with their distemper; but I truly believe it is as little as a man who lies on thorns or briars, or as someone who is thrown into a fiery furnace. It is vastly painful to them to be in this condition; and they cannot be supposed to hate themselves so far as to be *fond* of the pain. The devil is indeed very busy to work during the darkness of a soul — he throws in his bombs, and his fiery darts. To shock us more when we are compassed with the terrors of a dismal night, he is bold and undaunted in his assaults, and injects with a quick and sudden malice, a thousand monstrous and abominable thoughts of God. And these, at the same time, seem to be the motions *of our own minds*; and so they most terribly grieve and trouble us. And alas, we too often comply with his designs. We are usually then under great unbelief; and too often we think of God and of ourselves as the devil would have us think. Yet if you are saying that in every action of melancholy persons, it is from this evil spirit, then at length you will persuade them, maybe, that they are *possessed*, and that *all* they do is from him. For it is easy to fix any sort of direful impressions on those who are overcome with fear, when at the same time they are pained in every part. And then, finding themselves

¹³ See *Mrs. Drake Revived*, p. 82.

unable to get out of their distress, your discourses plunge them very low in misery. I would not have you bring a railing accusation against the devil, so as to attribute to him a thousand things in which he has no hand at all. Nor must you falsely accuse your friends by saying that they gratify him, when they do not. Consider how badly you would take it if you were in their case, to be so used; or consider that to be *without* temptation, is the *greatest* temptation.

VII. Seventhly, *do not wonder much at anything they say or do.* What will people *not* do who are in despair? What will they *not* say who think they are lost forever? What strange extravagant actions you see those do, who are under the power of fear! And none are so afraid as these poor people. They are afraid of God, of hell, and of their own sorrows. You need not much wonder at them, when you know that even so great a man as Job cursed his day, and talked about God with much more freedom and boldness than he should have done. And the Lord himself said that Job *darkened counsel by words without knowledge.* Don't think it strange if they complain very much, for their *grief* causes them to speak. You know the tongue constantly speaks of an aching tooth. Their soul is sorely vexed. And though it's true that they get no good by complaining, yet finding themselves in such a doleful case, they cannot help but complain. They can say with David, Psa 6.6, *I am weary with my groaning; all night I make my bed swim; I water my couch with tears.* Yet they cannot forbear groaning and weeping more, till their very eyes are consumed with grief. Let no carriage of theirs provoke you to passion; let no sharp words of theirs make you talk sharply. Sick persons are generally very peevish. And it will be a very great weakness in you not to bear with them when you see that a long and sore disease has deprived them of their former good temper. Don't you find in Scripture several instances of men who have uttered woeful complaints, who said *their hope had perished? That the wrath of God laid hard upon them? That his terrors were arrayed against them? That their prayers were shut out? That their iniquities had gone over their heads?* That they were like *spectacles of reproach*, and the scorn and wonder of other men? Therefore, don't wonder at anything that your friends say under great trouble.

VIII. Eighthly, *don't mention to them any formidable things, nor tell any sad stories in their hearing, because they already meditate on terror.* By every sad thing they hear of, they are much more terrified. Their troubled imagination is prepared to fix on any mournful thing, and by that means, it will multiply its own sorrows. Hearing sad things causes more violent agitations in them, and throws them into great disorders. It has the same effect on them that storms and thunder have in nature, and which strike terror into men. You must know that they are very ingenious in heightening every doleful thing, and to argue with themselves like this: "If it is so dreadful to be so cruelly used, so tormented, so enslaved. How dreadful then is my condition, that I have God against me, and am likely to be in hell forever!" Studiously avoid all discourse about what is grievous to them. And yet, you must not be too merry before them either. For then they will think you slight their miseries, and have no pity for them. A mixture of affableness and gravity will suit their condition best. And if I might advise, I would desire parents whose children are naturally melancholy, not to have them become scholars, or put them into any employment that requires much study. For that will engage them to perhaps think too much, and in the end they will be overwhelmed with uneasy thoughts.

IX. Ninthly, do not think it altogether needless to talk with them. Only, when you do so, *don't speak as if their troubles would be for very long.* It is the *length* of their trouble that confounds them — when after one week or month without sleep, or rest, or hope, the next week and month are still as painful and as terrible to them as the former were. Many times this pushes them to seek to destroy themselves, because they see no time limit to their miseries, and because their

anguish is both tedious and insupportable. Some of the Platonists thought that a man might dislodge his soul by abstracted contemplation, and turn it into the world of spirits by the mere force of thought. This is nothing but talk. For if anyone could so die, none would more frequently do so than melancholy persons, whose disease is earnest, intense, and undiverted thinking. And yet for all that, they cannot die from it. Of itself, it very rarely kills any person. Revive them, therefore, by telling them that God can create deliverance for them in a moment; that he has often done so with others; that he can quickly cure their disease, and show them His reconciled, amiable face — though it has been hidden from them for a long season. You will convey to them some little support by such discourse as this. Tell them it may be that in a little while their groans will be turned into praises, and that God *will satisfy them early with his mercies, and make them glad according to the days in which He has afflicted them, and the years in which they have seen evil*, Psa 90.14-15. Though they are like a burning bush, they will not be consumed; there will be more sweetness in the deliverance than there was bitterness in the cross; and hereafter they may have cause to say with David, Psa 43.4, *I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy*. And it will make their joys more pleasant when they come to it after so long a sadness — like a man who has lain all night long in waking pain, a morning rest is very sweet. And let them remember that the greatest mourner in Israel was the sweet singer of Israel. Pain, indeed, makes the time seem to go by very slowly — an hour seems a day, and a day a week. But if you can, by the blessing of God, give them any hope that they may at once be delivered, they will be sensibly refreshed; and they will be enabled to pray and read — none of which they can do while they are in deep despair. But when you talk with them, you must (as I said before) by no means thwart or contradict them, but accept what they say. Or taking for granted that what they say is true, proceed with what applications you think most proper to their case on such a supposition. And if you think they were truly good people and sincere in their conduct before this woeful distemper seized them, let them know what you think, and that you have charitable hopes of their salvation, however it may please God to deal with them as to *temporal* deliverance.

X. Tenthly, *tell them of others who have been in such anguish, and under such a terrible distemper, and yet have been delivered*. It is very hard indeed to persuade a person under great pain and anguish, and a sense of the wrath of God, and a fear of hell, that anyone has ever before been so perplexed as he has. They generally think they are worse than Cain or Judas, or any of the most wicked people in the world — such as thinking that their sins have greater aggravations, and consequently they will be more miserable. But you may acquaint them with several instances of God's gracious dealing with others, after they have been afflicted for many months and years. I could send you to some now alive, who were long afflicted with a troubled mind and melancholy, such as Mr. Rosewell, and Mr. Porter, both ministers. The latter of these was oppressed six years with this distemper; and now they both rejoice in the light of God's countenance. I myself was nearly two years in great pain of body, and greater pain of soul, and without any prospect of peace or help. And yet God has revived me in his sovereign grace and mercy. And there have previously been several sorely perplexed with great inward and outward trouble, whom God wonderfully refreshed afterwards. Mr. Robert Bruce, Minister at Edinburgh some time ago, was twenty years in terrors of conscience, and yet delivered afterwards. You may also direct them to the lives of Mrs. Brettergh, Mrs. Drake, Mr. Peacock, and Mrs. Wight, where they will see a very cheerful day returning after a black and stormy night; and see that the issue from their afflictions was more glorious than their conflict was troublesome. They went forth weeping; they sowed in tears, but they reaped a harvest of wonderful joys afterwards. You have in the *Book of Martyrs*, written by Mr. Fox, an instance of Mr. Glover. He was so worn and consumed with inward trouble for the

space of five years, that he had no comfort in his food, nor any quiet in his sleep, nor any pleasure of life. He was so perplexed, it was as if he had been in the deepest pit of hell. Yet at last, this good servant of God, after such sharp temptations and strong buffetings by Satan, was freed from all his trouble, and thereby framed to great mortification. He was like someone already placed in heaven; he led a life altogether celestial, abhorring in his mind all profane things.

And you have a remarkable instance of mighty joy in Mr. Holland, a minister who, having the day before he died, meditated on the 8th chapter of Romans, cried out suddenly, “Stay your reading. What brightness I see!” They told him it was the sunshine. “No,” he says, “My *Saviour’s* shine. Now farewell world, and welcome heaven; the Daystar from on high has visited my heart; O speak it when I am gone, and let it be preached at my funeral, *God deals familiarly with man*. I *feel* His mercy; I *see* His majesty. Whether in the body or out of the body, God knows; but I see things unutterable.” And the following morning he shut up his blessed life with these blessed words, “O! what a happy change I will make from night to day, from darkness to light, from death to life, from sorrow to solace, from a factious world, to a heavenly being! O! my dear friends, it pities me to leave you behind. Yet remember what I now feel. I hope you will find before you die, that God *does* and *will* deal familiarly with men. And now you fiery chariot that came down to fetch up Elijah, carry me to my happy hold; and all the blessed angels who attended the soul of Lazarus to bring it up to heaven, bear me — O bear me into the bosom of my best Beloved. *Amen, Amen*. Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.” And so he fell asleep.¹⁴

XI. Eleventhly, the next kindness you are to show to your melancholy friends, is to *heartily pray for them*. Let your eyes weep for them in private, and there let your souls melt in fervent holy prayers. They are not able, in a composed or lively manner, to recommend their own case to God. You may use many arguments in your prayers. Their forlorn state, and the greatness of their miseries, may be a very powerful motive to your supplications. You know that *none but God himself can help them*. For as Mr. Greenham says,

“If our assistance were like a host of armed soldiers; if our friends were the princes and governors of the earth; if our possessions were as large as between the east and the west; if our food were like manna from heaven; if our apparel were as costly as the ephod of Aaron; if every day were as glorious as the day of Christ’s Resurrection — and yet our minds are appalled with the judgments of God, then all these things would not yield us any help or consolation.”¹⁵

And you must *wrestle* with Him on their behalf. You may plead with him that his power and goodness will be more illustrious if he saves those whom none but he himself can save; and that his grace will be more remarkable if he pleases to create peace for those troubled souls in which none but he can make a calm. And you don’t know but that, upon your request, His Light may begin to shine on those who have bewailed his absence with many dreadful groans. And though your eyes are even weary with looking upwards, continue still to wait and pray, for it will not be in vain. Thus you will do them a great kindness, and perform your own duty, though perhaps they may be ready to say to you, as Mr. Peacock said to his friends, “Do not take the name of God in vain by praying for a reprobate.” And as Mr. Dod said to him when he said he could not pray, “Though he says most sicknesses hinder prayer, and therefore the Apostle James says, ‘If any man is sick, let him send for the elders,’ etc., yet if God stirs your friends to *pray* for you, He will stir himself to *hear* their prayers.” And consider that nothing but prayer can do them good. It is an

¹⁴ See this and several other instances in Mr. Robert Bolton’s *Instructions for Afflicted Consciences*, pp. 87, 235, etc.

¹⁵ See Mr. Greenham’s *Comfort for an Afflicted Conscience*, p. 27.

obstinate disease that nothing else will overcome. For it is a very slight melancholy, and not deeply rooted, that can be drowned in wine, or chased away with sociable diversions. Some indeed tell us that when they find themselves troubled, their way is to bid their thoughts to battle, and to oppose thoughts against thoughts, and to subdue this peevish humour with the impact of reason. But such must give me leave to say that they are *not* under the disease of Melancholy. For that will hear neither faith nor reason till God himself works salvation for us by his almighty power.

XII. Not only pray for them, but *get other serious Christians to pray for them also*. When many good people join their requests together, the cry is more acceptable and prevalent. When those in the Acts joined to remember Peter in his chains, he was delivered very soon after that, in the very time of their prayers. All believers have through Jesus Christ a great interest in heaven; and the Father is willing to grant what they beg in the name of his dear Son. I myself have been greatly helped by the prayers of others, and I heartily thank all those who kept any particular days in which to remember my distressed condition more solemnly. Blessed be God that has *not cast off their prayer, nor turned away his mercy from me*. Every day gives us several experiences of many who have been rescued from their diseases, their temptations, and their fears, by the prayers of others. And I might also add, you have very great cause to pray for *yourselves*, that God may give you strength to bear so heavy a cross as you are afflicted with, in the afflictions of your friends. Their doleful complaints, their repeated groans, and their long and sore trials, are enough to sink you too, if God does not give you wonderful support. You need to beg for strong faith and great patience, so that you may not be unhinged with their passionate or hasty speeches.

XIII. Put your poor friends in mind of the sovereign grace of God in Jesus Christ. Often put them in mind that *He is merciful and gracious; that as far as the heavens are above the Earth, so far are his thoughts above their thoughts; his thoughts of mercy and love, above their self-condemning guilty thoughts*. Teach them as much as you can, to look up to God by the Great Mediator, for grace and strength, and not to pore too much on their own souls where there is so much darkness and unbelief. Seek to divert them from puzzling themselves too much with God's secret and unknown decrees, and strive to help them believe in Christ, which is their certain duty. Show them what great sinners God has pardoned, and how he is *merciful, because he will be merciful* — finding motives to help them, from their very miseries, and from His own gracious nature. I find they dealt this way with Mrs. Drake. Concealing her name, she would send to several ministers to know whether such and such a creature — without faith, hope, love to God or man, hardhearted, without natural affection, who had rejected all means, nor could they submit to the same — might yet have any hope to go to heaven? And they returned for an answer, that such persons, and much worse (even as bad as Manasseh), might by the mercy of God be received into favour, converted, and saved. This greatly allayed her trouble. “For (she said) the fountain of all my misery has been that I sought in the *Law*, that which I should have found in the *Gospel*; and I sought in myself, that which was only to be found in Christ.”¹⁶

This is what I thought necessary to say to you. And you will find that the course I have mentioned, being taken with your friends, will do them no prejudice. I do not speak only with borrowed expressions in this matter, nor without some experience. I know very well that the mild and gentle way of dealing, you'll find to be the best; and the way of roughness and severity will but aggravate and increase their miseries. And I desire you who are yet healthful and cheerful, to *improve* your health. For if ever this distemper seizes you, you will be able to do nothing for your souls or bodies.

¹⁶ See her *Life*, page 107.

Preface

You may have *time*, but such will be your anguish, that you will not be able to do anything to purpose in that time. This book has a peculiar relation to the distresses of the *mind*. As to what concerns that *bodily* pain that I had with my inward trouble, I have largely shown what it was in my *Practical Discourses on Sickness and Recovery*, which were published about a year ago. And I have explained in my treatise about *Early Religion*, recently published, what a mercy it is to have our afflictions sanctified, and to bear the yoke in our youth, which is peculiarly designed for *young people*. And if God blesses it to their good, it may help them to avoid those woeful terrors which many others have groaned under.

I think I could have used a little more exactness in composing the following book, if I had set myself studiously to do so. And by that means, it might have been more pleasant to the Reader. But it would not have served my design so well. For according to that old saying, *aeger non quaerit medicum eloquentem sed sanantem*, a physician who can remove the disease is more welcome to the sick, than one who can talk finely about it, but do him no good. And if the cure is performed, it is no matter if the potion was not extremely sweetened. I purposely avoided all pretence to a regular smoothness of style, because the ears of people in great affliction are not so tender and so delicate as theirs are who are in health. I know that the age in which we live is very meticulous and critical; and that the English language has been greatly polished and improved within a few years; and that religion deserves the best words we can find with which to express our thoughts. And in Ecc 12.10 it is said, *The Preacher sought out acceptable words*; by which I suppose he means words that were *graceful as well as profitable*. I hope the Reader will not find either bombast or slovenliness in my expressions; and if there is not an accomplished beauty in them (as I do not pretend there is), that at least they are not all deformity.

Whatever some persons may say, I think it my duty to express my thoughts not altogether in a neglected and a careless manner, so long as it is with plainness and clearness, and such as may tend to edification. Though in the following book I have not given such a particular relation of my troubles as perhaps the Readers may expect, yet I desire them to take notice that wherever I speak of inward distress as if by a third person, I speak there of what *I myself* have felt. It is an observation of the readers of *Cyprian*, that through all his writings, almost every word breathes *martyrdom*. His expressions are full of spirit and passion, as if he had written them with his blood, and conveyed the anguish of his sufferings into his writings. If I had had the judgment and the pen of so eloquent a person, I might have much better described the sadness of my case. But I am sure nothing in the world could fully express it, it was so very terrible. And the greatness of the danger heightens the mercy of God my deliverer, to whose grace and wonderful salvation I owe my present peace and hope, and to whom I will devote all my poor endeavours. That those which I have used in the following treatise may be serviceable to His glory, to your advantage, and to the relief of your melancholy friends and many others, and also to my own good, is the prayer of

Your Hearty Adviser,

TIMOTHY ROGERS.

London, Sept. 10, 1691.

Letters from Various Divines

The *LETTERS* that were sent from several Divines to the Author,
are these following.

LETTER 1. HENRY LUKIN

From Matching-Hall in Essex, Nov. 21. 1690.

Sir, I took the first opportunity to read your good book; and besides the many useful things which are there to be learned in detail, the general scope and occasion of it much affected me, partly with gratitude, partly with an awful fear — with the former, to consider how it might have been with me; with the latter, considering how it may be with me. I see in what *others* suffer, what *I* might have suffered; and what am I that God should exempt me from the lot of others better than myself? It is likely, now that it is over, you may have cause to say that all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth; and the comforts that you have in the return of the morning after a night like theirs who live under the poles, may more than recompence all your sorrows and pains. And God has thereby fitted you to support and comfort others from your own experience. Yet it is a favour to be freed from such pains and terrors. *Those who go down to the sea in ships, and do business in great waters, see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.* But when *He commands and raises up the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea, they mount up to heaven, they go down again to the depths, their soul is melted because of trouble, and they are at their wits' end.* (Psa 107.23-27) So that, many would be afraid to purchase their experience so dear, or to venture to sea in a storm, though they might with pleasure relate their adventures when the danger is over. Some have a smooth and even way through the world, while others are like those who go over *Salisbury Plain*,¹⁷ or some such place, where they sometimes have a clear prospect of the city and their way to it, once they get on the high ground; but when they are down in a valley, they quite lose sight of it, and may fear they will never find the way to it. Some, by a *fiducia perfugii*,¹⁸ keep on a fair and softly pace towards heaven, and never have any experience, either of the ravishing joys, or the amazing terrors of others who are sometimes lifted up to heaven in ravishing comforts, and sometimes cast down to hell with fears and terrors. But though, through the mercy of God, I have had a safe and easy passage up to now through the world, I don't know what storms I may meet with before I get into harbor. I remember that great man Mr. *Marshal* (of whom we were recently speaking)¹⁹ told me not long before he died, that through the mercy of God he had much peace and quietness in his own mind, though he was not acquainted with the ravishing joys which others felt. But he did not know how it would be with him before he came to die. He depended upon God and was at His mercy, not only for his salvation, but for the comfort and assurance of it. Many charge the doctrines of *assurance* and *perseverance*, as tending to licentiousness, and emboldening men to sin. But if there was nothing else to be said in the case, those terrors which those who are sure to go to heaven may fall under here, are sufficient to check men's boldness and presumption. If I were sure that what I eat would not soon kill me, yet I knew that it would most likely breed the gout or the stone, I would forbear it. Though God may not send us to hell, he may bring hell to us, and make us feel the anticipations of it in our consciences; *Who knows the power of his wrath?* (Psa 90.11) Or who can endure his terrors, if he runs upon us like

¹⁷ *Salisbury Plain*: a chalk plateau with grassy plains in south central England, covering 300 square miles. – WHG

¹⁸ *fiducia perfugii*: refuge of faith.

¹⁹ Presumably Walter Marshall (1628-1680) an English, non-conformist pastor, best known for his book, *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*, which many say was the single greatest work on sanctification ever written. – WHG

a giant, takes us by the neck, and shakes us to pieces? We need to pray that *the way not be a terror to us in the day of evil*. We are always at His mercy, and depend upon him for the comfort and evidence of grace, as well as for the habit and exercise of it. *If he gives quietness, none can cause trouble; but if he hides his face, who can behold him?* (Job 34.29) I have been on a mountain sometimes, in the skirts of the Alps, when one moment we have had the sun shining out clear, and quickly a cloud has come, and we have been as in a thick mist, and could not see a step before us. God when he pleases, can hold us as over the bottomless pit, as some will hold children over some dangerous place, to frighten them. He can keep our minds intent upon our sin, so that it is ever before us. He can suffer our judgments to be so clouded, that we will have such dark apprehensions of things as to look upon those evidences which we have stored up against an evil day, as self-deceivings and delusions. He can let Satan loose upon us to argue us out of all our hopes. He can make our hearts soft, so that our fears and troubles make a sensible impression upon us, and are like a heavy burden on a chafed back. He can bring our souls to the grave, and our lives to the destroyers, setting us on the very borders of eternity, such that we cannot relieve ourselves by putting far from us the evil day. And thus He sometimes deals with those who are to Him like the apple of his eye. He uses his sovereignty in distributing both comforts and terrors. But a humble submission and resignation of ourselves to his good will and pleasure, will be the best means to prevent such storms, or at least the best posture for them to find us in. I am,

Your Real Friend Hen. Lukin.

LETTER 2. J. HUSSEY

From *Sissafernes* in *Hertfordshire*, Nov. 4. 1690.

Dear Sir,

I read your *Practical Treatise upon Sickness and Recovery* which you recently published to the world, and am glad to find so universal and deep a sense of the goodness of God, manifested in your own wonderful and recent return to the ministry, as expressed in those lines which I take as a real copy, transcribed from the original in your inward parts. I hope grace, mercy, and truth will keep you, and preserve alive those sparks of zeal in your soul, to fly always upwards to God, which have been kindled by him. If the Lord shines forth more clearly and influentially upon you after so black a cloud, I do not question that the Light of His Countenance will make amends for the darkness you lay under. The most violent storms can never beat off the loving-kindness of the Lord from one of his, even though sometimes, in the deep waters, all hopes of being saved may be taken away by them. Blessed be the Lord, who threw out a plank to save you in a time of need, and secured you comfortably upon dry land when you thought of nothing but of being shipwrecked, and swallowed up in the deepest mire. You have found a *Rock* when you feared a *gulf*; and you may stand upon one that is higher than you, when you had been carried so near to the land of forgetfulness, that God seemed to be just laying you in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps, with his wrath lying hard upon you and afflicting you with all his waves. Doubtless God has thus clothed you with the garment of salvation, that you may encourage others to put on Christ, though hell is naked before them, and destruction has no covering from those who are not hidden in Him. God has emptied you of your own fulness, that you may be filled with *Him who fills all in all* (Eph 1.23). You have been taught, even under judgment, to sing of mercy; and in every part of salvation, to cry *Grace, Grace* to it, having seen that His grace is sufficient for you. He has given you a sip of wrath, that the cup of your consolation may drink the sweeter, and that you may taste even more how good the Lord is, who would not leave you to take up the full draught, or wring out the dregs in your cup of bitterness and astonishment to all eternity. I desire to adore the Divine Goodness

on your behalf, that he has visited you with his own presence, though he had *his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm* (Nah 1.3), when he came to you. I bless the unsearchable riches of his grace in our Lord Jesus Christ, that he has shed abroad any sense of his love upon your soul, who had poured out so much of his displeasure, that you complain of his anger in every stroke of the rod of God upon you. I rejoice abundantly that he has bowed his ear to prayer for you, when you thought he had bent his bow like an enemy; that he has bottled up your tears when your roarings were poured forth like the waters; that God has formed you into a vessel of mercy when you thought he had slung you away like a vessel in which there is no pleasure. In a word, I rejoice with comfort and enlargements, that the Lord has given us such good hopes through grace, that you are sealed up unto the Day of Redemption, who once mournfully expressed it in my own hearing, that you were sealed up unto the black Day of Wrath, and would not see me until the heavens were no more. No more at present, except my hearty requests at the throne of grace, that He who has been the author of your faith, may become the finisher of the same, and confirm you unto the end, till an abundant entrance (through the broad gate of assurance) is administered to you into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I am,

SIR,

Your Affectionate Friend, Servant, and Brother in the Lord, *J. HUSSEY*.

LETTER 3. RALPH WARD

Dear Brother,

As the tidings of your distemper affected my soul, and drew out my heart to make request to God for you, so the tidings of your deliverance from trouble, confirmed by so evident a demonstration of it as your appearance both in the pulpit and the press, has much affected me with joy and thankfulness to the Lord. In your book I read of the wisdom and goodness of God in his severest dealings with his afflicted servants, and the accomplishing of what Job says, *That when he has tried them, he brings them forth like gold* (23.10). You have not been in the furnace in vain; but to humble and prove you, and to do you good in the end. O how good is God! Good in himself, good and kind to all his creatures, but especially good to Israel. You have had abundant experience of it. He has upheld you when falling, and raised you up when you were bowed down; and has *turned for you, your mourning into dancing; he has put off your sackcloth, and girded you with gladness, that your soul may sing praise unto him, and not be silent* (Psa 30.11-12). And you have done well in making so public an acknowledgement of your thankfulness to God — that as deliverance has been granted at the request of many, so by the many who have been concerned for you, thanks may be given to the Lord on your behalf. I am persuaded the Lord has taught you the truth of that saying, *namely, that the School of the Cross is the School of Light*.²⁰ You would not have known so well, either your own vanity or the vanity of the creature, and of all human help, nor the marvellous loving-kindness of the Lord in stepping between the bridge and the water many times for your help, had you not learned these things by being in the School of Affliction. And I am encouraged to believe that the Lord has reserved you, and restored you, that through his grace, you may be greatly instrumental for the glory of his name in turning many to righteousness. The most eminent servants in the Lord's work have been prepared for it by manifold temptations. Our *blessed Redeemer himself was tempted that he might be able to succour those who are tempted* (Heb 2.18); and the Lord comforts his servants in all their

²⁰ John Bunyan, *Dying Sayings*, "Of Affliction." – WHG

tribulations, *that they might comfort others with the same comfort with which they have been comforted by God* (2Cor 1.4). The Lord has brought you out of the depths of distress, that you may be the more skilful pilot to lead others through the waves and billows which they are afraid will swallow them up. Now, dear brother, what does the Lord require of you, but what *Paul* sets before young Timothy? 1Tim 4.12, *Be an example to believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*. Your sound speech, holy converse, servant love, and spiritual mindedness — rightly improving spiritual gifts, both in sincere professing and publishing of the truth, and unspotted purity of life — will be a speaking rule to others, and so adorn both your person and profession, that it will appear you have been with Jesus, and that the Life of Christ shines forth in you. And that you may long be a shining and burning light in this world, and at last be abundantly recompensed with the reward promised to the wise and faithful, is the fervent desire and prayer of,

Your unworthy, but affectionate brother in the service of the Gospel, *RALPH WARD*.

York, Nov. 6. 1690.

LETTER 4. S. A. BOLD

From Steeple in Dorsetshire, May 1, 1691.

My Dear Friend,

I did hope, when I was last in London, to have had the satisfaction of a free and large conversation with you, and to have discoursed about some particular matters with you; but I was unhappily defeated. I am now at too great a distance to use so much freedom with you as some of my circumstances would prompt me to, if I were placed so near you as would allow my waiting on you personally. But though I do not think it proper to desire satisfaction from you by letter about some things which would be of great use to myself, and about which I believe you can better resolve for me than others of my acquaintance, yet if it is consistent with your conveniences, I would be glad that you and I might maintain a correspondence sometimes by writing. I heartily bless God for his gracious dealings with you, and for the good I hope he has done me by what you have published to the world. I have found myself obliged frequently to peruse your book; and the oftener I read it, the more I am affected by it. I heartily wish English people might become so sensible of their great concernment, that you might have encouragement to publish what you intimate in your Preface you designed. It is what I earnestly long to see, and what I am persuaded would be of singular use if people were a little awakened out of their lethargic distemper. Perhaps God will use it to rouse and awaken many who otherwise will sleep on, and continue in their doleful disregard and formality. It would greatly rejoice me to understand by a line or two from you, that I have some ground to hope to see that tract in print. The Lord preserve his faithful messengers, and arm them against discouragements. Remember Ecc 11.1, & 6. I am,

Your Affectionate Friend, *SA. BOLD*.

LETTER 5. GEORGE NICHOLSON

Dear Mr. Rogers,

SIR, I thank you for your *Discourses on Sickness and Recovery*. I trust that God who has given you (as it were) a resurrection from the dead, has designed you for more than ordinary work in your generation. Your deliverance and salvation have been extraordinary; and it's more than probable that so must be your after-work. God, who gives to his servants the talents of gifts or

graces, will find employment for them answerable to the same. I long to see something you hint in your epistle before your book, about your spiritual conflict under your bodily affliction. It will be, I hope, of use to all tender afflicted consciences. I have blessed the Lord on your behalf, for His signal favour shown to you in your wonderful recovery. And I shall pray to God for you, that he will please to continue your life, health, and opportunities to you, that you may be eminently useful in your ministerial capacity for His name. Your dear parents would have rejoiced (if they had been alive) to have heard and seen the fruits of your labours. Dear Sir, though I am a little straitened at the present time, yet my heart is enlarged towards you. Wishing you all health and happiness in this world, and in the next, eternal felicity. I am,

Dear Sir,

Your unfeigned Well-wisher and Servant, *GEO. NICHOLSON.*

From Hudleskeugh in Cumberland, Apr. 17. 1691.

LETTER 6. THOMAS WHITAKER

Dear Sir,

It was your signal happiness to be deeply written upon the hearts of many of God's praying servants, when in your own apprehension you seemed as if you had been cast out of God's heart. And I heard some, when you were at your lowest ebb, express their faith and hope that God was but preparing you by those afflictive methods for more eminent service. And now it cannot but greatly rejoice me to see such blooming appearances of the issue answering both their prayers and hopes. Ministers, of all persons, need to set up upon a good stock of *experience* — spiritual and *useful* experience! And no school is more proper to improve us in that kind, than the School of Affliction — which made *Luther* sometimes say that *affliction, temptation, and prayer were the three things that made a minister*. And hence it is, that God in his wise and holy providence many times puts his servants to school under the preparatory pedagogy of affliction, whom he designs for more than ordinary usefulness. When we enter upon the service of souls, we don't know what cases may occur to require our wise and tender management. And a scribe cannot be better instructed for the Kingdom of God, than when he has felt in himself what he meets with in others. When we have been brought to the mouth of the pit ourselves, and *there* have been conscious of the thoughts, and fears, and workings of our own hearts, we can better tell how to minister proper applications to others in the like condition. When we have ourselves been tossed upon the tumultuous waves of temptation, and *one deep has called to another* to put the greatest discouragement upon our condition, we are better furnished to speak a word in season to others under like circumstances. Every storm weathered, furnishes the pilot with more dexterous skill, not only to work his own vessel in succeeding tempests, but to be singularly helpful to others when they fall into the like depths and straits. *Our Blessed Lord himself learned experience by the things which he suffered*. And if *he* must be put to school to lead him into a practical experience of what he was to pity and help in others, then how much more is it requisite in such poor unskilful creatures as we! A wise and holy God has been hewing you upon the dark mountains; and I hope it has been to make you a more expert and polite pillar in his sanctuary. And the more workmanship He has bestowed upon you, the more eminent station he probably designs for you. God works his greatest works many times in the dark, and forms his most elaborate pieces in the gloomy shades of adversity; so that neither ourselves nor others can tell what he is doing, till he has accomplished his work.

He throws us into the furnace, lead or iron, and for a long time nobody can tell what he will make of us. Sometimes He looks as if he would consume and make an utter end of us. And yet at last he brings us forth as gold. We go into the fire light, and foolish, and frothy; and when he has melted and tried us, for whatever time he sees fit, he brings us out serious, holy, and gracious souls. When we thought we would have lost life, and soul, and all, we have lost nothing but our dross and feculence (filth), to make us more refined for Temple service. When you seriously reflect on your bygone days of trouble, whatever thoughts you had then, I hope you can now say through grace, that God has made you no loser, but a blessed gainer by that gloomy dispensation. And whatever wisdom, and grace, and experience you have obtained, I pray God you may be helped humbly to employ in his Holy Sanctuary. We should labour to diffuse a more shining and burning light when God has been trimming us from our dross and filth, and has set us up again in his temple candlestick. God has been dressing and trimming you a long time; and after a long and dismal time of complicated affliction, he has restored you to your station in the assemblies of his people. Now the good Lord make both your gifts and graces so much the more resplendent, not only for your own sake, but also that you may minister more light and warmth to others on their way to glory. You promise a second volume of discourses, giving an account of the spiritual part of your affliction, which I will be very glad to see, as soon as your leisure will permit you to make it public. In the meantime, I commend you to God, and to the riches of his grace, in hopes that what God has done *for* you, is but a pledge of what he designs to do *by* you. To which I will only add my earnest prayers, and tell you that it is in all sincerity.

SIR,

Your affectionate fellow-labourer in the work of the Gospel,

THO. WHITAKER.

Leeds, Nov. 25. 1690.

LETTER 7. JOHN WORTH

SIR,

I now at last return my hearty thanks to you for your book. I would not have been thus far behind in expressing my gratitude, except that I have been hindered by weakness... It was a book to me both seasonable and suitable. I pray God it may be as well *improved* [profitably used], as it is generally *liked* by Christians. If I were to give an account of my visitation, it would in very many things correspond with yours. I have been for some years past under a hypochondriac evil habit of body, which has had many grievous symptoms attending it; *namely*, vertigo, convulsions, paralytic effects, with a fever thought to be hectic. And with it I have had a universal languor and decay of spirits, together with dreadful temptations, clouds, confusions, and terrors of soul, *etc.* So that, there was no hope or help to be expected, but from heaven, in answer to many prayers, which (through mercy) were successful — though I am still under weakness. Yet I hope I am going forward, rather than contrary. As to my soul, I have not been without good experiences (blessed be the free grace of God!). I cannot, nor may I trouble you to enlarge upon any of these things. My old enemy will not lay down except by force; strong temptations and corruptions, *etc.*, are my daily exercise. Good Sir, help me by your prayers over to the Lord Jesus; there's as much in that, as if I had made more words. Pray Sir, don't forget me, and please put others in remembrance of me; you know what graces are necessary to such a condition. It is a true saying, *tranquillus Deus, tranquillat omnia* [the tranquility of God calms all]. The Lord teach me to be as humble as he would have me be; and in everything give thanks. I desire to rejoice with you, and those who rejoice concerning you, for your restoration. Good Sir, again remember those who are still out in

Letters from Various Divines

the storm; they have need of patience, etc. I don't know how to break off. But time and strength failing me, I remain,

SIR,

Your Friend and Servant, Joh. Worth, Jr.

DAVENTRY, March 10. 1690/1.

LETTER 8. From a Young Student in Divinity.

Dear and much respected Cousin,

Long experience proves it beyond a thousand arguments, that those who have chosen God for their happiness, must expect none here. It is a contradiction to expect heaven on Earth, or to look for a settled duration where all things rush round in vicissitude. I cannot tell what they may find who have the world at will, but I am sure believers, upon a reflection and consideration of the hard usage and disquieting perplexities which they are still meeting with, cannot but long to be where the weary are at rest. The saints who have now gotten to the end of their way, may well rejoice, for they have good reason for it. Happy are those who have gotten safely to their Father's House through so many threatening difficulties. When others are lawless as to their practices, we are limited to the holy rule of the Word; our life must be a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world. I don't know what thoughts many professors may have of religion; but for myself, when I seriously think what a life a true Christian's is, I am ready to cry out, *True religion is a rare thing!* Dear Cousin, what manner of men should you and I be, who are designed for such special work! I desire to bear a part in the praises for your wonderful deliverance; the Lord teach us the true nature of thankfulness, that we may live more *to*, and *for* God. ... I desire an interest in your prayers, that God would keep me from Melancholy, which I am inclined to; and that God would bless my study to me, and make it successful. And in so doing, you will add one more to the favours you have bestowed on,

Your very Loving Cousin, *THO. BARNES.*

Rauthmell in *Yorkshire*, Novemb. 17, 1690.

Letters to Relations

LETTER 1. To a Relation of the Author's

One who was long under Melancholy, from a minister
who for several years was under that disease.

My dear Christian Friend,

As Christ has given me any heart of mercy, I cannot but pity you under your soul-affliction and disquietude of spirit, being greatly oppressed by Satan, that malicious and active spirit who hates you for the truth's sake. And therefore (no doubt) he hates you because he finds in you the love of the truth, by the proper and convincing evidences of it; and that you might not have any comfort by it, as the work of the Spirit of grace in your heart; and also that God might not have from you the praise and glory due to his Grace for it — for he envies Him all the worship and glory that's given him by his saints in heaven and earth. Therefore he does all he can to hide the knowledge of it from you, by clouding your mind, by darkening your evidences by his own malicious suggestions against you, and also by stirring up all sorts of sin in you — but more especially *unbelief*, the sin of sins, his first-born, the mother of all abominations in the soul. And so it is the provocative by which he well knows that if he can work it up to its perfect and full dominion, he will effectually hinder the income of all peace and joy, and so fill the poor despairing soul with all heaviness and horror, never to be removed but by faith, and its actings on Jesus Christ, the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace. I beseech you therefore (Dear Sister, and the Lord himself work it in you!) turn your mind away from all the malicious, deceitful, lying suggestions of the Adversary, whom you know, by the Scripture of Truth, to be *a liar and a murderer from the beginning*; and who will do all that he can to beguile you of the grace of God in you, and also of all that mercy, pardon, and peace which God has provided in his Son, for all believing, broken-hearted sinners, such as (I do not doubt) you are — whatever you may seem to yourself in your present darkness, and hour of temptation.

Turn yourself (indeed the Lord do it *for* you, and *in* you) from him to your Saviour, who will not accuse you with the Father, as Satan does; but is pleading his sufferings, and presenting his blood and atonement made by it for you. Look to Him (dear sister) look to him, whom you will find to be as the true Bronze Serpent to your love-sick soul, which has been sorely wounded by that fiery flying serpent and old dragon. But your Lord has overcome him by death, and you also (I do not doubt) have overcome him in diverse combats and temptations already, and shall overcome him fully and finally by the faith of your mighty Redeemer, and the Captain of your Salvation. As he is able to save you to the utmost, so I do not doubt he *will* do it, whatever your doubts and fears may be at present. He is with you, taking care of your soul, and all its concerns, though your eyes are withheld, so that you cannot discern him, as it was sometimes with the Apostles themselves. But he will before long manifest himself to you, and then you will know and acknowledge also that he has borne with you, and will be with you forever — even as I now do, though I would as much seek his gracious presence with me, as you are or can well be.

The Lord himself, even our Lord Jesus Christ, work this very thing in you, and cause you *to hold fast your confidence firm to the end*; and you will find that it has great recompence of reward, as the Apostle has testified to the Hebrews. For he who shall come, *will come*, and *will not tarry*. He will not only come to Judgment at the last day, but he will come to you in the Spirit, and judge *for* your soul *against* your enemies, to deliver you from all, even sin (which is such a burden to you); and also from Satan, the great troubler of your peace, who either accuses you falsely, or aggravates

all your infirmities and miscarriages, though such as he has tempted you to, are above all reason. I will be glad to have some account from you, how it is with your soul; ... I will endeavour (whatever lies in me, as enabled by the Spirit of Christ) to be a helper to your faith and joy. ... I will add no more at this time, but only to let you know that I have you, and others in your condition, daily in my prayers. So I commend you to the mercy of God in our dear Redeemer, I am,

Your very affectionate Friend, and Brother in Christ,

GEORGE PORTER.

Febr. 21. 1688/9.

LETTER 2. Written to a relation of the author's
by one who had been under Melancholy.

Mrs. Rogers,

If you dare believe one who has been in your case (which I confess is very sad, and much to be pitied) you have very much of a bodily distemper. And though because of your clouds, you cannot hope for relief, either by spiritual or natural means, yet know that nothing is too hard for God to do; use *both*, and look up to God as well as you can for a blessing. *The Lord's arm is not shortened that he cannot save; nor his ear heavy, that he cannot hear.* And though your sins and sad apprehensions keep you in sadness, so that you cannot see the Lord Jesus, nor call him yours, yet he sees you bemoaning your misery and disability to love and serve him. I know you would give all the world, were it at your disposal, for a glimpse of this favour. Do not side with your enemy so far as to believe that you would not accept the Lord Jesus to be your *King*, as willingly as to be your *Saviour*. If you can gain so much ground by yourself, then judge you are not alone in this. For those who have been in deep Melancholy, have not only had hard thoughts of themselves, but hard and sinful thoughts of God, as if he delighted in the death of a sinner (although he has sworn the contrary). In that dismal condition they could not see the loveliness of Christ, nor hardly discern desires after him, unless only to be saved from hell. They could plead against themselves, that their day of grace was past, and that they had sinned the unpardonable sin, and done that for several years. I could say much more, but I know it is to no purpose; for none can speak to the heart but God alone. Only I beg of you to cherish that hope you have, which the devil would have you disown; but if you had none, you would not ask any to pray for you.

I knew one who was in so despairing a condition that he did not do that; nor did he believe it more possible to be saved than for the devil. At length he was persuaded to use a steel course,²¹ and drink the waters, ²² and other means which, by God's blessing, did good. And as the bodily distemper wore off, more clearness came into the mind, and hope returned, which before seemed to be quite dead. And though the party still has clouds, ... and Satan is apt to put in, that all is still naught (useless), through God's mercy the poor creature can reply, *I am changeable in my frame; God is unchangeable in his Covenants.* Though I cannot find the sensible joy, love, or delight that I would, yet blessed be God that He enables me to wait on him in the use of the means, by which he has promised to renew my strength. And though I lack that sweet sensible communion with God, which is the life of heaven, is it not a mercy that I can *hope* in his mercy? I have deserved such high favours, that I must always be full of joy!

²¹ A 17th-century medication; chalybeate pills or medicines (*i.e.* infused with iron). – WHG

²² Water (baths) impregnated with mineral salts or gasses; often effervescent; used therapeutically. – WHG

This is what I *would*. But if the Lord keeps me a poor beggar, it is infinite mercy that I am not in hell; and that the desire of my heart is after him — I choose to love him; I cast myself on him; I neither expect nor desire any other Saviour. If I perish, it will be in serving him as well as I can, and let him do his will. *There is forgiveness with him, that he should be feared*. This poor creature often thinks of that Scripture, when Christ spoke to Thomas, *You see and believe; blessed are those who do not see, yet believe*. You say this is no comfort to you, that it is not your case; true, but you don't know how soon it *may* be. This party that I speak of was in your case, and I truly believe in *worse*. Therefore, I pray you, do not cast off your confidence. The Lord, I truly hope, will show you mercy. But you must *wait*; do not be impatient. Isn't redemption from hell, and hope of heaven, worth waiting for? ... The Lord shine in upon your soul, and let you see that whatever he does is in love and faithfulness. Pray for me, that I may not forget how it has been with you, nor be insensible (unfeeling) of your condition, or others in your case. ... I am in some small manner sensible of your trouble; I wish I were abundantly more so; for then I would hope to be hereafter, a partaker with you in your joys.

July 24, '89.

LETTER 3. To a Relation of the Author's.

My very kind, and dear friend, whom I much respect and love in the Lord, even as I have cause — having found you to be one who (I am persuaded) love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, which you have fully manifested by your longings after him, and your great inward sorrow when you could not enjoy him as you would. And now that he has returned to you, your soul is at rest, rejoicing in him as the Lord your righteousness, peace, and life, in whom you have all that your soul needs and desires. And the Lord manifest himself to you more and more, and fill you with abundance of peace and joy in believing, which (I do not doubt) you desire for this end: that His joy being your strength, and your heart enlarged by it, you may be able to run in the ways of his commandments, and to serve him not only in sincerity, but with all gladness, in all love and thankfulness for all his loving-kindness, and for all the great things he has done for your soul — in bringing it out of that horrible pit of darkness and the shadow of death, in which you saw neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, but were afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted; without all light, comfort, and joy. Though the Father of Lights, and the God of all Consolation *was with you*, even when you did not perceive him, and could discover no tokens of his gracious presence, as neither could I in the like gloomy condition. But I now find, as you also do, blessed be the Father of mercies, that he was ready at hand to give forth light and joy when his own set time came. Though we did not wait for it in a due manner, by faith, patience, and humility, yet He passed by all our unbelief, impatience, and peevishness, and visited our sinful souls in his tender mercy — notwithstanding all by which we had provoked him to turn his short withdrawing from us into an everlasting departure from us, and could have left us wholly to the unbelief and frowardness of our own evil hearts. Therefore, let us magnify his name together, and let his high praises be in our hearts and mouths as long as we live, and unto all eternity. For he is most worthy to be praised. And blessed be his name forever and ever, *Amen*. And let us walk circumspectly and humbly with him all our days, so that we do not grieve his good Spirit anymore, and provoke him to withdraw from us, and to take his blessed influences and comforts from us, as he has done. He is the life of our souls, and the joy of our hearts. Without him, we are but a sink of all filth, and a hell of sorrow and confusion.

I hope you will give me the contentment to let me see you as often as you can; I will be glad to be a means to help forward your faith and joy to a fuller settlement of spirit, and a more abundant

rejoicing in the Lord Jesus. Thus, with my constant prayers for you, I commend you to the grace of God, in Christ, and rest.

London, Febr. 8. 1689.

Your most Affectionate Friend and Brother in the Lord,

GEORGE PORTER.

LETTER 4. To a Relation of the Author's.

Mrs. Rogers,

I have read your doleful letter, in which you express your distress of mind under which you lately laboured. It was indeed a very sad misapprehension of God, and of your own condition. Yet this is no more than what has befallen many dear servants of God, who have managed the same objection against themselves, and laboured under the same frights. This you counterbalance with the comfortable account you give of God's great mercy to you in commanding down these waves and storms. I rejoice with you in this, and pray that God would please to confirm and settle you in the sense of his love. And that you may go forward in your present peaceable estate, I would advise you to take due care of your body, and to reduce it into order. I know well you are naturally melancholy, and you may be assured the devil took no small advantage from there to raise up your distressing fears. And if you don't take heed to take away this advantage, he may (unless God wonderfully prevents) raise up trouble for you a second time. It is not possible for me at so great a distance to direct you in this matter. Only physicians at the place, who see you, and can occasionally fit or change their prescriptions, are fit to advise you. This being cared for, I will only put you in mind of a few things which I would have you establish in your mind; and these are things that a review of your apprehensions in your former trouble will help you to understand.

First then, call to mind that such dreadful terrors as you have had, are not to be understood as certain evidences of God's rejecting those who are so afflicted; though you so concluded against yourself. Yet the present peace which God in great mercy has given you, is enough to tell you that you were mistaken when you thought so. Heman's case, and the instances of many others of your own acquaintance, may abundantly satisfy you that these things may befall the precious servants of God.

Secondly, note also that a truly converted person may be brought to such a pass, as to deny all the evidences of grace which he formerly had, and may condemn himself as a hypocrite; when at the same time, these evidences appear to bystanders, and shine through the black cloud of their terror.

Thirdly, it is further to be noted that the sad speeches such men utter, and the desperate conclusions that they make, are little else than the discourses of those who are distracted. Nor will God rigidly press them upon us as sins of that nature which we would take them to be. God, in mercy, considers our distress, and will more gently pass by such extravagancies, than we can readily believe.

Fourthly, you should also call to mind that you and others in this case boldly venture to determine that which neither you nor any other man can know — such as, that you were cut off, reprobated, made to be destroyed, had no time of mercy left, *etc.* This was a conclusion which you had no warrant to make, nor could you prove it. If you concluded your present state to be bad, you should not have taken it upon yourself to pronounce God's purpose to have been against you for the future. Who knows the mind of God?

Fifthly, I also think that you might possibly have some disadvantage, by some darkness of mind about the nature of faith. Some expressions in your letter (where you complain that you *could not* believe) look as if you thought faith must be a believing that our sins are *pardoned*.²³ I will not much insist on this, because I may be mistaken. But if you had such a mistake in your mind, it is no wonder to say you “could not believe.” These things you may do well to consider as *mistakes*, which the disordered reason you had run upon, [led] to the increase of your trouble. And now, while you are in the calm, fix the contrary upon your mind, and come up as fully as you can to these following conclusions.

1. Let the amiable, lovely, and compassionate nature of God be deeply impressed upon your mind; think often, seriously meditate, that *God is Love*, that *he does not delight in the death of sinners*; that he is willing to save.
2. Make much of the probability, or even possibility of salvation, even when the assurance of faith is wanting; it is a great stay to be able to nourish hope concerning this thing.
3. Persuade yourself for certain, that *God’s decree is no rule for you to go by*, and that you must interpret his decree by his promises; for it’s certain, his decree does not contradict his promise.
4. Assure yourself, that if God sincerely inclines your heart to accept Christ as your righteousness and lawgiver, and endeavours faithfully to live accordingly, he will undoubtedly fulfil his promise of peace and pardon to you; and that it is a comfortable evidence of his special grace.
5. Do not think you lack faith, because you do not have assurance; *faith is such a belief of the proffer of salvation by Christ in the Gospel, as to make us willing to accept it on God’s terms*.
6. Do not listen to severe and malignant suggestions of Satan against the mercifulness and goodness of God; if any such thoughts come into your mind, cast them out immediately, and raise up your mind to detest them.
7. Be thankfully content with that measure of peace which God has given you. Don’t expect more than you should, but patiently wait, in holy walking and dependence on God, till he enlarges you with joy and peace in believing. It is a mercy that he allows us peaceable encouraging hopes. All must not expect to be treated in his banqueting-house, with his banner of love over them.
8. Live watchfully. Lament daily sailings, and so make peace with God daily; expect it best, you will have cause for complaint against yourself, but still consider God’s merciful promise to pardon; and that for common infirmities, he will not be severe, nor should we frighten ourselves with them.

Consider these few things, and endeavour to settle your mind upon them. God who has brought you up out of the horrible pit will, I hope, preserve you from the like distress.

I am glad to hear your brother has grown better; in time he may be capable to do service, which I earnestly desire, and shall pray for. I am,

Your assured Friend, *RICH. GILPIN*.²⁴

Newcastle, Jan. 28, 89.

²³ It seems that in her letter, her faith was perhaps placed in the forgiveness of sins (as though by a doctrine of works), and not in the person of Jesus Christ, in whom and for whom our sins are indeed forgiven by God. – WHG

²⁴ Richard Gilpin M.D. (1625–1700) was an English nonconformist minister and physician.

LETTER 5. Written to another relation of the author's
by an old and experienced Christian.

My dear Friend,

I would not have a difference in opinion, or alterations in worldly conditions, breed a distance between us. The Lord pardon us, for we are apt to grow cold in love. And, O that the ancient Spirit of Love among Christians might be revived, which would more honour Christ than all our Conformity or Nonconformity! For the Kingdom of Christ, and the glory of Christianity, does not lie in forms and opinions, but in power, and holiness, and righteousness, and the joy of the Holy Ghost, and love to one another.

I have been under *deep melancholy*, and many temptations, and buffetings of Satan, and many have passed by me, as the Levite did the wounded man on the way to Jericho; and they have not only withdrawn from me, but censured me also. I hope I will love and pardon all those who in the hour of temptation withdrew from me, and stood afar off because of my sorrow; indeed, those who added affliction to my affliction. It would be a shame for me to complain of any unkindness of my friends, when Christ has been so kind to me. He helped me, succoured me, stood by me when all forsook me; I looked on my right hand and on my left hand, and there were none who cared for my soul. Even then, the Lord appeared a present help, or else the great waters of unbelief and despair would have overwhelmed me. For I have had greater conflicts with Satan, greater shakings of spirit, than I had at my first conversion. I have been ready to give up all for lost; yet all has been in order for clearer manifestations of everlasting love. Christ has carried me through several graves, several chambers of darkness and fields of temptation — yet all in order for light and triumph, and greater discoveries of his power, wisdom, faithfulness, and love to me. I have exceedingly put Christ to it, as much as any ever did. I *would not believe* unless I might put my finger in his wounds; unless I had such and such clear manifestations and sealings given of him. O, this unbelieving and proud temper of spirit has cost me very dear. Though Christ has wonderfully indulged me, I have put him to take strange courses with me — *no*, to throw me with Jonas into the belly of the whale, and of hell itself, that he might further convince me of my disobedience and unbelief, and of His mighty glorious power in preserving and delivering me out of the gulf of temptations.

He has shown many miracles of mercy and grace towards me, too big for me to express. Only heaven is fit to sufficiently declare those wonderful dealings of his. If ever any was a pattern of rich grace, *I am*. You never so grieved, and wounded, and tempted Christ, as I have done; and therefore were never cast into those hells, scorched in those fires, scourged with those rods, exercised with those temptations that I have been exercised with. I cannot tell what God has been doing to me. As the heavens are high above the earth, so are his thoughts above all my thoughts, or words. I am sure I should have been in hell, and in chains of darkness, if I had had my desert. But God has stretched out his arm of power and love, and fetched me up out of the lowest pit, where I was sunk, and displayed the banners of his love over me, and opened his heart, and showed me his blood. That he should thus deal with me — the very worst piece of old Adam; *no*, a piece of *hell* — angels and men may stand amazed at it, so great and so unexpected were the manifestations of his love. But what shall I say? It is Christ, it is *Christ* — an Infinite Person. It is impossible for any other (men or angels all put together) to contain such love as his; such *strange* love for such an unworthy wretch! I write and speak what I do not fully comprehend. If I fully knew it, mortality could not bear it. It would be immediately swallowed up, and sink under the weight of Infinite Love. Ah, but dear friend, I am not yet out of gunshot. I see a great field of

enemies before me; a devil full of policy and malice; a desperately wicked world; a heart in which there is a world of evil, indeed a *hell of wickedness*. All these I have to grapple with; each of them stands armed with thousands of temptations. I must fight, and *overcome* too, or be undone forever. I confess it is a good fight, a glorious fight, because I have such a good Captain. But often I am sorely put to it. When I take a view of my enemies, I think I will never be able to stand against such principalities and powers. The enemy has too dangerous a correspondence within me — spiritual pride and security. Lord, keep me humble and watchful, and eying the enemy, and also eying my Captain; living outside of myself, and fighting in His strength. And then my soul will tread down strength daily, and triumph always in Christ, and in the power of his might.

I hear the Lord is pleased to keep *you* under the rod, and to exercise you with the infirmities of a dying body, as he does me. He has worn out (if I may say) his rods upon me, as a stubborn child. He has tried his axes, and hammers, and saws upon me. You cannot imagine what a rock I am under all his strokes. I hope afflictions work more kindly with you than they do with me; and that you are found better metal in the fire than I am. I hear you are under Melancholy as well as I, though not in so great a degree. Satan can make use of it to raise strange storms and tempests, and confusions, and darkneses in the soul, as I have found by experience — though Christ turned all to good. Such melancholy persons need to be pitied and tendered. Men usually do not pity them; *but Christ will*. I could tell you many experiences of a melancholy condition, but the time fails me. Let us lift up our heads in faith and patience, our redemption draws near. Shortly we will be out of the reach of Satan, sin, melancholy, sickness, etc. We have a Jordan to go over, but the Ark goes before us; it will be made passable. Christ will take us by the hand, and bring us through to the other side. I mention you daily in my prayers; you do the like. I am,

Yours in Christ; your fellow-Soldier, and Sufferer, *T. L.*

LETTER 6. Sent to a Relation of the Author's.

Christian Friend,

The Lord has made me so sensible of your disconsolate condition, that you are seldom out of my thoughts, and frequent remembrances in my prayers, that God would give you comfort and peace in believing, which he can convey by whatever instrument he pleases. We read in Job 33.23-24, *If there is a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show to man his uprightness, then he is gracious to him, and says, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom*. Elihu in these words makes a defence for God's proceedings with man, where he shows it is not man's *ruin* that God desires by his various methods. He speaks in dreams, and by afflictions; and sometimes he sends a messenger with the affliction, to show to a man his uprightness. I hope God has no design to manifest his wrath to you, but to give you evidences of your sincerity. For if you did not love God, you would not lament his absence as you do. Supposing that your delays in opening to Christ have caused him to depart from you, never more to return. If you had rejected the good motions of the Spirit, it appears by your sorrow, that it was not out of malice, nor any other fault, but what the spouse was guilty of. If he were to cast off everyone who does not always readily obey his call, he would not manifest so great a willingness to receive all those who come to him. You may be, and I do not doubt that you *are*, mistaken in your condition, as Mrs. *Honnywood* was, whom God convinced by a miracle. Peter, though he denied his Lord and forswore him, yet Jesus manifested himself *first to him*, rather than to any of the other disciples; and he took care that he should have the first news of his resurrection. Christ is a merciful and faithful High-Priest; he considers our infirmities; he is full of a heart of compassion,

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and he came to seek and save that which was lost. Give no credit to Satan, who would make you believe that God is not willing to be reconciled, the One who sends ambassadors on purpose to beseech us to be so. If we do our utmost, we cannot depend on our own righteousness, but must rely on the mercy of God in Christ. If you do this, it will be the way to comfort here, or at length you will come safely to heaven, which is the prayer of,

Your Compassionate Friend, *G. D.*

**A DISCOURSE Concerning
TROUBLE of MIND,
AND THE DISEASE of MELANCHOLY.**

PART I.

Psa 30.5.

For his anger endures but a moment; in his favour is life;
weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

INTRODUCTION.

The miseries under which the whole race of men have now for a long time groaned, and under which they *still* groan, are owing to the Fall of Man. The day on which our first parents complied with the temptation of the devil, was a mournful day to *them*, and in its effects, no less sad to *us*. It filled their once pure and quiet hearts with trouble and disorder, and made them unable to think of their great Creator with delight. It intercepted those cheerful and comfortable beams of his love, which were more satisfying to them than all the glories of the lower paradise. For though, after the Fall, it abounded with all the same natural refreshments — with the same rivers, herbs, trees, and flowers — yet it was no longer a paradise to them. No music could delight their sense when they heard a terrible voice from God, summoning them to answer for their crime; no objects could please their eyes when they saw the clouds thickening over their heads, and dreadful frowns in the face of their mighty-Judge. All the creatures could minister nothing to their ease or safety, when the great Creator was against them. From their apostacy, we may derive all our miseries — both the pains and sicknesses that afflict our bodies, and the fears and terrors that overwhelm our souls. Our bodies are liable to a thousand calamities that may be both long and sharp; but however long and however sharp they are, they do not altogether give us such a sensible and lively grief as we have when we are under distresses of conscience, and when we are under a sense of the wrath of God that is due to us for sin. There are many persons who endeavour by all the rules of art, to give relief and help against the mischiefs that attend our bodies, but which after all their art, will go into the grave. And there are as many who, by the duty of their office and the character they bear, are obliged to imitate their Saviour: *to preach good tidings to the meek, and to bind up the broken-hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound*, Isa 61.1. But many times they are at a loss to know what remedies to apply to these inward and spiritual diseases. And they are always unable to make their applications successful, unless God himself, by his almighty power, *creates peace*, and turns that chaos and those confusions under which a poor troubled soul is buried, into the joy and light of day. It pleases the wise God, who may make us serve whatever uses he thinks most convenient for the good of the universe and the welfare of the Church, to allow some of his servants to feel the bitterness of sin, and the terrors of his amazing wrath; to be overwhelmed with the fear of hell, and for a long season to be as if in hell itself; so that when they are delivered, they may warn those who are at ease, that they beware of sin, lest it bring them also into a state so dreadful and so terrible; that from their own experience, they may with tenderness and compassion strive more earnestly to assist and help those whose consciences are in a flame, and who are full of anguish and tribulation; that when they have escaped out of the snare of the fowler, they may strive to disentangle those who are yet in trouble. And being themselves cured of their horror and amazement, they may lead their yet-wounded brethren to that kind Physician, to that loving Jesus with whose blood their wounds were cleansed and healed.

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As to myself, having been in *long affliction*, and great distress of conscience for many months, and under a continued fear and apprehension of God's displeasure; and now, through his inexpressible grace, not being without some hope of his acceptance, being delivered from violent and overwhelming sorrows, I would most readily give all the advice and help I can to those who are yet mourning under desertions, and complaining that God is departed from them, and that he remembers them no more. After the many waves and billows that went over me, through the great goodness of God, I now enjoy a calm. And I pity, and would gladly help those who are yet labouring in the deep. And them particularly I write this treatise in which, though there are many things less exact than a critical reader may expect, yet there are some in which, I hope, a distressed soul may find relief. The method I intend to follow is this:

In this *First Part*,

1. To show what is meant by the anger of God; and why he is angry with his own servants.
2. What obligations we are under to patience and humility, and several other graces, when we are under a sense of His displeasure.
3. Why His anger towards his own people is but for a short space.

CHAP. 1. The Anger of God toward His Servants

Of the Anger of God, and why He is sometimes angry with his own servants.

I. We must know that the infinite majesty of heaven is not subject to those unquiet passions to which our weak and frail nature is liable. He is not sometimes what he was not before; he is always in himself the very same; his essence is unchangeable. But he is pleased to stoop to our weakness, and clothes his intentions in words that may most suitably convey to our minds the knowledge of what he designs. In his most pure and blessed nature there is a perpetual calm and tranquility; nor does he suffer any of those commotions and disorders that exist in angry men. His *anger* is his resolution or his will to punish his sinning-creatures; or sometimes it relates to the evils themselves which sinners endure, such as pain, and fear, and sorrow, and wars, and famine, and pestilence, and like calamities. He is said to be pleased with us when we are obedient, when his face shines upon us in a comfortable and a gracious manner; and when he accepts our persons and our duties, and refreshes our hearts with the reviving-hopes of glory through Jesus Christ. But he is then angry when he withdraws the cheerful influences and quickening motions of his Holy Spirit. Also when we pray, and he shuts out our prayer, and leaves our poor souls to languish under despair or unbelief; and when we find in ourselves no spiritual and heavenly life. He may also be said to be angry, when he sends long and sore afflictions and distresses on our bodies and our souls, and withholds his blessing from all the methods that are used, with a design to give us help. And when he proceeds to a terrible execution of his threats, this act is called *vengeance*, as in Psa 99.8, *You were a God who forgave them, though you took vengeance on their inventions.*

II. God is sometimes angry with his own people; it is indeed paternal *castigatory wrath* that he sends upon them; but not a *destroying fury*. Thus he is said to be angry with Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. Psa 74.1. *O God, why have you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?* Thus Heman complains, Psa 88.7, *Your wrath lies hard upon me, and you have afflicted me with all your waves.* So the Church complains, Lam 1.12; 2.1; 3.1. The reasons for this are such as these:

1. Because *their* sins have a greater aggravation than the sins of *others*. They sin against God when they have tasted of his goodness — when he has offered them a clearer light and more experience of his love, than He has to the rest of men. When he is wounded in the house of his friends, he will resent such injuries and affronts. And they usually sin against more frequent motions of his Holy Spirit; and after they have engaged to be His, they break their vows, and forget their covenants. Once they have found his work to be a reward, and that he is a very good Master, evidenced by the peace of their souls, and the hope of heaven that he has given them, they *loiter in His service*. And will He not punish them for these things? What fitter methods can he take than to lash them for their ingratitude and unbecoming behaviour to so kind a friend as he has been to them all along? He is at more cost and charge with the children of His own family, than with others. And so, if they disobey him, they must feel his displeasure and the sting of the rod. *You alone have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities*, Amos 3.2.

2. To warn others, and to wipe off all aspersions that might be cast upon his Holiness. He is angry with his own, to let the profane world see that He is no respecter of persons — and that sin, wherever it exists, will not go unpunished. He puts some into the fiery furnace to let those who are at ease, know what they *also* have deserved, and what they may expect if they do not speedily repent and turn. Some ages feel the weightier blows of his hand, and are visited with severe judgments to teach future generations to be more careful to observe his laws, and to do his will. Deu 29.22, 24, *The generation to come of the children who rise up after you, and the stranger*

that comes from a far land, will say when they see the plagues of the land, and the sicknesses which the Lord has laid upon it, etc., even all nations will say, Why has the Lord done thus to this land? What does the heat of this great anger mean? He lays some countries desolate, that their desolations may more effectually show the evil of sin, and preach repentance to their neighbours round about. He sets some on fire, that they may serve as beacons to warn the rest of approaching danger. He is sometimes angry, that he may maintain the honour of his laws and the justice of his government. He throws some on sick beds, that others may learn by them to know their own frailty and prepare for like trials. Some he leaves in darkness, and anguish, and tribulation, that others may learn to prize the light lest they come to the very same calamity. He shoots his arrows into the souls of some of his servants, that all who behold his severe and righteous proceeding, may tremble at it, and learn to fear him who is so holy and so just a God; that they may not dare to venture upon those sins, under the woeful effects of which they see their fellow-creatures groan so very much. And he must be a hardened malefactor indeed, who will practice his old crimes when he sees another whipped or executed for those of the very same kind. Thus the view and the report of his judgments have a natural tendency to reform the world, to purify and make it better — as thunder and lightning cleanse the air and make it more healthful. How wicked is this present world, notwithstanding the manifold examples of his justice? And how much more wicked would it be if he allowed sin to always be unpunished? His best servants are too secure and careless, too forgetful of him and of themselves, till he awakens them by some severe stroke upon themselves or others; and he makes them more diligent and more serious when they see the clouds gather and the night drawing near. And by his anger, he designs to teach us all to put a higher value on the love of Christ; and to make us know of how high a nature our offence was, seeing that his only Son endured so much of His wrath before we could obtain a pardon. And when we hurt ourselves under his displeasure, he designs to make us ever admire the kindness of our Saviour, who freely suffered so much hurt and pain *for us*.

3. He is angry with his own, to teach them to value his favour more than they ever did. If it were not that we feel the bitterness of his anger, we would not have so sweet a relish of his love. If he did not sometimes withdraw himself, we would not think his presence so comfortable as it is. If it were not sometimes winter, and storm, and frosty weather, we would not take so great a pleasure in the summer-season. Oh! how pleasant are the smiles of God, when we have long lain under the terror of his frowns? How pleasant is it to indeed find him to be our friend, when we have long thought him to be our enemy? How pleasant is it to have the hope of heaven, when a man has long trembled at the very gate of hell? When we have been long wandering for our follies, as in a strange land, how pleasant is it to come to our home again? After we have been among our enemies, to come to our heavenly Father to have him meet us with encouraging words, to embrace us in his arms, to feast us at his table, to call us his children, to forget all our former injuries, and to be at peace with us? How we will run under his wing for shelter, when we have found that innumerable dangers overtook us while he withdrew his care! How we will wait upon him with obedience and love, and yield him faithful service in all that he commands, when we remember what griefs our former disobedience brought upon us! He is angry with us to cure our indulgences, our wantonness, and pride. And when our follies have brought us low, we will give a most hearty welcome to the first dawning of the day, to the first shining of his face. And though before, we prized at a small rate his highest favours, and his largest entertainments, we will now value one glimpse of light, as much as we did the whole sun before; and to partake of but the crumbs that fall from his table, will seem to us both an honour and a privilege. After many days of storm and darkness, it's even more pleasant to see the sun; even the very birds sing with a sweeter note when

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there is a clear sky; and the furrows of the fields rejoice after a long drought, to be refreshed with the former and the latter rain.²⁵ When a country has been long harassed with confusions, tumults, and bloody wars, how delightful is the return of peace?

When a soul has mourned a great while in fear and trouble, how delightful it is to hear the voice of its God, saying, *Be of good comfort!* How his promises, like dew from the womb of the morning, cause his poor drooping spirits to revive! Isa 12.1.²⁶

²⁵ **Pro 16:15** In the light of the king's face is life, And his favor is like a cloud of the latter (spring) rain.

²⁶ **Isa 12:1** And in that day you will say: "O LORD, I will praise You; Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me."

CHAP. 2. The Anger of God toward His People is short-lived

The anger of God towards his people is but for a short season; why he is pleased to order it to be so.

1. His anger is but for a moment, if compared with the eternity of happiness which he designs for them. Their troubles and afflictions will have a period, but their glory will never have an end. They weep for a while, and they will rejoice forever. They are disconsolate a few years on earth; but how little and inconsiderable these are to the vast durations of eternity!

2. His anger is but for a moment, if compared with the continuance of his love. *In his favour is life*; that is, usually the greater portions of our life are laden with his benefits. We have more pledges of his love, than messengers of his wrath. We have more mercies than crosses. We have a thousand easy blessings for one sharp affliction. His displeasure brings a storm, but his favour shines when that is gone and past. We have many a fair season, to one dark and gloomy day. The reasons why his anger is but for a moment, are these:

(1) He remembers the frame of his poor people; for if his wrath were long continued, they must utterly sink and perish. *Psa 103.14, For he remembers our frame; he knows that we are but dust.* One frown causes us to sink and tremble; what then would his multiplied frowns and displeasure do? He knows our tenderness: with what evil inclinations our nature is corrupted; how prone we are to sin; and how, if he were strict to mark what we do amiss, he must continually destroy the works of his own hands, and have none left to serve him here on earth. He remembers with what frailties we are daily beset, and he pities us as a Father pities the weakness of his child. He could kill us in a minute, and take away our breath; how soon can he scatter a little dust, and pull into pieces our frail constitution? For we are as unable to resist his anger as the dust to resist the wind. He knows we are so weak, that if he let us alone, we will soon decay; and that the force of his arm, and the greatness of his power, are not needed to crush such worms as we. As David said, *Has the king of Israel come out after a flea?* (2Sam 24.14) So we may in our distresses say to God, “Why do you arm yourself with wrath against us, whom one word of your mouth can throw upon the ground, or send into the grave?” It is not with him as with the great oppressors of the world, who use their greater power to trample on those who are of unequal strength. No, He delights to bind up the broken, to heal the wounded, and to comfort those who mourn. *Isa 57.16, For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry; for the spirit would fail before me, and the souls which I have made.* Such is the impatience, the unbelief, and the unsuitable behaviour of his people, that they give him cause enough to always be angry. But he does not proceed with the utmost rigour of his Justice. He freely pardons what with right he might exact. *Psa 78.38-39.* Their heart was not right with him, *They flattered him with their mouth; but being full of compassion, He forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them; yes, many a time he turned his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes away, and does not come again.* And when our extremities are so great, and our sense of his displeasure is so very pressing that we don’t know what to do, we may desire him to remember his own greatness, and our frailty — that we are his own handiwork; and that we are no more able to resist his power than we are to change our own natures, and to be his equals. *Job 13.25. Will you break a leaf driven to and fro? Will you pursue the dry stubble? Remember, I beseech you, that you have made me like the clay,* Job 10.9.

(2) A second reason why his anger towards his people is but for a moment, is because he is obliged to it by his Covenant. *Psa 89.31-33, If they break my statutes, etc. then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless, I will not utterly take my loving-kindness from them, nor allow my faithfulness to fail.* He is obliged by the Covenant

of Grace to be their God, and to use all the methods that his infinite wisdom sees are necessary for their final happiness. And if his anger and their own afflictions will contribute to this, though their flesh is pained and their bodies hurt, he will not fail to use those severities. His dearest servants may by temptation and their unwatchfulness, be overtaken by their spiritual enemies; they may wound and hurt themselves, and occasion his departure. And so, to excite them to a due consideration of their folly, he will leave them for a season. Their sins are the object of his abhorrence; and he may send very sore troubles upon them (though they will even then come upon a gracious errand), and promote their future *welfare* — when in the anguish of their souls, they may conclude these are the mark of his eternal *wrath*. He will not spare his rods, nor by a fond indulgence, suffer them to take their own course. For a parent, you know, will correct his own child, though he does not concern himself with those who are strangers to the family. The anger of God for your sin may deprive you of your dearest comforts, your kindest relations, your most beloved children, your estate, your health, and your ease. And yet, in all these He may have a design to make you more filled with holiness, and bring you nearer to himself. This is an ordinary discipline²⁷ with which he trains up all those whom he will convey to glory — though their own reason, and their gloomy thoughts, may judge that it is for a quite contrary purpose. He has promised that all things shall work together for our good; and he is faithful when he lays upon us the severest strokes, because they stir up our sleeping grace, and purge away our sin.

(3) Reason that his anger towards his people is but for a moment, because whatever his present dispensations are, he will never throw off the relation of a Father to his people; they do not render void the kindness and the grace by which he at first adopted them to be his own. A father when he frowns, and when he corrects, is still a father; and his sympathies increase²⁸ when the rebellion and undutifulness of his child cause him to be severe. Though we groan and weep through the bitterness of our grief, yet he does not change his paternal care — as Christ when he was a man of sorrows, was pronounced by God to be his beloved Son, Psa 103.13, *Like a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him*. None of our earthly friends can be more tender-hearted than he is, with only this difference: that they would heal our wounds when they first begin to sting. And He, being more skilful, makes our cure advance by slow degrees. He bereaves us of this or that enjoyment which we dearly love, because he sees it is necessary for our salvation; as it is many times expedient to cut off a gangrened part of the body to save our life. He will separate us from our iniquities, rather than let them make a separation between us and him. And there is nothing but a most tender love in all this. Jer 31.20, *Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; therefore my compassions are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord*.

If there were any ways milder and gentler, that would equally promote our good, he would use them with the greatest readiness — if our own absolute necessity did not require that he bring judgments upon us. Nor would he at all use those methods that seem to be rigid and severe. Those who are his people would be in as much ease as other men, and laugh and rejoice as much as they do, except that he would teach us by his displeasure, that knowledge of himself, that faith, and that patience, and those other graces which we would never know without his timely corrections. It is more gratifying to Him to smile than to frown, to reward than to punish. Deu 5.29, *O that there was such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever*. When we wander, his

²⁷ Ordinary: that which brings order, or brings us back into the straight and narrow path. — WHG

²⁸ Originally, “his bowels earn with him,” etc.

goodness and his love will not permit him to see us run to misery. His anger will overtake us, to stop us in our hasty course, and restrict us to the right way. He never strikes but for just reasons, though for the present they may be very much wrapped up in his own decree. There are many people whom we are angry with and reprove, whom notwithstanding, we most sincerely love in the meantime. And Christ has told us, Rev 3.19, *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.*

(4) The anger of God is but for a moment, because he delights in mercy. Psalm 103.8, *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.* It is long before he punishes; and it is with haste that he comes to our help when we repent, many times even before. In the midst of wrath he remembers mercy; he does not always inflict what we have deserved, but considers what is most proper for him to lay upon us, and what we are able to bear. And therefore he gives to us some mitigations with our bitterest cup. He is called the *Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort.* Though punishment proceeds from him, as well as tenderness and affection, he is nowhere called the *Father of Judgments.* Mercy arises from his own Nature, and he delights in it. Mic 7.18, *He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in mercy.* His wrath is said to be reserved in golden vials, Rev 15.7; i.e., it doesn't flow forth all at once, but by degrees; yet his mercy is compared to a river, and a flowing stream, Isa 66.12; to the oil of gladness, to the smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia.²⁹ It is a glory to this God to relieve the miserable, and to help his servants when all their power and might is gone. And he ends the controversy with them when there is yet cause enough on their side that he should pursue the quarrel further. When he leads us into a wilderness, yet he provides some water, some refreshment for us there. It is one of the great wonders of his providence, that he supports those poor souls who have no light of evidence, no sense of his love, no hope, nothing but the fears of wrath and desolation. And yet the fact of the matter, and our own experience plainly tells us that it is so. His everlasting arms are underneath, and his power maintains our life, when we say that he has forgotten to be gracious. He bottles our tears when we weep, and hears our groans when we lament, and proportions the troubles that he sends, that they will not be too long, or too violent. Jer 30.11, *I will not make a full end of you; but I will correct you in measure, and will not leave you altogether unpunished.* And those afflictions which his people suffer are not in all respects proper punishments, because his anger is mixed with mildness, and mitigated by the intercessions of a mediator. Lam 3.31-32. *The Lord will not cast off forever; but though he causes grief, yet he will have compassion according to the multitude of his tender mercies.*

(5) That his anger is but for a moment, is for his own Name's sake. His nature is most inclinable to do us good. Therefore the prophet Elijah says to those idolaters mentioned in 1Kng 18.24, *The God who answers by fire, let him be God.* And he chose that element above the rest, to signify how soon we will have mercy; it comes as upon the wings of the wind; it is as swift as the rays of light. Hos 11.9, *I will not execute the fierceness of my anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not man.* A man when he is greatly provoked by his enemy, is not satisfied with having once made him feel his anger, but carries on his revenge to further degrees, and only ceases the pursuit with the death of the one he first assaulted. But the Great God, though he is able to conquer those who oppose him, with a total defeat and ruin, yet he allows them to breathe and live, *that they may repent,* and that He may cause his goodness to shine with a greater brightness to the world. He could follow them with one blow after another, with a succession of new and greater miseries, but he restrains his anger for his own sake. And it maybe a great consolation to poor afflicted people to consider that when they have sinned, they have to deal with God, and not

²⁹ Psa 45.7-8.

with men. They don't have to deal with men who are full of rage and cruelty, but with a God who is gracious and full of mercy; not with men who may caress them today, and hate them tomorrow, but with a God who is unchangeable. And even when they are in the fire, or in the water, his love for them is still the very same. Men think it is a dishonour to spare their inferiors if they don't by the lowest submissions testify of their sorrow for their crimes. But the Great God is so far above all his creatures, that he may when he will, think them below his indignation, and magnify his goodness in sparing and forgiving them when they most deserve to die. Isa 48.9, *For my name's sake will I defer my anger, and for my praise will I refrain for you, that I not cut you off.* It is his *power* that moderates his *anger*. Those persons who have the least strength, either of reason or of courage, are the most passionate and inclined to revenge. In punishments, He shows his dominion over his creatures, but his power over himself — when he forgives great injuries, and is slow to punish great affronts. And his power in those acts of grace is very great and illustrious. *He is God, and not man.* There is more compassion, and more real pity in him, than in the most compassionate or tender-hearted man we ever knew. *He is God, and not man.* He whom we have offended, and who can destroy us, begins first to explore a reconciliation with us. This is not the manner and way of men, who think that those who have offended them are to make the first advances towards repairing the breach. There is no attribute in the display of which the Great God glories so much as in this of display mercy; and it is by *this* that he would be known, Exo 34.6-7.

(6) That his anger is but for a moment, is because he would differentiate between the righteous and the wicked. The afflictions that he sends upon the righteous, are to prepare them for heaven and glory. But those scourges that he uses toward the wicked and impenitent, are but the beginning of their sorrows, the flashes of those flames that will consume them forever. The distresses of the righteous are short, and so are the prosperities of the wicked. The righteous are weeping here, but they will rejoice hereafter. The wicked have their heaven now, such as it is, and hereafter they go to an eternal hell; and there they must weep and wail, when the good and holy will have all their tears wiped away. The one will find him to be a loving Father, and to have been so in all their trials and calamities; and the other will find him to be an enemy, and to have been so, even though they had many good things in the time of their present life. Here the righteous have sweetness and mercy mingled with their sorrows; but there the wicked will have pure, and unmingled, and intolerable wrath. Here, in the heaviest strokes, the servants of God now and then find some little comfort; but his enemies in *that* world must have no drop to cool their tongues, no refreshment, nor support forever. The same Sun that will cherish the righteous with his everlasting beams, will scorch the wicked, and fill them with an inexpressible rage and fury. God will throw them from all their heights, silence all their lofty speeches, and ruin all their vain-glorious designs. Dan 4.17, *The demand is by the word of the holy ones, to the intent that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men* — that is, by the petitions of angels,³⁰ who cannot endure that the empire of God should be obscured by the pride of men. Besides the tender respect that He has toward his own glory, he is constantly presented with the solicitations of the angels to punish the proud of the earth, who darken the glory of his majesty. It is necessary for the rescue of his honour, and necessary for the satisfaction of his illustrious attendants, who would think it a shame for them to serve a Lord who was always unconcerned in the rebellions of his creatures, and would tamely suffer those who spurn his throne. His wrath toward his servants is with mercy, and but for a moment; but to his enemies, it will be severe and abiding wrath.

³⁰ Stephen Charnock (1628-1680), *Of God's Dominion*, p. 767.

CHAP. 3. The Advantages of God's Anger

Of the several advantages that are designed by God for his servants, in his being angry with them only for a moment; together with the obligations which they are under from so merciful a dispensation of his providence; and the several improvements we are to make of it.

Inference 1. None of the people of God have cause to conclude that because he is angry with them at present, they are therefore in a *state* of wrath. Our sense and feeling of things that are very bitter, joined with the knowledge that we have of our guilt, and our innumerable sins, frequently corrupt our reason, and obscure our faith. And from the severity of his present dispensations, we are apt to say, he has forgotten to be gracious. Jdg 6.13, *If the Lord is with us*, as Gideon said, *why then has all this befallen us? And where are all his miracles which our fathers told us of?* “He will be favourable no more.” But this is the language of our mistaken unbelief. Isa 49.14-15, *Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me. Can a woman forget her suckling child? Yes, she may; but I will not forget you.* Isa 40.27, *Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, That my way is hidden from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?* Our sins indeed may cause him to withdraw the manifestations of his love, so that we will feel no comfort in our prayers, none in his ordinances, none in his words. Every threatening will pierce us to the quick, and no promise will yield us quiet. And yet for all this, he may return again with his vital influences. And though we have not seen either the sun, moon, or stars for many days and nights, yet a glorious light may succeed afterwards. In sore afflictions our grieved sense, and the fear that attends our guilt, and the malice of the devil, may put us upon desperate and unwarrantable conclusions. And the deserted person may say, “I am abhorred by the Lord; he considers me his enemy; he is cruel to me; he has departed from me; he does not answer me. I go to his ministers, and they give me no relief. I go to his Word and it is bitter to my taste; it fills me with gall and wormwood.³¹ I seek him in my solitudes, and in the assemblies of his people, but I do not find him. He has left me; he has thrown me off. *The comforter who should relieve my soul, is far from me. He has built against me; he has hedged me about so that I cannot get out; he has made my chain heavy. Also when I cry and shout, he shuts out my prayer. He is to me like a bear lying in wait, and like a lion in secret places,* Lam 3.7-10.

This is a sad and a doleful case, and yet one who suffers all this, should not say that there is no future help, for God may be gracious. And his wrath, though very terrible and perplexing, is but for a moment. No believer should conclude that because he is under the displeasure of God at present, that he is therefore a child of wrath. Nor should he from his present feeling, dare to assert his reprobation; it is usurping that judgment which does not belong to men, and a positive determination of that which we cannot know. We may as well conclude that when the sun sets, it will never rise again; or that when thick clouds darken the air, it will never be fair weather anymore. We should never forget the case of Job. Never was any man covered with a greater heap of miseries, never was any man more seemingly left by God and harassed by the devil, than he was. Never did any man make more doleful complaints than what we hear from the poor man in his heavy trial, as in Job 10.16-17: *You hunt me like a fierce lion; and again, You show yourself marvellous against me. You renew your witnesses against me, and increase your indignation toward me.* Job 19.6, 10, 11, *Know now, that God has overthrown me, and compassed me with his net; ...He has destroyed me on every side, and I am gone. He has removed my hope like a tree. He has kindled his wrath against me, and he counts me as one of his enemies.* And yet what a glorious deliverance the poor man had after all this! We should not say that because we are

³¹ Gall and wormwood are poisonous and sickening. – WHG

miserable at present, we will always be so; or that because God is now angry, he will never be pleased again. No, we should rather remember that it is but for a moment. And though the kind hand of a friend may put us to pain, yet God searches our wounds only in order for a cure. He will not poison our sores, nor like an enemy, take pleasure in our torments.

Inference 2. We have great cause to be patient in all those sufferings that are the effects of God's displeasure, seeing that it is but for a moment. Mic 7.9, *I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him; till he pleads my cause.* There is nothing to which we are more liable under the sense of God's displeasure, than to fretfulness and discontent. As David said, Psa 31.22, *I said in my haste, I am cut off from before your eyes.* And we should with all imaginable care be fortified against it. This grace of patience is what all of us will very much have occasion for during the manifold evils of this miserable world. We will have occasion for this as we are men; for as such, we are born to trouble. And we will need it much more if we are true Christians; for as such, we must expect more trouble from the corruption of our hearts, from the world, and from the devil.³² For if the devil sees us going to that heaven from which he is forever excluded, his rage will prompt him to give us continual molestation on our way there. That we may therefore be prepared to resist his subtle and violent assaults, and to bear those long and sore trials that may be our lot, let us have *these things* before our eyes:

1. If we are impatient when God is angry with us, we will provoke Him to further wrath, and cause him to double the blows of his arm, which at present are heavy *enough* for us to bear. If the first corrections don't bring us to a malleable and a tender frame, He will be forced (if he designs our good) to send many more upon us. Our unruliness and impatience will add more pain and sting to the rods that are already upon us, and put a greater edge on our trouble. And so, that which at the first was but a single stroke, will multiply to many more. And by this we will make the evil of our *affliction*, which is designed for our *good*, to become our sin — and so carry that inconvenience to our *souls*, which with a quiet and submissive frame would have but hurt our *bodies*. By this means, we lose all the comfortable blessings of a sanctified and well-improved cross; and we make that yoke *gall* us, which otherwise might lie with ease upon our necks (Mat 11.29).

2. Let us remember that we are in no way injured when we are under long afflictions; and that whatever becomes of us, God is always very just. *He will not lay on man more than what is right*, Job 34.23. An earthly parent in the warmth and heat of anger, may correct the follies of his child in too severe a manner. But that God who knows our frame — what is fit for Him to do, and what we are able to bear — will proportion his corrections to the necessities of our case, and not permit our troubles to stay a day longer than is needed to accomplish those excellent ends for which they were designed. He may in his anger pull us down and make us desolate; but we don't know what an attractive structure he intends to build from these ruins. It may be that the darkness that frightens us, is to usher in an eternal and a glorious day. *His ways are far above our ways.* So much greatness, wisdom, and goodness as there is in Him, should produce patience and resignation in our hearts, even if we don't know what period he intends to put to his present dark and unsearchable designs. Though we are pained, he is faithful still; and though he does not gratify our curiosity, nor permit our blind eyes to pierce into the depths of his counsels, yet let us hold this for a certain truth: that *the Lord is righteous and just in all his ways.* He may say to us, as Christ said to Peter, *What I do you do not know, but you will know hereafter*, Joh 13.7. His *justice* should silence our murmuring complaints; and his *faithfulness* our discouragements and

³² Eph 2.2-3. — WHG

faintings. He never afflicts us without reason; he never does it except with a design for our final good. The sword that wounds us, brings a balsam with it; it opens a passage to let out our corruptions, and then it heals and closes up the wound again. Isa 30.18, *Therefore the Lord will wait that he may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted that he may have mercy upon you. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all those who wait for him.*

3. That we may bear his anger with patience, let us consider what mercies he has given us, and how much worse we might be than we are now. It may be that He frowns upon us, but that frown might have been our final sentence; and that anger which is now kindled against us, might have been everlasting burnings. And though he speaks to us by terrible things, yet he might have said, *Depart from me, you cursed* (Mat 25.41). The drops that fall upon us might have been a deluge and a storm of wrath; and the fiery furnace into which we are thrown to consume our dross, might have been our hell. Lam 3.39, *Why does a living man complain*, a sinful man who might have been deprived of both hope and life long ago? Oh how our gracious God, even in our sorest trials, deals much better with us than we have deserved! We multiply our sorrows to a vast account; but if we compared them with our sins, their number would appear to be very small. If we put our crosses and our iniquities into the same balance, we would quickly see what a mighty difference there is between them. It will be a considerable motive to patience, to consider what we have deserved.

We bewail the loss of the sense of the love of God, and alas! we didn't value it as we should have! We complain that He has forsaken us, but who among us valued his presence at the rate we might have valued it? We say that he does not hear our prayers, that he is deaf to our request; and how often did we pray as if we did *not* pray? How often did he seek to enter into our hearts, and we repulsed him? How often did he call and invite us to come to him, and we did not obey his call? Do we have reason, then, to be impatient that He is a stranger to us, when we remember how he would have dwelt with us, but we shut him out? — even though it was our ignorance that betrayed us to it, and *we did not know what we did*. We reckon up our nights of darkness, how long they are, and how dismal. But we forget how he has given us many a bright and clear day, many an hour of peace and joy, for one of grief and trouble. We have deserved to be miserable all the days of our lives, for every day we sin. We have many healthful seasons, as well as times of sickness — whereas He might have made our passage uneasy and troublesome in the deep waters, from the womb to the grave.

Know, therefore, that God exacts of you less than your iniquity deserves (Job 11.6). We suffer justly for our sins. If God were to inquire into the multitude, the heinousness, and all the aggravations of our sins, we would have a greater multitude of crosses. Let us cease then to be impatient; for He deals with us in great tenderness and mercy. Our troubles may have been sharp and long, but they might have been more stinging, more bitter, and more violent, and drawn out to a more formidable length. But now, because it was not so, *He has visited in his anger; and yet he does not know it in great extremity*, Job 35.15 ^{KJV}. He has not stirred up all his wrath, nor amazed us with all the thunder of his power. Let us not be like the Israelites in Psa 106.7, who provoked him, and did not remember the multitude of His mercies.

4. Consider that He uses no other methods with you when he is *angry* with you, than what he has used with his dearest servants before now; and this may tend to compose your spirits under long and sore trials. Are you better than Moses, than Job, than Heman, than David and Asaph,³³ and

³³ Heman wrote Psalm 88; Asaph wrote twelve Psalms (50, and 73-83); which all involve God's displeasure. — WHG

many other excellent and holy men with whom he was displeased, and who felt his wrath, though it was but for a moment? Are we more dutiful and obedient than they were? Don't we merit the chastisements of our heavenly Father as much as they did? Yes *indeed*, and much more. If we have the spirit and the privilege of children, we should not murmur if we have our share in the discipline of the family. Would we have the course of providence inverted and changed for us? Can we imagine that we will be always spared, when so many great saints have winced under the displeasure of God for their sin? We are apt to think there is no *sorrow like our sorrow with which the Lord has afflicted us*, Lam 1.12. But we do not wisely inquire into this matter; for if we trace the steps of holy men of old, we will find that innumerable and very grievous calamities were *their* portion as well as *ours*. We have heard of the distresses and of the patience of Job; of the pains of his body, and of the troubles of his soul; and when either our bodies or our souls are more afflicted than his was, then it will be soon enough for us to begin to murmur. And if we don't do it till then, we will be as remarkable for our patience as he was. *Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you*, 1Pet 4.12. *All these things are experienced by your brethren who are in the world*, 1Pet 5.9.

And this is to be duly thought upon; for there is nothing of which Satan makes greater use to perplex us in our hour of temptation, than the length and the sharpness of our trials. It's as if God were therefore our enemy because he afflicts; or that we are not his children because we are afflicted so very long. Thus the evil spirit will suggest and say,

"If you were a friend of God, who is so compassionate and so slow to wrath, would he follow you with breach upon breach, with one stroke after another, and let his hand be heavy upon you day and night? He supports, comforts, and refreshes all his servants. But *you* have no refreshment, nothing but anguish and vexation. Therefore *you are none of his*."

But by faith we must quench this fiery dart, and know that the fruit of our affliction may be very sweet, though for the present it is very bitter; and that we are under the conduct of that wisdom which can order even this cross for good. And whatever mists that envious spirit may raise before our eyes, let us still remember, *that His anger is but for a moment*; that others whom we are sure God loved, have undergone like troubles; and his own dear Son was still a Son when he was a man of sorrows; and that his afflictions were of a great length, from the manger to the cross. If God would have us be so conformable to this blessed Person, that we have no rest from trial till we are quiet in the grave, then we should not distrust His goodness, nor murmur against it.

5. Let us compare our present sufferings and afflictions with that happiness which is to come. His anger is but for a moment, but his love will be forever. He frowns for a moment, but he will show them his pleased face forever. He corrects them and they weep for a moment, but he will embrace them and they will rejoice forever. *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning* (Psa 30.5). And don't we find our hearts begin to spring within us when we consider that we are in pain for a moment, but we will be at ease forever? Isn't this good news to those who fear God, and yet are afflicted? Lift up your heads you mourners, you prisoners of hope; it is but for a little season. Don't let your hearts faint. I know you will say,

"Oh, I could bear anything but the wrath of God. He is angry with my soul; he denies an answer to my prayers; he doesn't speak to me one comfortable word. I look up to his heavens, and they are like brass. I run to his ordinances, and hear his Word in the assemblies of his people. But while others are wet with the dew of heaven, I remain dry and neglected as I was. I seem to be *like the mountains of Gilboa; no dew nor rain falls upon me* (2Sam 1.21). I seem to be under the curse of God. And because I have formerly not improved the means of grace, he seems to say of

me as of the barren fig tree, *Never let fruit grow upon you anymore*. And can you tell me where I should go, and what I should do in such a case as this?"

You must still in humble submission wait upon the Lord. He stays from your present help, upon a very gracious design. He bottles your tears, and is acquainted with your griefs; and that anger that now bows you to the ground, will be removed in a little while; and your faith and your hope will not be in vain. There are thousands of joys prepared to meet you when you are a little more purified and prepared for them. Isa 54.7-8, *For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer*. Nothing can be less than a moment; it is the least part of time; and yet all our troubles here are so small a thing as that, compared to that endless eternity which is to come. So if your outward afflictions and your spiritual fears should last for life — and none can give you assurance to the contrary — yet all this life is but as a moment, but as *nothing* compared to that state of blessedness that comes afterward. Nor are the degrees of your sorrows here, proportional to the degrees of your approaching glory. *For our light affliction which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2Cor 4.17. This great Apostle calls his afflictions "very light;" and yet there was never any who suffered more troubles from the malice of the world, than he did, as you may see in 2Cor 11.25-26. What is a moment compared to a day, and a day to a year? And yet such, and infinitely less, are our longest afflictions here, compared to that eternity. As one says,

"What is one grain of sand to all those vast heaps of sand that are in all the sea? What is one drop of water to the vast collections of it that are in the large ocean? What is a little gnat to the whole universe? So is all the affliction of this life which passes away, when compared with the glory which is to come. And yet a grain of sand is something in respect to the whole earth; and a drop is not altogether nothing, though compared with the ocean. For by a continual heaping of grain upon grain, it would be possible to make a globe as great as the earth; and the ocean might be emptied of its water. But eternity cannot be diminished; it suffers no changes. After millions of years in happiness, it will be as sweet and as comfortable as it was the first moment. It is the *length* of our troubles and our pain that makes them more grievous. As when we do not sleep, the night seems very long, and the doleful hours of our sickness seem to move at a much slower pace than those of our pleasant health." ³⁴

Thus Job discourses as if his time, being clogged with miseries, seemed an eternity. Job 7.15-16, *My soul chooses strangling and death rather than life. I loathe it; I would not live always; let me alone, for my days are vanity*. He was weary of being in pain so long, and thought that his afflicted life would never have an end. Yet all *the afflictions of the present time are not worthy to be compared with that glory which shall be revealed*, Rom 8.18. We are near to a blessed change. And who would not undergo the dangers of a troublesome voyage for a month, if he knew that he would return to his home laden with great treasures, and live in splendor ever after? What pleasure is it to those who are besieged, to know that they will certainly be relieved in a little time? It causes them, though pressed very close by their enemies, to resume with new courage, and to hearten one another. So it should be with all believers. The day of their Lord's coming draws near, and then he will put all their enemies to flight, and reward their diligence and perseverance. The enemy of our souls is full of rage. But what fills *him* with fury, may yield *us* comfort, because we know that *his time is short*, Rev 12.12. *The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly*,

³⁴ Jurieu, *Balance du Sanctuaire*, p. 72. [Pierre Jurieu (1637-1713) a French Protestant leader. – WHG]

Rom 16.20. Oh what comfortable words these are! That enemy who fills us with vexation, and whose malice is both great and constant, in a little while will not molest or interrupt our satisfactions anymore.

Your tears that you shed for your offences now, are very just. It is what we owe to God for having sinned so much against him. But shortly we will be with him, and never complain of his absence from us anymore. When a man is tossed with storms, and sees no prospect of the shore, it is very dismal; but it is not so with us who have our haven in our view. What if our troubles should continue for twenty or thirty years? This would be very overwhelming to our sense; and yet it is *nothing* when compared with an eternity of joys above. How soon will this be over? And how long will that remain? It casts a great damp upon all things under the sun, that they are unsatisfying, and that they are very short. However pleasant they are to us, they will depart. Our friends, and all the delight of their conversation — our riches, and all the respect and service they procure us — will fade away. Our beloved bodies which we maintain with great expense and care, will leave us, and must go into the grave. But our happiness will be forever. It is *Eternal Happiness*; our thoughts cannot comprehend, nor can our words express, what that is. We will then know what it is, when we are in actual possession of it. To be *forever with the Lord* — what encouragement this affords to our patience and resignation! To be with him, who is our portion and our all; to be with him, and to be without our sin that provoked him to wrath and made our spirits sad — what a heaven this will be!

As this life, by its tedious afflictions, seems like an eternity to those who are in distress, so the pleasures of that undecaying life will seem but a moment to us, it will be so very pleasant. And we are *near* to it. Though the pains that forerun our departure prove to be very sharp, yet in a moment death, whenever it comes, will be past. In a moment we will see the face of God that was hidden from us here; we will be changed as in the twinkling of an eye. And when we are in that eternity, will we then say that we cleansed our hearts *in vain*? Won't we then see that we had no cause to murmur or repine? All our faculties will be gratified with proper objects and suitable employment; all will be overspread and swallowed up with a quick and a lively joy. Oh! how blessed are the tears that will lead us to such a joy! Blessed is the cross that will yield us such fruit as this. And blessed be that God who will bestow such a reward upon us. When we get there, we will sing in consideration of those very afflictions that made us sigh and groan while we were on earth. It is *good* to be there; and how freely we would allow our thoughts to always dwell on this pleasant subject, if not that our worldly business and the necessary affairs of life call us away from the Mountain of our Transfiguration? However, let us not forget that these things are the truths of God, which he has shown to his servants, and which will shortly come to pass. And they are very near too, and should have a suitable influence upon us.

How the martyrs of old *rejoiced* when they saw the day in which they were to suffer! How they embraced and encouraged one another, saying, "We are but an hour or two short of heaven. We have but one more combat to finish, and we will be with Christ. We dine on bitter herbs, but we will sup with Him. Before the crowd that came to see us die is dispersed, we will be with God, and with innumerable angels, and the spirits of the just." With what calmness the blessed sufferers have bid this world *adieu*, saying,

"Farewell sun, moon, and stars, and welcome better lights. Farewell wives and children, friends and acquaintances. Farewell you deceiving pleasures of the world. And now welcome you joys of paradise; welcome you sweet cross of Christ; and welcome death that will convey us there."

And thus their souls were driven in chariots of fire to their father's house. Whether there is music in the revolution of the celestial spheres, as some of the philosophers imagined, we don't know. But it is very likely that the separated soul of the patient and triumphant Christian, will have those angels who rejoiced at its conversion, wait to carry it to its blessed home to present it to the throne of God with joyful praises and united hallelujahs. Thus we should admire and imitate the patience of the saints whose life was begun with darkness and sorrow, but ended with light and pleasure — began with a combat, but concluded with victory. And then the soul that a few moments before was disconsolate, will have cause to *say on that day, O Lord, I will praise you! Though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and you comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation; ...the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation, Isa 12.1-2.*

CHAP. 4. The Great love of Christ in suffering God's wrath

Of the great love of Christ in suffering the wrath of God in his soul; which is more to be admired, in that he bore it for us, and not for the fallen angels; and because he is now, from his own experience, more qualified to relieve us under all our temptations.

Inference 1. How great a cause we have to value Jesus Christ who, by suffering the wrath of God in his own person, has procured this privilege for believers: that the anger of God towards them will only be for a moment? Had it not been for his spotless satisfaction, the Divine Justice would have perpetually flamed out against us; and He would not only have been angry with us now, but forever. *He has delivered us from the wrath to come.*

That which is easy for us upon our faith, was purchased by him at a very dear price. He shed his own blood to obtain peace and mercy for us. Oh, how *great* was the burden of that heavy cross which he bore for us? How terrible and amazing was that wrath which he felt in his bitter and doleful agonies, when he did not see one smile in his Father's face; when it was an hour of thick darkness for him; and when under the pain of what he felt, and the view of what he was to feel, he said, *My Soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death?* — and when the agonies of his soul affected his body, and made it sweat as it were, drops of blood, even in a cold season? What a gloomy time was that when he fell upon his face in a sorrowful posture, and with strong cries and tears prayed, *O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me?* What flaming wrath was that which scorched him, when he uttered those dreadful words, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* The Angel told Mary that a sword would pierce through her son, Luk 2.35 — what injurious usage her soul must have met with; but how much sharper was the sword that pierced the soul of Christ himself? The wrath that he bore would have totally overwhelmed and destroyed angels and men, had they joined their strength together. There was none but him who was able to sustain such a combat, and to bear such a load. Oh, where would we guilty creatures have been, had not he died for us! God would have been our enemy, and hell our portion. His holiness would not allow him to be gracious to us without a satisfaction for it; and there was none who was able to make it, but his own dearly beloved Son — and this excellent Person did it freely.

And what cause we have to *admire the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of this love which surpasses knowledge!* Eph 3.18. Angels in heaven wonder at it, it was so great in itself, and accomplished in such a painful and a costly way. And we may justly be filled with a wondering joy; for we are more concerned, and our sin and guilt make us need it more, than they do. There was nothing in us to move him to begin or finish the blessed work of our redemption — nothing but misery. He saw us lost, and he came to find us. He saw us perishing, and his sympathy increased within him; and his own pity and compassion made him come and save us. What punishment had we deserved for our manifold transgressions? And he came and bore the punishment that was our due, and discharged that debt which we were never able to pay. How kind he was, who did not think his own life nor his own blood were too much for us? Who ever exposed his person and his life for an enemy? And yet he died for us when we were so. It is as marvellous an act of mercy, as if a Prince's son were to lay his head upon the block to save one who had rebelled against the crown and government of his own father.

What does he require from us for all that he has done? He asks nothing but our love, and won't we give him our best affections, our highest thoughts, and our hearts, which he has so dearly bought? Have even *any* of those things to which we give our love, done so much for us as *He* has done? He has the best title, and will prove our truest friend in the end. If it had not been for him, we could never have prayed to God with hope, nor lived without a fearful expectation of

vengeance. We were children of wrath, and but for him, we must have been the heirs of wrath too. Who would not love such a benefactor? Who would not give him all, who gave himself for us? It is by his death that God is appeased, and that his anger is but for a moment, toward those who receive his Son. God has smelled a sweet savour in this sacrifice, and is highly pleased with it, and is pleased with *us* on this account. He does not follow us with wrath now, but invites us to himself in mercy; he has sheathed his flaming sword, and is ready to embrace us in his arms. And though he sees nothing in us to excite his goodness, yet every time he looks upon our blessed Lord, he sees one who has entirely pleased him, who has done his will, and who is the beloved of his soul. And it's for *His* sake that his anger towards us is so long delayed; and that when it comes, it is but for a moment. Let us love this Redeemer with all our hearts, remembering that terrible sentence of our apostle, *If any man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha*, i.e. cursed till he comes again, 1Cor 16.22.

There are two things that should engage us to love him, for his bearing the wrath of God.

1. That he bore it *for us*, and not for the fallen angels.
2. That from his own experience, he is able to help us under all our temptations, and when we are under the sense of God's displeasure.

1. Christ did not bear the wrath of God for the fallen angels. They fell from him as we did, but he does not design to raise them again. They groaned under the wrath of the mighty Judge, and they must *always* groan under it. No beam of cheerful light will shine into their dungeon; no messenger will be dispatched to give them the glad tidings of salvation. The anger of God threw them out of heaven, and the door is forever shut. They know this to be their woeful case, and therefore they rage against him, and against his servants, and his interest in the world. What could move Christ to take the nature of man, and not of angels? (Heb 2.16) — to say to us *live*, and to allow them to *die*? To visit our sinning world, to set us at liberty, to set open the prison-doors, while he allows them to roar in chains of wrath? As they have greater capacities, and natures that are more knowing than ours, so they might have honoured their Creator more than we do, had they been redeemed. But they must mourn forever, and never sing his praise; they must grieve while we rejoice. While we look for our Lord, they tremble in the fear of his coming (Mat 8.29). While we have the sweetness of hope, they are in anguish and vexation, in despair and horror. We have our sabbaths, but they have no days of rest. We can call God our Father through Jesus Christ, but they don't know him by such a comfortable name. They feel his power, but they don't taste his love. They tremble under his vengeance, but all comfort and joy have fled away from them forever. Why are we in the light, and they in darkness? Why is Christ a physician to us, while he is a judge to them? Truly, nothing makes the difference but his own love; and what manner of love this is! (1Joh 3.1)

2. It was great love in Christ to bear the anger of God, because now his poor tempted servants have one to whom they may repair in all their straits. Heb 2.18, *For in that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor those who are tempted*. It is a great relief to the miserable and afflicted, to be pitied by others; such as Job 19.21, *Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has struck me*. It is some relief when others, though they cannot help us, yet seem to be truly concerned for the sadness of our case, when by the kindness of their words and of their actions, they soothe a little the wounds that they cannot heal. But it is an unspeakable addition to the cross when a man is brought low under the sense of God's displeasure, to have men mock his calamity, or revile him, or speak roughly. This enflames and exasperates the wound that was big enough before; and it is a hard thing when one has a dreadful sound in his ears, to

have every friend become a son of thunder. It is a small matter for people who are at ease, to deal severely with those who are afflicted; but they little know how their severe speeches and angry words pierce them to the very soul. It is easy to blame others for complaining. But if they had only felt for a little while what it means to be under the fear of God's anger, they would find they could not keep from complaining. It must make any person very restless and uneasy when he apprehends that God is his enemy. It is no wonder if he makes everyone he sees, and every place he is in, a witness to his grief.

But now it is a comfort in our temptations and in our fears, that we have so compassionate a friend as Christ, to whom we may repair. Heb 4.15-16, *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in every time of need.* Had it not been for his mediation, the absolute and pure Deity would have been too glorious and inaccessible to us. But Christ is clothed with our nature. Though it has undergone several alterations since he was exalted, yet we are sure that he retains a tender sense of our miseries. And though he is very high, he doesn't think it below him to regard the most troubled and sorrowful believer. On earth he was acquainted with grief, Isa 53.3. And he has carried to heaven with him a remembrance of what he felt in his own temptations, and of what he felt when his Father frowned upon him. His own experience renders him more capable of helping us; and it makes him full of pity when he sees us mourn, well-knowing what his own case was. God has fashioned the hearts of all men; and some have naturally more mercy and pity than others. And then the Holy Spirit, by his renewing grace, carries their good dispositions to greater degrees, usually proceeding and working according to their tempers. So too, it is certain that he tempered the heart of Christ, and made it of a softer mould than all the tenderness of all the men in the world put together would have made it. "He had such a human nature, that he might be more merciful than all men and angels together."³⁵ Our groans and our sighs teach his heart above. And even if he does not come with help just when we desire it, he is yet providing for our welfare. He sends us some inward supports when we don't have an immediate deliverance. He will not suffer us to totally sink, though he may leave us for a while to try our faith, or to let us understand our own weakness. We may think that our vessel will be covered with waves when he is guiding us to shore; even when we think he is asleep and has forgotten us, and doesn't care even if we are cast away. Only let us never cease to say, *Master, save us, or else we perish!*

³⁵ Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), *Christ's Heart in Heaven*. p. 55.

CHAP. 5. Long-continued angers are unreasonable.

Showing the unreasonableness of long-continued angers among good people; and also that the temporary effects of God's displeasure are more lamentable than the wrath of men. Of the excellency of religion; and that the enemies of the church have no cause to insult it, because of its certain deliverance, and the dismal end of their own wickedness; on which account Christians have no reason to envy their prosperity.

Inference 2. Seeing that God is angry but for a moment, how unreasonable are long-continued angers among good people? *Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give opportunity to the devil*, Eph 4.26-27 — i.e. whoever has injured or provoked another, must temper himself, and sue for a reconciliation speedily, certainly before the time of solemn praying to God, which was constantly at evenings. And so the exhortation corresponds with that in Mat 5.23-24: *If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there, and first be reconciled to your brother.*³⁶ It is a strange thing that any good people should be so passionate and hasty as some are; they are quickly enraged and hard to be reconciled. And there are many who will keep their anger for several months, or it may be years together. Oh! how unlike this is to that God whom they call their Father in heaven, who is slow to wrath, and whose anger towards them is but for a moment! And what an honour, and a privilege would it be to resemble him? If he were not more patient with his creatures and his children, than they are with one another, then what confusions, what woeful *punishments* would the world be filled with? *Anger rests in the bosom of fools*, Ecc 7.9. Your hasty passionate people are commonly the weaker sort of Christians. And though the strong must pity their weakness and bear with them, yet the weak must not bear with themselves, but rather pray and strive against it, and not coin excuses to defend that which is inexcusable — which is a reproach to religion, and is itself a great sin. A good man may be surprised suddenly, and put into a fret. But to *always* be fretting and uneasy, and displeased with those who have injured you, is very unsuitable to the example of your blessed and meek Saviour. What pleasure can such persons take in hearing that their enemies abroad lose the day, when they have a worse enemy in their own breasts, who leads them captive and takes them at the first assault? The worst enemies in this sense are those of a man's own house. And it is a wonder that those persons who appear to be very conscientious in other things, will yet indulge themselves in this. They give an opportunity to the devil, and he casts a mist before their eyes. Though he cannot keep them from fearing other sins, yet he so cheats them with false pretences, that they don't believe rash anger is a sin, or they are easily drawn into committing it.

What differences have been kept up for a long time in churches, in families, among acquaintances and friends, whose anger should have been like that of God: *but for a moment*? They don't rightly consider their own duty, nor the infirmity of mankind, and how most of their errors are to be cured in a loving and a gentle manner. We are unwilling to pardon our enemies, or the injuries of our friends, and yet God is most ready to forgive us all. Eph 4.32, *Be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.* There are, it may be, some angers that have lasted ten or twelve years. And what estrangement, what distance, what shyness is there among such persons? It may be spoken to their *shame*. Men who have received an injury will hardly speak well of persons who have perhaps given them but a slight provocation. They'll have no commerce, nor familiarity with them. But is this blessing those who curse us, and praying for those who spitefully use us? (Mat 5.44) Is this an imitation of our gracious God, who has forgiven us all, upon innumerable provocations? I don't mention here your brave fellows who

³⁶ See Dr. Hammond *in loc.*

upon every small affront are for challenging another to give them satisfaction; who are so weak that they cannot agree without a duel; whom a false notion of honour pushes forward to those rash enterprises that are condemned both by the laws of God and the laws of men. And isn't he a hard man who has the courage to trample upon the authority of his Maker, and his rulers too; who dares to risk damnation to preserve his reputation; and hazards sending his own soul to hell, or that of his friend, just to avoid the label of *cowardice* on earth? What a low value these persons have of their lives, who throw them away merely to satisfy their own passion? And in what posture or preparation is that man for dying, who dies to satisfy his own revenge? It would be more honourable to forgive a fault, than to pursue it in such a bloody manner. Eph 4.20, *But you have not so learned Christ. Jas 1.19-20, Therefore my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God.*

Inference 3. Seeing that the anger of God is but for a moment, it is better (as to its temporal effects) to fall into the hands of God, than into the hands of men. We may say of all wicked men, what Jacob says of Simeon and Levi: *Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, don't come into their counsel; my honour, don't be united to their assembly ... Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel, Gen 49.5-7. Their tender mercies are cruelty, Pro 12.10.* Wicked men are soon transported into violent passions. And when they are armed with a power suitable to their rage, what horrible effects does it then produce? They are inspired with barbarous principles and designs, by an Evil Spirit that delights in mischief. And he communicates to them his own fury; and what is it that they then hesitate at? ³⁷ Nothing softens or makes impressions on their cruel hearts.

There have been sad instances of these in the several massacres in *Ireland*, and *Piedmont*, and *France*.³⁸ They did not spare the aged, the feeble, the sick, or the young. There was no age or sex that did not feel the woeful effects of their wrath and rage. They have torn poor harmless infants from their mothers' breasts; others they killed in the womb; some they cut in pieces, others they put to long tortures and lingering deaths — and they were not moved at all with the hideous cries of parents who died several deaths in beholding their children die. And then, when their eyes had beheld the sad spectacle, the parents had their own blood shed. Oh, what vast difference is there between the temporary anger of God, as to outward evils, and that of men? He no sooner sees us at his feet, than his sympathies increase over us; and He raises us up with his hand, and bids us to be of good cheer. But these cruel men delight to trample on the poor and the desolate. God hears our cries when we pray, but these men are deaf to all the entreaties and supplications of afflicted and miserable people. They set themselves to invent methods of torture, to make those who are within their power, die with greater pain and sorrow. But *God does not willingly grieve nor afflict the children of men.* Their wrath is unruly and assigns itself no bounds; they know no moderation; they forbear nothing that tends to gratify their lusts. But it is a comfort that our God is of great power, and his mercies are infinite. Men go about that work which God sometimes permits them to do, with cruel intentions to ruin and destroy. But God has a design in all his corrections to purify and reform, and to do us good in the end.

³⁷ Originally, "that they then *scruple*." Having succumbed to Satan's urging, nothing then restrains them. – WHG

³⁸ At the start of the **Irish Rebellion** October 23, 1641, some 4000 Protestants were killed, and perhaps 12,000 were driven from their homes, later dying from cold or disease. On 24 April 1655 there was an attack ordered by the Duke of Savoy against the Waldenses in **Piedmont** France. It unleashed a campaign of looting, rape, torture, and murder. An estimated 2,000 people were killed and another 2,000 were forcibly converted to the Catholic faith. A sonnet of lament over it was written by John Milton. Following the 1572 **St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre** in Paris, some 5,000 to 30,000 Huguenots were slaughtered by Catholic mobs throughout France. – WHG

2Sam 24.13-14, *God came to David, and asked him, Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or shall you flee for three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days pestilence in your land? Now advise, and see what answer I will return to Him who sent me. And David said to Gad, I am in a great strait. Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man.*

Inference 4. What a good master God is, whose anger is but for a moment. Other masters may be hasty, and froward, and hard to please; but He is patient and slow to wrath. He is never angry till we disobey his voice, and by our laziness in His work, we force him to it. And even then, his nature inclines him to moderate our stripes. He adds no more than what are necessary to promote our good. He does not treat us as slaves, but exercises toward us a mild and a favourable government. He threatens a long while before he punishes. The clouds gather blackness to give us notice of a coming storm. And the thunder of his wrath, as well as that of nature, roars before it falls. He threatens, and advises, and persuades, and uses several affectionate expostulations with us before we feel the rod. And when he seems to be very *just* in vindicating his own right, he does not cease to be very *good* at the same time. We frequently provoke him, and he is most ready to forgive. He does not seek advantages against us, nor wait for our halting. It grieves him when we sin; and he is only angry so that we may repent.

He delights in peace and not in war; in the manifestations of his mercy and love, more than in the terrible revelations of his wrath. He whets his sword before he strikes, so that in the preparations of his judgments, we may see what we may expect, and seek to prevent them. He summons us to surrender ourselves before he begins by sharper methods to make us sensible of our follies. And while his rod is in his hand, he stays to see if we will even then return. And he is unwilling to punish, even when he is forced to do it — as a tender judge with sorrow and regret, pronounces sentence upon a malefactor. Hos 11.8, *How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I surrender you, Israel?* Psa 78.38, *Many a time He turned his anger away.* He recalled, or ordered his anger to return (as one expresses it), as if he were unresolved what to do. He recalled it, as a man recalls his servant several times when sending him with an unwelcome message; or as a tender-hearted Prince trembles when he is to sign a writ for the death of a rebel who before had been his favourite — he blots out his name again, and flings away the pen. He singles out here and there some of his servants, when he might punish *all* of them for their sins; he makes one hurt, to be a warning to the rest. And according to the doctrine of the Schoolmen,³⁹ He recompences good works far above their merit; but he punishes crimes far below their demerit. He makes his mercy triumph over judgment. He punishes with regret. And he retains a great deal of his wrath when he corrects, but he keeps no measure of it when he rewards (Psa 103.12). The miseries of the miserable are not greater than the joy and happiness of the blessed.

Oh! who would not serve so gracious and so good a Master as God? Who is long before he is angry, and is soon appeased again? Are the cruel commands of Satan, the slavery of the world, and the defilement of sin, to be preferred to the gentle and pure commands of God? How many *curse* their folly in adhering to these! But none repent that they have been employed in His service. His most aged servants find the greatest honour and delight in having served him very long, and would not quit their experienced and kind Master for all the world. They know that his corrections are short, but his love is everlasting. His wrath is for a moment, but their heaven will be forever.

³⁹ That is, the *Scholastics*, who advocated Christian Aristotelianism (e.g. Scotus & Aquinas). – WHG

Inference 5. The enemies of the church of God have no reason to insult those who are afflicted in it; for though God is angry for their sins, *yet his anger is but for a moment*. Thus they treated David. *Psa 41.7-8, All who hate me whisper against me; an evil disease, they say, clings to him; and now that he lies down, he shall rise up no more.* And *Psa 42.3, My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, Where is your God?* They thought he was entirely forsaken and abandoned forever, putting these questions to him: “What has now become of your God in whom you were prone to boast? Where is He now whom you once called your refuge and your hiding place? Where is his power and his goodness, that he leaves you to such a deep and violent affliction?” — an allusion to this insult of Shimei:

2Sam 16.6-8, Thus Shimei said when he cursed, Come out you bloody man, and you man of Belial. The Lord has returned upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead you have reigned; and the Lord has delivered the Kingdom into the hand of Absalom your Son. Behold, you are caught in your own mischiefs, because you are a bloody man.

This bold man put a wicked interpretation on the providence of God. And because David met with so many troubles, and such an interruption in his affairs before the Kingdom was well settled in his hand, he thought God was against David. But David lived to sit with prosperity on the throne for many years. And Shimei had leisure enough in which to repent of his foolish and extravagant reproaches of so good a King. Thus the barbarians thought Paul had been a murderer, because a viper fixed upon his hand; and that vengeance had pursued him for some great offence, till he shook it off. He taught them to see how ill-grounded their opinion was, and that the God they thought was Paul’s enemy, assisted him to work miracles.

When you see any who are greatly afflicted, and groaning under a sense of the wrath of God, you ought to tremble rather than rejoice; to weep rather than laugh; to consider how holy and how just God is, seeing that He will not spare even his own. For all his elect will at one time or other taste the bitterness of sin. You who were never serious, have reason to humble yourselves, and to think what *you* may expect when his *children* are corrected in so severe a manner. If his own family suffer such afflictions, what then does He have in store for his open enemies? *1Pet 4.18, If the righteous are scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?* *Pro 24.17-18, Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest the Lord see it, and it displeases him, and he turns his wrath away from him.* Don’t entertain a secret pleasure in the downfall and distress of any man whatsoever. For these inhuman affections are so displeasing to God, that they may provoke him to transfer the calamity from your enemy to *you*, and thereby damp your sinful joy with a double sorrow — first to see your enemy delivered from his trouble, and then to find *yourself* involved in it. ⁴⁰ Do not triumph over any in affliction, lest the cup be taken out of their hand, and put into yours.

Do not, like the friends of Job, censure them as greater sinners than anyone else in the world, just because of their sorer trials. It’s as if you were acquainted with the secrets of the decrees of God, and with your shallow reason, could pierce into the bottom of his unfathomable judgments. Those who are under an apprehension of the Divine displeasure, know that it is for *sin*. This is what troubles and afflicts them more than anything else. But you should not conclude that they are sinners above the rest of men. Rather, wonder at the goodness of God, that he is gracious and more favourable to *any*, when they *all* deserve to die. Do not, by reproachful language, add affliction to those who are afflicted.

⁴⁰ See *Patr. Paraph. in loc.*

Zec 1.15, *I am very sorely displeased with the heathen who are at ease, for I was but a little displeased; and they helped further the affliction.* The Church was sensible of the cruel insulting of wicked men over her miseries, when she says, Mic 7.8, *Do not rejoice against me, O my enemy. When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to me.*

Inference 6. How much happier is the condition of a *good* man, than one who remains *impenitent* in his wickedness. God is angry with the one for a moment; but with the other he will be so forever. The servants of God never have so much cause to *mourn* under the sense of the heinousness and aggravation of their sins, as they have cause to *rejoice* in the riches and the freeness of His grace. They never have so much cause to be troubled at their own distress, as to sing at the remembrance of His holiness. They have cause to weep indeed, because they have provoked so good a God to wrath; and cause to be glad that His anger is but for a moment. They have cause to be concerned that they have made him frown; but cause to rejoice that he will smile on them forever. The righteous have a bitter cup, but as it is mingled here with love, so it prepares them for a sweeter taste of heavenly pleasure. *In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red. It is fully mixed, and he pours it out of the same cup. But all the wicked of the earth will wring out and drink its dregs,* Psa 75.8. God corrects his own here with measure; but his punishments of the wicked will know no bounds; wrath shall come upon them to the utmost. And how low must they sink, and what load must they bear, who have God to punish them, whose being is eternal and whose power is omnipotent? On his own, He frowns for but a season, and he does it to bring them to their duty; but on his obstinate, unrelenting enemies, he will frown *forever*. He will abhor them, cast them out of his presence, trample upon them in his fury, and leave them to be the brands of hell, and the prey of devils.

Now indeed, we cannot persuade men to repent, by telling them of all the terrors of the Lord which are terrible beyond expression — though we tell them death and destruction are at hand; though we show them the threats of the Scripture, with examples of their evil predecessors who have gone to their own place. *They slumber on,* though we tell them of the danger, and of a pit that is opening its mouth to swallow them up; though we see wrath gathering, and the clouds ready to burst, and bid them to make haste to get a shelter before the storm comes; though we bid them to flee for their lives out of Sodom — they still linger and delay. But after death, they cannot be secure, even if they would. They will then have no pillows on which to rest their heads, no water to quench their thirst, no friend to help them, no God to hear their cries. They cannot then stop their ears at the roaring wrath of God. They cannot then stupefy their consciences, nor put the evil day far off.

Now they make a shift ⁴¹ to stifle the checks of their own consciences. They mock the threats of God, and deride his message. But sinners, you will sadly know what a dreadful and terrible God you provoke to wrath. All your entertainments and diversions, all your mirth and laughter, all your carnal comforts, and your jolly company will be gone, and be gone forever. And what will then remain? Nothing but consternation, shock, and woe; nothing but anguish and tribulation. Who will speak comfortably to you? Who will deliver when you have fallen into the hands of the Living God? when you find that God, who is a gracious Father to the saints, is a severe Judge to you; when He who is the joy of their hearts, departs from you; and He who refreshes them with the smiles of his face, kills you with his frowns. What will you do when the full wrath of God is poured on your guilty souls? Where will you turn when it scorches and burns you, and sets you all on fire? How it will overwhelm you when you find that all your hideous cries, all your lamentations

⁴¹ *Shift*: a flimsy excuse; a weak argument to justify an action, or to deflect blame or accountability. – WHG

and your groans, are to no purpose! When you are in the power of cruel devils, and meet with no pity from God, and none from his angels or his saints!

We think it is long to be in pain for a month or two, or for a year. But how long will they think it is, who are to be in pain throughout all the durations of a sad eternity? We think it long when we don't sleep in the night, and wish for the light of day. But Oh, what a long night that will be — and how uncomfortable — that will have no morning, and won't be succeeded with a beam of day forever! Men now think an hour or two in attendance upon God is a great while; they think fast-days and sabbaths are long. But if they come to that misery, Oh how long and how tedious will they find hell to be! How insupportable it is, and how unavoidable! Hear therefore, all you who live in sin; hear and *live*! Oh don't throw yourselves down that precipice under which there is a Sea of Wrath, and a Lake of Fire. O do *not* wound, or destroy, or torment your own souls; do *not* carry fuel to that fire which will never be quenched; do *not* run into the furnace out of which there is no escape. For the Lord's sake, and for your own sake, and for the sake of your friends who would gladly see you become religious, *awake* and every one of you *call upon your God*. Seek him while he may be found, hear his voice while it is called today, lest the God who alone can help you, laughs at your calamity; lest He who is now so merciful, hereafter takes pleasure in your punishment. If you forget your danger and sleep on, know that when you are in hell, you will then be forced to open your eyes, and they must never be closed again. Oh what a dreadful and startling light you will see then; when you see that the Great God is your enemy, the devil is your tormentor, damned souls are your companions, and everlasting fire is your own portion! God will not then repent of the evil; he will not then send his messengers with glad tidings anymore. What will you do in the Day of the Lord?

Nah 1.5-6, *The mountains quake at him, the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence. Yes, the world and all who dwell in it. Who can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.*

Don't we have some representation of the terror of the great day, in some greater thunders that make us tremble, that with their noise and lightning, astonish the inhabitants of this earth? *The voice of the Lord is powerful, and full of majesty; the voice of the Lord rends the air, and sends out flames of fire*, Psa 29.4, 7. But what a more terrible season that will be when we hear the voice of the last trumpet saying, *Arise you dead, and come to judgment!* When the elements will melt with fervent heat, when the sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood! When the stars will fall from heaven, and this admired earth will be full of convulsions and violent agitations! When the seas will roar, and the graves open, and the Judge appear in the clouds! When you will hear the cracks and the groans of the dissolving world! Where will you sinners hide your heads? What will you then think of the wrath of God in that great and that terrible day? You will then wish you had never been born. Oh how happy would you then reckon yourselves, if you might but go into the grave again. Oh how happy, if you could but die. But it will flee from you. *This* is that hell where the wicked must live, and *ever* live, though it will be in misery.

Oh, little do you think what you do when you sin. You are like a man drinking at the edge of a furnace into which he was to be thrown after finishing off a few glasses. Like a malefactor who is jolly and merry overnight, and is to be executed the next day. *Then* you will see that it will be well with the righteous, though it goes ill with you. Judge things *now*, as they will appear to be *at that day*. Join yourselves *now* to that society among which you would *then* be found. Judge religion as it will *then* appear. Here it doesn't seem to be such a lovely thing, through the many afflictions

and sorrows that attend it. But then it will appear in its true luster and its fullest beauty. Here you see many times a true servant of God brought very low, complaining of his iniquities. Now you hear his groans, but a moment from now you will hear his praises and his hallelujahs. It is night with him now, but a moment from now you will see him triumph in eternal day. He is now in a strange land, but shortly he will be with his God at rest in heaven. And happy is he that gets to such a blessedness, even though he goes out with a sad heart and weeping eyes, and meets with broken bones, and many a trembling dispensation on his way there.

What course will you take? Which pattern will you choose? Will you serve God or your own lusts? Will you have your portion here, or in the world to come? Will you be content with the present afflictions of religion, in hope of eternal joy? Consider that they are not to be judged the happiest men, who fare well for a *moment*, but those who do so *forever*. If you serve your sin, you may have pleasure for a while, but bitterness and sorrows in the end; your farewell will be very terrible. Will you please yourselves for a moment, and risk an eternal wrath? Or wouldn't you rather yield yourselves to a gracious and a loving God? And then you will *sow in tears, but reap in joy*; you may feel His anger for a moment, but he will entertain you in his own Kingdom forever.

Inference 7. We have no cause to be offended by the prosperity of the wicked. It is true, the righteous are now *sowing in tears*, but they will *reap in joy* (Psa 126.5). In a little while it will be the portion of the ungodly to mourn and to be sorrowful. Would you envy a malefactor who is jovial and pleasant overnight, when you know that he is to be led to execution the next day? His approaching punishment might justly spoil the relish of his own delicacies. However, it gives the spectators no occasion to begrudge him his drunken joys, seeing that they are the last the poor man is ever likely to have. A short space of time obscures all the gaiety of his looks, with an everlasting cloud. It is no just objection against the wisdom of the Divine Providence, that the good are afflicted, while the rod of God is not upon the bad. For He gives to the good the blessings of the right hand — the knowledge of Himself and of their own duty. While to the other he gives only the blessings of the left hand — riches, and honour, and similar goods. These being only outward and for this present world, they are not of so great a value as those which are spiritual, and relate to a life to come.

We think it fares well with the wicked, because for the present we don't see them shed so many tears, nor complain in so doleful a manner as the good are often forced to do. But we don't see in what chains they are held, nor with how many stinging thoughts their minds are harassed, all the while they forget God. We don't see the perplexities to which they are reduced by the contrary commands of diverse lusts. If we consider that God is *angry with them every day*, and that we don't know but that in a day or two they may be cut off and perish, then we will have no cause to murmur at their present undisturbed case, and their seeming welfare. For their happiness is not real, but apparent. All the goods that are bestowed on them, are but mean and low in themselves, though our erroneous and blinder judgments think they are somewhat great and considerable.⁴² For considering what little moment the present goods and evils are — which good men suffer, and bad men enjoy — they should be looked on as an argument for God's wisdom, rather than an objection against his providence. For he understands the just value of things, and knows that the best of these worldly goods, are bad enough to be thrown away upon the worst of men. And so He expresses his just scorn of these admired vanities, by scattering them abroad with a careless hand. For why should he partake of the error of vulgar opinion, and to so regard these trifles as to put

⁴² Dr. Scot's *Christian Life*, part 2. p. 255.

them in gold scales, and weigh them out to mankind by grains and scruples? ⁴³ Therefore, when we see bad men rejoice, and good men mourn, let us not censure, but *adore* that Providence that assigns to each, different portions in another world. Those who are healthful are not more beloved for that reason; nor are the sick and weak more hateful to God for those outward troubles that they now suffer.

There are many who have their paradise in this world, who will have none hereafter; and there is many a one who is torn and mangled with the thorns and briars of the wilderness, to whom God reserves a throne above. We see many a vessel on whom the sun shines, and which sails with a fair gale; and yet, by splitting on a rock or on the sand, it never reaches the port. And we see others who meet with nothing but high waves and contrary winds; and though they have an unpleasant voyage, yet for all that, it is very safe and attended with comfort in the end. The wicked do not always prosper in this life. God sometimes makes them examples of his justice. And if he does not usually do so to those who are very bad, it affords us a certain ground for the belief which we have of a judgment that is to come, in which punishments and rewards will be distributed in a manner other than they are now. This maxim of our Christian divinity, that God sometimes afflicts very severely those whom he tenderly loves — even when they well perform their duty, even when He is well pleased with them — was unknown to the ancient Israelites. ⁴⁴ This was a lesson above their understanding. God did not afflict them except when they had provoked him by some particular transgression. But when they did not, they always had a peaceable and happy life.

It is not so with us. Sometimes our afflictions are indeed not the marks of his *anger*, but of his *favour* — as when he calls his own to endure things that are very bitter and unpleasant, for the trial of their patience and faith. None of the prophets reckon suffering among the gifts of God. But our Apostle esteems them to be so (Phi 1.12-14).⁴⁵ We hear none who are under the New Testament (which gives us a clearer revelation of another world) say as they did up till then, *Why does the way of the wicked prosper?* (Jer 12.1) But rather, *Count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations* (Jas 1.2).

⁴³ *Grains and scruples*: drips and drabs; here “scruples” means miniscule amounts. Rogers implies that the wealth and comfort enjoyed by the reprobate here, is nothing compared to what the elect will enjoy in heaven; and the pain and suffering of the elect here, is nothing compared to what the reprobate will endure in hell. If we keep that end in mind, the present may become more bearable, Rom 8.18. — WHG

⁴⁴ *Fragmens de Serm. de Mons.* Morus, p. 74.

⁴⁵ **Phi 1:12-14** But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

CHAP. 6. The Duty to sense God's Wrath

Of the duty of those who have never been under a sense of God's wrath and terrors; and what the doleful condition is of a soul who apprehends himself to be under His hot displeasure.

I. Seeing that God is often angry with his own servants, ⁴⁶ what cause you have — those of you who fear him — to *bless* Him, that he is not angry with you, and that you don't feel his displeasure! He sets up others as his target against which he shoots his arrows. You hear others groaning for his departure, and yet your hearts are not saddened as theirs are. Your eyes can look up towards heaven with hope, while theirs are clouded with a veil of sorrow. He speaks roughly to them, but comfortable words to you. He seems to set himself against them as his enemies, while he deals with you as a loving friend. You see a reviving smile on his face, and they can discern nothing there but one continued and dreadful frown. Oh admire and forever wonder at the *Sovereign Distinguishing Grace of God*. Are you who are at ease, better than many of his people who are now thrown into a fiery furnace? Have you less dross than they? Do you think they have sinned at a higher rate than you have ever done? He is angry with them for their lukewarmness, for their backsliding — and have your hearts always burned with love? Have your feet always kept his way and not declined? Have you never wandered? Have you never turned aside to the right hand or to the left? Surely you have; and therefore what a mercy it is that he is not angry with *you* as well as *them*! You see many whose consciences for their sins are turned all into flame and horror and perplexity — full of accusations, full of guilty fears for their sinning, for their sinning against light, knowledge, mercy, and love; and have *you* never so sinned? Haven't your consciences also been defiled? Have you never done what was evil, when you *knew* it to be so? Haven't you often been kindly entertained by God, after you have run away from him? After great transgressions, haven't you met with joy and pleasure in the sense of his pardoning healing grace, while others who have been perhaps more dutiful, did not fare so well — nor ever had such a fatted calf killed for them, nor such feasts to refresh their souls, as there have been prepared for you?

You can never sufficiently bless God for his mercy. Every day you deserve his anger, and yet you haven't been under the terrible apprehensions of it for a moment. Why are you sitting at His table, and honoured with His presence in all your duties, in all your sufferings, while He is a stranger to *them*, like a wayfaring man who tarries but for a night? What is it that makes Him bless some children of the family with greater peace and comfort than he does the rest? Nothing but his own grace and mercy. Some are drawn with cords of love, and some have their iniquities constantly visited with stripes. Some are gladdened with the hopes of heaven, and some are afraid they will never go there, and don't know by experience what *joy* and *pleasure* mean. Some have their spirits overwhelmed, their whole souls covered with thick darkness, and their bones broken; while others are at ease, and see the light of his countenance, and have unchanged health. Some travel with weary steps, and make their pilgrimage with their own sorrows, to be a vale of tears; while others run the way of His commandments with enlarged hearts. Some families are filled with lamentations, and some with songs of praise. And all this gives us still greater occasions to magnify his grace and love, that we have a moment's ease. That we can observe one sabbath, or make one prayer with hope, deserves our highest thanks and admiration.

II. *Secondly*, do not presume for all this. For though he is not yet angry with you, he may soon be. This was the fault of David. Psa 30.6, *In my prosperity I said, I will never be moved*; but it

⁴⁶ Here Rogers will compare one believer with another believer, not with an unbeliever. The son who dutifully stayed with his Father, uncelebrated, is compared to the prodigal son who receives the fatted calf (Luk 15.20-30). – WHG

immediately follows, ver. 7, *You hid your face, and I was troubled*. The sun now shines upon you; the candle of the Lord refreshes your tabernacle; but you may meet with many storms, and clouds, and darkness before you come to your journey's end. The disciples were once greatly pleased with the glory of the transfiguration; and during the delightful interview between Christ, Moses, and Elijah, they thought themselves as in heaven. But a cloud came and obscured the preceding glory, and then the poor men were afraid. It is true, the anger of God endures but a moment; but even that moment is very sad, and terrible beyond expression. Weeping endures but for a night; but it may be a very bitter and a doleful night for all that. It is a night like that of the Egyptians: when they arose, they saw all their first-born slain, and there was a hideous universal cry and mourning throughout the Land. So this night of the anger of the Lord may destroy all our comforts, and make the first-born of our strength, the confidence and the pleasure of our hopes, give up the Ghost. *Psa 77.2-4, My sore ran in the night, and did not cease; my soul refused to be comforted. I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. You hold my eyes waking. I am so troubled that I cannot speak.* Though you are at ease today, and feel no trouble, no disquiet, are you sure that it will be so tomorrow? Are you sure that you will never see any frowns on the face of God? Don't presume on the strength of your grace, nor the brightness of your evidence for salvation; for that may languish, and this may be obscured. And those of you who now think you are at the door of heaven, may be brought to the contrary — for all you know, to the very gates of hell. Though God is pleased at present to deal gently with you, yet your sins may cause him to send his dreadful rebukes upon you. Your souls lie open and naked to him, *Heb 4.13*. And he can make whatever impressions he pleases there, either of his goodness or his severity. Do not be secure; for *it is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*, *Heb 10.31*. Who can stand when He is angry? Who can bear his blows? Or what hand can strike so hard a blow as his? There are these things in the sense of his anger, that may prevent your security. And I will tell you not only what I have seen and heard, but what I have experienced and felt in my own soul.

1. Once you have a serious and a fixed apprehension of the displeasure of God, no creature can yield you the least comfort. However rich you are, all your gold cannot purchase one hour's peace and joy. You may complain indeed to your friends, and you cannot help but complain. But alas! they can give you no relief. Their language is, *Unless the Lord helps, we cannot help*. You may go to your ministers. They may speak kindly to you, but they cannot make their own words take effect. If the heavens above you are like brass, they cannot give you rain, nor make the dew of God fall upon your branches as it used to do. They can mourn with you, but they cannot wipe your tears away. Once you apprehend that God is angry with you, you will seek in vain for rest in pleasures, or diversions, or a change of company. For such a stinging thought as this will always pierce you to the quick: *God is my enemy, and what will these avail?* The sense of his anger will put even your natural spirits into a strange unquiet agitation. And after this, you will not find your very bodies at ease as they used to be. *Psa 38.2-3, Your arrows stick fast in me, and your hand presses me sorely; there is no soundness in my flesh because of your anger, nor is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.* *Job 7.13-14, When I say, my bed will comfort me, my couch will ease my complaint, then you scare me with dreams, and terrify me through visions.*

All the fountains on earth will never quench your thirst, if the fountain of living waters is shut up. Your bed will not then be a place of rest, nor your food be delightful to your taste. Your sorrows will keep you waking all night, and your fears will haunt and pursue you in the day. *Job 3.24, My sighing comes before I eat; and my roarings are poured out like waters.* Your soul will then abhor all sumptuous food, and your life will draw near to the grave. And when you have tired yourselves in seeking rest among the creatures, and have found none, you must then sit down,

and say by sad experience, "What miserable comforters you all are." For however many crowds of quiet people you run into, you can find no quietness for yourself. Though the wounded hart runs into the common herd, she doesn't lose her pain by that means, but carries her wound with her wherever she goes.

2. While you are under the sense of God's displeasure, you will find no comfort in his ordinances. Every part of his blessed Word will be like a sword cutting to your very soul. You will find every threat to be like a dart thrown at you; and every promise that is full of consolation to others, will yet be dry to you. The Scripture which was once your delight, will fill you with gall and wormwood. What you once reckoned to be the *Book of Life*, will then seem to be a *Book of Death*. And you will be afraid to read there for fear of reading your own condemnation — the sense of God's displeasure makes so great a change. Those assemblies that were once your joy, will then be terrible to you. I don't go there (says the troubled soul) to meet a Friend as I used to do, but to see an Enemy — to see others joyfully serving God and singing his praise, while I am silent with deep affliction and can only mourn, while they rejoice. What pleasure is it to see others feasting at his table, while my sins have destroyed my appetite and there isn't one crumb of the bread of life that belongs to me? I pray and he shuts out my cry; he doesn't regard my entreaties, doesn't ease my distress, nor does he seem to relent with all my groans. I have sinned against him, and I dare not say *My God* and *My Father* anymore. I have lost all my fervor, all my confidence, and all my hope in prayer. I go round the streets to seek the One who was once my Beloved. Help me, all you servants of the Lord, to find my God again. But for my former undervaluing of His presence, he has now departed, and I do not find him. Woe! Woe is me! What have I done? Woe is me that I have lost the one whom *to lose* is hell.

3. All this will be attended with great anguish of spirit, and great tribulation. Job 16.12-13, *I was at ease, but he has broken me apart; he has also taken me by my neck and shaken me to pieces, and set me up as his target*, etc. Then all our sins are brought fresh to our minds with a new and cutting remembrance, as if they had all been committed but yesterday. They rank themselves in order. Every one of them being set before us, gives us a new stab and a wound, to increase the sore and the pain of our former wounds. They present themselves with all their hideous aggravations against what mercy, what goodness, what checks of conscience, what warnings, and what motions of the Blessed Spirit they were committed. And who can bear so terrible a sight as this?

Job 13.26, *You write bitter things against me; and make me possess the iniquities of my youth* — that is, (1) to always think about them; (2) to feel pain and hurt in that remembrance; and (3) to be astonished with my guilt and fears. Then all our thoughts of God himself become uneasy. We can think of nothing but his greatness, majesty, justice, and holiness. How it overwhelms us to think what a powerful God we have against us! It troubles us to think that he is displeased; and yet we know that he is *justly* so. "If God were for me," says the troubled soul, "I would bear any pains, and wait, and hope. But He alone who can help me, has gone away. He alone who could speak peace, seems to take no notice of the sadness of my case. My sins have taken my God away, and what more do I have?"

And when we are set on fire with the sense of his wrath, the more that we think, the more we are distressed. Every thought returns with sad tidings, and pours oil onto the flame. And what anguish we feel when we continually think of a displeased God! There is nothing on earth that resembles it, nor are any words capable of expressing it. We then smell the fire and brimstone of the infernal pit. Then a man may say with David, *The sorrows of death encompassed me, and the pangs of hell got hold of me*, Psa 116.3. I think that these spiritual terrors are of the same kind as those

felt by the ones who are now in hell; they differ only in degree, and in duration. For a sinner who is under the sense of God's displeasure, and in terror for his sin, it's as if he is in a burning oven or in scalding oil; he is in every way beset, and in every way tormented. Trouble of conscience is indeed a slighter thing; but the sense of wrath kindled there, is vastly terrible. It is the suburbs of destruction; it is the nauseous smell of the bottomless pit. Job 6.4, *The arrows of the Almighty are within me; the poison of which drinks up my spirit.* The terrors of God set themselves against me. Whatever David thought about, whichever way he turned, he saw nothing but what filled him with amazement. Psa 88.16, *Your fierce wrath goes over me; your terrors have cut me off.*

4. What these troubled souls are afflicted with, the fear they have, is that this displeasure will be eternal, as implied here: *Has his mercy clean gone? Will he be favourable no more?* (Psa 77.7-8) And the Church: Lam 3.18, *My strength and my hope perished from the Lord.* So Psa 88.5, *I am free among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more.* Some sickness is grievous to us when we have no hope of getting better. That wrath is not to be born, which we think to be a forerunner of eternal wrath. And so the troubled soul argues thus:

"God has withdrawn Himself, and it may be he will never return again. I have lost him for the present. And Oh! what will become of me, if I lose such a God forever? I now have no beams of light; and what if I go from here into outer darkness? What if my lot and portion should fall among those who are abhorred by the Lord? I once tasted how good He is; and must I lose after this, all the pleasant sense of his mercy? Must Christ *not* be my Saviour, nor heaven be my home after all this? Oh! what will I do? Where will I appear if he were to say at last, *Depart from me, for I don't know you?* Will I be placed at the left hand of Christ? After all that I have read and heard, after all my profession, and strivings, and my prayers, will I be shut out of that Kingdom, when others will enter in? How will I bear so great a disappointment? How will I dwell with everlasting burnings?"

III. If you have not yet been under the apprehension of Gods displeasure, take warning by those who *are*. Don't dare to venture upon any sin, when you behold their grief and their sorrows for *their* iniquities. You see their tears; you hear their lamentable groans. You see that nothing in this world is refreshing or comforting to them. And may you yet hug the serpent that has stung them, and made them cry out in the *bitterness of their souls*? Oh, *stop* where you are! Go no farther, lest you fall into the depths; lest the fire that scorches them begins to seize on you; lest the God whom they account their enemy, begins to frown on you also. Learn obedience by their strokes, lest you too be made to feel the stinging rod. You see how those who once were as cheerful, as pleasant, and as little afraid as you, are now cast down, and troubled, and perplexed, and cannot be merry as they used to be. The sense of God's displeasure has untuned their harps, so that they cannot sing the songs of Zion. You see how their pleasure and their hope is shipwrecked; beware lest you run upon the same rock. For doing so, after the sight of their example, will make you guilty of a *double* crime: first of doing ill, and then of doing it after such a warning as their sorrows gave you. Job says he was *set up as a target*, ch. 7.20. And so are others in the same case. They now receive the shots of that justice which they provoked. But if their punishment doesn't make us humble ourselves and repent, then we may be set in their place. That will render the wounds we then receive, more poisonous and malignant, for not having taken and heeded the warning given us by them before. Be drawn by his goodness and his gentle methods, so that you may never know what his severe displeasure is. For God has further ends in long and terrible afflictions, than the correction or the good of the person so afflicted. They are a part of his government of the world.

And He has regard for the welfare of the *public*, in what seems to relate only to *us*. Deu 17.13, *All the people shall hear and fear, and no longer act presumptuously.*

IV. Beware of provoking God; dread the beginnings of his wrath. *If his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all those who trust in him*, Psa 2.12. *Whoever provokes him to anger, sins against his own soul*, Pro 20.2. And in such a case, the evil spirits have a power given to them to molest and trouble us with their impure suggestions, and with strange and unaccountable fears. Psa 78.49, *He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them.* And in that unhappy moment, when our sin has stirred up His wrath, there is nothing in heaven or on earth that will not range itself on the part of God against us. And the devil himself will then take the same part, not out of love to God, but out of revenge to us, to execute the designs of His justice. And all the world will be so far from yielding to us the least shelter from His wrath, that it trembles at it (Psa 18.13-15).⁴⁷ Psa 104.32, *He looks on the earth, and it trembles; He touches the hills, and they smoke.* Job 9.13, *All the proud helpers stoop under him.* What minister can speak peace to such a soul, when the God of Peace will not? His ambassadors cannot bring a reviving message unless they are charged with it by their Lord and Master. If he makes the heavens to be like brass, then all the fountains of water will be dried up. *The spirit of a man will indeed bear his infirmities* (Pro 18.14); *i.e.*, they will bear his bodily weakness and his pain for a little while. But if he is followed with breach upon breach, and heavier crosses press upon the former lighter evils, then his spirit and his courage will begin to fail. For no briskness of temper, no strength of nature, no liveliness of spirit, can stand before one spark of the wrath of God. They cannot shut their eyes that they might not see it; they cannot sleep that they may forget it; they cannot lose the sting that afflicts them, with all the diversions and the pleasures in the world. The sense of guilt will haunt and pursue them wherever they go.

V. Strive to be safe from the eternal wrath of God, from that wrath which will not be for a moment, but *forever*. If his wrath here makes his servants a terror to themselves and to others, what terror will the damned have when they are compassed about with pure and unmingled wrath, that is hotter and more scorching than all the eruptions of it here on earth? While you see but a small cloud, the least intimations of his displeasure, seek to make your peace with God through Jesus Christ, lest ruin and desolation suddenly fall upon your heads; lest if you stay a little longer, you will have no time or space in which to repent. Oh, how can you fold your arms and be at ease, if the Great God of all the world is your enemy, and you don't know if the next day, the next hour, or the next minute, his arrows may be shot against you. Job 36.18, *Because there is wrath, beware lest he take you away with one blow; then a great ransom cannot deliver you.* The withdrawing of the favour and the love of God, the least eclipses of his shining light, are very terrible. But oh, how much more dreadful would it be, if you were to fall into the terrors of an eternal night! You can in no way escape his justice, Psa 139.8.⁴⁸ Take yourselves to God while he is dealing with you for your good. Though his justice frightens you for your guilt, yet upon your humble submissions, his mercy will relieve you. It is He alone, through Christ, with whom you chiefly have to deal. His anger will pursue you wherever you go, unless you meet Him with humble and repenting tears, and plead the blood of Jesus; and this will quench that fire that has already begun to flame.

⁴⁷ **Psa 18:13-15** The LORD thundered from heaven, And the Most High uttered His voice, Hailstones and coals of fire. He sent out His arrows and scattered the foe, Lightnings in abundance, and He vanquished them. Then the channels of the sea were seen, The foundations of the world were uncovered At Your rebuke, O LORD, At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.

⁴⁸ **Psa 139:8** If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*.

Your *salvation* is concerned; your *souls* are in danger. Therefore make the most earnest applications to God, so that he may be merciful to you before it is too late. If I could tell you that there is a person who designs to set fire to the house in which you live, and I gave you clear information about the time, then afterward I need not persuade you to be watchful. The love you have for your own safety would oblige you to prevent his purpose. This is what I *cannot* acquaint you with here. But I *can* tell you about that which is more formidable. The devil is laying a train to destroy your peace, your comfort, and your hope. Seek to countermine his malicious design, lest he betray you to danger, while you think there is none at all.

VI. Speak kindly and compassionately to those whom you perceive to be under the sense of God's anger. Job complains, *How long will you vex my soul, and break me in pieces?* (Job 19.2) And as men who have long been used to poring over their troubles, he tells them how often they had vexed him. Verse 3: *These ten times you have reproached me; you are not ashamed that you alienate me.* It is likely they didn't intend to vex him with their words. For being good men, they would not be so barbarous. They made good sermons, but very sorry and mistaken applications. It is easy to trample on those with sharp and cutting speeches, whom God and their sorrows have already thrown into the mire. It is easy for those who are in no trouble, to silence and upbraid those who are. As Job says to Eliphaz, *Will vain words have an end? I also could speak as you do, if your soul were in my soul's stead. I could heap up words against you, and shake my head at you. But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief,* Job 16.3-5. When any of your friends are under spiritual trouble, you must carefully abstain from any passionate or sour word or action that may increase their grief. It will be some small help to them to see that you pity them, though you cannot give them relief. Use all the compassionate and kind words to them that you can, and seek to bind up their sores with a gentle hand. Beware of using the least savour of sharpness and reproach and scorn. For these will, as they did to Job, vex their souls more; they will be evil in you, as well as unpleasant to them. Hence come these complaints: *Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness. I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They also gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink,* Psa 69.20. *Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those who are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud,* Psa 123.4. But above all, abhor the thought of taking the least inward delight from their miseries. *You should not have looked on the day of your brother, in the day that he became a stranger; nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress,* Oba 1.12. *You should say, Why do we persecute him, seeing that the root of the matter is in him?* Job 19.28

Roughness and severity is not the way to help those who are troubled and cast down. He is learned, who speaks *a word in season to the weary*, Isa 50.4. The rarity of such a person is expressed in Job 33.23: *If there is an interpreter, he is one among a thousand, to show man his uprightness.* Those who — under the guise of ambassadors of the Gospel of Peace — do nothing but thunder out the law to a wounded and troubled soul, show that they are unlike the Jesus whom they would seem to represent. They show they have very little skill in such matters, and no experience at all. Nor do they do as they would have done to them in a like case. There is a sort of balsam in compassionate and gentle words. Though they do not fully perform a cure upon our wounds, yet they make the pain and the sting less. Whereas a rough and sour carriage will exasperate and heighten them; it only pours oil onto the flame.

CHAP. 7. What to do if you think God is angry with you.

Showing what is to be done by those who think God is angry with them. And first, of prayer as a principal help against their trouble. And some objections of tempted persons answered.

I will now make application for those who are under an apprehension of God's anger. There are no people in the world whose case requires greater pity, and to whose relief we should be more inclined to contribute all that we are able. While we are at liberty, their poor souls are under the bondage of an overwhelming fear. That God whom *we* serve with hope, is terrible to *them*. They find no delight in those ordinances, and that sabbath which yield sweetness and refreshment to us, because the Comforter who should uphold their souls, has departed from them.⁴⁹ If on a journey we saw any person wounded and mourning under his bleeding wounds, and crying out for help, the compassion that is fixed in human nature would move us to assist him, and not to pass by and suffer him to groan under the pain of so deplorable a condition. And much more should we be ready to help our fellow creatures in a far sadder and more dreadful case, such as is now before us. There are a great many at this very time, who are complaining that they have no hope, no prospect of deliverance from their present miseries and afflictions; who tell us they are cast off by God; that he has forsaken them; that their sins are set in order before them; and they are afraid that the God whom they once thought was their own God, will be favourable no more.

Oh! how little do we know what we do when we sin! It is easy for a moment; it yields us a little superficial transient delight. But it leaves a woeful sting, and a lasting bitterness behind. Oh! what would such poor creatures give, that they had never sinned? Or that they had never sinned so willfully, so frequently against that God whom they once experienced to be very good and gracious, but whom they now find to be very severe and very terrible? They cannot look below without thinking that hell is opening its mouth to swallow them up. They cannot look above, without seeing the great Creator of heaven and earth as an enemy to them. And who can stand before thoughts so cutting and overwhelming as these? Now, this being a condition which I was in myself not long ago, and from which the mighty grace of God has been pleased to save me, I desire to give all the help I can to such dejected and trembling souls. And there are none among us, perhaps, who may not at one time or other fall into such depths as these. Therefore I hope the following directions may be of some use or other. I beg of you who are at ease now, to regard these things. For if you fall so low, the anguish and bitterness of your spirits will not allow you to give such a distinct and careful attention to what will be spoken to you *then*, as you may *now*.

First, if you are under the sense of God's anger for your sin, *pray earnestly to Him*, to turn his wrath away. We usually deprecate war, and famine, and the plague, and those other mischiefs which, by the evils they bring upon our bodies, are very formidable to us. But this sense of the Divine Displeasure has something in it that is *more* formidable. For it brings an unspeakable load of trouble on the soul, and it wounds that part of ourselves which is capable of having either a very pure and noble joy, or a very piercing grief and sadness. A man who is sunk under a burden that is too heavy for him to bear, cannot help but groan to be at ease. Thus we have Psalm 6.1-4:

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your wrath, nor chasten me in your hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak. O Lord heal me, for my bones are vexed. My soul also is sorely vexed; but you, O Lord, how long? Return, O Lord; deliver my soul. O save me for your mercies' sake.

⁴⁹ Rogers does not mean *finally* departed, as if salvation were lost. See Obj. 1, cons. 2, below. – WHG

These are the breathings of someone who is sensible of a great and a violent distress. And they tell us that even our weakness, and our helpless condition, is an argument that we may plead with God, such as we have here: *Have mercy upon me, for I am weak*. Your goodness, Your glory and power, will be rendered more illustrious in giving some relief to one so desolate and so low as I am. But I know what poor trembling souls will be ready to reply:

Obj. 1. *Alas! I cannot pray.* The Spirit who should warm my soul, and kindle my desires, does not move upon me as he used to do. I grieved and vexed him up to here, and now he has left me to grieve and vex alone. I am so troubled, that I don't know what to say. And when I endeavour to pray, I find no fervour, no life at all. My prayers have grown very troublesome and uneasy to me.

Ans. I grant you, this is a sad enough case. It is sad for creatures so miserable, and so full of wants as we are, not to be able to pour out our supplications before the Lord. And it is sadder when our sins have made the Spirit retire, who alone can teach us how to pray. But there are some considerations that may support us, even in so sad a case as this.

1. Our distress teaches us the folly of our sin, and causes us to hate what has cost us so very dear; and it is well for us that we see the odiousness of it, even if it is hurt and pain that opens our eyes. It is better to be wounded in order for a cure, than to die at ease, and so perish forevermore.

2. The Spirit is not so withdrawn that he will not return upon our earnest addresses for his grace. He still hovers about us. And though we did ill to shut him out before, yet this blessed guest only waits for a favourable opportunity to do us good again. He is not entirely gone — that sense which we have of sin, is His own work.

3. Our indisposition to the duty of prayer, is no sign that we are void of life. A bed-ridden person lives as well as one who is in firm and pleasant health. A groan is as much a sign of life, as laughter and a merry song. It is very undesirable indeed, to have such a feeble and decaying life; but the way to make it stronger is to keep our souls exercised. The weak and creeping motion with which we stirred at first, being continued, will enable us to tread with a steadier foot, and we will get several paces farther in a very little while. By praying, even in a very poor manner, we will learn to pray. Though we but *sigh* after God, yet even a sigh may ease us a little; and by frequent use, it is turned into a loud and prevailing cry. God is still your Creator. And the One who hears the ravens and the young lions when they roar for meat, will not be deaf to you.

4. It is a more excellent state of soul to pray to God, and to persevere in it, when you have no comfort than when you have it. Sensible consolation ⁵⁰ is a very desirable thing. It is like the dew of heaven; like manna coming from there; like honey or the honeycomb — very pleasant to the taste. But dependence and trust in God, when he is withdrawn, is one of the most glorious acts of faith. And if it is not treated with feasts and splendid entertainments *here*, I can assure you — no, God *himself* has assured you — that it will fare very well in the next world. Sensible consolation may be in the *inferior nature*, as the mystical people speak of it. It may be occasioned by the temper of the body, the harmony of the passions, or the agreeable dispositions of the natural spirits. But those other less pleasant acts, are seated in the highest region of the soul, in the *understanding* and the *will*; and on that account, they are more truly spiritual and abiding.

5. Those poor troubled people who complain of their deadness and incapacity to manage the duty of prayer, should consider what an influence their fears have had upon their bodies. Fear naturally contracts and dulls the heart; its motions are weak and languid. Despairing thoughts and

⁵⁰ *Sensible*: tangible; palpable; capable of being sensed. — WHG

apprehensions about our everlasting state, dry up our moisture. And by cutting off our hopes, they make everything that was pleasant to us, wither away. It is a very hard matter for the soul to retain its heat and warmth when its dear companion, the body, does not assist it as it used to do — when the spirits with which it serves itself in so many several actions, are stagnated into a feeble and almost indiscernible motion. There have been some great saints who, by a sort of holy *antiperistasis*,⁵¹ have glowed in their hearts with a quicker flame to God, when all has been cold and stormy around them. There have been some who have never had more inward health than when their outward man decayed; and whose souls seemed manifestly to thrive when their bodies were moldering away. But generally speaking, the neighbourhood, or nearness of a sickly body, proves a great clog and hindrance to the mind. There is no question but that God will make allowances for our weakness. And groaning after Him by one who is under the power of a disease, may be as gratifying to him as long-continued prayer by one in health. Therefore, pray to God, even if it is with heaviness. Though mingled with many a bitter sigh, it will yet be a payment of that homage which you owe to God; and you don't know how soon you may meet with a gracious return. You may kneel down in sorrow, and he may lift you up with joy, and say, *Be of good comfort, your sins are forgiven you*. And I know that would be very welcome and pleasant news to you — the news of a kingdom to be your own, would not be half so refreshing.

Obj. 2. *It is not for me to pray.* I am sinner enough already, God knows; and would you have me aggravate my guilt? For I have wandering thoughts and an unbelieving heart. I am a *wicked* person, and *the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord*, Pro 28.9. And therefore, to what purpose should I pray? If any man indeed breaks the laws of God with contempt, and then thinks to make satisfaction by his prayers, and an outward or pompous devotion, he offers an affront to the all-knowing God. And His holy eye cannot look upon an action so criminal without the greatest disdain and scorn. If a man swears, and curses, and damns himself with one breath, and then desires God to bless him with the next, this would be a ridiculous pretence to religion. And such are likely to find severe punishment from that God whom they abuse with so shameless a confidence, and of whom they speak with so little reverence. If a man desired God to help him rob, plunder, or wrong his neighbours, this would be (as far as he could) to make the Holy One of Israel a partner in his crimes. If a man killed another unjustly, and glutted himself with revenge, and then, as some have expressed it, said grace over his bloody banquet, this would be to commit a double wickedness. It was an abominable thing when so many harmless Protestants were so barbarously butchered in *France*, to sing *Te Deum* ⁵² at Rome, for the massacre of so many poor creatures. It was as if the God of Mercy had been cruel as well as they; as if the rage that came from hell had descended from the God of Love; as if a man who lives at the Prince's charge, and is maintained at his table, were to break the most venerable laws of his kingdom, and then thank the Prince for giving him a power to do what he knows the Prince detests and hates.

There is no question that it is the duty of a wicked man to pray to God. I suppose there is none who thinks Simon Magus was a very good man. And yet he was exhorted, even when he was in *the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity*, to pray, *if perhaps the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven him*, Acts 8.22. If you think yourselves wicked, there is nothing that is *more* your duty, than to beg the grace of God — to strive, to knock, to call upon Him while he may be found. But beware not to think that some failings, even in some considerable duties, are a sign of your total

⁵¹ *Antiperistasis*: resistance or reaction roused by opposition, or by the action of an opposite principle. — WHG

⁵² A Latin hymn, "Thee, O God, We Praise." — WHG

apostacy. Unbelief is in the best of us; but not indeed in its reigning power. Strive as much as you can; then bewail your weakness, and implore the help of God, and he will be favourable to you.

Obj. 3. *It is true; I know it is my duty to pray.* And I have prayed for several months, and for several years, and I still have the same diseases, and the same fears that I ever had. I have no less pain in my body, no less disquietness in my soul, than I had the first moment that I began to pray. *He has hedged me about so that I cannot get out; He has made my chain heavy. Even when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer,* Lam 3.7-8. I am just like Saul when he inquired of the Lord, 1Sam 28.6, *The Lord did not answer him, either by dreams, or by Urim, or by Prophets.* He would have no communication with him, take no notice of what he did. I too am in such a case. I inquire after Him in his ordinances, but I have no news of his gracious presence there. In tears I pour out my soul day and night, and pray. But my prayers that I send up to heaven bring back again to my poor weary soul no tidings of comfort, or of peace. My eyes fail with looking up; my heart faints. And I can hold out no longer in a duty in which I find no delight, and which brings me no advantage. Why should I wait upon the Lord any longer?

Ans. This I think is one of the greatest temptations with which Satan assaults troubled souls. He knows well, that once they quit their hold of God, they fall into his hands. They lengthen out his chain, and whet his malice, and come within his reach. And there is no duty which the devil hates more than prayer, for it has many a time defeated his designs, and made his kingdom shake.

THE 1ST GENERAL RELIEF

Therefore I earnestly desire of you — as you love your souls, and as you would not dishonour God, nor gratify the devil — that you would *never give up on prayer*. Though you but chatter like a crane, yet it is better than to be altogether silent. Though you but mourn after God, it is better than to resolve to let him go; though you can but say, *Lord be merciful to me, a sinner*; though you can but strike upon your breast, and look up to heaven; though you can but *creep* in His ways — it is better than to leave them. Though you can but speak a word or two in prayer, it is much better than not to pray at all. Oh what a terrible thing it is to leave calling upon God; to give ourselves up for lost; to say it is *vain*, when *nothing is too hard* for Almighty Power and Infinite Goodness to do. And woe to us when we quit the Rock of Ages, and commit ourselves to the waves. What sorrows do we then meet with, and how low do we sink?

How intolerable it is to have the rebukes of our conscience, the upbraidings of Satan, the guilt of sin, the fear of hell, and to have no God to whom we can go with hope! Do not allow the greatness of your evils to deprive you of that support which is to be found in the performance of this duty. Though you don't have a quick answer to what you desire, yet it in no way follows that your prayers are not heard. God knows better than you, what will be the most proper season in which to bestow the mercy that you think is most necessary. His delays in this kind are no sign of his abhorrence. He may suffer us to fall into very great agonies so that, like our Lord in the garden, we may pray more earnestly. And our requests are not vain, even though we have no dawns of a near and immediate deliverance. The prayers of the primitive church for kings and all those in authority, were answered many years afterwards, when Constantine was converted to the faith (312 AD). Beware of fainting under the hand of God. And yet, when we can look upon him only as an enemy, it is almost impossible *not* to faint. Under painful and sore troubles, we must frequently look up to God, and beg his strength. And seeing that in such a case, we cannot perform any long or very regular duties, we must often *renew* our prayer, though for the very same desires, Psa 142.4-5; Eph 6.18. And to this purpose consider the following:

1. There is none besides God himself who can help you; and this should cause you to persevere in prayer. His hand alone can heal the wounds. It is common for the troubled soul to say, Oh what I would give for one beam of hope! I would give all the world, if I had it, for one pleasant sight of the face of God. It is not so to be obtained: not by bare wishes, nor by the purchase of anything that is so low and contemptible as all that which is in the world. When the heavens are brass, none can cause the rain to fall; when the sun has set, all the artificial fires which the skill of man can make, will not yield so large and so pleasant a light for this earth as *He* did. His return chases away the darkness, and brings to us the welcome day. In a distrust of your own weakness, have recourse to this God, and say with David, Psa 51.12, 17, *Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit... The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart – These, O God, You will not despise.* It must be the act of a power that is omnipotent, to give you comfort. Not all the Angels in heaven, nor all the men on earth, can help you *unless* He is pleased to do it. As you contribute nothing to your first regeneration — as the thing created does nothing to bring itself into being, but only receives from the Creator's power and goodness what He is pleased to give — don't expect too much from the most knowing ministers, or from your dearest friends. They are but cisterns which can yield no water to quench your thirst, unless they are filled with water by the clouds of heaven. As to the satisfaction and quieting of a troubled soul, *all men are vanity*. It is an incommunicable prerogative of the Divine Nature, to certainly and infallibly relieve the miserable. Isa 57.19, *I create the fruit of the lips.*

Other friends either don't know your wants, or by their own poverty or distance, they are not in a capacity to supply them. But God is *always* near, *always* full of goodness, and He is acquainted with whatever we need or expect. If all the world were your friends, and He was your enemy, the gaiety of their looks, the pleasure of their smiles, would not take away the terror of His frowns. The threatening cloud would hang over your heads, and frighten you with its dreadful presages wherever you went. And on the contrary, if all the people in the world were your enemies, and He was your friend, his love would sweeten all their hatred; his voice would still all their clamours; his arm would fence off all their blows; and under the wings of His providence, you might lie down and sleep in peace. He can save you when you have destroyed yourselves; when you have run to the very door and gates of hell, He can pull you back. Even when you are dying, He can strengthen and revive you. It is with Him that you principally have to deal. You must therefore pray to Him, because your help can come from Him alone.

When Adam had committed sin, he was afraid, and took no pleasure even in Paradise, though (as one says) "The Sun yet shined upon his head with as gentle and refreshing beams; the rivers ran as clear as before; the birds sung with as melodious a voice; the flowers had as fragrant a smell; the herbs were clothed with as fresh a verdure, and all the fruits flourished as before. But from the poor man, peace and innocence had fled away. All without was calm, but he found a tempest rising in his own breast, which he didn't know how to slay." Those of us who have by woeful experience felt the terrors of the Lord, know that all the advice of our friends, all their arguings and discourses, all their entreaties and prayers, gave us no manner of ease till God Himself was pleased to command salvation for us. Job 34.29, *When he gives quietness, who can make trouble? And when he hides his face, who can then behold him? Whether it is done against a nation or a man alone?* The greater our distresses, the more fervent our prayers should be. And when the winds are highest, and the storms increase, and threaten us with shipwreck and with ruin, the nearness and the greatness of our danger, must cause us to arise and call upon our God with more speed. Therefore, even if you have the sense of his displeasure, yet say, "There is none can help me but

God himself. There is none can heal my diseases, or forgive my sins, but He alone. Therefore, as long as I live, I will pray, and call upon Him till he has mercy upon me.”

2. *Secondly*, Though you are under the sense of God’s anger, you have encouragement to pray, from the many promises and from the office and the name of Christ. That Mediator who well remembers what he felt when he groaned under his Father’s wrath, also knows with what flames your souls are scorched. He looks upon you with a most compassionate eye, and will awake to promote your safety if you but say, like the poor frightened disciples, *Master save us, or else we perish*. It is true, he is attended with illustrious spirits, some of which were never thus sick, and others whom he has fully cured. But in the throng of his admiring courtiers, in the midst of their cheerful and pleasant *hallelujahs*, his heart is concerned for *you*, and his ears will be open to *your* cry. His intercession gives you a good ground of hope. He ever lives to manage that glorious and honourable work; and having an unchangeable priesthood, *he is able to save to the uttermost, those who come to God by him*, Heb 7.25. “To the uttermost” is (as one observes) a good word, and put in for our comfort.

“For (he says) let your soul be set upon the highest mount that ever any creature was yet set upon, and that it is enlarged to take in and view the most spacious prospect both of sin and misery, and the difficulties of being saved, that ever yet any poor humbled soul cast within itself. Yes, join to these all the objections and hindrances of your salvation that the heart of man can suppose or invent against itself. Lift up your eyes, and look to the utmost that you can see; and Christ by his intercession is able to save you beyond the horizon and furthest compass of your thoughts, even ‘to the utmost’ and the worst case the heart of man can suppose.”⁵³

Cry often to God, *Oh pity me, a poor helpless sinner, for the sake of Christ. He bore Your wrath; turn it away from me, for I am not able to bear it*. The name of Jesus carries comfort and salvation with it. He is a perfect Saviour in every time of need. The name of Jesus Christ tells you that his office is to do good to the miserable, to heal the diseased, to open the eyes of the blind, *to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound*, Isa 61.1. You are to pray in that name which was celebrated by all the patriarchs and holy men of old, by the prophets and by the priests under the Law, though it was then wrapped up in obscure types and representations. It is that name in which God himself delights; at which the angels bow with reverence, and at which the devils tremble; that name which is great in heaven and earth — in which you were baptized, and in which you must place all your hopes. In this name you may implore assistance in all your wants, and this may furnish you with a holy confidence; for it is the name of the Son of God, of His entirely beloved Son. And it would be a reproach to this great and venerable name, to pray with distrustful thoughts. Oh, let this be a support to you: that you may have access to God by this name which has been dear to all the faithful, and must be so to you; and which has been the refuge of many a poor trembling soul. This is the name which the saints of God have mentioned with great delight in all their straits; the name of which they were pleased to frequently hear and to speak, and which was the joy of their hearts, and for which they did not refuse to suffer death. Some have taken the pains to observe that it is mentioned in the epistles of Paul 220 times, and often in the gospel of John — so sweet, so dear to them was the name of Jesus.

This is the first general way of relief that those who are under the sense of God’s anger ought to take; *namely*, to pray to him. So Jer 10.24, *O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in your*

⁵³ Dr. Thomas Goodwin, *Triumph of Faith*, from *Christ’s Intercession*, p. 199.

Part I - Chap. 7. What to do if you think God is angry with you.

anger, lest you bring me to nothing. Psa 39.10, Remove your stroke from me, for I am consumed by the blow of Your hand. Also, Psalms 85.4-7; 38.21-22; 138.3; 143.2.

CHAP. 8. Of Faith in Christ

Of faith in Christ, as another help under the sense of God's displeasure. And the several tendencies it has to calm an afflicted soul under long and sore trials.

THE 2ND GENERAL RELIEF

This relief is that, when you are under the sense of God's anger for your sins, *act faith upon God and Christ*.⁵⁴ Faith, I may well say, is the mother of all the graces. It conceives and gives birth to them, and takes care to promote their growth. It contributes life to them at the beginning, and causes them to thrive and flourish afterwards. With faith, our lowlier services meet with a cheerful and a favourable acceptance; and without it, not all the most pompous devotions, not all the most tedious and painful mortifications that we could ever practise, would be of any value in the sight of God. What mighty things has faith produced? What miraculous triumphs did it gain? No history can furnish us with an account of so many great and illustrious heroes, of so many difficulties, and such great victories, as the 11th chapter of *Hebrews* furnishes. Not one mentioned there failed to meet with great troubles; not one there failed to overcome them. And it is always expressed "*by faith*" they did this or that. To most, faith appears to be an easy thing, not having seen their sins in their odiousness and their aggravations, not having given much thought to the holiness, and justice, and majesty of God, and of the spiritual law that pierces into all the depths and recesses of the soul. They think it is a small matter. But to a poor sinner who is under the rebukes of God and of his own conscience; who is awakened with terrible threats and amazing fears; who sees vast multitudes of sins within, and sees hell without — there is nothing more difficult. For thus he argues with himself,

"Can a holy God bear with so vile a sinner? Can he forgive so many and such great iniquities? Will he be gracious to someone who has been so much his enemy as I have been? Will that love ever be shown to me, which I have so much slighted and undervalued — and for my contempt of which, God knows I now pay very dearly? Will the Great Ruler of heaven and earth be favourable to a worm? Will he admit a rebel to his presence and his glory?"

It is not easy to satisfy a mind that is struggling with those manifold objections which carnal reason, and sense, and a man's own heart, set themselves against with so much seeming strength and force. But now there are several ways by which this faith, so much opposed, prevails and obtains a conquest over such subtle and plausible enemies as these.

1. Faith quiets the soul, by directing it to consider the nature, the promise, and the word of God. It takes away the sourness of our thoughts, by which we are apt to conclude that God is of a furious and implacable nature; that he will never be reconciled, or deal with creatures so mean and so sinful as we are. This reveals to us the terms of his Covenant, the free offers of his mercy:

Isa 27.4-5. *Fury is not in me. Who would set thorns and briars against me in battle? I would go through them; I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he **shall** make peace with Me.*

"His strength," means the holy properties of his nature, his goodness, his unchangeableness, his faithfulness, which he has graciously revealed with a design to thereby support our hearts. Faith guides us to the view of his promises, to the truth and authority of the promiser, to his all-sufficiency, and his readiness to pardon and to save. And this indeed is hardly to be entertained.

⁵⁴ To "act faith" is to *exercise* faith, or to act *in* faith and *on* faith in Christ, who is the object of our faith. — WHG

To think that when we are under the apprehensions of his wrath, that He is ready to *forgive!* For if I may judge others by myself, it is not so much his *power* that we then question, as his *goodness*; it is not so much whether he *can* (for that we know well enough), but whether he *will* give us help. Now faith leads our trembling souls to the promises, which are the voluntary engagements of God, by which *He has obliged himself to do us good*; which are the product of his love, and which convey a quickening power and virtue to the soul. It also shows us the foundation on which all these promises rely, even Jesus Christ, in whom they are *Yes and Amen*, i.e. they are very certain and very true; *and he is the same, yesterday, and today, and forever*, Heb 13.8.

Faith makes us humble, and consequently patient; it empties the soul of all proud and lofty thoughts; it sees that it has nothing of its own on which to trust, and therefore it depends on God alone; it reveals his relations as a Creator and as a Father. And it produces acts in the mind that are suitable to these comfortable titles. *Psa 42.11, Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.* Suitable to that title in Isa 50.10. *Who is among you that walks in darkness, and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God — i.e., whoever is without any reviving sense of the love of God, any sight of his own grace, and I may add, without any hope of deliverance and salvation? For the least hope carries with it some light, even if it is very feeble, and almost undiscerned.*

Now, for a man to cast his anchor in the dark, and to trust when he has no visible foundation for his faith, is a work of labour and of difficulty. The name of God in this case, is a great relief; and that name is proclaimed, Exo 34.6, *The Lord God, merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant*, etc. So that as Dr. Goodwin says,

“When a poor soul in distress is not able to say, ‘I see such or such signs, or any evidence in myself by which I can conclude that God is my God, or Christ my Saviour; though I know nothing by myself by which I can claim any present interest,’ yet because *Grace and Mercy* is his name, and *Our Righteousness* is his Son’s name, I therefore cast myself upon both for pardon and favour. On these my soul relies, stays, and abides, and from these it will not be driven.

“Two things concur to this trust. First, that there is free grace, good will, and mercy in God, and that Jesus Christ is appointed and made to be our righteousness. And *2dly*, That I am capable of, and I may come to have an interest in both of these; and that even if there is nothing in me which may claim an interest in them, yet there is nothing that *excludes me*. Consequently, I cast myself upon God for both, and there I rest.”⁵⁵

2. Faith will greatly help us, as it gives us a right understanding in the nature of those long and severe afflictions by which we are apt to conclude that God is angry with us. It will show us that there is nothing new or strange in them. It will carry our minds beyond the present pain, and show light beyond the darkest cloud. It will teach us to judge God, not by that which is present, but by that which is to come; not by what we feel, but according to his own promise. It will show us by a delightful manifestation, the period and conclusion of God’s design, and cause us not to judge his works by the first rough and less amiable draught. Faith will show us that anger and love may very well consist together; and that the ruder blows that make us groan and sigh, may be to polish and fit us for his heavenly temple. This will hold us up when our sense is puzzled, and our feet are likely to slide. It sets before our eyes not only the first corrections that are painful to the flesh, but the *end* of the Lord — that he is *very compassionate, and of tender mercy*, Jas 5.11. It shows us

⁵⁵ Goodwin, *Child of Light*, p. 126. [pp. 193-194 in the 1810 London ed.; Rogers adjusted the text slightly. – WHG]

the justice and equity of God's proceedings: that there is nothing in them but what is highly reasonable and necessary, even when they seem to be severe; that they are needful to keep us from wandering, and to prevent our sleeping the sleep of death; that those heavy crosses that tire and weary our spirits, may be sent to promote our eternal rest; and that the deepness of our groans here, may cause us to sing louder *hallelujahs* hereafter.

3. Faith will greatly help us as it both reveals and fortifies us against the power of Satan and his wiles — though these designs of his are invisible and so very little known, and yet more dangerous for being so. In those doleful troubles that I myself have experienced, in all those terrible reflections and overwhelming fears, I was not sensible of any agency of evil spirits; but that all my thoughts and my fears were the product of my own mind. Though *now* I am apt to believe that some of those strange thoughts that I now and then had of God, and those sudden terrors that pierced my soul, must have had in them something of the cruelty and malice of Satan, for they were so very terrible. I truly believe that *people very much wrong both the devil and melancholy people*, in calling the unavoidable effects of their disease, “the temptations of Satan,” and the language of that disease, “a compliance with them.” They both ascribe to the devil a greater power than he has, and they vex the diseased person more than they need to. For I don't question that this *evil spirit*, through the permission of God, is the cause of many painful sicknesses that come upon our bodies. Yet there are also many that are the result of a disordered motion of the *natural spirits*,⁵⁶ and in which he has nothing at all to do. But as it is the common custom of cruel and barbarous persons, to set upon the weak, and to trample on those who are already thrown down, so it is very frequent for the devil to take occasion from our bodily indispositions, to attack and molest our spirits. For these are bereaved even of that force which they used to have when the house in which they dwelt was at ease, and free from those disabilities that they are always under at such seasons. For it is then *night* with us. And in the night, those beasts of prey range abroad, which kept to their dens during the brightness of the day.

But however it is, whatever agency there is of evil spirits in our troubles, acting either on our understandings, our passions, or our imaginations, this *grace of faith* will unveil their designs, and baffle all their stratagems. Eph 6.16, *Above all, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of Satan.* And that this is so very necessary, appears by Luke 22.31-32: *Satan has desired to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed that your faith will not fail.* There is nothing against which that engineer of hell levels his batteries with a greater fury, there is nothing that can lay us open to greater danger, than either downright *unbelief*, or the *weakness* of our faith. Faith not exercised, is like weapons of war left lying beside us: they rust and are in no way serviceable. For while faith remains in exercise, we persevere in our watch; and the God whom faith shows is looking on, comes to our assistance in every time of need. And so does that Redeemer who has conquered the devil by his death and resurrection, and at whose glorious name those evil spirits tremble and are afraid.

4. Faith will greatly help us under the apprehensions of God's displeasure, as it leads us to the consideration of Christ as crucified.⁵⁷ It is easy indeed to learn the *notion* of faith; but a thing of more difficulty, is to *experience* the efficacy and the power of it. For a man to have a sight of that *within* himself, which would condemn him and for which he is troubled, and at the same time to have a discovery of that *without* himself, which will justify him, and to *rejoice* in it, is that which

⁵⁶ That is, of natural origin rather than spiritual adversity. – WHG

⁵⁷ See Dr. John Owen, *On Psalm 130*. p. 279. [*Works*, ed. Wm. Goold, 1850-53, vol. 6, *Verse Fourth*. – WHG]

he is not led to do except by faith in the mystery of the Gospel. If we pore upon our own qualifications, duties, evidences and the like, we will, by a continued circulation of uneasy thoughts, only increase our own trouble. The imperfection and the faultiness of all that we have done, or are able to do, will fill our minds with perplexity and distress. The holiness and the spirituality of the law of God will kill our most forward hopes. Therefore our best way is not to sit still, where we are bewailing our miseries and the sadness of our case; but to arise and run to the City of Refuge that is before us. When we are wounded with the sense of sin, with our weeping eyes, and with our grieved hearts, we are to look up to Christ, of whom the *Bronze Serpent* was a type. When the burden of our iniquities sinks us down, and makes us groan, we must go to Him in whom the weary and the heavy-laden find rest, to that Gospel which, as it reveals and manifests abundance of sin in us, at the same time it manifests our righteousness in Christ. While the one terrifies us with the fear of hell, the other will refresh us with the hope of heaven. The Blood of Jesus extinguishes the wrath of God; and as it makes us safe, it also makes us holy. For it cleanses us from all iniquity. *This is the shelter and the healing of a soul who is in danger, and diseased.*

How many souls have cast their anchor in the dark, when all comfort has failed them for many days? How many have obtained support and relief by saying that if they perished, they would perish at the feet of Christ? And saying that the *Lamb* of God, so full of meekness and of pity, is too gracious to let any perish there? As a Priest, he died for his enemies. He is a meek King; though he is upon a throne of majesty and a place of joy and glory, yet he will admit mourners into his presence. He is a King of poor and afflicted persons, and a *Prince of Peace*. And as he has beams of majesty, so he has a heart of compassion. What mercy may we not expect from so gracious a Mediator who took our nature on himself, that he might be gracious? Let us therefore go to God by Christ, who has satisfied His justice by his death — for without him, God is like a consuming fire to us sinners. Let us go boldly to his throne in the name of Jesus, and we will find that the God of whom we were afraid, will become our friend; and we will experience him to be better to us than we ever thought he would have been. Our unbelieving hearts, while they are such, will be full of darkness and trouble. But *upon our faith* the storm will cease, and the morning will begin to dawn upon us. And instead of that wrath which we feared (and had deserved), we will find that *there is mercy with the Lord, and plenteous redemption*, Psa 130.7.

The first thing that a convinced awakened sinner thinks of is his own danger, and how he may avoid the wrath of God, and what he must do in order for that. Now, it is not to be accomplished by pompous, ceremonious services — not by external mortifications, nor by offering the fruit of his body for the sin of his own soul. But it is by faith in Jesus Christ and his death, by means of which God has become propitious and favourable to us. And as one says, “The first view that a humble soul is to take of Christ, is of his being a Saviour — as made a sin and a curse, and obeying to the death.” And Christ must be considered not only with respect to the excellencies of his person, but as clothed with his garments of blood, and the qualifications of a *mediator* and a *reconciler*. This renders him the fit object of a sinner’s faith. If we think of God, without thinking of Christ, he is vastly terrible and awesome to us. But in and through Christ, those otherwise overwhelming apprehensions become very pleasant and comfortable to us. Let us honour the love that God has shown in Him, with admiring thoughts, and never have low or mean apprehensions of his grace. Christ is near to God, and he pities us. He is able to help us, and is most willing to do so — for those who come to him, *he will in no wise cast out*. He will not upbraid us for our former follies; he will not increase our grief. But once he sees us lying at his feet, and washing them with tears of unfeigned humiliation, he will raise us up, and bid us to *be of good cheer*.

5. Faith will remove the troubles that we have from the sense of God's displeasure, by conveying to us that life and strength from Christ, which will enable us to subdue all our spiritual enemies, Phi 4.13.⁵⁸ Faith will bring him to us. And when he is in our vessel, let the waves threaten us with ever so formidable a noise, we are sure not to be cast away. All the specters that frighten us will vanish if we but once hear him say, as he did to his disciples, *It is I, do not be afraid*. This grace will unite us to Christ, and communicate his power to us in the several measures that we need. And without his assistance, long and sore afflictions will tire our spirits, and destroy our hope. He is necessary for us, for he has a perfect knowledge of our enemies, of their force, their policies, and their designs. He has by his own combat learned to fight, and by his experience he can teach us to get the victory. Neither the multitude, nor violence, nor the obstinacy of our enemies, can hinder the success and the glory of His triumph.

In Col 1.11, Paul prays that they might be *strengthened with all might*, because as we must deal with diverse enemies, and we are sick from diverse infirmities, we need to receive not one or two kinds of strength, but many different ones.⁵⁹ For in nature you see that the strength of bodies is different: one resists one thing and yields to another; one has the virtue to repulse the force of one element, but not to guard itself from another. In a manner, so it is in the souls of men. One man frees himself from the temptation of one sin, who is not able to defend himself from another; one man resists the temptations of prosperity, whom adversity overthrows; one man bears troubles for a while, whom the length or tediousness of them will overcome; and if one of our spiritual enemies succeeds against us, we are undone forever. Therefore, as the Apostle says, we need to have recourse to Christ, who can furnish us with skill and strength to defeat whatever stands in the way of our peace, or our salvation. To have someone on our side who has returned from the field of battle as a conqueror, is a mighty encouragement and privilege. Such is our Lord. He is a victorious and a triumphant Saviour. He will not leave his conquests incomplete, for he goes on conquering and to conquer. And the glory of his enterprises has not filled him with disdain or contempt for the poor and needy; for he who is the King of Zion, as I said before, is a meek and lowly King.

By faith in Christ we obtain his Spirit, which by opening our eyes, will show us that fountain of living waters where we may both quench our thirst, and wash away our filth. This Spirit will take away the sting of guilt, and sweeten the cross that was very bitter to us. And when our Lord has come to help us, when we know that he is afflicted in our affliction, then that yoke which galled us before, will become like an ornament about our necks. And when we have the pardon of our sins, and the hope of God's acceptance, that affliction which we thought was a burden too heavy for us to bear, will become light and easy for us. *Out of the devourer shall come forth sweetness*. From those very fears that overwhelmed us, will spring glorious hopes; and those hearts which a slavish fear of the wrath had contracted, will be enlarged with a sense of His goodness and his love; and we will not look upon him as an enemy, but as a friend; not as a judge, but as a father. Isa 33.24, *The inhabitants will not say, I am sick. The people who dwell in it will be forgiven their iniquities*. Alas! When God leaves us, the smallest danger terrifies us; the least dart of Satan makes an impression on our spirits; the least trouble sinks us low — such inconsiderable creatures are we. But if the Lord is with us, if Christ is on our side, neither the law, nor sin, nor death can hinder us from bidding defiance to all that is against us, 1Cor 15.56-57.

⁵⁸ **Phi 4:13** I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

⁵⁹ Vide Daillé, *in loc.* [Jean Daillé (1594–1670) Huguenot minister and Biblical commentator. See note, Part I, chap. 12, par. 8 below, for the “*loc.*” – WHG]

6. Faith will give us relief under the apprehensions of God's displeasure, or our sin, as it will show us the period and conclusion of those miseries which we now are groaning under. Our *sense* will tell us that our troubles are tedious and very long; but our *faith* will rectify our judgment and show us that though we have been in heaviness, it is but for a season. Our sense makes us think our night of weeping is very long; but *faith* sets the morning before our eyes. And indeed, when that morning comes, the time of sorrow will appear to have been very short. Our weeping will bear no proportion with our joy, nor our groans with our hallelujahs. The luster of our crown, and the glories of our triumph, will make us forget the blood, sweat, and labour of the combat, though while here below we thought it hard. Faith will wipe away our tears and cause us to take a further prospect, and to see where they now are, who once were mourners as well as we. Job is no longer wondered at by his friends, sitting on a dunghill (2.8-13), but shining with glory in the highest heaven. Heman is no longer distracted with terrors (Psa 88.15-16), but infinitely pleased with the sight and enjoyment of his God. There is Asaph also singing praises to him (Psa 75.9), though he thought and was afraid that His mercies had clean gone, and that he would be favourable no more (Psa 77.7). Faith will solace your drooping spirits, by causing you to frequently remember that though God is angry, it is but for a moment; and that though you have but sour grapes now, they are only to prepare you for a better relish of the joys above. It is *this* that sets our feet upon a Rock, and produces in our fainting souls, a secret support and hope that though it is night with us for the present, it will not always be so. Rev 3.21, *To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father on His throne.* The dangers and distresses on the way, will make us like our home even better. All the years of our life, though spent in sore afflictions and anxieties, will be but a very little space when we have landed at our haven of joy and immortality.

CHAP. 9. Direct Acts of Faith

Of the direct acts of faith, as the most suitable to a distressed soul; and also of waiting upon God, with several considerations to enforce it. And that a person in great affliction ought to hope that it may be better with him.

THE 3RD GENERAL RELIEF

Look forward to Jesus Christ, when you find things perplexed and troubled in your own souls. And indeed, in the direct acts of faith, we have nobler objects to converse with than when we look and pore upon our guilty selves. When we look into our troubled hearts, we can see nothing besides confusion and disorder there; but we may at the same time discern an all-sufficient fulness in God and Christ to relieve our wants. It is a long and a tedious work to consider the several steps by which we are to proceed in such a case, whether we have believed or not. Our duty at this very instant is to believe — *i.e.* under a penitent sense of what we have done amiss, to look to Christ for help. We must carefully distinguish between *justification* and *sanctification*; between those habits and those holy actions that are the *effects* of faith, and faith *itself*. Our sanctification is full of imperfection; but that righteousness of Christ, in which alone we are to trust for acceptance with God, is complete and perfect. These are things to be considered by people under spiritual distress. But if you are under *the disease of Melancholy* to any great degree, I am sensible that neither this, nor any other direction will be altogether available. It is such a stubborn and obstinate disease, that it is not to be overcome by rational methods and persuasion — no more than a broken bone can be set again by words and talk. It is only God who is fully acquainted with the nature and violence of this worst of distempers. It is His power and His grace alone that can chase it away. And all those things that depend on consideration, and that may succeed in other cases, do not have the same tendency to good in this one, because it is our *disease* to always pore and think; and it is our *misery* that we cannot think to any purpose. I beseech you to remember that the foundation of all our peace and comfort is Christ alone, and faith in him. Mortification, self-denial, and other graces are the superstructure that is laid upon it. But truly, all that we can do in great and deep affliction, and in sore distresses of soul, is but to look up to Christ as a poor wounded bleeding man looks up and cries for help to someone who passes by on the road. And our Saviour and our Physician is so compassionate, that he will regard us, though we are able to say little more than this: *Have mercy on us, you son of David*. Under the prospect of our great infirmities, and from the manifold imperfections of our duties, and under the sense of our own nothingness and unworthiness, let us humbly take ourselves to Christ. He will not disdain or slight our approaches to him, nor leave them unattended without some manifestations of reviving grace and mercy.

THE 4TH GENERAL RELIEF ⁶⁰

When you've done all this, you must *wait till the Lord appears for your relief and help*. Psa 123.2, *Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden to the hands of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He has mercy upon us*. Though his strokes are very painful, yet we are sure that we have deserved them; though his delays of help are tedious, yet we have merited a much longer delay at his hands. We are indeed like so many poor slaves under the bondage of our fears and our troubles. But alas! we have brought ourselves to that slavery, and we must look to God till he sets us free again. And though our Master is angry with us, yet he is a Master still. And that relation we have to him, that interest which we

⁶⁰ Originally labelled "IV." But since there was no preceding III, it was clear this was the next "General Relief." The whole series 1-15 has accordingly been labelled to match the first three instances.

have in his covenant, may be somewhat supporting and comfortable to us. It is an easier thing to bear any trouble that continues for a week, or a month, and then passes away. But this will be the trial of our *faith*: if we can maintain our dependence and trust in God when he afflicts us sorely for many months or years together. If we see no sign of help, no prospect of deliverance, we are still to wait till the time has come, even the set time to favour us. And this must be done with patience, with a silent and quiet resignation to his Will. It is the product of a calm and a quiet soul that is satisfied in the justice of providence, even though it is severe, with only *this* limitation: that you have the freedom and the command of your natural spirits. For if they are hurried and put into confusion by a disease, then indeed you can neither perform this nor any other spiritual action with calmness and deliberation. But in other cases, where the disorder of the spirits is not so great and violent, *whoever believes, does not make haste*, Isa 28.16 — he is not furious and precipitant. And indeed, it is our common fault that we would have the help of God come just when we want; to be eased as soon as we find ourselves in pain; to get to heaven immediately when we find ourselves no longer fit for service here on earth; and to have an unpainful and easy passage there. But God, who is not so tender of our flesh as He is of our spirits, will allow us to be long in trouble, so that all may know by their own feeling, how evil and bitter a thing it is to sin; and that by the methods that please us least, He may do us the most good; and by our temporal inconveniences, He may promote our eternal welfare.

We *ought to* possess our souls in patience (Luk 21.19), in a humble and a quiet silence; and approve of all the dispensations and works of God. Yet how it is possible for us *not* to manifest our sense of grief, even in doleful expressions, I don't know. When a man is under a burden that he cannot bear, or when he is in sharp pain, it is natural for him to groan and to sigh; it is something he cannot help. It would be, as I intimated before, a needless labour to advise people under great affliction and spiritual distress, *not* to complain. For say what we will, they cannot help but complain. Can a man think God is his enemy, and his soul is in danger, and hell is likely to be his portion, and *not* be greatly concerned? Can he see his comforts wither, his hopes expire, and others be at ease while he is in woe and trouble, and *not* be greatly concerned? Or can he be so, and not express his concern for the sadness of his case? Don't blame people who are under *the terrors of the Lord*, for complaining. If your souls were embittered with wormwood and gall, you would complain as much as they. Can they be silent when they think that God has departed from them, and as they fear, departed forever? Can they, in so terrible a calamity, be as quiet and as much unmoved as when they were at ease? Our blessed Lord himself, in the days of his flesh, when his suffering increased upon him, *offered up prayers with strong crying and tears*, Heb 5.7. And in the pain of his inexpressible agonies on the cross, he cried out with a loud voice, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* Mat 27.46. And Psa 32.3, *When I kept silence, my bones grew old through my roaring all day long*. And David assigns the reason for it in *verse 4*, *For day and night your hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer, Selah*.

There are some natural, unavoidable expressions of grief and sorrow which are consistent with that waiting and dependence upon God, which I have mentioned before. Nor is it contrary to this waiting, to desire a speedy and a quick deliverance; you may lawfully pray for it. We have several instances of this, such as Psa 22.19, *Do not be far from me, O Lord; O my strength, hasten to help me*. Psa 31.2, *Bow down your ear to me, deliver me speedily*. Psa 69.17, *Do not hide your face from your servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily*; also Psa 102.2. Psa 40.17, *Do not tarry, O my God*. You may, in imitation of such great examples, frame your requests in this or a similar manner. But when you have done so, if relief does not immediately come, if your distress and your anguish remain, you must still be content to wait, and to justify your Maker in his delays and in

His proceedings towards you, even if they are very terrible — as in Psa 22.1-3. *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not hear; and in the night season, and I am not silent. But you are holy, O you who inhabits the praises of Israel.* Those who aver that religion is in all respects an easy thing, don't know what they say. If they knew what it was to be under the sense of God's displeasure, and under violent, painful distempers for many months together, and yet to wait, and be satisfied with that Providence which thinks it fitting to continue with long pains upon them, and terrible fears — they would find it is not such an easy matter to be truly religious. But that you who are exercised with severe and sharp trials, may arrive to this excellent disposition of being able to still wait on God, consider the following:

Cons. 1. How long God has waited on you! How long he knocked at your doors! How he entreated, and beseeched, and called to you before you let him in! How he followed you from day to day, and from sabbath to sabbath! How he waited for your repentance one year after another, doubling and renewing his expostulations with you, saying as to Jerusalem, Jer 13.27, *Will you not be made clean? When will it be?* And if you refused to hear the calls of the Great God for so long a space, can you think it hard that He doesn't grant a quick answer to your prayers? Would you have help suddenly, when you made the *Eternal* wait for your hearts so very long? He waited on us to do us good — when we ran from him, when we spent our thoughts, our strength, our lives, and our time in vain. After all our rebellious, our undutifulness and disobedience, he moved upon our souls by his Spirit. He excited us to mind our interest, and gave us space in which to repent. Let us *remember* these things to humble us, and to increase our patience, and to keep us from thinking it strange if God delays his help, even for a long time.

Cons. 2. The sovereignty, the greatness, and the wisdom of God. We are his own, and he may do what he will with us. Being His creatures, he may cause us to serve whatever purposes he pleases. And his wisdom will guide even our miseries so as to make them useful to *others*, even if they are sharp and severe to *us*. His ways are far above us. His greatness and his glory being so far above our thoughts, the most suitable temper of a creature towards so great a God, is to be *silent*, and to wait to see what a period infinite wisdom will at length put to those dispensations of his providence, which are so dismal and so terrible to us. If all our comforts that we have in this world, all that we most valued and esteemed, are taken from us; if our afflictions are long and tedious, and accompanied with such stinging particularities as have scarcely been mingled with the crosses of others who have gone before us — *God may yet do what he will with us*. We can have nothing to say to him, because we are the work of his own hands.

Our hearts in sore distresses are apt to say, Why are we so much and so long afflicted? Why are we compassed with such terrible calamities when others are at ease, who appear to have sinned as much as we? But these first risings of murmuring and disquiet are to be *resisted* by the considerations of the majesty and the greatness of God. He may put his creatures to whatever use he pleases, so that He may, though with their own pain, promote the good of others, and their own final good. Though Job, as Mr. Charnock observes,⁶¹ was a pattern of patience, yet he had deep tinctures of impatience. He often complains of God's usage of him as too hard, and he stands much upon his own integrity. But when God comes, in the latter chapters of that book, to justify His carriage towards him, he does not charge Job as a criminal, but considers him only as His vassal. He might have found flaw enough in Job's carriage, and corruption enough in Job's nature,

⁶¹ Stephen Charnock, *Discourse on the Attributes*, page 781.

to have cleared the equity of His proceedings as a Judge. But he uses no other medium to convince him, but the greatness of his majesty, and the unlimitedness of his sovereignty. This so appalls the good man, that he puts his finger on his mouth, and stands mute with a self-aborrence before Him as a Sovereign, rather than as a Judge. His wisdom also — that makes the night to precede the day, and storms to clear the air and make way for a fairer season — ought to silence and pacify our souls. Isa 30.18, *And therefore the Lord will wait, that he may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all those who wait for him.* He knows the fittest times and seasons in which to heal our diseases, to remove our fears, and to do us good.

Cons. 3. How great the mercies are that we are to wait for. It is for heaven and glory, and we have his promise that our faith and our patience shall not be in vain, Isa 35.3-7. And after all the dangers, the snares, the hindrances and temptations of this world, to come to salvation at last, is so great a mercy that it is surely worth staying for. Though we labour six days, yet the rest of the Sabbath refreshes our Spirits; and after the sufferings of this mortal life, so will that eternal Sabbath that is to be kept above with God, give us great refreshment. Our time on earth is a season which, by several trials and afflictions, prepares us for that happiness and glory. As the night frightens us, the morning will surely bring us joy. It is but a little while, and our Lord will come and save us. Let us not surrender ourselves to our spiritual enemies, though we are straitly pressed; for our Saviour is marching to our relief. Jas 5.7. *Behold the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has long patience for it, until he receives the early and the latter rain. Be patient also; establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draws near.* The farmer does not give up his grain for lost, even if it is covered with snow and storm; he expects to see it rise with the returning Spring. So neither should we despair of finding comfort, even if the prayers that we have made bring us no present satisfaction. You know David had the promise of a Kingdom, but what strange difficulties did he meet with? And how long a time was it before he came to sit upon a peaceful throne? We must have conflicts before we get the victory; we must run our race, and strive hard, before we get the reward. But once it is bestowed on us, it will abundantly recompence us for all our tears, and all our heaviness. We are to take up our cross *daily*; every day on earth will afford us cause for patience. We are to watch, for all our time is but as a moment to eternity. Let not our Lord, who will bless us with a long and unspeakable felicity, have cause to say to us as he did to his sorrowful disciples, *Could you not watch with me one hour?* (Mat 26.40) He looks on, knows our weakness, and will give us help. He could immediately solace, and refresh, and save us if he would. But seeing that he is not pleased to do so, let us humbly be silent, and acquiesce in the wisdom of his appointment and decree. For though he delays, he is not unmindful of our sorrows; and in the very minute that is most for His glory, and for our good, he will come and save us. Isa 64.4, *For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen, O God, besides you, what He has prepared for the one who waits for him.*

THE 5TH GENERAL RELIEF

Entertain a secret hope that it will not always be so sad and dismal with you. Though you have made several prayers that have not yet received a gracious answer of peace, yet *pray still*, and do not be discouraged; but like blind Bartimaeus, cry even more earnestly (Mar 10.46-48). You know that the woman of *Canaan* persevered in her attendance on our Lord, even though the words he spoke seemed to have a great deal of sharpness and severity in them (Mat 15.22). Yet she was resolved not to leave him nor be denied; and at last our Saviour highly commended that faith of which he seemed to take no notice before. *It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly*

wait to see the salvation of God, Lam 3.26. The reason for this is alleged in *verses 31-32: For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though he causes grief, yet he will have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.* Though everything you look at within your own hearts, terrifies and perplexes your thoughts, yet the vastness of that mercy that is in God — and which he is willing to communicate to you through his Son — may afford you support and relief. The very possibility of help, though ever so remote, may quiet and calm your souls a little. For though you see nothing for the present but frowns and anger in the face of God, yet you *cannot*, you *should not* say that it will never shine again. Though his strokes are increased, and every day are more painful than they were the day before, you must not then conclude that He who chastens for your profit, will not lay aside the rod. Though you are sinking with your fears, and you have no power left, yet lay hold on the strength of God. He will not knock away your trembling hand, but will encourage your dependence and your trust in Him.

You have not everlastingly perished; you have not yet received your final doom; it is possible that you may escape. There is great comfort in thinking, *Maybe I will be saved, even though by fire.* Though there is more comfort in this: *I fully believe I shall be saved;* as in Zep 2.3, *It may be you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger.* Or Joel 2.13-14, *Who knows but that he will return, and leave a blessing?* Though you are afflicted and tossed with tempests, and not comforted, yet there is a prospect of a quiet shore. Christ is not far off with his pleasant and reviving consolations. Hold out a little longer, and your expectation will not be in vain. Length of pain, and continuance of sorrow, tires and spends the natural spirits. And long attendance upon God, without any manifestation of His appearance for our help, dulls our motions, enervates our souls, knocks the wheels off our chariots, and greatly tempts us to despair and to say, “Because he does not help us, he never will.” Jer 8.18, 20: *When I would comfort myself against my sorrow, my heart faints within me; for the harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and we are not delivered.* But let us hope still; for when we are at the lowest, *then* is the proper season for God to work. We are indeed altogether desolate; but in Him there is complete and suitable salvation. It is an honour that we give to His promise when we *believe* it, and *rely* upon it, when all things seem to flatly oppose our faith. Isa 8.17, *I will wait upon the Lord, who hides his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him;* also Psa 27.13-14.⁶²

When we let our hope go, we pull up the sluice; we deluge ourselves with miseries and calamities that are inexpressible. And yet many times, after long despair, that same God who raises the dead, gives our departed hopes a resurrection, and makes our broken bones rejoice, so very merciful and so good is He.

⁶² **Psa 27:13-14** *I would have lost heart, unless I had believed That I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living.* ¹⁴ Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!

CHAP. 10. People in Anguish should not look for Assurance, but Sin.

Showing, that people under great trouble and anguish of soul, are not to look for assurance or great joy all of a sudden; but as far as they can, to inquire into the reasons for God's displeasure towards them, and to look up to Him through the Great Mediator; and not provoke him further. And also, how they may know when afflictions are sent *in wrath*, and when *in love*.

THE 6TH GENERAL RELIEF

When you are under the sense of the anger of God, *do not look for assurance and great triumphs of soul all of a sudden*. If you have supports, it is a great matter; though as Mr. Bayne ⁶³ used to say, "You don't know what *spiritual festivities* and *jubilation* mean. If you have daily bread to maintain your life, it is what you ought to acknowledge thankfully, even if your tables are not covered with delicacies, and you don't fare deliciously every day." There were but three of the disciples whom our Lord admitted to the sight of his glorious transfiguration. He doesn't treat all his followers with the same dishes, with the same joys and transports. We are sufficiently privileged if we are in the verge of his family, if we are *adopted*, even if there are several who are greater favourites than we, and whom He is pleased to set at his right hand, and on his left. He may choose whom he will, to be his beloved disciples, to whom he will manifest more of his presence and his love, and an extraordinary care. Don't think that because you have read about some who have had heaven meet them with angelical triumphs and consolations, that therefore *you* must drink draughts as full of the same rivers of pleasure, or that they will follow *you* as much as them in this wilderness. Some of the eminent servants of Christ, who have been very laborious and useful, who have been remarkable for their patience, their faith, and their self-denial, have been blessed with a nearer access to God, and have seen more of the Lord of Hosts in his Glory. But it is enough for such unprofitable servants, and such great sinners as we have been, that we look for the Promised Land. Though we don't have many clusters of the grapes of Paradise to cheer us on the way, our Master uses us very well if he doesn't turn us out of doors. Even if we don't fare so well as others, it is a mercy that we have but the crumbs that fall from his table. This advice is needful, because if we look for extraordinary joy and delight, and then don't find it after long waiting, we will be ready to give up our work when we don't receive that pay, in the hope of which we flattered ourselves for a long time. This is all because *some* in a transport,⁶⁴ after long desertion and sore trials, and after the long absence of Christ, have cried out,

He has come, he has come! Oh he has now come, whom I longed to see. Now salvation has come to my house. Now I am fully satisfied; now I am content to die. Oh the riches, the depths, the greatness of the grace of God! Now I see that my fears were too great, my thoughts of him too low. I see that He who inhabits eternity, even the Great Jehovah, will deal familiarly with the sons of Men. I could not have thought that ever I, who was so faint, should be *revived*; that I, who was so full of despair, should be full of hope; that I, who was so near hell, should be brought to the gates of heaven. But my own experience now tells me that it is so.

Song 2.3-4, *I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste; he brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.* This is the language of those whom the King of heaven delights to honour. These are the golden vessels which he fills with the oil of gladness. These are the Elijahs to whom he sends his chariots of fire to convey them

⁶³ Paul Bayne(s) (1573-1617), best known for his commentary on Ephesians. He succeeded Will Perkins at St. Andrews and taught at Christ College, Cambridge. – WHG

⁶⁴ *Transport*: an ecstatic state; rapture. – WHG

home. *But this is not the lot of all his subjects.* This is not what we are certainly to expect. If we go to heaven, even if by dispensations that have a great deal of cloud and darkness in them, yet it will be very well for us if we believe we will be safe. Though there are some who, with Simeon, embrace their Saviour in their arms, and see His salvation before they die, we must wait till after death for the sight of that. Most believers have a comfortable and reviving hope, through grace, that they will come to heaven. But there are few who are so well assured of it, as to have no remaining doubts and fears. Notwithstanding what I have said, we must endeavour to work out our salvation, and by diligence in good works, and holy duties — to strive that we may be among the blessed number of these excellent saints whom God is pleased to clothe with the garments of praise and joy. The passionate feelings of joy are not essential to holiness; though when they are bestowed, they greatly quicken our obedience, and enlarge our hearts. If we resolvedly adhere to God, he will give us what will be sufficient for us. Our very fears will increase our comfort afterwards. By the way in which we least expected it, joy and pleasure will come — like the ravens, *greedy creatures*, unexpectedly brought food to the Prophet (1Kng 17.6).

THE 7TH GENERAL RELIEF

Inquire into the causes of God's anger. He is never angry, as I said before, except when there is very great reason — when we *force* him to be so. What is that accursed thing in our hearts, or in our lives, for which God hides his face, and frowns upon us? What particular disobedience to his commands is it, for which he has taken up the rod? ⁶⁵ Job 10.2, *I will say to God, Do not condemn me; show me why you contend with me.* Lord, my troubles and my sorrows are very well known. Every eye beholds my calamity, every ear is astonished with the report of my sore distress; and all who know me, or have heard of me, wonder why, above all others in the world, I am made so miserable a man, that there has not been an example of a like great and strange affliction since the beginning of the world. I myself, who feel these wonderful sorrows, am most of all perplexed. Show me *for what*, and *why* it is that I should be so.

Job was an upright man; and not being conscious either of secret allowed sin, or open transgression, he might be at a great loss to know the cause of his affliction. But for most of us who are as far from the grace which he had in his trouble, as we are from the riches which he had in his prosperity, we may soon know that God is angry for our sin. And yet at the same time, we must not cease to be solicitous to know what are the particular sins that have made Him tear us up by the roots, and to throw us down as with a whirlwind. What it is that has made Him angry with us so long, and to delay his help so long, that if any evil is undiscovered in our souls, we may lament it with a seasonable grief,⁶⁶ and get a pardon for it. It is not the common course of God's providence, to cover his servants with so thick a darkness as that which our troubled souls labour under in the day, or rather, in the *night* of his displeasure. And therefore, we may with humility desire to know why He proceeds with us in a way that is so singular.

For it is in some way delightful to the understanding, to pierce into the reasons and the causes of things. Psa 74.1, *O God, why have you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?* However angry he is, we must make our addresses to him. And seeing that being cast off, being *separated* from him, is so terrible a thing, He allows us to inquire into the reasons for his proceedings, and to debate the case. And our debate must end in prayer and

⁶⁵ Vid. Caryl. in loc.

⁶⁶ *Seasonable*: timely.

supplication, as here in verse 2.⁶⁷ It is very true that when a man has fallen into a pit, the business of the poor man is not to inquire how he *fell into it*, but how he may be *drawn back up*, and escape the danger that has overtaken him. Yet in this case of the sense of God's displeasure, the knowledge of the *causes* of it may produce many good effects which, though they don't appear in our depths and troubles, yet they will show themselves *afterwards*. They will cause us to forever dread the same things which brought so many miseries upon us. Suppose in another case, a mother brings forth children to the grave, who only views them a while.⁶⁸ And after all the pain of bringing them forth, and after all the care for their future welfare, she sees them one after another snatched away. To know the reason for so terrible a stroke, will greatly support her spirit. For suppose it is to wean her from *terrestrial* comforts, and to give her those comforts that are *eternal*; to take her children away, and to give her more from God; to bury her dear offspring, so that her *declining* graces may have a *resurrection*, or that her comfort in the *living* may be more tangible to her when there are so many *dead*. This will calm her soul, and make even a disconsolate mother rejoice. Thus, when a man is exercised with long and sharp sickness and affliction, to know the causes of it may be useful to promote his humiliation at present, and to make him avoid the same things in the future, if he recovers.

THE 8TH GENERAL RELIEF

When you are under a sense of God's Displeasure, *fly to his Mercy and his Grace in Christ*. When your Creator is angry, there's nothing in this world that can give you relief, but himself. Fly *from* God as absolutely considered in his greatness, justice, holiness, and majesty; but fly *to him* as revealing himself through the Mediator. The hills and the mountains cannot be a shelter from his wrath; where can you go from his presence? Where will the sense of his anger, and your own guilty thoughts, not pursue you? *Take yourselves to him*. And when you think of him, think of him as a God in whom there is the greatest tenderness and pity, and of which all the compassion that is in human nature, is but a weak resemblance. As it is all one with him in temporal deliverances, to save by many or by few (for what dangers can resist His omnipotence?), so it is as easy for Him to forgive a thousand thousand sins, as to forgive one. However unworthy and vile, mercy seeks no other qualification of its object, than it is needy and liable to ruin. And it is a good way to fly *to his mere grace and mercy*, for we have undone ourselves. Poring upon ourselves ⁶⁹ only increases our load; we are apt to say in our distress, 'If we were so mortified to the world, and our hearts were so purified and cleansed, then we might approach with some boldness, Him who is altogether holy.' This is true; and yet we must first ask Him to make us such that He may delight in us. And as we sorrowfully cast our eyes upon our wounds and our miseries, let us look at the same time to that Physician who has provided a remedy for us by Christ, and who can heal all our backslidings, and teach us to apply that remedy. If we are the worst and the most sinful creatures on earth, yet a Saviour is tendered for our acceptance and our choice. And if we will receive him, all our transgressions, however heinous, will be blotted out.

As we have a very deep sense of hell and destruction, so let us have the most enlarged thoughts of the pardoning grace of God. And to this we are encouraged by the revelations that He has made of himself through his dear Son. His forgiveness is like himself. "It is (as one says) an object for

⁶⁷ **Psa 74:2** Remember Your congregation, *which* You have purchased of old, The tribe of Your inheritance, *which* You have redeemed-- This Mount Zion where You have dwelt.

⁶⁸ That is, she gives birth, but her children are stillborn, or die in infancy. – WHG

⁶⁹ Or in today's language, "dumping on ourselves," by poring over all our faults. – WHG

faith alone, which can rest in that which it cannot comprehend.”⁷⁰ And if forgiveness in God were not somewhat beyond what men could imagine, no flesh could be saved.

Isa 55.8-9, *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, says the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

It is not the manner of men to pass by multiplied transgressions, as God does. The consideration of his infinite mercy removes all those obstructions which our unbelief, in viewing the greatness and aggravations of our sins, throws in the way. And though our sins have been inexcusable in every way, and upon every reflection that we make of them, they frighten and trouble us, yet the mercy of a God will surely yield us some relief. For there is no other reason why He does good to this or that sinner, but His own grace. He freely chooses, justifies, adopts, and renews the souls of his elect. None of this is from their merit, or anything that he foresaw in them, but from the good pleasure of his will, Eph 1.5-6. All that he does for them, all that he *will* do for them unto eternity, will be to the *praise and glory of His own grace*. This is the true way to humble us when we see nothing in ourselves, but what exposes us to misery. And that is true gospel obedience, which is the fruit and product of His love shed abroad in our hearts. This is the only Rock on which we are to build our comfort when the storm comes. This *free grace of God* is that which the saints admire on earth, which revives their drooping spirits, and which they will wonder at forever. It is a shelter from the accusations and the malicious insults of the devil. For though he sets our sins before us, with all their overwhelming circumstances; though we cannot deny the charge, and we believe that we are miserable in ourselves; yet we resolve to fly to the mercy and the love of God in Christ. We would disparage the excellencies of his nature, and the offers of his goodness, if we did not lay hold of them. This is what some call a natural *Novatianism*⁷¹ in the timorous (timid) consciences of convinced sinners. By this, they doubt and question being pardoned for sins of apostacy, and for falling after they have repented.

THE 9TH GENERAL RELIEF

Beware of running into further sin, and thus to provoke God to further anger. When our hope is perished, there is nothing so evil which we will not dare to do. If help doesn't speedily come, we are apt to say it is in vain to pray; it is in vain to look up to a God who has thrown us off. Jer 2.25, *You said, 'There is no hope; for I have loved strangers, and after them I will go.'* You are lost forever, the devil will say. And therefore it is all the same whether you sin or not; you can but still be lost. This is one of his fiery darts. And if by our compliance we allow it to take hold of us, it will terrify us even more. He will rejoice at our fall. And by every new transgression, he will put our souls into much more violent and scorching flames. What monstrous injections, what unbecoming thoughts of God he suggests! And alas, how *frequently* we entertain them, for they come thick upon us! In the time of God's displeasure, when the edge of his Holy spiritual law wounds our souls, what vast multitudes of corruptions we then discover, that we never saw before! How our old sins *amaze* us, and new ones arise and spring from them! And what can we do in the swelling of the Jordan, in so great an inundation, but endeavour in our poor feeble manner to look up to Christ for help. *Beg the Spirit*. For as one says,

⁷⁰ Dr. John Owen in *Psalms* 130. p. 221 [Verse Fourth, Properties of Forgiveness, par. 1].

⁷¹ *Novatian* (c. 200-250) was dissatisfied with the lax moral practices and the lenient treatment of those who denied the faith during the persecutions of the church. He falsely taught there is no forgiveness of sins after salvation. – WHG

“There is no heart so unclean which this Spirit will not cleanse; no soul so feeble which he does not fortify; none so sorrowful which he does not comfort; none so desolate which he does not cause to rejoice; none so slavish which he does not set at liberty; none so sick which he does not heal; none so dead which he does not quicken.”⁷²

Surely he will regard us. For he knows that of ourselves we cannot bear up against the winds and waves. And let us always remember that among so many cruel enemies, it is *unbelief* that leads the vanguard. It encourages and draws them on. And when we have gotten the victory over this, all the rest will be daunted and run away. By *unbelief* we open our hearts and let in all those thieves and robbers which deprive us of our peace. It is the defilement of our consciences by manifold acts of sin, that makes us like the troubled sea which cannot rest.

“And for a conscience that is guilty of many neglects, ... to lay claim to God’s mercy is to do as we see *mountebanks*⁷³ sometimes do, who wound their flesh to try conclusions upon their own bodies, how sovereign the salve is; yet oftentimes they come to feel the pain of their presumption by long and desperate wounds.”⁷⁴

In the case even of sore afflictions, let us be afraid to sin; for that devil who tempts us, will immediately vex and torment us even more for it.

THE 10TH GENERAL RELIEF

Do not mistake those things for evidences of the certain wrath of God, which perhaps are not really so. He may suspend the expressions of his love, though he loves us still — as Joseph had the tenderness of a brother, while his brethren thought he was very angry with them. Indeed, in our secret supports we are not altogether destitute of His care, though we don’t know how they come. Like metals that lie deep in the ground, they partake of the influence of the sun, even though he does not shine upon them with his Light. There are few afflictions that don’t have the marks of fatherly *kindness* in the seasonable correction of our faults, rather than the marks of *displeasure*. No outward losses, no inward troubles that are but for a time, are the certain signs of wrath — indeed, even if they are very long and very grievous; for it was not so in the case of Job. But *how will I know* (some will ask) *when afflictions are in wrath?* It is a question to be answered with great tenderness and caution. Divines say they are in wrath when these are true:

1. When they come with great violence and suddenly destroy, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, and in the Deluge. Psa 58.9, *Before your pots can feel the fresh brambles burning, in His wrath He shall swallow you all, as with a whirlwind.*⁷⁵ Nah 1.9, *He will make an utter end; affliction will not rise up a second time.* And yet this must have some limitations. For a good man may be seized with a violent disease and suddenly die, of whom we should not say that he died by the wrath of God.
2. When there is no mercy discernable in the cross (the affliction), but only what is evil.
3. When one evil makes way for another, and none are sanctified (purged).

⁷² Author unknown. – WHG

⁷³ *Mountebank*: a flamboyant deceiver who attracts customers with tricks or jokes. – WHG

⁷⁴ Sibbes, *Soul’s Conflict*, p. 31.

⁷⁵ This verse is variously translated. I crafted it to best fit the point Rogers is making. – WHG

4. When the affliction brings some special sin to remembrance; and when sin itself deprives us of a mercy. Thus, when intemperance brings sickness, ambition brings disgrace; covetousness and an over-eager desire for riches, brings poverty.

But then, even *great crosses* are given in mercy (not wrath),

1. When God not only *afflicts* us, but *teaches* us at the same time.

2. When we can be thankful for that comfort which we have lost; that is, if it is *outward* comfort. For I don't see how any person can be thankful for desertion while it remains upon him. For that would be to thank God that he has departed, or that he has restrained the manifestations of his love — which no man is obliged to do.

3. When all our losses are made up by God, and in the graces of his Spirit [*as with Job*].

CHAP. 11. A Distressed Conscience is no sign of Reprobation.

Showing that present distress of conscience is no sign of reprobation. There may be too great a trouble for sin; and when it is excessive, former experiences may be helpful to afflicted people. And showing that God will not judge persons who have been good, according to what they are in the woeful disease of Melancholy. ⁷⁶

THE 11TH GENERAL RELIEF

Don't judge your eternal state by what you now feel. By the terrors of the Lord, you may be in anguish and tribulation, and be in the very *suburbs* of hell, and yet never go there. God may be displeased, and yet after a moments sorrow, you may find him to be your gracious and your everlasting friend. You may be thrown down now, but His hand and His promise can quickly raise you up again. Through the power of your dismal thoughts, you may conclude you are reprobate; and yet God may bring you to salvation at last. You may lie in terror for many years, but you cannot, you *should not* say that it will be so forever. I myself have been so afflicted, in such great anguish and perplexity, under such dreadful apprehensions of the wrath of God, and of his power and greatness which I thought were employed against me, that I thought myself in hell — knowing that it is not so much a *place*, as a *state*. I thought that my soul would be gathered with sinners, and that I would be found at the left hand of Christ. I thought that I was cut down forever — banished from the courts and from the presence of the Lord; and that I would never see light, nor comfort, nor refreshment anymore. And yet through the grace of God, you see that I am revived, and am not now without hope, as I once was. And from the very gates of death, from the very door of destruction, I come to tell you that though God is *just*, yet he is also *gracious*. *There is mercy with Him, that he may be feared*; and that as the *night* comes, so will the *morning* too. For though we have provoked him, which was our folly, yet He will not contend forever, which is our comfort.

Psa 31.21-24, Blessed be the Lord, for he has shown me his marvellous loving-kindness, etc. For I said in my haste, 'I am cut off from before your eyes.' Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried to You. O love the Lord all you His saints — Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your hearts, all you who hope in the Lord.

When we are in deep and sore affliction that hurts, and makes us groan, it is indeed hard to believe that what makes us so sick, will promote our health; or what breaks us to pieces, will joint our bones again. But our sense and present feeling is not to guide our thoughts. We feel ourselves indeed miserable, but we ought to believe that our present misery may promote our happiness, though by ways we don't see for the present. We are not to judge of God by the darkness of his providences, but by the light of his word; not by his afflicting strokes only, but by his promise — which obliges him to correct us for our sin, yet not to altogether destroy us.

THE 12TH GENERAL RELIEF

Remember that *it is an evil thing to be overly troubled*, even for sin itself — though this advice does not concern most men; most are secure. They break the laws of God and don't tremble; they pollute themselves with manifold abominations and are not ashamed; they sin with lofty looks and hardened hearts; and they do evil with both hands earnestly. They take the name of God in vain; they profane His sabbaths; they scorn His word; they defy His threats; they scorn His

⁷⁶ That is, depression is not a sign that we're unsaved; it's not a punishment from God; nor does God punish depression as being itself a sin. And yet depression *may* result from exceeding sorrow for sin and its consequences. — WHG

messengers. And yet few or none strikes his thigh ⁷⁷ and says, *What have I done?* They are daring where they ought to fear, and rejoice where they ought to mourn. Most of the world is in a deep slumber, in misery and in danger; but they are insensible. They don't know that the end of these things will be very bitter and vexatious. But I now speak to those whose consciences are awakened with a sense of the greatness, the majesty, and the justice of God, and the strictness and holiness of his Law — and at the same time, have a deep sense of their own guilt, and liableness to condemnation. Their thoughts in such troubles are too apt to sink and be overwhelmed. And indeed, the view of all their sins, set in order before them, is too terrible for them to look at. The burden and the weight of them is too heavy for any mortal men to bear. But they should consider that God is not only severe, but very good; that he is not only angry, but reconcilable and willing to be at peace again. This will represent his love to us, and it is *that*, and that alone that will melt our hearts with a kindly grief, and keep our sorrow from overflowing its due bounds, as it is very prone to do. And it does so in several cases:

1. When our sorrow for sin hinders our regular proceeding in the true judgments of things. We know that in dark and cloudy seasons we cannot distinctly perceive the several objects that we can clearly discern in fair weather. So too, when our sorrows have raised a mist before our eyes, we dim our reason, and weaken our faculties, and don't see things as they really are, but as they appear in a dark and confused manner. When we are not able to apprehend things as they are in themselves, but only as our *afflictions* represent them. That is a false medium by which to form our judgments: when they make us heighten our troubles and, it may be, make them greater than they really are; and when they make us altogether inattentive to those directions, methods, and advices that are suggested for our help.

2. When our sorrow for sin drives us away from God, the sight of our wounds should make us hasten to the Great Physician for a speedy relief. When I have thoroughly beheld my sin, the next thought should be, 'Oh what need I have of a God to forgive me, of a Saviour to plead my cause, and of the Holy Spirit to renew me!' And then to throw myself at His feet, whom I have provoked, in the submissive terms of the poor Prodigal saying, *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.* And not because I *once* wandered, but because I *still* wander in a strange country, far from my proper home. Our grief for sin is too great when it causes us to totally despair — to give ourselves up as hopeless and lost forever. This we should never do. We weep *too much*,

- when we cannot see the goodness and the mercy of God, *as well as* his justice and severity;
- when we think that it seems good to Him, to oppress and crush the works of his own hands;
- when we judge him to be tyrannical and cruel, as if he intended nothing but our ruin;
- when we peremptorily say that he will not hear our prayers, nor show us any favour;
- when we have no suitable thoughts of his amiable nature, his covenant, and his promise;
- when by the painfulness of the rod, we call into question all that he has ever done for us;
- when because he frowns, we say He has thrown us off;
- when because he delays his help, we say He *will be gracious and favourable no more forever*;
- when we charge him foolishly, and either deny his providence, or blame his conduct, because he doesn't use so gentle a method towards us as we would have him use; or
- when from our distress, we make desperate conclusions about Him, or about ourselves.

⁷⁷ That is, in acknowledgement of their covenant oath, in dismay that they may have broken it. — WHG

And most of all, when seeing that others whom we reckon to be as great sinners as ourselves, are in health and peace, while we groan and languish. We are apt to say, as in Psa 73.13, *We have cleansed our hearts in vain*; that it is a vain thing to be religious, or to fear such a God who allows his servants to be so very much afflicted, and with the sort of sorrows that are more spiritual, and consequently more bitter than the rest of the world is acquainted with.

3. We are *too troubled for our sins*, when that trouble not only indisposes us for duty (for if it is attended with pain and trouble, it will be apt to do so), but when it makes us altogether omit our duty that we owe to God; when our sorrows damp our affections, which are the wings of our souls to carry us up to God; when it causes us to mind nothing else but what is sad and grievous; and when our sorrow swells to so great a height, that it covers with its imperious waves, all the foundations and grounds of peace and comfort.

It was not so, as some have observed, with our Blessed Lord. For when he was on the Cross, he was in extremity, in mighty pain and violent agonies, and yet these did not take away from him his care for his Mother. So the good thief in the midst of his pangs, laboured to gain his fellow, and to save his own soul, and to glorify Christ. These were indeed extraordinary instances. For our sickness may be such that all that we can perform to God is a quiet submission to his will, and a desire for the prayers of others. Thus our sorrows for sin are *excessive* when they make us give up prayer, or hearing the word, or like duties; when they unstring our harps, and dull our praises, and make us unfit for our calling.

4. When our sorrow puts us upon indirect means for relief; when we put that trust in *men* that should be placed in *God*; when we expect that cure from *them*, which *He alone* is able to give; when we seek it in vain company, in recreations, or in the things of this world. But if our sense of God's displeasure is very great, we soon know that all these things are of no value.

THE 13TH GENERAL RELIEF

Call to mind those experiences that you had up to now of the goodness of God. Remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. You are now fearing his wrath; but can't you remember the time when his love was your daily solace and delight? You are now complaining that he doesn't hear your cry; but how many prayers has he sent back with a gracious answer? How many times have you laid at his feet, in humiliation and tears, and his hand has wiped away your tears? How many times when you have been fainting, has his Word revived your poor troubled souls? And though his Word is now bitter to your taste, and fills you with gall and wormwood, yet it is still able to revive you. Those places of Scripture that revived you up to now, are still able to refresh you; those breasts are still as full of consolation as they ever were. It is only because you are for the present under a decay of spirits, and have lost your appetite, that you cannot draw that consolation from there as you used to. Don't forget the many mercies of your infancy, your childhood, your youth, and your riper age — how seasonable, how unexpected, how necessary your mercies have been, both for your bodies and your souls. And though I know it is your abuse of them that grieves and troubles you, yet remember that the One who once forgave you, can forgive you still; and that the One who once did you so much good, is *still* able to do you good.

Jdg 13.23, *If the Lord had meant to destroy us, he would not have received a sacrifice at our hands, nor have done all this for us.* Shall we distrust, shall we forsake, shall we limit a God who up to now has been so very merciful and so gracious? It is no comfort to a poor man to think that he was once rich; or to a sick man to think that he was once in health. For the bitterness of his present evils takes away the relish of his former comforts. And when a man has lost God in his

terrible apprehensions, it makes it more intolerable than if he had never enjoyed Him. Yet having once had communion with Him by his grace, and by his Spirit, may give us some reason to hope that the root of the matter is in us, and that God will cause it to bud and spring forth again — though it now lies under water, and is covered with many storms and tribulations; and I may also add, with many sins and corruptions with which we were not troubled before.

THE 14TH GENERAL RELIEF

Remember that *God will not judge you according to what you are in such a woeful distemper as Melancholy*; but it will go with you as you were in the time of your health. It is highly necessary to consider this. For many good people, when they are under the disease of Melancholy — which can no more be prevented than a consumption or a fever — they are very apt to express themselves in this or in a like manner: ‘I thought I had once been serious; but now I see that it was all a deceit. I see that I heard, and prayed, and received the sacrament in vain; for if I had been a true believer, this would never have befallen me.’ *This is a very false way of arguing.* For if you had been ever so sincere, that sincerity would not have kept away diseases, nor this disease in particular. For in *Melancholy* we think and speak according to our present apprehensions and our fears. And these are greatly caused by the disorder of our imaginations, owing to the confusion and hurry of our thoughts. And that confusion is the product of a great and unusual stagnation or fixing of the spirits, when the blood is corrupted, and the body indisposed. And in turn, this is most frequently *occasioned by the lack of rest or sleep.* It is commonly said by others who don’t know what Melancholy is, ‘Why do you think and pore (focus) so much? Divert yourself; think of something else.’ But it is no more possible for people to divert their thoughts, when this disease comes with such violence, than it is possible for a man to be wakeful in an apoplexy, and calm in a raging fever — no more than a man who has a broken arm or leg can walk and act as he used to do before.⁷⁸ And indeed, rational and spiritual methods will not suffice for the cure of this. For you may as well expect that a good sermon or comfortable words would cure the falling-sickness (epilepsy), or palsy, or a broken head — only because this disease works on the spirits and fantasy, on which words of advice also work. Therefore such words, and scripture, and reason, may somewhat resist it, or may palliate or allay some of its effects at present. But as soon as time has worn off the force and effects of these reasons, the distemper immediately returns.

It is as natural for a melancholy person to fear, and to meditate on terror, as it is for a sick man to groan, or for one in health to breathe. It is certain that tenacious, obstinate distempers such as Melancholy, will not be relieved by mere words or sentences. Indeed, these persons *cannot* cast out their troubled thoughts; they *cannot* turn away their minds; they can think of nothing except what they *do* think of — no more than a man with a toothache can forbear to think of his pain. And *not* to think, is in fact to be *cured*, which they would gladly be. Though others urge us to rule our thoughts, it gives us no relief; it only adds to our misery, to be frequently urged to do what we *cannot* do. But my advice to such melancholy persons is this: that in the use of those things which they find may yield a natural refreshment to their spirits, they would look up to God, who can make the winds and storms to cease, and make that unquiet agitation that is in the blood and humours, *be still* again. And when he is pleased to give you rest at night, and the clearness and activity of your natural spirits, then your troublesome and uneasy thoughts — by the help they will then receive by reading or advice — will wear away. I say nothing but what I myself have experienced to be true; for this disease magnifies our sorrows.

⁷⁸ Mr. Baxter’s 32. Dir. p. 6.

What I aim at is this: that when any are in deep melancholy, so far as they have any reason left, they should not increase their own terror, by thinking that all their former prayers and endeavours have been to no purpose, just because they do not then perceive what effect they have had. God is certainly more gracious than to reckon the unavoidable attendants of *a disease that none can cure but God himself*, is sin. Men are not to be judged by whatever strange actions or expressions they are guilty of in a violent sickness. And among all that are so, I think *this* to be most violent.

CHAP. 12. God's ends in long afflictions.

Of the several ends that God has in allowing his servants to be under long afflictions, and spiritual distress and anguish.

THE 15TH GENERAL RELIEF

Consider what ends God may have in letting the apprehensions of his wrath continue for a season. And here I know I enter upon something about which we cannot have a certain and a comprehensive knowledge. For the judgments of God, and great, and long, and severe trials, are too deep for us to easily fathom, or to tell particularly what God's design is in this or that. The *arcana's*⁷⁹ of his government are not obvious to everyone who desires to pry into them. And there is an abundance of very dark and mysterious providences in this world, the reasons for which we will never know till the Great Day. Who can tell the very cause why God allows one religious man to suffer affliction for several years, and another who is perhaps no better than he, scarcely knows what affliction means? One will be crossed and disappointed in all that he goes about, and meet with losses in his estate and in his family, and be damaged in his health; while another prospers, and is well, and dies an easy death. What a smooth path some good people take to heaven, when others are torn with thorns and briars, and go mourning and weeping all the way! Who dares presume to say why this is so, and not otherwise? A great modesty becomes our inquiries when we endeavour to pierce into the designs of the Great God, whose throne is established in righteousness, but surrounded with clouds and darkness. *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing*, Pro 25.2. His infinite majesty will not be accountable to us for what he does. There is a thick veil upon the reasons for his judgments and decrees, so that he may procure a greater veneration from his creatures. Psa 77.19, *Your way is in the sea, and your path in the great waters, and your footsteps are not known*. Therefore, when we say that God does this or that for such or such a reason, we must do it with great humility, and only so far as the Scripture is our guide. And from that we may learn that God allows his people to be under the apprehensions of his wrath, and under long afflictions for such ends as these:

1. It is certainly good for the *universe*, for God does nothing in vain. And when any *part* suffers, it is for the good of the *whole* — though perhaps we cannot discern how it is so, till his hand has finished his entire design.
2. So that others may be convinced by their very senses, what a dreadful God he is, and how terrible a thing it is to sin. *When the lion roars, who will not fear?* (Amos 3.8) When men see those who were once as pleasant as themselves, shedding tears and crying out in the bitterness of their souls, that they are undone and miserable — their sad looks and their doleful expressions bear witness to the being, and to the severity and justice of God. Sometimes in the extraordinary joys which his love produces in the hearts of his people, he shows heaven on earth; and sometimes in the fears and amazements and terrors of awakened consciences, he shows hell on earth; and *both*, by his wise and holy Providence, are designed for the good of others. The language of their groans thus speaks to all who behold their sorrow, “Oh do not sin against so great and so terrible a God, lest the flames begin to scorch you, that have almost consumed us. We no more thought of falling into his hands, than you do. We thought no more than you, that our sinning would cost us so very dearly. But you see what we have felt, and what you may expect if you don't repent and turn, and make your peace with so holy a God as he. His power will amaze you. His arm will crush

⁷⁹ *Arcana*: information known only to a special group (*arcane data*). – WHG

you if you ever provoke him to send on you such a stroke as ours." Endeavour, therefore, to profit by such sorrowful examples.

3. God does it to keep us from carnal security all our lives. *Psa 9.20, Put them in fear, O Lord, that the nations may know themselves to be but men.* When our sin has fallen upon us, like a giant newly refreshed with wine, surely the remembrance of that horror, pain, and sting will keep us so that we dare not sleep in sin, nor be unwatchful and presumptuous anymore forever. Surely this will quench all irregular desires, and cause us only to desire God more, whose favour we need so very much. This has surely shown us how great is our weakness and our folly, and how low we sink when he has left us. This will make us humble, and *walk softly* all our days, remembering that we are not, every hour, more than what God makes us to be. If he leaves us but for one poor moment, where are we? We who have tasted so much of his displeasure, have cause to rejoice with trembling; every remembrance of that doleful time must be to us a new motive for obedience, and a powerful restraint of sin. *Heb 12.10, He chastens us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.* Oh what an abundance of folly must have been lodged in our hearts, that God is forced to use so sharp and so severe a method to whip it out! How benumbed we were, that nothing else could awaken us! How diseased, that nothing but a potion so bitter could promote our cure! How great was our pride, that he was forced to beat it down by so violent a stroke! *Deu 8.15-16, Who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which there were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water ... that he might humble you, and prove you, to do you good in the end.* So Paul had a thorn in the flesh, *2Cor 12.7.*⁸⁰

4. He does it to convince us of His own all-sufficiency, and the nothingness of ourselves, and of all other creatures. He let us fall to show us how small our strength is, and that if we would have our goings established, we must depend on Him alone. In our prosperity we are apt to think that this or that creature, this or that person will yield us relief. But in spiritual troubles, God shows us that *all men, even the best of men are vanity*; and those from whom we expect the greatest help, do us the least good. Indeed, those watchmen of whose skill and kindness we have the greatest opinion, are frequently allowed to strike us by their *imprudent* or *harsh* speeches and censures. So that we may not look to those cisterns which we find to be broken ones, but to that heaven from where all our consolation flows. When we go to the creatures with the most raised expectations, we meet with the most unlooked-for disappointment. And indeed, while we look only to them, we are like people who go begging at the doors of the poor. Our fellow-creatures are all *eleemosynary*,⁸¹ yet they have nothing but what they receive. Unless *God* helps us, they *cannot* help. Unless the wind blows, all the skill of the pilot, and all the industry of the mariner, cannot make the ship sail forward to the port. We indeed think that if our friend is sick, we would hasten to his help, and immediately relieve him. But our *best* Friend waits a long while before he delivers. This is not from any pleasure that He takes in our sorrows, but that he may render his power and wisdom more illustrious. As when Christ heard Lazarus was sick, he stayed two days in the place where he was, so the glory of God might be more conspicuous in his resurrection (*Joh 12.6-7*). And when the season that is most beautiful comes, we will discern the reason for his delay. He lets us fall wondrously low, so that he may display his power that is almighty, and his wisdom that is never at a loss; so that we may know when all other methods have been tried in vain, it is He alone who can make our *broken bones rejoice*, *Psa 51.8*; that when we are beset with difficulties which

⁸⁰ **2Cor 12:7** And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

⁸¹ *Eleemosynary*: generous in assistance to the poor. – WHG

we think insuperable, we may stand still, and see how glorious, how suitable, and how speedy are the salvation, the grace, and the help of God; that He alone is *the God of Comfort*, 2Cor 1.3; that all other things are inconsiderable, but that *He* is all sufficient.

And it is an excellent lesson that he teaches us by our heaviest crosses: none but He alone can calm the tumults and uneasiness of a troubled soul. Our spirits are so remote from human observations, our diseases are so inward and so great, that men cannot reach them. But nothing is too hard for him who is the Father of Spirits; and he calls us peculiarly to regard this mighty work of his.

Isa 57.17, *For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry, and struck him. I hid myself, and was angry, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him, and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, says the Lord, and I will heal him.*

He *creates* it; he not only *brings* peace, but he brings it from *nothing* by his all-powerful efficacy that nothing can resist. I say again, I believe this is *one of the principal lessons that God designs to teach us by our inward and spiritual troubles*: that our help lies in Him alone, and that all, even the best of men, are vanity. We must not look for much from them, for if we do so, we will most surely be disappointed. They have no patience to hear our complaints and understand the particularities of our case; or if anyone has so great a patience and so much tenderness as to hear our sad story, they will maybe sigh or shake their heads at it, but alas, *they can give us no relief*.

5. Another end that God may have in the continuance of long and sore afflictions, and great inward troubles, is to reveal more clearly to us the corruption and defilement of our nature. In a calm, the waters of the sea appear to be clear enough; but when the storm comes, then it throws up the mire and dirt. In prosperity and health we think we have very good hearts, and considerable degrees of sanctification; but when sin is driven home upon us, the spiritual law of God begins to show its purity. Oh what multitudes of iniquities then appear! What unbelief, what impatience, what murmuring, what unbecoming thoughts of God, such hideous and strange thoughts as we never had before! In health, and strength, and peace, there are a thousand secular affairs and contrivances that take up our time, and divert our minds, and turn us to the view of things without. But in the trouble of our consciences, our eyes are turned another way, to behold with attention our own souls, and to see what lusts, what impurities, what venomous creatures, what vipers have been entertained there. And oh! what a ghastly formidable sight this is, to see such a numerous brood of transgressions, when we imagined that all had been very well with us! It is even a wonder that God, who saw so much evil in us, should let us alone so long. These spiritual afflictions show us what a sorry contemptible creature man is; what cause he has to be debased when he is most proud; and what cause he has to be covered with shame and blushing when he is most fearless and undaunted. When God does not blow upon our garden, instead of those spices, those *graces* blowing forth that may be for His glory and our comfort, there is nothing but weeds and thistles — nothing but thorns and briars that tear and wound us. Our Soul is then just like a dead carcass full of putrefaction — no sprightly motions towards heaven, no spiritual or warm desires. It is like the cold regions of the north which the Sun only visits with his fainter and weaker beams; and not like those eastern countries, where his greater heat produces spices and fragrant flowers.

6. Another end that God has in the continuance of spiritual troubles and afflictions, and the sense of his wrath long upon us, is so that, *from our own experience*, Christ may be forever very precious to us. When we are at ease and think we are whole, we seldom think of him. But our pain, and our

hurt, our guilt and our fears — the sight of our present danger, and of approaching wrath — causes us to run to this physician, and to beg his help when we are sinking. It makes us stretch out our hands and say, *Master save us, or else we perish*. Never did a poor man beg for alms with more earnestness, than we will beg for his help; never did a diseased person, after violent racking pain, long for rest and a cure, more than we shall long for Christ. And having fallen among lions, having been the slaves of fear, and held in captivity by the temptations of Satan, we will most gladly shake off our chains, and embrace liberty and salvation when our Lord comes to set us free! The sight of him being our Saviour, will make us run to meet him, and say, “Welcome, you only friend of our souls; welcome, you dear physician and healer of our souls. *Hosannah to the Son of David, blessed is he that comes to us in the name of the Lord.*” Oh! how our very hearts will melt with love, when we remember that as we have been distressed for our sins against him, so he was in greater agonies for us! We have had gall and wormwood, but he tasted a more bitter cup. The anger of God has dried up our spirits, but he was scorched with a more flaming wrath. He was under violent pain in the garden, and on the Cross. Ineffable ⁸² was the sorrow that he felt, being forsaken by his Father, deserted by his disciples, affronted and reproached by his enemies, and under a curse for us. This Sun was under a doleful eclipse. This Living Lord was pleased to die; and in his death he was under the frowns of an angry God. That face was then hidden from him, that had always smiled before; and his soul felt that horror, and that darkness, which it had never felt before.

So that, although there was no separation between the divine and human nature, yet he suffered pains equal to those which we deserved to suffer in hell forever. God so suspended the efficacies of his grace, that in that hour it displayed none of its force and virtue on him. He had no comfort from heaven, none from his angels, none from his friends, even in that sorrowful hour when he needed comfort most. Like a lion that is hurt in the forest, so he roared and cried out, though there was no despair in him. And when he was forsaken, there was yet trust and hope in those words, *My God, My God*. Have we been abandoned by God? He was much more so, and was deserted for a while, that we might not be so forever. Oh! how frequently should we remember such a Saviour? How delightful should we think and speak of him, who thought nothing too much for us? By feeling the wrath of God, we have drunk in some measure, from the cup of which he drank. We drink justly for our sins, but he out of love and kindness, that he might make an atonement and a propitiation. And if what we have felt was so terrible, how much more dreadful was that which he endured? If the smaller drops that have put our souls into a flame have filled us with anguish, what torment did he undergo who was plunged as into a *sea* of wrath? Surely such a friend, such a physician as he has been to us, must be ever valued. We cannot pray but in his name; we cannot be justified but with his righteousness; we cannot hope for anything but by his merits and intercession — we cannot *live*, we cannot *die* without him. Let this be the constant language of our souls: *None but Christ, none but Christ*. Song 3.1-4.⁸³

7. That we may put a high value on the Scripture, so that we may search and look into it with more earnestness and frequency, to see if there are any promises in it that are *reviving*, any place in it that may afford *hope and comfort* to souls so miserable and so guilty. For when our consciences are awakened and pierced with the sense of wrath from God, if his Word would speak *peace* to us, we could have ease. But the terrible *threatenings* of his Word are the things that wound us deeply

⁸² *Ineffable*: defying expression or description. — WHG

⁸³ **Song 3:1** By night on my bed I sought the one I love; I sought him, but I did not find him. ² “I will rise now,” *I said*, “And go about the city; In the streets and in the squares I will seek the one I love.” I sought him, but I did not find him.

³ The watchmen who go about the city found me; *I said*, “Have you seen the one I love?” ⁴ Scarcely had I passed by them, When I found the one I love. I held him and would not let him go.

and put us to greater pain. And then we know, and fully believe beyond all doubt, that this is the Word by which we are to be tried in the great and solemn Day.

8. Another end of God in continuing afflictions, and in a long remaining sense of his wrath upon us, is that we may be everlasting admirers of the freeness of his grace when we are delivered. Oh! with what wonder we should behold his condescension, and his cure of us, that when our wounds were very deep, he poured in wine and oil; when we were inwardly bleeding and no creature, no friend on earth could help us, he didn't let us bleed to death. Whatever gifts we have, whatever advantage above some others in knowledge and understanding, whatever opportunities we have of doing good, and whatever zeal we use in doing what that opportunity offers to us, we ought to say with Paul, 1Cor 15.10, *By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than all of them; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.* The hand of God is so strong, his wisdom is so admirable, that he turns to our profit and advantage not only the evils which are caused by cross events, or by the world, but those which we commit ourselves — those that seem contrary to our salvation, even those sins which we are guilty of. He changes these poisons into medicine, these scandals into edification. And from the thickest darkness He brings our light.⁸⁴ Such as, by the adultery and murder by David, God opened the eyes of his servant to consider the horror of his fault. That which was likely to have thrust him into perdition, instead confirmed him, by Divine Providence, in the way of salvation. By his fall he was made to know how feeble his nature was; and on the other side, how admirable was the grace of God. This obliged him to quit all high opinion of himself, and not to seek his happiness anywhere else than in the mercy and grace of God. And as to *other* faithful persons, this sorrowful example of his was beneficial to mortify their vanity, and their pride, and to teach them to put all their trust in God. With what wonder should we daily cry out, *Will God indeed dwell familiarly with men?* Will he pity, will he pardon such impatient, such murmuring, such unbelieving sinners as we have been? Will he cause us to hear the *joyful* voice again, who have so long had the voice of *ruin and destruction* in our ears? Will he return and be my God again, when I have so often thought that he was my enemy? Will he give me the hope of heaven, when I have been so long at the very door of hell? Will he put out his hand, and take me into his Ark, when my poor uneasy soul has been wandering to and fro seeking rest, and found none?

God's end in these afflictions and sore trials, is that the delivered Christian may always be employed in wondering at His Love. And when he has lost himself in wondering and transporting joy, he may say, *Oh the height, and breadth, and depth!* etc. Rom 11.33. What, will He be so gracious to me, who have had such hard thoughts of him? Will he embrace me in His arms, such a prodigal as I am? Oh why should He let me live, when others who have been less sinners than I, are dead and perished? Why should He be kind to me, when I was so undutiful to him? What, will He give me leave to pray yet again to him, when in my unbelief I so often said it was in vain to pray? Will He suffer me, who has spoken so unadvisedly with my lips, who has darkened counsel by words without knowledge (Job 38.2), to take His name in my mouth? Will he suffer a mortal man, and a vile sinner, to say *My Lord, and my God?* Yes, he will!

I see, I *feel* that with him there is plenteous redemption; and I must forever admire the riches and the freeness of his grace. Let others talk of merit, of the power of their own will, of the light of their own understandings, of the force and strength of their reason. *As for me*, I know that I have none of these things of which to boast. I was laid low in the very depths of misery and desolation,

⁸⁴ Dailleé *Mélange*, part 2, p. 415.

and there I would *still* have lain for all that I was able to do. I was hopeless, and he filled my despairing soul with hope. I was very guilty, and he forgave me. I was near to hell; I saw the flames and smoke of that infernal pit; I smelled the fire and brimstone; and He who alone could help me, brought me back again. I was fainting, and He revived me — dying, and He made me live. How many has he passed by, and suffered them to pine away in their iniquities? And yet He has said to me, *Live!* If he will accept my poor prayers, my weak endeavours — my heart, and my soul — then my thoughts, my affections, will all be employed for Him, and for his glory. When I have so long heard the rumour, and the noise of war, He has sent me the tidings of peace and joy. Oh why is it, if not from his own grace, that I, who was so far from him, should be brought near; that I who hated him so much, should be so greatly beloved! *Enter into your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.*

9. Another end why God allows his servants to remain so long under the impressions of his wrath, is that they may learn to be merciful, and helpful to others.

(1st) To those who are in the same case.

(2nd) To those who are sinning, and have not yet felt the displeasure of God for their sins.

First, To those who are under a troubled conscience, and the apprehensions of God's wrath, see 2Cor 1.3-4, and Luk 22.32.⁸⁵ As our heavenly Father has been merciful to us, so we must be merciful to them. And having met with a Fountain that has quenched our thirst, lead them also to the Spring of Living Waters.⁸⁶ Conceive of yourself like Joseph, therefore, sent before and sold into the Egypt of a wounded conscience. There your feet were hurt in the stocks, and the irons entered into your soul, that you might provide food for the famine of others, and especially to be a purveyor of comfort to those of your brethren who will follow you down into the same doleful condition. We must not grieve them by sharp or unseasonable discourse. When they are in the furnace, we must not, by imprudent bitterness, make it hotter. They are wounded in their souls, and those wounds require a *gentle*, a *skilful*, and a *tender* hand. Every one of us should say,

“They are troubled on every side, and so was I. They are afraid that God has departed, and so was I. Those arrows of the Almighty that stick in them, but a little while ago stuck in me. That cup that is now in their hand, was but a little while ago in mine. As they sigh, and complain, and groan, and fear, even so did I. *Therefore*, let me visit these sick; direct these wanderers who have lost their way, and see if these prisoners, by the sight of *my* liberty, will become prisoners of hope. I must lead them to my Physician, and tell them the nature of my cure.”

When others have fallen into the pit out of which we are newly delivered, let us strive to draw them up. Let us put on a heart of compassion; let us patiently hear what they say, and not rebuke them for complaining. Let us not be weary of their discourse because it's doleful and troublesome. Let us not smile at that which makes them weep; nor simply call that *fancy*, which is the *anguish and trouble of their souls*. Let us remember all the speech and usage that made us worse when we were ill, and *avoid* all such speech to them. Let us remember what it was that gave us some support, and let us minister the same to them. When any of our friends are very sick, if we know any cordial, any receipt that has been beneficial to us under a similar case, we make all the speed

⁸⁵ **2Cor 1:3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. **Luk 22:32** But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen your brethren.

⁸⁶ Dr. Fuller's *Cause and Cure of a Wounded Conscience*, pag. 144.

we can to fetch it. And we cannot see them faint, without finding at the same time a very sensible commotion in our own hearts.

No *outward* affliction, however painful, is so terrible as these *spiritual* troubles are. Let us therefore be more affectionately concerned for such distressed persons than for any other, when we see the anger of God beginning to kindle in their consciences. Let us use all the methods that are most likely to quench the beginning flame. For as God commanded the Israelites to be kind to strangers because they themselves were such in the land of Egypt, so let us be very kind and pitiful to all who are in distress, having been so ourselves. Let us take all opportunities to visit, to exhort, and to direct them. Let us wrestle with the God of Jacob on their behalf. Let them see that we sympathize most heartily with them; and that although the grace of God has wiped away our tears, yet we can still weep with those who weep. Let us take all the ways we can to make them believe we are afflicted with their affliction, and sincerely concerned for the sadness of their case. And by this means, they will more ruminant on what we say, who have been once as they are now, and more regard what we tell them, than they will regard *others* who may speak well indeed, but not from their own experience. If a man had a bodily disease, he would rather have recourse to a physician who had himself been recently cured of it, than to any other who perhaps can talk more learnedly about it, but doesn't know by information or study, half so much as someone who *feels* it. The knowledge of the one is but speculative, but the other's is more distinct and practical; and he knows how to make suitable applications to his patient, from the remembrance of what he felt in his own body, Heb 2.17-18; 2Cor 1.6.⁸⁷

Secondly, God continues the sense of his wrath very long upon the souls of his people, so that they may learn to pity wicked men, and instruct them in the way of happiness, Psa 51.11-13.⁸⁸ Thus they may teach them by their words, their serious exhortations, and their faithful reproofs — by their holy conduct, and by their every action that they go about doing. There are many lessons that we ourselves are not taught except by the rod and the frowns of an angry God — by a very painful and severe discipline. We don't see till after a lengthy teaching, the real evil of sin, and the true worth of Christ. Once we have arrived at the knowledge of this, we must communicate some measures of it to others; though the misery of it, is that most will scarcely believe our report till they themselves come to feel what we have felt. He who has escaped by the mercy of God, out of a long-troubled conscience, can thus say to sinners:

“I have paid dearly for all the delight that I once had in sin, for all my indifference and lukewarmness, my cold and sluggish prayers, my lost and misimproved time. Beware that you do not provoke Him, for he is a jealous God. For if you do, you will also find that those sins which you make a slight matter of, will tear you to pieces hereafter. You will find, when your consciences are awakened, they are a heavy and intolerable burden. They will press you down to hell itself. I could not have thought that the displeasure of God would be so bitter, and so very dreadful. *It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God, for he is a consuming fire.* If his anger is kindled but a little, you cannot then fix your minds upon any pleasant objects, nor

⁸⁷ **Heb 2:17** Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. **2Cor 1:6** Now if we are afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.

⁸⁸ **Psa 51:11** Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit. ¹³ *Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.

have one easy thought. You cannot then go about your business, your trades, or your secular affairs, for your souls will be so amazed, that you will be full of horror and consternation.

“Those of us who have *felt the terrors of the Lord*, would most earnestly persuade you to forsake *every* sin. For if you indulge and love your iniquities, they will set you on fire round about. Oh, if you but knew what you do when you sin! You are opposing that Authority that will avenge itself on all its obstinate opposers. You are heaping up fuel for your own destruction. You are whetting that sword that will enter your bowels, You are preparing yourselves for bitterness and trouble. And though God is patient for a while, he will not always be so. The shadows of the night are drawing near, and the doleful time will come when all your mirth will end in tears, and all your false confidence, and your foolish hopes, will expire and give up the Ghost. And which of you will live when God enters into Judgment with you? What will you do? Where will you go for help, when He that is your Maker, He that has weighed your actions and observed your wanderings, calls you to give an account of all these things?”

If our blessed Lord, when he came near Jerusalem, lifted up his voice and wept, saying, *O that you had known, even now in this your day, the things that belong to your peace!* then what a cause we have to mourn over our fellow-creatures whom we see are in danger of misery, and Alas! they don't know it! Can we see them sleeping on the very edge of ruin, and not be greatly troubled for them? Oh poor sinners! You are now sleeping, but *the Judge is at the door*. You are rolling the pleasant morsel under your tongue, but it will be a great vexation to you in the end. How can you rest? How can you be quiet when you have none of your sins pardoned; no comfortable relation to God; no well-grounded hope of heaven? How can you with any assurance go about those things that concern your buying, your selling, and the present life, when your poor souls that are a thousand times more valuable, are neglected all the while! We have felt great terrors, inexpressible sorrows from an angry God, and we would gladly persuade you not to run onto the thick bosses of his buckler, not to dare his justice, not to despise his threats, as once it was *our* folly. But we didn't know what we did. We have *come out of great tribulation*, and a fiery furnace, and we would gladly persuade you to avoid the same danger. Let what we have felt, be a caution to you.

It was the desire of *Dives* in his misery,⁸⁹ that he might leave it, to go from there to warn his brethren lest they came to the same place of torment. But it would not be granted. Some of us here come from the very gates of hell to warn you, so that you might not go there — no, to warn you so that you might never go *so near it* as we did. We wish you so well, that we would not have any of you feel so much sorrow and grief as we have felt. We were once asleep as you are. We didn't imagine that terror and desolation was so near when it came upon us. And now having been overtaken with a storm of wrath, we come to warn you that we see the clouds gather, that there is a sound of much rain, and of great misery — though *your* eyes are so fixed on things below, that you don't see it. You must speedily arise, and seek a shelter, as you tender the salvation of your souls. You must not put off serious thoughts for your own safety — not for one day, not for one hour longer — lest it be too late.

We were travelling with as little thought of danger as some of you, and we fell among thieves. They plundered us of our peace and our comfort. And we were even ready to die, when that God, whose just displeasure brought us low, was pleased to take pity on us, and to send his Son, like the kind Samaritan, to bind up our wounds and cheer our hearts. And we cannot be so uncharitable as not to tell you when we see you going the same way, that there are robbers on the road; and that if you

⁸⁹ *Dives* is the traditional name given the rich man, in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16). – WHG

do not either return, or change your course, you will smart for your security as much as we have done. If we have indeed been saved at length from our fears, it is *as through fire* (1Cor 3.15). But we suffered very great loss while those fears remained. Some will perhaps say to themselves,

“I will see no evil, though I walk in the imaginations of my own heart. These things you talk of are the mere product of a *melancholy temper* that always presages the worst, that always frightens itself and others with black and formidable ideas. And seeing that I am in no way inclined to that distemper, I need not fear any such perplexing thoughts.”

But *know this*: that no briskness of temper, no sanguine courageous hopes, no jollities or diversions can guard you from the wrath of God. If you go on in sin, you must feel the bitterness of it, either in this world or the next. And notwithstanding all the strength of your constitution, and all the pleasures of your unfearing youth, that day may come all of a sudden. The cup that is full of sparkling wine, has dregs and poison at the bottom. Your souls are always naked and open before God, and he can make terrible impressions of wrath there when he will — notwithstanding that by your cheerfulness and mirth, you seem to be at the greatest distance from it.

CHAP. 13. *The Duty of those delivered from Melancholy.*

Showing what is the duty of those persons whom God has delivered from Melancholy, and from the anguish of their consciences under a sense of his wrath; and also, what a wonderful act of providence it is that suffers a very sinful world to be in such great peace! And what cause there is for all people to pray against such diseases which the devil himself serves, to their great torment and vexation. And as the conclusion of this first part, what is to be thought of those who are distracted with trouble for their sins; and of those who die in great darkness as to their spiritual state.

I would now proceed to show how those persons who have long been under a sense of God's displeasure, and who have now come to some *good hope through grace*, ought to behave themselves after so terrible a visitation. But my discourses on the former verses of this Psalm (which I published some time ago ⁹⁰), where I mentioned what we are to do after recovery from sickness, has in a great measure prevented my further insisting on this subject, and also insisting on those ends that I have now mentioned, which God aims at in these dispensations. And if we make it our great care to comply with them, we meet His designs; then even those sore afflictions will be a very great mercy to us. What I judge is further necessary to be said, I will comprise in the following particulars:

I. That in all the following part of our lives, we value this world very little. Our unmortified affections were the briars and the thorns that pierced us, and multiplied our sorrows. Let us look upon this world and its most admired glories, as a poor, contemptible, *empty* thing; for so it is indeed. By the cares and variety of thoughts to which the world naturally carries us, it easily disquiets and throws us down; but it cannot with all its charms raise us up again. All its riches cannot buy an hour's peace and comfort; all its honours cannot save us from the contempt of God; all its pleasures cannot sweeten our cup, nor all its smiles cheer us when He frowns. The more we are elevated above all earthly things, the more we will be freed from storm and tempest. And it may be true what some tell us, that the tops of those mountains that are above the middle region are so quiet, that the lightest things there, lie still and are not moved.⁹¹ This world has been formerly, and *still is*, a place of vanity and vexation of spirit. We have found it to be so; we have always met with trouble. When we loved anything here with an excessive love, alas! it was able to do nothing for us in our sore affliction. When our consciences were in a flame, there was nothing in it that could quench our thirst. Let us esteem at a low rate, such an empty world as this. Its comforts are doubtful, but its miseries are certain; its griefs are long-lived, but its pleasures are very short.

II. When the sense of the wrath of God is removed, we must by the remembrance of it, be fortified against the temptations of Satan. When we are tempted to distrust, we must say, *I will not entertain any more hard thoughts of a God whom I have found to be faithful*. When we are tempted to impatience under some new or returning cross, we must reply and say, *I will not fret nor murmur any more against my gracious and my loving God who will, I am sure, remember me still in my low estate, as he did up to now*. When Satan would persuade us that we are no sons of God because we are afflicted, or because we are so long afflicted, we must quench this dart also, by remembering our dear Redeemer, who was never more beloved than when he was most sorely

⁹⁰ Referring to his sermons on Psalm 30, in *Practical Discourses on Sickness and Recovery*, London, 1690. – WHG

⁹¹ A nice thought, but indeed *not* true. The winds blow fierce atop Everest and all other towering peaks. That's all the more reason to seek our peace in Christ alone. – WHG

tried. There is nothing that will so preserve us, as the remembrance of the kindness and the mercy of God. *His peace that surpasses understanding will keep our hearts* (Phi 4.7).

III. Let our escape from such long and sore afflictions, quicken us to duty. I don't mean by that, only to *prayer*, but the performance of all those acts of religion by which we may glorify God and do good to men. Let our prayers be more fervent, our meditations of him sweeter, and our thoughts of him more constant and abiding. Let us take heed of all formality and unaffectedness of spirit in all our attendance upon God.⁹² Let us beware of inward and spiritual decays, and stifle and resist the first abatements and declinings of our love to God, seeing He has withdrawn his hand from us, and His dread does not make us afraid, Job 9.13-14.⁹³ Let us draw near to him, and seek his face, and do it now with more delight. For as the earth (as one observes) is shut and bound up by frost and cold, and does not produce her fruits till the warmth and heat of the summer call them out, so the heart, under the cold affections of fear and guilt, under the dark apprehensions of wrath and judgement, is so contracted, that it doesn't know *how* to draw near to God. But when His love is shed abroad in our heart, then it is enlarged to the performance of its duty. And the sense of mercy, and the hope of it, gives us great encouragement to pray — for *prayer is the child of faith*. Let the love of God towards us quicken us to watchfulness, and to taking daily care of our own hearts that are so treacherous and deceitful. It once was night, a doleful night with us; but seeing the day has begun to dawn, let us set upon our work with greater diligence.

IV. Our deliverance from such sad and terrible apprehensions of God's wrath, and from long and sore trials, should teach us to walk humbly with Him. We have seen him in the terribleness of his majesty, we have seen the Lord of Hosts in his glory. And such a sight cannot but make us know that we are unclean, Isa 6.5.⁹⁴ What do we have in which to pride ourselves? The archers have sorely shot at us, and we could not make our bow abide in strength. God has bruised, tried, and laid us low, to show us what was in our hearts. And alas! we saw nothing there but what was very bad. It was such a sight, that it may cause us to wonder at His patience, and His healing grace, and to abhor and loathe ourselves forever. The time of our darkness was a time of *provocation*. When we were in the wilderness, we *murmured*. And what a mercy it is that our carcasses have not fallen, and our souls are not ruined; but that the God whom we so provoked, has given us the prospect and the hope of Canaan *after all this!*

If others had told us when we were in health and peace, that we would speak so harshly of God when we were in our distress — that we would censure his dispensations, and sin so very much when His rod and His stroke was upon us — we would have thought they were very censorious and uncharitable people. But *there is no man who knows how bad his heart is, till it is tried by long and sore afflictions*. Our anguish, and our sorrow, and our despairing fears, caused us to do a thousand things which we would tremble at in another season. And such fools are we, that even when we are ground in the mortar,⁹⁵ our folly does not depart from us. Though God has forgiven us, we ought to remember our murmuring, our unbelief and like sins, with a great self-abhorrence

⁹² *Unaffectedness* is not merely being unaffected by something, but being overly cool and rational; showing no *affection* or *passion* for the things of God. — WHG

⁹³ **Job 9:13-14** ^{NLT} And God does not restrain his anger. Even the monsters of the sea are crushed beneath his feet. So who am I, that I should try to answer God or even reason with him?

⁹⁴ **Isa 6:5** So I said: Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts.

⁹⁵ *Mortar*: a bowl-shaped vessel in which substances can be ground and mixed with a pestle. — WHG

all our days. Isa 38.15. *What shall I say? He has both spoken to me, and has done it himself. I will go softly all my years, in the bitterness of my soul.*

We have caused many to be discouraged, many to faint, many to reflect on religion because of our sadness. And the dishonour that may have come to God by this, should be a matter of great humiliation to us, even though in the spiritual affections of the religious, there is something that is very tremulous⁹⁶ to the wicked. It is like a judgment to harden them, and for the falling of many, that by this means they are more *fixed* in their prejudices against all religion. And by seeing that those who have long pretended to embrace it are very sorrowful, they are tempted to believe there is nothing real in it; and so they go on and sin, and *die*. We have great cause to be humbled and not to glory in our strength, for we have found it to decay — not to glory in our knowledge, for we have known such distempers as have cast a cloud on our understanding. We have been buffeted by Satan to teach us that we need more help to preserve us, than our own. Oh! What is man when left by God? Nothing but weakness and vanity. *He withdraws man from his purpose* (his work), *that He may hide* (keep) *pride from man*, Job 33.17.

V. We must beware of a relapse. Just as we must be careful to avoid all those things which may bring upon us the same bodily diseases from which we are delivered, so we ought to be as careful to prevent everything that may bring a new indisposition and terror on our souls, when we have newly come out of the furnace. Let us beware that we not fall again into such hot and fiery trials as those which we have felt. Let us forever be very cautious to avoid everything that has the appearance or show of sin. And let us forever be jealous of our own hearts, and watchful over their most secret motions, seeing that they have often (alas! too often) betrayed us. Let us forever absolutely deny all the most pleasing temptations of the devil, remembering that he is the enemy of God; and remembering with what cruelty and pride that enemy of our salvation insulted us when it pleased God to leave us for a season. Let us remember how the devil suggested dreadful and amazing apprehensions to us; and let us no longer come near the den of lions, nor play upon the hole of asps. We have felt the arrows of the Almighty; let us not provoke him again to bend his bow, and to set us up for a target of his displeasure. It is not long since his waves and his billows went over us. Oh! let us not plunge ourselves again into the deep waters, nor cause him to frown, whose frowns we have found to be so very terrible. Psa 85.8, *God the Lord will speak peace to his people, and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly.*

It was indeed our folly to provoke so gracious a God; it was our folly to be indifferent and careless in our holy duties. Let the rod that has made us wince, forever drive away that folly which was once bound up in our hearts. Doleful experience, and anguish, and tribulation, have told us what a dreadful thing it is to sin. By the judgments that we have groaned under, let us learn righteousness. We have come off the rack with broken bones, and with many wounds, which our good Physician has been pleased to set and heal again. Let us not rebel against his laws lest we be put to the rack again. It is not indeed the corruptions that are within us that will bring us to it, unless we cherish and approve them when they entice us to do what is evil. Though they war, if it is against the allowance of our mind, they will not interrupt our peace with God. Let us not be secure. Though the devil has left us, it may be only for a season, and he may return again with greater fury. During the comfortable quiet that we now enjoy, let us prepare ourselves to resist and oppose all his assaults for the time to come. Though we triumph through the grace of God, let us remember that our enemies are not yet fully overthrown. They are not ashamed by one defeat,

⁹⁶ Tremulous: quivering (trembling) as from weakness or fear. – WHG

but will rally their dispersed forces and come again. What did we think of sin when it caused the Son of Righteousness to be covered with clouds, so that we could not see him, nor feel his vital quickening beams for many days? What did we think of it when it had set us on fire all around, and brought us to the very gates of hell — when it sunk, and overwhelmed, and terrified us every moment? From now on, let us never begin to parley with an enemy who has used us in such a barbarous and cruel manner.

VI. After we are delivered from the dreadful apprehensions of the wrath of God, it is our duty to be publicly thankful. *Psa 66.16, Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul.* It is for the glory of our Healer, to tell of the miserable wounds that once pained us, and to speak of that kind hand that saved us when we were brought very low. It is for the glory of our Pilot, to tell of the rocks and of the sands, of the many dangers and threatening calamities that by his wise conduct he made us to escape. And to see us safely on the shore may cause others who are yet afflicted and tossed with tempests, to look to Him for help. For he is able and ready to save *them* as well as *us*. Like soldiers when a tedious war is over, we must with delight relate our combats, our fears, and our dangers — and make our experiences known to doubting, troubled Christians, and to those who have not yet been under such long and severe trials as we have been.

VII. The fears that we have had of God and of his wrath, must teach us not to fear inordinately any of those evils that are of a *lower* nature. Others who all their days have been in ease and quiet — who have had no troubled conscience, or none for a long while — may be afraid of temporal evils and inconveniences. But to us who for a long time have been afraid of God himself, how slight a thing the wrath of man should appear! When we have been under His displeasure, the One who can kill the *soul*, what little cause we have to fear those who can only kill the *body*! Others may be afraid of a small distress, of a little bad weather. But it doesn't become us to fear, who have been in so many separate storms for many months together. When we have been afraid of hell, there is nothing on earth that looks with so formidable an aspect. And if God has delivered us from the *greatest* dangers, we ought to believe that he will save us from the *lesser* troubles of our life. Our experience of so many terrible things, should fortify our minds against all future afflictions that are not of the same kind. I will close this part of the verse with these two advices:

1. If the servants of God are liable to such sad apprehensions of his wrath, then you have great cause to admire the peace that is in the world. Many among his people are crying, *The Lord has forsaken me; His wrath lies hard upon me.* And if all his people, if all those whose sins *deserve* His wrath, should all be so sensible of it, and complain, and cry out in the same manner, then Oh! what a doleful cry that would be! — like the cry that was in Sodom when it rained fire and brimstone; like the cry that was in Egypt when they found all their firstborn slain! Oh, what a change would appear in the world if God were to let out the sense of His displeasure on all who deserved it! This world would be like hell itself. All commerce and business would immediately fail. For what heart would men have to trade, to buy or sell, if they didn't know whether the very next moment they might be in hell! It is one of the mighty acts of Providence, that it maintains so great a calmness in a very sinning world. For if He were not infinitely patient, if he were to open the eyes of all men to see his unspeakable majesty, holiness, and glory — and to see their offences, and their deserts, and their nearness to destruction — and then to let them, as he justly might, be tortured with their guilty thoughts, to be tempted and overcome, and to sink into despair — then Oh! what lions and tigers men would be! They would tear themselves apart, and one another. All the stillness of this earth would be turned into rage; all its joys would be turned into gloomy sorrows; and all its laughter into weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. And all its

inhabitants would be in anguish, and curse their God and King. Most for the present are under insensibility. They don't see where they are going, nor feel the horrors that they are capable of. They are treasuring up wrath, and it is His goodness, that it does not immediately fall upon their heads in burning drops. There is but a thin partition between *this* world, that has so many varied pleasant objects in it, and *that* world of flaming torture, where all is dismal and uncomfortable. If the curtain were drawn aside, and men could look into that fiery furnace, and the wicked apprehended that they were going there, Oh what consternation, what amazement, what paleness would be seen on every forehead that is now most proud and lifted up.

2. Pray to God that you may not fall into those diseases which *Satan* is apt to take very great advantage of. And also pray that *Satan* may not be allowed to bring such sickness upon you as will indispose you for the service of your Maker. It is long and severe afflictions that the devil makes great use of; and in their own nature they lead to impatience, and murmuring, and hard thoughts about God. And therefore they may be earnestly prayed against, but always with submission. And if you are naturally melancholy, all the prayers in the world will not change your temper. Yet by prayers, that black humour may be kept from *tyrannizing* you as it has done to many thousands. Pray against all those diseases that are not common to men; and which being unknown, cannot be relieved. And by affecting your natural spirits, these may cause you to continually think, and to do so with tormented anxious thoughts, so that you will be a terror to yourselves, and unable to follow your calling. And yet, by not affecting you so visibly as other diseases do, they expose you to the uncharitable censures of your friends, and to their reproach. And we may also pray against those afflictions which disturb our reason, so that we cannot think or exercise our faculties as we used to do. As it is lawful to pray for the removal of afflictions (Job 9.34); so also to desire *that His strokes may not be overly heavy upon us; and that he would remember our frame, and how we are but dust*. If we have been in diseases that have overwhelmed us, it is our duty to pray, and to use all imaginable care that we do not fall into the same disease again; and to pray for *others*, that they may never fall into any such disease — for of all other distempers, there is none so insupportable and so terrible. When we beg new favours of God for ourselves, we must remember others, and wish that they may never feel what we have felt.

Beggars (as one observes) when they crave alms, frequently use this for a motive: that the person of whom they beg, may be preserved from that misery of which they themselves have had woeful experience. If they are blind, they say, *God bless your eyesight*; if lame, *God bless your limbs*; if undone by accidental burning, *God keep you and yours from fire*. So we may say to our Redeemer, “Lord, may you never be put to fresh agonies by the deep distresses and agonies of your poor bleeding servants.” And to you who are good, we may say,

“The Lord preserve your peace; *The Lord bless you, and make his face to shine upon you*; the joy of your Lord be your strength; the Lord give you the sweet hopes and foretaste of heaven; and we wish that you may never drink so much wormwood and gall as we have drunk; that you may never see, and know, and feel such terrors, and so much of hell as we have felt.”

It is our duty, as I have said, to pray against such diseases which have an influence, for the most part, upon the *mind* — though it would be a very atheistic thought to imagine that all inward horror of conscience comes from bodily distress. For God, *to whom all things are naked and open*, can make immediate impressions of his wrath upon the soul, that will fill it with sudden amazement and trouble. Yet I truly believe that of all the Christians who are under dreadful fears of wrath, and in long terror, there is not one in twenty whose inward trouble did not come either from a melancholy temper, or from a multiplication of sharp and severe outward afflictions. And

the devil takes an opportunity from these, to throw his fiery darts, and to put them all into a flame. Those who know how great the temptations are that attend long-continued afflictions, will heartily pray against them. To this I will only add two questions, and so conclude this First Part.

Ques. 1. If the anger of God is but for a moment, what should we think of those with whom he is angry to their dying day, and who die in apprehension of his displeasure?

Ans. It is very true, his servants may die in these circumstances. And for their poor souls, it is a very uncomfortable passage. It is very sad for the servants of God, for those I speak of, to go to heaven speaking in one sense, the language of hell. It is a mysterious, and a very deep transaction of Providence, that is wise and good, even if it is not understood. But many a believer in his dejected apprehensions, even at the last, thinks himself an heir of the Curse, who yet finds himself an heir of Glory. *Many a time*, as said once by a person dying in trouble, *the sun sets in a cloud, and yet arises in a marvellous light*. A minister once asked Mr. Dod what he could say to someone going out of the world, who had no comfort. He answered, *What would you say to the Son of God himself, who when he was dying, complained that he was forsaken?* As I mentioned before, it is sad for the person himself, and for to his relations whom he takes his leave of in such doleful expressions. His sorrowful departure may bring some of them down to the grave in sorrow also. Yet, after all their mourning, they may meet with joy in the Great Day; and their mutual sorrows at their parting, may increase their joy when they meet again. Many a believer dies with a dreadful sound in his ears, as if he were a reprobate and a cast-away — whom God will yet bless, and who will hear a comfortable sentence immediately after his dissolution.

Satan pursues and hunts many a believer like a bird on the mountains, who will arrive safely at his eternal home, where neither Satan's malice nor his spite shall ever enter. Many a one wanders about here, like Noah's dove, finding no rest, whom God will take into his Ark. And though he seems to have fallen into the very belly of hell, yet he will rise again in a blessed immortality. And those eyes which were closed with tears, will see the Lord in peace. We must not judge such persons whose troubles continue to the last moment of their lives. For if they have been holy in their conduct, they will enter into rest, even though by a way that is very dark and frightful. Moses, by the displeasure of God against him for his provocation, died and came short of that Canaan which he very much desired to possess. But when he was in heaven he was fully satisfied; and in his God he met with all that he could desire before.

Ques. 2. But suppose a person is distracted with the terrors of the Lord, and dies in that woeful condition. The anger of God towards such a one seems to be very great. How is it consistent with His promise that *all things work together for good to those who love him*? A distracted person ⁹⁷ can exercise no grace, cannot think of God rightly, cannot commit himself to Jesus Christ, nor put his soul into any fit posture by faith and patience, for his Lord's coming.

Ans. This is related to the former question. And what I said then, may give some answer to this. And indeed, all terror long continued in a sense of God's displeasure, is attended with *distracted*. What man can have his eyes opened to see God against him (he thinks), and to see hell preparing for him (he thinks), and yet have calm and quiet thoughts? It must fill him with horror and confusion. It must eclipse his reason, and put all his apprehensions into an inexpressible ferment, to see himself so likely to perish. He can mind nothing else, nor think of anything else but his danger and his misery. This always returns; this always perplexes and overwhelms him.

⁹⁷ *Distracted person*: here it means someone in mental turmoil. – WHG

I have met with but one who ever handled this question. And because of his judgment, his learning, and the good report that he has in the Churches of Christ, I will give you the substance of his answer:

“1. This may be for the good of others. Isn’t there many a lesson that those who are not so afflicted, may learn from so sad a providence? May they not learn to admire more the goodness and the mercy of God to them, that they are not in the same case? And it is so far good to the person himself, even if he doesn’t discern it, that he is used as an instrument to promote the glory of God.

“2. It may do him the same good as death; *i.e.*, deliver him from the evil to come, from beholding such sorrows on the Church, or on his friends, as would have been a daily torment to him, and on which being deprived of the use of his reason, he cannot reflect with so great a grief as he would otherwise have done. Or,

“3. By this means the wise God may have prevented his falling into many such sins and temptations as might have been very hurtful to others, and have more defiled his own soul. And who knows if this may not be the case of the distracted person?”⁹⁸

Thus, Reader, we have been travelling as through a wilderness of fiery serpents. You have, if I may say so, borne me company while I have been showing you how God leads his children through a Desert, and the House of Bondage. I hope it has not been without some profit to some poor troubled souls, for whose sakes especially I have so long insisted on this subject.

In the following Part, with God’s assistance, I will lead you to the brighter side of the cloud, where you will not meet with things very *doleful*, but very *pleasant*.

⁹⁸ See Mr. Richard Allen’s *Godly Man’s Portion*, pp. 62, 63.

**A DISCOURSE Concerning
TROUBLE of MIND,
AND THE DISEASE of MELANCHOLY.**

PART II.

Psa 30.5.
In his favour is Life.

CHAP. 1. *The life we enjoy by God's favour.*

Of the several sorts of life that we enjoy by God's favour; and in what conditions of our present pilgrimage it more especially revives us.

1. *Our natural life is in God's favour.* We are the work of his hands, and his kindness and bounty continually maintain what he at first created. His Providence secures us from innumerable dangers. He gives us food and drink, and health and strength; but his displeasure quickly deprives us of all these. It is said of all the creatures, *Psa 104.28-29, What you give them, they gather; you open your hand, they are filled with good. You hide your face, they are troubled. You take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.* It is this great God to whom we owe our peace and plenty, our liberties, and all the comforts we enjoy. He saves our bodies from plague and long sickness, and from pining, wasting sorrows. All the delight we have in our friends, in our families, or in our relations, flows from his goodness, and his mere mercy. And it is he that saves our houses from fire, our estates from robbers; and our country from desolating wars. *Psa 30.7, Lord, by your favour, you have made my mountain stand strong.* Man being the noblest creature, and the most dignified in all this lower world, God has appointed the lower creatures to minister to his use and his delight. The air, as one observes, is his aviary; the sea and rivers his fishponds; the valleys his granary, the mountains his magazine. The first affords man creatures for nourishment, the other metals for perfection. The animals were created for the support of the life of man; the herbs, the dews and rains, for the same purpose. There is not the most despicable thing in the whole creation, that is not endowed with a nature to contribute something for our welfare, either as food to nourish us when we are healthy, or as medicine to cure us when we are distempered; or as a garment to clothe us when we are naked, and to arm us against the cold of the season; or as a refreshment when we are weary; or as a delight when we are sad. All serve for *necessity* or *ornament* — either to spread our table, beautify our dwellings, furnish our closets, or store our wardrobes. *The whole earth is full of his riches,* *Psa 104.24.*

2. *Spiritual life is in His favour.* It is he that draws the first lineaments⁹⁹ of the new creature, and his hand that brings it to perfection. He first infuses a vital principle into the soul that is dead in sin, and that maintains it afterwards against all the powerful motions of sin, and against all the stratagems and temptations of the devil. From His own grace he elected his people to salvation, and in time He gives them his word and his spirit to quicken them, together with all those other blessings of Adoption, and Justification, and Sanctification, which are the product and the fruit of his electing Love. The first quickening, and afterwards those exercises of life which his chosen perform — the first motion and the renewed strength which they receive to enable them to walk in His ways — is His own gift. It is his pardon that bestows a new life upon his servants, when they were dead in Law, and could see nothing to ensue but a terrible execution. It is his favour that

⁹⁹ *Lineament*: a characteristic property that defines the apparent individual nature of something; also, the recognizable or characteristic parts of a person's face: eyes and nose and mouth and chin. — WHG

contrived the way of our escape from death through the blood of Christ, and that was pleased to accept the sufferings of that holy Person in our stead. That faith is of His own operation, which unites us to his Son, the Fountain of Life, and conveys quickening influences to us. Joh. 5.24, *Whoever hears my word, and believes in Him who sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not enter into condemnation; but has passed from death to life.* This faith is of His bestowing, which enables us to be moderate in our prosperity, and to bear the cross when we are afflicted. All those acts that are the fruit of the new birth, as well as the new birth itself, are the work of his own hands. For he gives both *to will* and *to do*. He teaches us to fight against our spiritual enemies; and his power being employed for us, he causes us to get the victory.

When we are bewildered, his Word is our guide to direct us. And when we are fainting, we have many great and precious promises to revive our spirits. When we are in darkness, and when we are in danger, he is both our sun and our shield. His wind blows upon our gardens, and causes the spices to flow forth. He excites and quickens our graces when they begin to languish; and when we are lukewarm and cold, he makes us lively and fervent in the performance of our holy duties. For (as one says) what the soul is to the body — to move it to natural things, to breathe, to eat, to walk and the like — the Spirit of God is the same in our souls — to move us to spiritual actions, such as the fear of God, love toward him, and trust in him; and all the works of righteousness, charity, humility, patience, and sobriety, which are the motions of the new creature. So that we may say of this Spirit, that he is the Soul of our souls. Take away this Spirit, and the soul resembles a dead body: it has no zeal for God, no compunction, and no tenderness. When we are disconsolate, one kind look from God makes us be of good cheer. When our hearts are benumbed, and our eyes are dry, he melts them into tears with his love. When we are unfruitful, he sends his dew upon our branches to make us flourish in his courts, and look fresh and green. And when we are under spiritual decays, he causes us to thrive. When we backslide, he heals our backslidings. Through the Great Mediator, He brings us near and into an acquaintance with himself. For as distant as we are from him, that far are we removed from true and real life. When we wander, he recalls us. He sends us fresh influences, and establishes our goings when our motions are like those of a wounded body, very faint and tottering.

3. *Eternal life is in His favour.* Hence it is said that *eternal life is the gift of God*, Rom 6.23. Psa 16.11, *You will show me the path of life. In your presence is fulness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* It is there that they are said *to see God* — for the sight of his face is what makes it such a glorious and delightful place. His wrath is what kindles hell; withholding his favour is what makes it such a dark and gloomy dungeon — and the clear manifestation of it is what makes all the glories of the Celestial Paradise. Therefore Jacob, when he had a vision of God's favour toward him, said, *This place is none other than the gate of heaven.*¹⁰⁰ Do not frame for yourselves a gross and material happiness; it is all in the love and favour of God. To see Him, fills all the souls above with ineffable delight; and to be deprived of this blessed privilege, fills all the souls in misery with mourning and lamentation. To his saints, *God will be all in all.* His communications will be entire and full there.¹⁰¹ Because the creatures are of diverse orders, each one receives its portion of divine favour, different from that of others. He communicates himself to the heavens, otherwise than he does to the earth; to an angel otherwise than to a man. The earth has an image of His firmness; the sun has an image of His beauty; the heavens an image of His immensity; and so on in others. But there is no creature that has assembled in itself, all the beams

¹⁰⁰ Gen 29.17.

¹⁰¹ *Lettres de Monsieur Claude* p. 10.

of the communications of God. It will be otherwise in Paradise. There God will be all things in the saints, and they will be filled with his favour. And as he (Mr. Claude) further says,

“God is not so *all in all* in the faithful here. The troubles of our conscience, the weakness of our faith, the languors of our devotion, the shadows of our knowledge — our sins, our miseries, our sickness, and our death — are the fruits of the fall, and of the malice of the devil. But in that felicity *above*, there will be nothing of *us* in us; nothing of the impression of the devil. All will be of God. Our shadows will be swallowed up by his light, and our weakness by his power. It is a state of glory; and *glory* is a mixture of all the blessings of God, in a degree sovereignly perfect.”

That country above, is indeed the land of the living. They live, and shall never die. But this earth is a region and a place of death. For beside that death which is natural, most men are dead *in sin*. And truly, even those who are alive, have but a weak and fainting life. There the saints will be admirers of the grace and favour of God: that after various difficulties, and innumerable temptations, and overwhelming fears, He at last brings them to that happy place. For the poor trembling saint who thought himself cast off and forsaken by God, to find himself in His arms, in His presence, in His heaven, how great his joy and praise will be! How he will ascribe all his life there to the mere favour and grace of God, who will set him at liberty, when by his many sins he had deserved to be bound in eternal chains! That will cause him to sing *hallelujahs*, when others weep and wail forever! How he will admire that grace that has placed him in heaven, when so many others are in hell! And admire even more when he considers that this distinction of states was *freely made*; that the crown which will adorn his head, was *freely given*! How every look upon God will fill his soul with a wondering joy, because He freely gave his Son! How every view of Christ will increase his wonder, when he considers that He freely undertook the kind work of his redemption; that he freely shed his blood, and paid the debt which the sinner himself could never pay; and that he freely gave the Spirit, and offered that salvation on easy terms, *without money and without price*, which cost him very dearly! All the saints above will continually adore the riches of His grace that admitted them to glory, when they deserved to be shut out as others were; that they were deformed, till he put his beauty upon them; that they were liable to death, till he justified them; they were polluted in their natures, till he renewed them; and dying, till he made them live! They learned nothing but what He taught them; had nothing but what He gave them; did nothing but what He enabled them to do. So *all that* must be wonderful in their eyes, from the beginning of God's design for their salvation, to the conclusion of it. And when it is all finished, they must with loud praises sing, *Grace, Grace. By grace you are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*, Eph 2.8.

What does God's favour yield?

1. First, *no common mercy yields any comfort, without the favour and love of God. His loving-kindness is better than life*, Psa 63.3. If a man has all that he can wish — everything that is splendid and delightful, everything that may please his eye or gratify his appetite — but he doesn't have with it the love of God, then he is a miserable man. For this will mingle wormwood and gall with all his entertainments: to think the God is his enemy; that these common blessings may conclude in hell; and that by all he eats, and all he drinks, he may be but fattened for the day of slaughter. While allowing himself all the carnal gratifications with but a little more consideration, he may discern a two-edged sword that hangs over his head, and see a gulf below that is ready to swallow him, and devour all his hopes and joys; and that all his comforts depend on the slender thread of life; and that there is but a small partition between him and everlasting burnings. How this fills

him with shock and consternation! With fear and horror! And while he is most jovial, he may see a dreadful handwriting on the wall, that may make his knees knock, and overthrow all his mirth and pleasure. Alas! What does it signify to a man, if all the world smiles upon him, but he is under the wrath and the frowns of God? The world cannot shelter him from the coming storm, nor screen him from the consuming fire. What a small satisfaction it is to a condemned malefactor, that the partakers of his wickedness applaud and caress him when his execution draws near, and the day of his death puts an end to all his hopes? What peace can a sinner have, who has the Lord of Hosts against him? How can he lie down with comfort when he doesn't know if he may awake in flames? With what ease can he look upon anything he enjoys, when he doesn't know if the next moment he may be destroyed and lost forevermore; and that his next move may be to the grave, and to a place full of torment? What comfort can he find from loud laughter, from cheerful company, and from vain sports, when the next moment he may be in a place where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth?

Without the favour of God, all that is in the world — all its promises, all its pleasures, all its friendships, all its entertainments — are mere vanity and vexation of spirit. If a man fares deliciously every day, if he drinks the most sparkling wine, if he procures all the spices of the east, and all the riches of the west, those will not keep his heart from sorrows, nor will they secure him from the wrath to come. These things are very gratifying while he has a body, while he can hear, and smell, and taste. But what will a man do, who is a stranger to God, when he is turned into a spirit? What will an immortal soul do when all these corporal goods have passed away? Where will his provision be? What will his entertainment be when he is lodged in the eternal world; when he no longer hears the music that once charmed and gratified his senses; when he no longer sees those beauties that he once admired and doted on? How his soul, that pursued nothing but a temporal and a carnal happiness here, must be filled with uneasiness and regret, with anguish and despair in that *state of separation* — to see itself stripped of all its ancient comforts, and to have nothing remaining that is comfortable! To be full of flaming desires, and to have nothing with which to quench the raging flame!

All that is present without the favour of God, is like grass on the housetops; it flatters us with a false opinion of its high station. It looks fair and green, *but the mower has nothing with which to fill his hand*. It quickly fades and withers away. But with God is *the Fountain of Life* (Psa 36.9), a Fountain that supplies us with vital streams, and does not cease to refresh till it mingles with the *river of delight that makes glad the City of God*, Psa 46.4. The glories of this world are soon covered with night and darkness; but he is a Sun that ever shines, and from which issues nothing but cheering and reviving light. This is why *the little that a righteous man has, is better than the revenue of many wicked men*, Psa 37.16. *Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure with trouble*, Pro 15.16. His little is given to him with a blessing; and their multitude of things is attended with a curse. His temporal mercies are the forerunners of eternal ones; he tastes a sweetness in what he has because he is sure it flows from the love of God. *He can eat his bread with joy, and drink his wine with a cheerful heart; because his works are accepted*, Ecc 9.7.

2. *The favour of God is life in all temporal wants and afflictions.* No affliction can be borne if a man doesn't see that God's fatherly goodness orders and directs the sharpest and bitterest cup. How can a man hold out in trouble, when he doesn't know if it may be the beginning of sorrows for him? With what grief must a man weep, who doesn't know if his tears will ever be wiped away? How deeply must a man sigh, who looks at his blow as the blow of an enemy, and the chastisement of a cruel one? (Jer 30.14-15) But now the *favour* of God reconciles the soul to His most severe

and mysterious dispensations; and teaches it to be silent under His hand; and to believe that though he is angry now, yet he will not be so forever. When a poor soul looks around, and sees vexation and trouble over all the world, this favour of God encourages him to look above, where he finds a calm, and rest. When the men in whom he most confided, prove deceitful, and when he meets with the greatest disappointments from those he expected the greatest kindness from, then he can have recourse to that God who will never change. When he is left alone and forsaken, the Divine Presence gives him honey in the wilderness, and turns his dungeon into a paradise. What he lacks in the creatures, is plentifully supplied in his blessed and glorious Creator. And though he is poor in the world, *yet he is rich in faith*, Jas 2.5. Though he has nothing on earth that he can call his own, yet what a sweet support it is to think that God is his. Why need he care if he is cast off by all the world, when God receives him? Why need he care if they condemn him, when the Sovereign Judge of all acquits him, and bids him to *be of good cheer, for his sins are forgiven?* He need not fear all their daring threats, their insolence and pride, when he can look up with *Stephen*, and see Jesus at the right hand of God to plead his cause. Though he loses his friends and his earthly comforts, yet he has an Almighty friend that he can never lose.

Every correction is gratifying to a soul thus privileged, for however unpleasant it is for the present, he knows it will promote his final good, Rom 8.28. He knows that his heavenly Father tutors him by so sharp a discipline, for his own glorious Kingdom; and he relies on His faithful promise to bring him there. He knows when he is most pained, that he is under the conduct of a tender and skilful Physician; that though he searches his sore, He will not fail to advance and complete his cure. And therefore he encourages himself to trust in Him whom he will praise *as the health of his countenance, and his God*. He knows that when he is thrown down by sickness, the everlasting arms will be underneath; and that he will be strengthened with strength in his soul, when his body begins to decay. But now, *without* the favour of God, every little cross proves a burden too heavy for us to bear. When a man thinks to himself, *These pains that I feel are the wounds of an enemy*; when a man sees nothing but what is dismal, dark, and troublesome, and has no prospect of a dawning or approaching light, how sad and how overwhelmed must he be? How small a thing will sink us, when the Comforter who should relieve our souls, has departed? (Lam 1.16)

3. *This favour of God is life to us in the troubles of our conscience*; and there are no troubles in the world like these, Psa 88.3-4. In all other troubles, our friends may mitigate our sorrow by their kind discourses and their pitying expressions; but how can they speak peace, when God has declared a war against us? Job 34.29, *When He gives quietness, who then can make trouble? And when he hides his face, who then can behold him?* When He in his just displeasure raises a storm, who can make the water smooth again? Once the sun has set, can all the power of nature make it rise again? Other troubles make the body droop, but these make the soul itself languish and pine away. What but the favour of God can revive us, when under the sense of sin and guilt, our hearts begin to die within us? When our sins are set in order before us, who can free us from the formidable sight? Who but He can teach our hands to fight, and to get the victory? When we are awakened with the sense of His wrath, with the fear of hell and of destruction, who can close our eyes again? When we are under these inward wounds, who can pour in oil, who can bind them up or heal them, but He alone? When our consciences accuse us for our former and our later sins, who then can plead our cause? Who can be on our side, when God himself has overthrown us? When the spiritual and holy Law slays us, who can give us life? When the Word pronounces a dreadful sentence against us, who is able to reverse it? Who in heaven or earth can be our helper, if we don't find help from God? Who will give us any comfort, when through the terrors of our souls we are looking for the wrath to come? Who will give us rest when we lie down, and rise again

with a sense of the fury and the displeasure of the Lord? (Deu 28.66-67) When a soul continually vents its presaging fears, and says, "Now I am troubled, but I will shortly be in much greater trouble. Now I am with my friends, but it may be that shortly I will be with devils. Now I am on earth, but it may be that shortly I will be in hell."

Now the favour of God brings life to the dying soul. One beam of his favour causes the disconsolate mourner to lay aside his mourning garments, and to rejoice. After long terrors, how sweet is the voice of God who brings the news of a pardon? How welcome are the tidings of a pardon to a malefactor at the very place of execution. And when God has brought us out of the deep waters, and the miry pit, our very bones begin to rejoice. It spreads a cheerfulness over every part, to think that the one whom we had so highly offended, will yet be reconciled again; it raises us even to transport and wonder. What, will He be gracious and merciful to such as we? Isn't it pleasant after a long war, to be at peace; after hard labour, to rest; after a long journey, to arrive at our home? So it will be, after a long darkness, to see the face of God shine upon us again. As a devout Lady once said;

"I have found him whom I sought; the love of my soul, and the joy of my heart; My Lord, and my God. Now my joys return; I now behold the face of God, and feel his comforts in the service and worship of him. And therefore every hour seems five till the hour of prayer comes; till by contemplations and meditations I bring my God to my soul. I could wish every one of the days for the solemn worship of God, to be a Joshua's day. The longest is too short for me; and my usual hours of devotion and meditation are too narrow a confinement for them. And when I am refreshed with the comforts of God, my heart dilates itself further by looking on the joys of heaven. For if there is such joy during the seed time, now infinite is the joy of harvest." ¹⁰²

What can be greater, more delicious, and more comfortable, than to find that the Sun of Righteousness will shine upon us with His healing beams, assuring us of his grace here, and of his glory in the world to come? To see that hell, and that curse of the Law in which we thought ourselves involved, are under our feet! To see the yoke of sin broken, and the power of death abolished! To see the heavenly sanctuary open, and Christ our salvation on the throne, reaching out his hand to us, and guarding us to that happiness which he has purchased with his blood! Oh! how cold, and how miserable are all the delights of the world to such a delightful sight as this? And how happy are the people whose God is the Lord! No pleasures, no creature-comforts, no merry songs can give quiet to a troubled soul, without the favour and love of God. Till he comes, all other methods only make the clouds blacker, and increase our sorrows.

4. *His favour is life in the vehement assaults and temptations of the devil.* When the armed strong man comes against us, when he throws his fiery darts, what can hurt us if God encompasses us with *his loving-kindness as with a shield?* (Psa 5.12) He can disarm the tempter, and restrain his malice, and tread him under our feet. If God is not with us, if he doesn't give us sufficient grace, then so subtle, so powerful, so politic an enemy will be too hard for us. How surely we are foiled, and get the worse of it, when we pretend to grapple with him in our own strength. How many falls, and how many bruises by those falls, have we gotten by relying too much on our own skill? How often we have had the help of God when we humbly asked for it! And how sure we are to get the victory *if Christ prays for us that our faith does not fail!* (Luk 22.31) Where can we go for shelter, if not to God our Maker! When this lion of the forest begins to roar, how he will terrify and vex us till the one who permits him to trouble us for a while, is pleased to chain him up again!

¹⁰² See Life of the Countess of Falkland, p. 22.

5. *God's favour is life, even in death itself.* He cures all the disorders of the soul. He weans it from the body, and makes the passage to another world sweet and easy. He can take away the frightful, ghastly aspect of death, and bestow on it a pleasant and amiable look. This is why sick people are often heard to say; *Oh! If I had but the favour and the love of God, I could be freely willing to die even in this moment! If I had but his love, I could bear all these pains, and quietly submit, though I have restless nights and weary days. For then I would be sure of eternal rest.* It is our estrangement from God that makes us live in bondage all our days. And when our time to die has come, it makes us so very loth to depart. This sense of God's displeasure makes a deathbed a bed of sorrow; and it makes death to be indeed, the King of Terrors. Who can help but tremble when he finds himself leaving this world, and he doesn't know what will be his portion in the next — who finds himself going to the Judgment Seat, but doesn't know whether he will be acquitted or condemned there! How many times in our sickness do the very thoughts of death cut us to the very soul, because our spirits are clouded, and our evidence for salvation has departed even before we depart — so that we stand trembling on the borders of eternity, and would gladly stay on earth, though we cannot? What but the favour of God will help us? *When our heart and our flesh fail, He will be the strength of our heart, and our portion forever,* Psa 73.26. What but this will attend us through the shady vale? How can we part with our friends, if God is not our Friend? How can we leave this earthly tabernacle if we don't have a *house not made with hands?* (2Cor 5.1) How will we look upon so vast a change as that of time into eternity, if we are not to change this mortal life for a better one?

But one smile from the face of God in that great and concluding work will keep us, so that we will not be afraid to die. One foretaste of heaven will make us with undaunted hearts, bid this sinful world adieu. We shall then, like *Moses*, undress ourselves and die. We will go down to the grave with the same cheerfulness which *Jacob* went with into *Egypt* — because our Mediator and our elder Brother lives, and He has made good provision for us. We won't be fearful to lie down in the dust, once we have the hope of a blessed and a glorious resurrection. And the day of our death will be a comfortable day, if our blessed Lord is then pleased to tell us that on the same day, *we shall be with him in Paradise.*

CHAP. 2. Of heaven and hell.

Inferences from God's Favour

Of heaven and hell, and of that spiritual death which has seized most of the world. And also the reason why good people are many times very willing to die; and of the inexcusableness and misery of those who are without God's favour. And why some grow in grace more than others, and are more earnest for a share in the love of God.

Inference 1. What a blessed and glorious place is heaven, which is full of God's favour! The City had no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God illumines it, and the Lamb is its light, Rev 21.23; Rev 22.2-5. It is the land of the living, and so it is no wonder that death will never enter there. But here he is a God who hides himself. He is hidden under the veil of the creatures,¹⁰³ under an abundance of mysterious providences. For though his throne is established in righteousness, yet clouds and darkness surround it, Psa 97.2. "Beams of his glory everywhere break forth through every creature, providence, law, and ordinance of His. Yet much of his glory that shines in the creation, is hidden by a train of second causes, through which few look to the First cause."¹⁰⁴ His work in the world is carried on in a mystery. His interest lives, but it is depressed. Those who are devoted to him, are supported indeed by his invisible hand. But in the meantime, they are low for the most part, and afflicted.

But in that *eternal state*, the veil will be rent. He will show himself in a brighter manner. His glory will shine out with direct and pleasant beams to all the beholding and admiring eyes. There he will give forth the full and satisfying communications of his love that will cheer, and satisfy, and refresh a vast multitude of grateful and adoring spirits. Here the souls of good men are depressed by the misrepresentations of Satan, and by the frequent jealousies and suspicions of their own guilty souls. But there they will see him as he is; and what will increase their joy, is to see He is their own God *forever*. No storms will molest their peace there; nothing will interrupt their eternal calm. Not a vain, tumultuous, repining, or uneasy thought will assault their peaceful and quiet hearts *forever*. No more will they cry out, *Is his Mercy clean gone? Has he forgotten to be gracious?* (Psa 77.8) For they will be with him in his own presence. *Here* his family is composed of several distressed, mourning children. And when some praise him, their praises are disturbed by the groans of others, or by their own sins. But *there* they will all be clothed with praise, and none will be sick or die. If we but knew that there was a place in the world where the people never die, the love that all have of life would put them to inquiring how they might get there. *This country is heaven.*¹⁰⁵

There death, and fear, and consternation are banished forever; there we should lift up our eyes; there we should direct our hearts. In heaven, the favour of God shines with an unclouded brightness. Those who are inhabitants of that holy place, are employed in an honourable attendance upon their mighty King. They do not need, they do not *desire* any of those enjoyments which are here below, any more than the favourites of a Prince desire a meaner station, or a poorer cottage, or some obscure and forlorn retreat. And alas! what are all our pleasures, and our most splendid entertainments, compared to that Bread, and to those spiritual and intellectual joys which angels and glorified souls feed on! The first hour, the first day of joy there, is better than an

¹⁰³ *Creatures*: here it means "all created things," rather than just mankind, or even the animal kingdom. – WHG

¹⁰⁴ Rev. John Howe, *Of Delighting in God*. See his *Works*, London, 1822, vol. 2, chap. 5.

¹⁰⁵ Rogers exhorts us to enter heaven *here*, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ; for we cannot enter *there*. *It is appointed for men once to die, and after that, the Judgment.* (Heb 9.27) – WHG

age of joys here below. If one day spent in his courts, in his love and praises *here*, is better than a thousand *elsewhere*,¹⁰⁶ what will one day in heaven be! There we will not live on things meaner than ourselves; we will have no meager contentments there, nor dishonourable cares. In the favour and in the sight of God we will have a taste of all excellencies and delights, without the least mixture of evil. And what transports we will have when we come to the full view of Him, the sight of whom, even at this distance, was so sweet and comfortable to us! — when after all our doubts, our fears, and our sad thoughts, we find that we have, through many dangers, gained our port.

Inference 2. If the favour of God is life, then O! what a doleful place is hell, where this favour never comes! Job 10.22.¹⁰⁷ How black is their darkness, and how long and tedious is their night that will never have the dawn of day! Oh! how terrible and how frightful is the second death! ¹⁰⁸ A death that torments the separated soul! A death that banishes it from the presence of the Lord! A death that excludes it from all comfortable sight of God! There the damned see him as a Judge, feel his awful terrors. But if they could, they would gladly wrap themselves in darkness, and never see such a frowning and a dreadful God. There is anguish, and woe, and tribulation; and the continual groan and cry of that place is, “*God has gone away from us forever*. His face and his light cheer his saints; but it scorches us, and puts us all into a flame.” This is the language of their misery: that God will show them no pity; that he is deaf to their cries, and in his eternal wrath He has shut up his compassions that once yearned over them; that once he would indeed have been reconciled, and they *would not*. And now they will never have an offer of his favour anymore. Oh! poor forsaken souls! What will they do who have no God to give them help, no Mediator to plead their cause, no Physician to bind up their wounds, no kind hand to give them the least comfort! — nothing but wrath, and no love; nothing but vengeance and destruction, and no mercy with it!

The servants of God never taste so much of hell, as when his face is hidden. It brings upon them desolation, terror, and the very pangs of death. Now and then they have some support here, some little beams of light; but in that doleful place, there is nothing but sorrow and despair. Here, Christ is concerned in all the temptations of his servants; he sympathizes with them, and in his due time he sends them relief. But he will never concern himself with the damned, nor cast one gracious eye upon them. They are fallen, and he will not raise them up; they are perished, and they *must* perish; they thirst indeed, but will never have a drop of water to cool their tongues. What will the poor creatures do when they are overwhelmed with the wrath of one who is Almighty! Oh! how loud their cries will be! And how dreadful their complaints when, after millions of years have passed, they still have as many more to come! When they have been long tossed upon the lake of fire, they will never be nearer to the shore; never hear one comfortable word from the mouth of God! Oh! how glad they would be to have one smile of his face, one day’s refreshment! But it must not be; the gulf is fixed, and the sentence is irrevocable. Isa 27.11, *He that made them, will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them will show them no favour*. Oh! what can be thought more desolate than to be forsaken by God! — to be forsaken by God, in whom alone is *life*, and to be cast into outer darkness! And what will be the consternation of the Great Day, when he says to the wicked, *Depart from me!* etc. To hear that voice, and that word, *Depart from me*, *will* be their hell. They will not be able to turn their thoughts from the contemplation of their own miseries, nor their eyes from the sight of those objects that will fill them with grief and horror,

¹⁰⁶ Psa 84.10.

¹⁰⁷ **Job 10:22** A land as dark as darkness *itself*, As the shadow of death, without any order, *Where* even the light is like darkness.

¹⁰⁸ Rev 20.14; 21.8. The lake of fire. — WHG

and they will be themselves abominable. For what a despicable deformed thing, even now, is an apostate angel that is stripped of the life of God!

Inference 3. If life is in the favour of God, then most of the world is dead. For most are alienated from him by their evil works; most are stupid and insensible, in a dead slumber, and are his enemies. *She that lives in pleasure, is dead while she lives,* 1Tim 5.6. And if this is a symptom and a mark of death, then how many dead we have among us! How many who find time enough for their games, their sports, and their recreations, and find no time in which to call upon the Lord, and to seek his favour! How many eat, and drink, and are merry, even when their souls are in the greatest danger, and their Maker is their enemy! It is a sign that when they are so little sensible of their greatest interest, and have so little taste and liking of divine joys, that *they are spiritually dead*. How much greater is the number of the dead than of the living! How many families are without prayer, without any sense of God at all, and in which the whole family is dead! And in those families where some are alive, how many are yet not quickened! How many good parents are mourning over their dying children whom they cannot bring to life! They see them stepping into the grave, and all their entreaties, all their tears, all their prayers cannot bring them from there! And in our congregations, how many there are who have indeed *a name to live, but are dead!*¹⁰⁹ who have never yet been in earnest for their salvation! who unconcernedly let days and years roll over their heads, and are never any nearer heaven at the conclusion of the year than they were at the beginning of it! They may indeed have risen early and sat up late; but all their cares have been for the *body*, as if they had no *soul*. They have grown crooked with looking downward, and are as earthly and sensual as if they had no heaven to mind. And what a heartless thing it is to the ministers, to find that they spend their labour in speaking to the dead, and who in great measure *remain dead!* Though the ministers don't do it without hope that at some time or another, their Master will say to them, as he said to the Prophet about *dry bones*, Eze 37.1-4.¹¹⁰

Oh! what a plague is among us, and we don't feel it! Gray hairs are here and there upon us, and we don't discern it! How many captives the prince of darkness has, who are no way grieved by their own captivity! How many are strangers to the favour of God, who never saw his reconciled face, never felt the quickening influences of his Spirit to this very day! And yet they rejoice as if all were safe and well! They sit down to eat and to drink, and rise up to play; and in the midst of those diversions, death seizes on their bodies. And when their bodies die, their souls die, and are past our help. Oh! my friends, if you have any life, any compassion, put on the sympathies of Christ, and take up a lamentation for the dead.

Inference 4. Why good Christians are so willing to depart from this world. It is because the favour of God is their life; and when they are dead, they live again. Because they cannot see God and live, they are content to die, that they may enjoy the blessed sight. They remember very well that they are strangers and pilgrims on earth; that affliction is as proper to this world, as heat in summer, and as storms and snow in winter. They know however coarse their fare, however harsh the usage they meet with, that they are travelling to their dearest country; and every one of those Holy Pilgrims on the way to Zion, is continually crying out (as one says) in this or like manner:

¹⁰⁹ Rev. 3.1.

¹¹⁰ **Eze 37:1** The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it *was* full of bones. ² Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, *there were* very many in the open valley; and indeed *they were* very dry. ³ And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." ⁴ Again He said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!'"

As for you, O City of God, how great, and how transcendent is your beauty! Nothing but you do I desire. I think of nothing but you. I pant, I thirst, I long for your felicity. How I long for you, you sure reversion of never-fading pleasures! O! Paradise, you are the recompence of my travels, and the sole aim of all my hopes. How gladly would I leave these habitations of clay, to dwell in your eternal and delightful mansions! What would I not give to enjoy the liberty of your citizens! O! *Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, when shall I leave this ruinous and shaken House! O that I had the wings of a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest. O! when, *when* shall I arrive there? How long will it be before I enter the court of heaven! ¹¹¹

Oh! how many on whom the face of God has comfortably shined, have longed to depart, and to be with him? They bear all disappointments and vexations in the hope of this. And pain and sickness are welcome because they're like the wheels of their chariots, driving them nearer to their home. Such as these are like a well-freighted ship that is ready to sail, and stays only till a favourable wind presents itself. They don't die by surprise. For these happy travellers to glory are always on the road that leads to the blessed place above. Death is not frightful to them, because they have often meditated on what it means to die, and what is required for so vast a change. There are, indeed, a great many formidable things in death — the separation of the soul, the many preceding pains, and an innumerable army of sorrows and griefs that march before the King of Terrors — all of which these holy persons overcome by *faith*. They know that Christ has taken from death, all its poisonous and hurtful qualities. Their distance from God is the trouble of all good people. And when he shows himself, they rejoice; just as when he hides himself, they mourn. And hence many a religious person, when he came to die, has been heard to say,

I would not now, for all the world, be without an interest in Christ. I always found him to be a good Master, and I still find him to be so. He has taken away the sting of death, and I am willing to go to the House prepared for all living. For my Lord has been there before, and has perfumed and sanctified the grave. O Grave, you look with a dreadful aspect to flesh and blood, but *not* so to faith; and I bid you welcome, as the way to Glory. I commit my Body to you, to keep it safe till the resurrection, when my soul that I now commit into the hands of my Saviour, shall come and fetch it back again.

With the sense of this favour of God, the martyrs so cheerfully persevered, and looked upon their dying day as the day of their coronation. This favour made them scorn the threats and the frowns of tyrants, and all their rage and fury. By this they went to the fiery furnace as to a bed of roses, because they knew God would be with them there. In the hope of his acceptance, old and young, grave matrons and tender virgins, have embraced the stakes, and kissed the flames, and freely died. And they have rejoiced, and looked with an unmoved countenance on all the preparations of death, while those who were the spectators of their patience, could not look upon them without flowing eyes. To them they have said,

Death would be frightful if we looked no further; but it comforts us when we see the crowns, the hallelujahs, and the glories that wait for us on the further side. This will deliver us from an evil world, from our corrupt hearts, and from all those sins which we have long groaned under. This will bring us to Him whom all our days we have longed to see. Our friends bewail us here, but angels are waiting for our souls, and will be glad to convey them to their Lord Christ and ours.

¹¹¹ *Situation of Paradise*, p. 95, by Pierre Daniel Huet (1630-1731).

And conformably to this, those Forty Martyrs whom Basil and so many of the Fathers celebrate, encouraged one another.¹¹² When neither promises nor threats would prevail with them to forsake their God, they were condemned to be exposed on ice, to be killed with cold. When they beheld the place, casting away their garments, they ran to it with delight, not as if they had been going to death, but to gather the spoils of victory. Along with our garments, they said, we will put off our old man, our sin, and all the corruptions of our nature. What a great thing it is if the servant suffers that which his Lord endured before! We were the cause that he was disrobed and afflicted. The cold, said these happy souls, is *troublesome*, but Paradise is *sweet*. This ice afflicts us; but the rest there, will delight us. Let us endure this cold a little while longer, and the warmth of Abraham's Bosom will refresh us forever. We will exchange this bitter and tempestuous night, for an eternal day. Let us turn our backs upon the world; and seeing that we are once to die, let us now die, that we may live. And O Lord, let us be acceptable to you when we are offered to you by this painful death. Thus they endured in the cold night, rejoicing in the hope of Glory. What wonders of courage and of zeal have been produced by the sense of the favour and the love of God!

*Inference 5. How inexcusable are those who refuse this favour of God, in which alone is life! Who would choose to be a beggar, when he might be the King's favourite? Who would choose to embrace a dunghill, when he might be treated with plenty, and all suitable accommodations? Who would choose to be sick, or blind, when he might receive his sight? And yet this is the sad case of sinners! God would be their friend, and they will not have him as such; he would save them, and they will not be saved; he would bless them, and they choose to be cursed. How many are there, who prefer a lust before a Saviour, and earth before heaven, and the applause of their vain sottish companions, before the approval of the All-seeing Judge? O blind sinners! Why will you lay hands on yourselves, and do all you can to deprive your souls of life? "What a sad thing it is," as one says, "to deny sustenance to your own life! The breath of God is in you; what will be done to the one who starves a Prince's child?"*¹¹³ What do we have of like worth to spiritual vigour, agility, courage, and peace of soul? And shall we, who have a door of life, at once offer contempt to divine goodness, and violence to our own life, by not using what God has put in our hands for our relief? Is there so much allurements in destruction, and so much beauty in eternal flames, that you cannot forbear going there? Why will you suffer your souls to starve, while you are contriving to gratify the flesh? Why will you still serve the devil and your own sins? Are they such good masters, will they pay you so well in the end? Are you content to have the pleasures of sin for a season, though you lose your share in Paradise? Oh, what bitter reflections this will cause hereafter, on so bad a choice — when you lift up your eyes in misery, and see the Kingdom of heaven afar off, and say,

I was once offered that Kingdom and those joys, and I would not have them. I was once fair for salvation, but I slighted it. I might have had the favour of God, and I would not have it. O my cursed sins! How you have deceived me! You promised me delight, and you have brought me to bitterness and woe. You promised me safety, and you have made me perish. Oh that some *angel*, or some *saint*, might be sent to bring me some relief! The word of God told me of that Glory; his ministers earnestly entreated me to prepare for it; my Friends were always bidding me to leave my wicked course; my conscience checked me for it. And yet I broke through all these exhortations and these checks; and so I have come laden with guilt, to eternal misery. I was at my games and sports, when I should have been on my knees. I indeed had time, and strength, and health, and many helps and advantages. O that all my days I had watched, and strived, and

¹¹² Basil of Caesarea (370-379) delivered a homily on the Forty Martyrs (Hom. xix in P.G., XXXI, 507 seq.). – WHG

¹¹³ Jos. Symond's *Sight and Faith* (London, 1651). p. 214.

denied myself; then I would not have come to this place of torment! O that my sun would rise again! O that I might have another trial, and more time! But alas! the Judge is my enemy. I have heard my sentence, and he will not change his purpose! I am condemned, I am lost forever!

O sinners! As you would never fall into such a hopeless state, now, *even now*, seek the face of God. Haven't you already spent time enough in sin, in walking in the imagination of your own hearts, and the sight of your own eyes? Haven't you loved your sottish pleasures long enough? O! Come! Leave the tents of wickedness; come and love your God, for he is ready to receive you; come to him, and all your sins shall be forgiven! O do not let mercy itself, that speaks for your hearts, be denied. Who will be so good a friend as God? Who will abide with you, when life itself is gone? And now surely, the heart of some sinner or another begins to relent. Someone is saying to himself,

Though I never prayed in secret before, yet now I will begin to pray. Though I lost an abundance of my youth and my health, I will strive to lose no more. I have put off God and my conscience with vain excuses and delays, but I will not put them off again. The one who gave me life will have my thoughts, my heart, and my endeavours. And I will ever admire the riches of his love, if he will pardon such a malefactor, and condescend to such a worm, and entertain such a prodigal as I have been.

Inference 6. What a woeful condition those poor sinners are in, who are without this favour of God! How great a danger they are exposed to every day! And they don't know it, which is a part of their misery. Spiritual death has closed their eyes, and they don't see where they are going. What a sad object a poor sinner is, who is yet a stranger to this God; who is every hour liable to His eternal wrath; who seeks the friendship and the favour of men, and has no thoughts of his Creator, no dread of His displeasure, no taste or relish of His love! Surely they must have fallen into a dead sleep, whom all the terrors of the Lord, all the threats of his word, and all the calls of his ministers will not awaken! With what peace can you eat and drink, or work, or rest, while so great a God is your enemy? Will his wrath, that makes the devils roar and tremble in their hellish agonies, be *tolerable* to you? When his vengeance pursues you, where will you run for help? When he frowns, what will it avail you if all the world should smile upon you? When he casts you off, who will show you pity? When he condemns you, who will plead your cause? Don't you know that your life is short, that your change is near, that the Judge is at the door? Don't you know that this world will leave you, so that you may quickly go into another? And can you dwell with eternal burnings? Can you venture to go to the Judgment Seat before you have an interest in Christ? Are you fruitless and barren here, and do you think to flourish in the Celestial Paradise? Do you remain dead here under all the means of grace, and yet hope to live forever? What pleasures are those that enchant you, that you will not come and taste the joys of God? Who will be a better friend than he is? If you laugh at destruction, it will not be further off. Oh don't let the devil be your master, nor the world your God. Don't let sin cheat and impose on you with its false and counterfeit delights.

Others are mourning after the Lord *in secret*; and don't you have as much cause to mourn as they do? Others are striving with earnest prayers and supplications, and holy endeavours, to enter in at the strait gate; and will it open to you by itself? Or don't you, as well as they, have souls to save? Others read, and hear, and pray, and do all they can for salvation, being afraid that they might fall under the power of eternal death; and have *you* no cause to fear? Why is it that when they are running so fast in the way of heaven, you run faster in the way of hell? Why with so great a care, do you tend and regard your bodies to preserve them from pain, and yet suffer your souls to languish and pine away? If you only knew how miserable you are without the favour of God, it

would create a vast horror in your thoughts. How deeply you would groan if you were but sensible of the vast load of guilt that is upon you! How earnestly you would cry for help if you but saw where you are sinking to, and where you are likely to be forever! How you would startle if you but perceived that the devil *flatters* you, so that he may *destroy* you! It is *his* work that you do, *his* lusts that you embrace, *his* designs that you comply with! There is no dungeon so doleful, no place so full of torment, no fire so hot as that to which he leads you — and which will be even more insupportable to you, because you let him lead you captive at his own pleasure. If we receive any life from God, let us bewail our dead; let us pity those who have no pity for themselves; let our eyes and our hearts melt and be troubled for them, even though they will not shed any tears for the sadness of their own case.

Inference 7. Hence we see the reason why some grow more in grace than others do, and are also more serviceable in the world. Fear and sadness damp and contract our spirits; but joy and comfort dilate them, and cause them to act with spriteliness and vigour. The displeasure of God weakens the faculties and powers of the soul, by the terrible apprehensions which it is then filled with. But His favour-bringing life fills it with delight. And faith is strong and unmoved when it can behold God, his Son, and the Promises, *all* as her own portion. Love is then genuine and durable, when it has a warm sense of the love of God. And under the constraining power and force of this, the heart is dissolved into tender sorrow, and a true repentance. It is the shining of the face of God, that makes us active for his Glory, and unwearied in his service. And under his pleasant and reviving beams, the Christian travels with delight and haste to his dearly-beloved home. But when this favour is eclipsed, when this Sun covered with a cloud, then the poor Christian is like one who travels in the darkness of the night and has lost his way. He is full of fear and perplexity; and so is the deserted soul. But the first beam of day makes him to go on and finish his course. And then that promise in Isa 35.1-2 is accomplished: *The wilderness and the solitary place will be glad for them, and the desert will rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice, even with joy and singing*, etc. The favour of God is like dew on the grass; it causes fruit where there was nothing but withering and decay before. As God is pleased to favour us, or to be displeased, so there is either great ease, or else restlessness and indisposition on our spirits. His favour excites admiration and praise, love and joy; and with these cheerful affections, a man may do a great deal for God. Whereas our strength usually departs with our departing comforts. What can we do for the salvation of others, if we are under great fear that we ourselves will not be saved? How can we work in the Vineyard, if we fear that our Master will cast us out in anger? Psa 51.11-12, *Do not cast me not away from your presence; and do not take your holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free spirit.*

And so it is, as the favour of God,

1. Delivers us from those lusts and corruptions which chain us down, such that we cannot run in the way of God's commandments.
2. As it keeps us from being entangled with the affairs of the world, that subjugate and enthrall our minds.
3. As it is a Spirit of Adoption in us, and frees us from those slavish fears of the justice, sovereignty, holiness, and power of God, which overwhelm our hearts.

Job 22.26. Then you will have your delight in the Almighty, and will lift up your face to God. You will pray to him, and he will hear you.

The favour of God gives us access to the Throne of Grace. It takes away our unwillingness and our restraint in holy duties. It gives a freedom and enlargement of soul. And then it is like the flower that opens itself to the shining Sun. Even if a man allows no alteration in his constitution or outward appearance, yet if God withdraws from him, then all within greatly decays. When the spirit came upon Saul, 1Sam 10.6, *He prophesied, and was turned into another man*. He was inspired with greater courage, and had a disposition that was more heroic and better qualified. But when this spirit was taken away, an evil spirit succeeded in its place. Then Saul was no longer the same — nothing but fear, and horror, and despair, and vexation raged in his breast. He was in all respects a very miserable man. He had the *title* of a King, but was divested of all royal qualities when he was left by the God of Israel, and went to ask advice of the witch of Endor. See his own complaint in 1Sam 28.15: *I am sorely distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me, and answers me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams*.

Doesn't every Christian find by his experience, that he is not the same in his duties at one time, that he is at another? Sometimes his heart melts under a sense of the love of God, and he feels such a vital influence of the Spirit, that it seems like a foretaste of heaven. He seems to be even *swallowed up* with joy; he seems to be within the courts of God, and to set his foot within the Land of Promise. Oh, who can express the sweetness that spreads all over the panting soul, when it sees the face of God! It then lives indeed, but hardly knows whether it is in the body or out of it, so many wonders of grace and mercy does it view! (2Cor 12.2) And yet this same person who is now in triumph at the gate of heaven, may at another time bewail his own case, and be in deep sorrows, as if at the very door of hell.

When the dew of God ceases to fall upon the soul, it no longer looks so fresh and so fair, but sighs and groans for her Saviour, though a little while ago she could say, *I am my Beloved's, and he is mine*. The same person may look at God as a Judge, who before thought of Him as a Father.

“The life (one says) which God gives his servants, may be weakened; but it is never extinguished; there is oftentimes upon them a spiritual fainting (though not a total death), when the Spirit does not produce any cheerful motion, nor display any of his usual beams of light — so that they are tossed between fear and hope, between the sentiments of life, and the apprehensions of death.”

What dryness, what hardness, comes upon our hearts? How little life, or enlargement, or comfort do we have in duty, when the Spirit of God is withdrawn from us? All our endeavours, all our strivings with ourselves, do not warm our spirits as He used to do. How little delight do we have in prayer? And how loth are we to pray? We know how lame and defective our petitions and desires are. And we are at as great a loss as Job, when he said (23.3-4), *Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to his seat*. And verse 8: *I go forward, but He isn't there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him*, etc.

Inference 8, and lastly. From this you see the reason why the servants of God so earnestly beg this favour, and are so deeply troubled when it is removed. It is their life, their portion, their *all*. Everything is strangely changed; all its attractiveness, and beauty, and glory vanishes when the life is gone. *Life* is the pleasant thing; it is sweet and comfortable. But *death*, with its pale attendants, raises a horror and aversion to it everywhere. The saints of God dread the removal of his favour, and the hiding of his face. And when it is hidden, a faintness, and a cold amazement and fear seizes every part. They feel strange bitterness, and anguish, and tribulation, which makes their joints tremble; it is like the very pangs of death to them.

Psa 22.14-15, *I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of me; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue clings to my jaws, and You have brought me into the dust of death.*

Also, Psa 38.2-10; Job 23.8-9; Psa 13.1-4.¹¹⁴

Psa 27.9, *Do not hide your face from me; do not put your servant away in anger. You have been my help, do not leave me, nor forsake me, O God.*

Psa 69.17. *Do not hide your face from your servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily.*

Psa 4.6. *There are many who say, Who will show us any good? Lord lift up the light of your countenance upon us.*

¹¹⁴ **Psa 38:2-10** For Your arrows pierce me deeply, And Your hand presses me down. ³ *There is no soundness in my flesh* Because of Your anger, Nor *any* health in my bones Because of my sin. ⁴ For my iniquities have gone over my head; Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. ⁵ My wounds are foul *and* festering Because of my foolishness. ⁶ I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. ⁷ For my loins are full of inflammation, And *there is no soundness in my flesh.* ⁸ I am feeble and severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart. ⁹ Lord, all my desire is before You; And my sighing is not hidden from You. ¹⁰ My heart pants, my strength fails me; As for the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me. ^{NKJ} **Job 23:8-9** Look, I go forward, but He is not *there*, And backward, but I cannot perceive Him; ⁹ When He works on the left hand, I cannot behold *Him*; When He turns to the right hand, I cannot see *Him*. **Psa 13:1-4** How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? ² How long shall I take counsel in my soul, *Having* sorrow in my heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? ³ Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God; Enlighten my eyes, Lest I sleep the *sleep of death*; ⁴ Lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him"; *Lest* those who trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

CHAP. 3. The favour of God is to be diligently sought.

Showing that the favour of God is to be diligently sought; and what is to be done to obtain it.

1. *Seeing that life is in the favour of God, seek it earnestly.* If I were to bid you to take care of your lives, or your estates, you would quickly think it a needless request, because your own safety and interest would prompt you to it. But if we bid you to take care of your souls, there indeed you can hear one sermon after another, one exhortation after another, and still be as secure and careless as before. We hear many people wishing for *other* things, and very few who are desiring *this*. We hear the poor say, Oh that I was rich! The sick, Oh that I was well! And the prisoner sighing for his liberty; the trader busily concerned for his gain; and the merchant for good returns. But Oh, how few are saying, Oh that I might find grace in the sight of God! Oh that I might be His, and He be mine! Many have their eyes fixed on the world, admiring and doting on it, though they daily see how vain it is, and how its fashion passes away. But Oh! how few there are whose eyes are fixed on heaven, and whose hearts are panting after the Living God! If I could teach you a way to be the favourites of the King, or of some powerful or great men, you would think to derive great advantages from such a privilege, and quickly strive to get it. But here is one greater than they, even the King of kings, whose favour is tendered to your acceptance and your choice. His throne is accessible. Though his majesty might confound you, yet his goodness bids you welcome to his presence. *Seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.* And I think every soul here should rejoice to even know that it is *possible* for him to have God be his own God. That however abject, however sinful he may have been, yet he may be advanced and honoured by the Lord of Glory, if he but returns. And when He bids us seek his face, we should answer, *Your face Lord we will seek*, Psa 27.8, and seek it quickly while he may be found, lest sickness, and death, and judgment prevent us. And lest, grieved by our delays, He covers himself from us by an eternal separation; and when we seek him, we should not find him. And because we did not hear his calls, he might shut out all our cries, *and laugh when our calamity comes like an armed man*, Pro 1.28.

If you have no need of him to forgive your sins, to heal your souls, to protect you from danger, or to bring you to salvation, then leave this work alone — be unconcerned whether you seek his favour, or disesteem it; whether he is your friend, or your enemy. But if you *need* God, as I am sure you do, then pour out your supplications to him for his Grace; and say, O Lord, I have been dead in sin, but I know that nothing is impossible for you. You open the graves, and make even the dead live. Let my soul feel your almighty power, and have a share in the first resurrection, that the second death may not prevail over me. O let me be one of your children; one of your blessed family; one whom you love, and whom you will love forever. You have pardoned many who were once as guilty as I have been. O magnify the riches of your grace in blotting out my iniquities. You have quickened many who were once dead. Let me also be quickened by the vital influences of your Spirit. You have received many prodigals; let me not be thrown off. You have blessed many; and you have many blessings in store. *Therefore bless me, even me also, I pray you, O my God.*

2. Join endeavours to your prayers, and use all the means of grace, with conscionable diligence. 2Cor 5.9, *We labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted by Him.* Psa 119.58, *I entreated Your favor with my whole heart.* Oh, do not mock him with a mere form of words! But let your affections and your words be joined together. Be like the hart, that when it pants for the waterbrooks, it runs there with all the speed it can. Once your souls are warmed with a sense of God, use all the care you can to maintain that sacred and that comfortable flame, lest by your neglect it be extinguished and go out again. For a man to wish that he had the favour of God, and not to use all His prescribed means, is foolish and ineffectual. It's as if a traveller sat on the road

in a lazy posture, without any motion, and yet wished to be at his journey's end. It's as if a man wished to be learned, and yet never read or studied; as if a soldier wished for victory, yet never fought; or a farmer wished for a bountiful crop, yet neither plowed nor sowed. It is not a careless *wish* for God's favour, that will serve the turn. You must pray constantly, and resort to those places of worship where he usually manifests his presence in his own ordinances. And read his word with reverence, humility, and frequency. You must seek him with your whole heart. You must expect and wait for a gracious answer to your prayers, even if it is long. How many days men will give their attendance to for some preferment or high place in a Prince's court! It should not grieve us to wait for the favour and the love of God. For once it is bestowed, it will requite all your pains and labour, 1Cor 15.58.¹¹⁵ In the quest for this, you will meet with manifold trials, and with great oppositions. Your carnal nature and your old sins will present motives to your sense to draw you back. Satan will perplex you with a thousand doubts and troubles. For you may be sure, this lion will roar when he is likely to lose his prey. But nothing of this must discourage you. The favour of God is so great a mercy, that you may justly be importunate and restless till you get it, notwithstanding all the dangers that you meet with. No great things are obtained except with difficulty. You'll see hereafter that it was worthwhile to take pains in a matter of so great a consequence. You now find that after all the pleasure of sin is past, it leaves a sting, and fills your minds with bitterness and trouble. But hereafter you'll find nothing but comfort, nothing but an overflowing-pleasure in the love of God. And you'll find it to be so very pleasant, that you will wish that you had done more for him than you have done. There's not a soul in heaven who repents of the pains he took to get there.

3. *You must be deeply sensible of your own miserable and undone state without it.* Luke 5.31, *Those who are healthy, don't need a Physician, but those who are sick.* Mat 18.11, *The Son of Man has come to save that which is lost.* Job 33.27-28, *He looks upon men; and if any say, I have sinned and perverted what was right, and it does not profit me, He will deliver his soul from going down to the pit, and his life shall see the light.* Once you are convinced that your sins have made Him angry, that his anger is very just, and yet it is so severe that if it continues, it will be intolerable — once you are sensible what a great God you have provoked, what a holy Law you have broken, what a hell you have deserved — you will reckon it as a great mercy that you are not already there, from which there is no return. If your conscience has been awakened with a deep impression of his wrath, then all the riches, the honours, and the pleasures of this world, will seem to you to be very poor and empty things. The sight of sin that has deceived you, that has defiled you, that has exposed you to so great danger, will fill you with shame and sorrow, with fear and trouble. Of all your desires, this will be your chief, and your only desire. Let me have the favour of God, whatever else I want; let me have his favour or I die forever. You will be restless and unsatisfied till you have the hope of this. The reason why men are so industrious for all other things, and so little concerned for the favour of God, is because they are blinded by the devil, and by their own lusts, and they are under a spiritual insensibility.

But once you find sin to be bitter, *this favour* will be very sweet. If *that sin* has thrown you into painful agonies and deep distress of soul, *this favour* will greatly comfort and revive you. You will then see great cause to humble and loathe yourself, and not find any cause for pride, or for the boast of the *Pharisee*. But in the better posture and temper of the Publican, you will say, *Lord be merciful to me, a sinner*. Never did a traveller after a tedious journey, more desire his home, or a

¹¹⁵ **1Cor 15:58** Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

mariner long tossed with tempests, more desire to see the quiet shore, than you will desire this favour of God. When you have been scorched with inward thirst, you will pant for this fountain of love in which you may quench your thirst. When you have been in a long war with God, and at length come to see the danger of it, then O how beautiful will be the feet of those who are ambassadors of peace! You will then say, as in *Luk 1.53*, *He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.*

4. *The favour of God is only to be had in and through Jesus Christ; and so you must apply yourselves in Him for it.* It is not all your zeal, your repentance, your self-denial, or your mortifications, that of themselves will be sufficient to bring you to the favour of God. Though you labour in His service all day, and mourn for your miscarriages all night, what satisfaction will this give to his offended Justice, and to the honour of his violated Law? We were happy indeed at our first creation in His love; and we would have been happy still, had we persevered. But our first apostacy by the fall from that innocent condition, has made a large breach between God and us. And there is none found in heaven or earth who can make it up, except his only Son. The loss of original righteousness has made us lose his favour, and occasioned a vast distance between Him and us. This has brought forth all the miseries of the world: irregular seasons, overflowing inundations, and dreadful wars; all the sickness and pain of our bodies, and all the guilt, and unquietness, and disorder of our souls. In Adam we all died; both natural and spiritual death came upon all, because all have sinned. But God in his mercy has not left us hopeless. As soon as Adam fell, God was pleased to provide for his rising again; and as soon as Adam had wounded himself, God prepared a balsam to heal and cure his wounds. And when Adam was stung and poisoned with the venom of the serpent, God prepared an antidote. The poor guilty creature could have expected nothing but a curse; and yet God gave him the promise of redemption, and of a blessing by the Seed of the woman, who would break the serpent's head. When he drives Adam out of Paradise, he might have put him out of heaven, and out of his presence forevermore, and have said, *Go and dwell with that devil who tempted you to sin.* Upon the Fall, He did indeed withdraw his usual favour. This raised a cloud that obscured the beauty of His morning-glory, and that intercepted the beams that a little while before had shone upon his head. But though we had destroyed ourselves, in God was our help. He sent his own Son to die for us, to give satisfaction to His justice, which would otherwise have slammed against us. And *though we are enemies, yet He is willing to reconcile us by the death of his Son*, Rom 5.10. It is by his Son that God will deal with us. We must address ourselves to Him, as being ordained by God to make our peace.

We must look to *His* righteousness, being very sensible that, at best, our *own* is miserably defective. If our persons, and our services are accepted, it must be through His Beloved; he is the principal and the great favourite of heaven. All the mercy that we need will be bestowed for his sake alone. All the miseries that we deserve, he will keep from us. It pleases God to behold what Christ has done. He will be pleased with us, if we are *in him*. It is the blood of Jesus, and the merit of his death, and our application of these by faith, that will reinstate us in his favour. And it is the power and the virtue of his intercession that will preserve us in it. Christ is *the way, and the truth, and the life*. It is he that will conduct and lead us to his Father, and make the One who was our enemy because of our sin, to be our friend again. It is his office as Mediator and Saviour, to heal the wounded, to reduce the wanderers, to call home the banished, to make the lame to walk, and the blind to see, Isa 61.1. And our blessed Lord is willing to plead our cause, and to help our wants; for those who come to him, he will in no way cast out. If you believe, then his Father will be your Father; and his God your God. For God has resolved that all the communication of his grace will be made through his dearly beloved Son. And if you sincerely beg his favour for Christ's sake, you

will not be denied. *He that has the Son, has life.* You will indeed flourish when you are united to this great and glorious Head; and the death that you found by the first Adam, will be removed by the second. *As in Adam all died, even so in Christ all shall be made alive,* 1Cor 15.22. The office of our redeemer in heaven is still to be a reconciler; and not all the angels or saints there, can do for us what He does. When you are complaining of the yet remaining defilement and power of sin, and say with the great Apostle, *Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?* remember that there is help laid upon One who is mighty — One who is compassionate, and has a tender sense of all your griefs and miseries. And therefore, when you are amazed with the view of your own guilt, terrified with the accusations of your own consciences, and perplexed with the violent assaults and temptations of the devil; when you are afraid you will be the stubble to the devouring wrath of God; then *lay hold of his strength,* Isa 27.5. That is, lay hold of *Christ who is the power of God, and the wisdom of God,* 1Cor 1.24. And then it may be said of you, as in Eph 2.12-14, *Though in time past you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, yet now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off, are made near by the blood of Christ; for He is our peace.*

5. *That you may have an interest in the favour of God, which is life, your natures must be renewed.* It is not enough that your consciences are delivered from guilt, and from a liability to punishment; but they must also be delivered from the dominion and power of sin. If your lusts are unsubdued, by their unquiet and disorderly motions they will create a hell within; and then you cannot expect a heaven without. If you relish only temporary, carnal joys, you must not expect to taste the joy of God; nor think that if you wallow in the mire, He will place you on his throne. Though his sun gives refreshment with his cheerful beams to all the world, to the bad as well as to the good; yet the beams of his special favour will not shine upon a dunghill, nor visit those hearts which are full of all manner of pollution. His pure and holy nature will not allow him to behold iniquity with approval. Do not think to see the reviving smiles of His face, so long as you turn your backs on Him; so long as you love what he abhors; so long as without any remorse or grief, you scorn his government, and violate his laws. Till you are born again by the Spirit of God, you are in a state of death, and are unfit for the communications of the Divine favour; you are in that condition, and not members of the Body of Christ. For all who are joined to that glorious Head, have life and strength from him to mortify their lusts. *What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial?* 2Cor 6.14-15. There is no communion between God and you, till your natures, your inclinations, your principles, and your designs are all changed from what they once were. *The righteous Lord loves righteousness,* Psa 11.7. Till you have his image, and a resemblance of him is wrought in you by the Holy Ghost, you are not his favourites, nor one in whom he can take a peculiar delight. Without holiness, his presence will not seem amiable to you; or at least, without it you cannot see his face. Isa 59.2, *Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden his face from you.* And therefore they are compared to a thick cloud; they obstruct and dim the light that otherwise would shine upon your heads. Therefore David prays, *Create in me a clean heart;* and then, *restore to me the joy of your salvation,* Psa 51.10, 12. While sin is lodged and entertained in the soul, it is like wind in the bowels of the earth: it will cause convulsions and troublesome agitations there. It was the sin of Adam which made so many frowns in the face of God; that caused the first eruption of his wrath; that makes it so frequently flame out with terror against the guilty sons of men. Till you are born again, you will have an aversion

to God. How can you expect His favour to be given to you, while you don't care to think of Him? Till your darkness is removed, and you are acquainted with Him, you cannot be at peace.

6. That you may have the favour of God, you must — in conformity to the new nature, and those holy dispositions that you receive by his grace — yield Him a sincere and a constant obedience all your lives. *His countenance beholds the upright*, Psa. 11.7. He encourages the weakness of that soul who is tender and afraid of sin. He will not treat you with the kindness that he shows to his honourable subjects, if you take part with his open enemies. *You are my friends if you do whatever I command you*, Joh 15.14. Obedience is the genuine effect of so excellent and so near an alliance; and it is the proof and evidence of it. Joh 14.21, *He who has my commandments and does them, he is the one who loves me; and he who loves me, will be loved by my father, and I will love him*. And ver. 23, *We will come to him, and make our abode with him*. That is a promise full of mercy, and words that have in them all that is desirable, that are *big* with consolation! What can a soul wish for more, than to have God the Father and the Son — to have them for his *friends*, for his *guest*! — and not only to tarry for a night or a day, but forever! — not to comfort him with a transient visit, which would be a great privilege, but to *dwell* with him! Oh! blessed is the house that has such inhabitants; and blessed is the soul who is thus honoured and esteemed. By obeying his commands, you show yourselves to be vessels of honour. And when you are so, he will at one time or other fill you brimful of joy.

If you serve the devil, you can by no means have that satisfaction that flows from the hope of being a son of God, and an heir of heaven. And though God's showers fall upon the sands, as well as on the manured and cultivated ground, yet till you are *fruitful*, you cannot expect to be refreshed with His gentle and comfortable dews. There are peculiar influences of his grace that fall upon his enclosed gardens, and not upon the deserts. *If favour were shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness*, Isa 26.10. It shines like the sun on a rock; he is no more fruitful, no more tenderhearted than he was before. If you embrace your ancient sins, if you hold onto your correspondence with your former lusts, God will not pour the oil of gladness into such old and depraved hearts. If we go on in sin, we violate our own serenity, and raise within our breasts a multitude of storms. Whereas Psa 119.165 says, *Those who love your Law have great peace, and nothing will offend them* (cause them to stumble). And so, Gal 6.16, *As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy*. Isa 64.5, *You meet him who rejoices and works righteousness*.

By these means you shall obtain the favour of God, and when you have so obtained it...

CHAP. 4. Take heed not to lose the favour of God.

Showing that we ought to take heed that we do not lose the favour of God once we have enjoyed it; and what we are to do so that we may not fall into a condition so miserable as this would be.

7. *Take great heed that you do not lose the favour of God again.* It is true indeed, that those whom God once loves, he loves to the end. They are not suffered to be totally miserable; yet they may lose the sense of his favour, and all the comfort that once flowed from the pleasant thought that He was their God. Those who have sailed with a very prosperous gale may, upon their negligence, be tossed with many storms, and may be terrified with a thousand dangers and calamities while they do not see the sun, moon and stars for many days and nights together. And though they do not at length fall short of heaven, yet they may travel as through a wilderness on their way there, and not meet with those clusters of the promised land, with those joys and comforts that others meet with. The Spirit may suspend his influences, and leave the conscience in a very lamentable state, and take away the peace that he once gave. So that the poor soul in that condition cannot help but look upon itself with as sad an eye as if it were a reprobate. And there are great difficulties and dangers before the Spirit returns again to repair the breaches which our sin has made. The disorders of our souls afterwards remain a great while, and it will cost us vast labour to remove them — as when some river that is very muddy has overflowed the neighbouring fields, even though it returns to its ordinary channel, yet it nevertheless leaves those places all covered with slime and dirt. The least eclipse of the face of God is a very formidable thing. It will shake all the powers of your souls, and put you into such terror as will seem to like hell itself.

If you are so foolish as to *forfeit* His favour upon slight temptations, you'll dearly pay for that folly. You may do that in a moment that may fill you with astonishment and sorrows all your days, and make you go at last mourning to the grave. You may by a sudden fall have your bones broken; and it may be that you never again recover your former ease and strength. Do not therefore wound or bruise yourselves. If you are not very careful, that candle of the Lord that shines upon your tabernacle may be removed, and then you'll know by sad experience, that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against Him. Though now you do not question your title to salvation, yet you will then be full of doubts and fears; though you are now looking to God as to a friend, yet you will then be forced to look upon him as an enemy, and to think that your afflictions are not the rebukes of a Father, but of an angry Judge. He will indeed be the same God still, as full of goodness and of love; but to *you* he will be like a fountain sealed up. Your poor mourning souls will be like the mountains of Gilboa, cursed and barren; there will be no dew or rain upon them (2Sam 1.21). Though you are ever so flourishing now, yet then the sharpness of the winter will blast all your fruit, such that the fig tree will not blossom, nor will there be any fruit on the vine, and the labour of the olive will fail. Consider how great the sorrow of David was, when God departed from him for a season! How many were his tears, how heavy his complaints, and how sad his thoughts! Though he was (as it is usually judged) of a sanguine and merry temper, and had a peculiar skill in music (which is the usual allayer and charm of grief), yet in the sense of God's displeasure, his joy was turned into lamentation. His harp and those songs with which he had driven away the melancholy of Saul, could not stifle or chase away trouble from his own soul. The storm was too loud to listen to those softer airs; the wound was too deep to be cured by those gentle and easy methods.

Beware lest you lose the sense of the favour and the love of God; lest you make your heavenly Father visit you with painful rods, and severe afflictions. Take heed that you do not weaken yourselves; *for the joy of the Lord is your strength*, Neh 8.10. Isn't it motive enough to say that his favour is your life, and his displeasure is your death? Let us but take as many pains for our

spiritual, as for our *natural* Life, and all will be very well. When we find the least decays of nature, we are very industrious to repair them. When we find the least faintness or indisposition in our spirits, we have recourse to cordials, or to something that is very comfortable and reviving, to refresh them. When we are sick, we complain of our illness; we make abundant inquiries, and use a great deal of care to know what it is that will do us good. We have a great value for our dear life, and we are afraid of everything that may deprive us of it. And when we are in health, what do we *not* attempt for our own preservation! What arts we use! What provisions we make for food, and drink, and clothes, and houses, and gardens, and other accommodations, that we may live at ease! And (my friends) isn't our soul of more worth than the body? Aren't its decays and its death more painful and more intolerable than all the languishing and decays of our outward man? Let us therefore, as we have a great horror of natural death, have no less horror for that which is spiritual. Let us keep the favour of God with greater care; *that* is our spiritual and eternal life. And so that we may not lose it,

(1) *Let us not grieve his Holy Spirit*, Eph 4.30. We are not so happy as to have a familiar conversation with Christ, as those had who enjoyed his presence here on earth. Though he is withdrawn from our eyes, and we don't see him in his exalted and glorified state, yet he has sent his Spirit to dwell in our hearts. And we ought to treat and entertain so divine a guest with all manner of obedience and respect: to do nothing that is unsuitable to so great a Presence; to not pollute ourselves or defile his temple with any sort of sin, lest we *grieve and vex* Him. The Divine Nature is indeed incapable of our passions — it is above our joys and our sorrows. It is said of those on Mount Olympus, that they see the clouds gather below their feet; they see the hail and the thunder disturb and lighten on the plain, while they rejoice in the pure light of the sun. In such a manner, the Divine Essence sees all the troubles and agitations of the creatures, remaining always in its own peace and tranquility.¹¹⁶ This expression is borrowed from *human* affections. And when the Holy Spirit does in us, what our nature does when it is seized with sorrow, then He is said to be *grieved*. And if we make Him sad, we cannot expect that he will make us rejoice; if we affront and abuse him, he will not be our comfort; if he retires, all our evidences will be covered with darkness and we will be plunged into the lowest depths. Let us therefore obey all his suggestions. Whatever he bids us to do, let us do. Let our minds always be yielding to his good and profitable motions. Let us not slight the revelation he has made, nor be unmindful to grow in all the graces that are pleasing to him. Let us remember the kindness that he does us, how he chases away our darkness; and when we are fainting, how seasonably he applies the promises, and brings to our remembrance those truths that are most suitable and refreshing to us. Let us not grieve him by neglecting to read or meditate on the word which he indited,¹¹⁷ or by our foolish communications, by rash angers, or malice, or bitterness, or wrath, or contention, Eph 4.31. But let Him be the absolute Master of our souls. When we are afflicted, let us not grieve him by our murmuring or impatient complaints in our afflictions; nor by security and hardness of heart in our prosperity. And when he would carry us towards heaven on the wings of spiritual desire and love, let us not allow ourselves to be seduced by the world, the devil, or the flesh. And if we obey him, he will maintain a sense of the divine favour on our souls. And the life that he will give us will not be like that of the sick, the feeble, and the dying, but like the life of the strongest and most healthful.

¹¹⁶ Claude *Serm. Sur. Eph 4.30.* p. 29.

¹¹⁷ *Indite*: to produce a literary work; to compose or pen it; or in this case, to inspire it (2Pet 1.21). – WHG

(2) *Let us beware of spiritual pride.* The contrite and humble are those that He regards. The proud he looks upon afar off. Psa 138.6, *Though the Lord is high, yet has he respect for the lowly; but the proud he knows afar off* — that is, with disdain and scorn. It is nothing but our ignorance that makes us proud. We are ignorant of God, and of the multitude and greatness of our sins. It would be impossible for us to be proud, if we frequently considered the great Majesty of God, and our own vileness! His Holiness, and our pollution! His Almighty Power, and our weakness! His Glory, and our darkness! His Eternity, and our own fading being! What comparison can be made between the Great Ruler of the world, and us who dwell in houses of clay? It was a mighty condescension in our blessed Lord, and one of the greatest parts of his humiliation, to be clothed with our nature, which is in itself so mean and low. And as one says,

The whole world from east to west lies very sick. But to cure this very sick world, there descends an omnipotent Physician, who humbled himself, even to the assumption of a mortal body, as if he had gone into the bed of the diseased.

It is an ignorance of ourselves that is the cause of our pride. We don't remember how often it is that we offend in thought, word, and deed. How we are by nature children of wrath! And how we make ourselves more so, by repeated acts of sin. God resists the proud, but he regards the contrite and humble soul (Isa 57.15). *He fills the hungry with good things, but the rich he sends away empty*, Luk 1.53. All on whom he bestows his favour, he first convinces of their own misery; shows them the curse, the hell, the condemnation that they deserved. And when they are pardoned after such a sight, that pardon fills them with low and self-abasing thoughts. And when he comes to embrace them, he finds them in the posture of the poor prodigal. Luk 15.18-19, *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son*. One sight of the face of God will dash all our confidence, and lower all our pride. And the more this is revealed, and revealed to the souls of the faithful, the more they see cause to loath and abhor themselves in dust and ashes. This is why our Apostle, who knew so much of God, was so very humble in saying, 1Cor 15.10, *By the grace of God I am what I am— I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me*. He calls himself the chief of sinners, and admires the *grace of our Lord*, that was *exceedingly abundant towards him*, 1Tim 1.14. And elsewhere he styles the mercies of the Gospel as the *exceeding riches of the grace of Christ*, Eph 2.7. If ever you would have the favour of God continued, strive against all pride.

A man is then proud,

1. When he attributes to himself, to his own industry, wisdom, or prudence, that which he has received from God; or,
2. When he attributes to, or expects by merit, that which is a free gift; or,
3. When he thinks he has that which he does not have; or,
4. When he despises others, and affects preeminence.

It is usual with us to take the measure of pride from the garb or attire, from the outward behaviour, gesture, or the use of some less grave or decent fashions. And indeed, there may be an excess in these things that may be very justly blamable. But my friends, there is a pride worse than all this, even *spiritual pride*, that has in it the very image of the apostate spirit, and is truly diabolical. When a man is proud of the graces, or the gifts of God, it alienates him from the Divine favour, for which we are more prepared when we are covered with shame and sorrow. And when we are poor in spirit, *then* we may hope that he will enrich us with his love. When we are emptied of all self-conceit, or a flattering opinion of our own actions, *then* we may hope that he will fill us both with grace and glory. What a sorry unbecoming thing is it for a man, even the best of men, to be

proud! Alas! How soon can the Great God cause all his glory to wither, and to fade away! What a vain thing it is for a man to pride himself in things that relate to the body, when it is susceptible to agues,¹¹⁸ fevers, consumptions, convulsions, and many tedious days and years of pining sickness, and must at last be the prey of death, and moulder in the grave!

And it is no less evil and foolish for a man to pride himself in anything that relates to his soul — in his knowledge, in his faith, in his serviceableness. For upon this sin, an hour of temptation may come upon him that will be an hour of darkness, that will cause the light of *all these* to vanish. And what is man, when his conscience is awakened with a sense of guilt, when his sins are set in order before him, when the devil is permitted to sift and vex him, to ruffle him with traumatic terrors, and the constant view of hell? If God departs from us, that envious *raging spirit* who is of great power and malice, insults us with ease, and treads us under his feet. Oh! how vain it is for us to be proud, who live a miserable life, and may die a very painful death! All the designs of God are to exalt *Himself*, and abase the *creature*. The consciousness that the saints have of their own unworthiness, will produce an eternal admiration of God's love; and they will all cast down their crowns before the throne (Rev 4.10). 1Cor 4.7, *Who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive?* 1Pet 5.5-6, "*God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.*" *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.*

(3) *That you may not lose the favour of God, you must beware of formality, and all slightness of spirit in the performance of holy duties.*¹¹⁹ It will also be very prejudicial to us when we can *omit* them, and have no great trouble or regret for so great a sin. Whereas, if we were duly careful about the welfare of our souls, we would refresh them with frequent thoughts and meditations, as we refresh our bodies with two or three meals a day. When we bring dead sacrifices to the altar of God, we need not wonder that we have so little spiritual and heavenly life — we need not wonder that we have no more sense of his favour when we often pray for it, than if we hadn't prayed at all. The coldness and indifference of our petitions shows that we don't much care whether they are granted or denied. God will not *thrust* his mercies upon us whether we would have them or not. None will enjoy his gracious comfortable presence, except those who strive and wrestle; and those who have the zeal of Jacob — who will not let him go till He blesses them. We would all have heaven and salvation, but God knows that we beg for it in a very poor fashion. And so he may justly expel us from the sight of himself, because we draw near to him with so little fervour. We give him cause to complain of us, as He did of those in Isa 29.13.¹²⁰

We are guilty of slightness and formality in holy duties, in the following instances:

1. When we perform them as a *task*, and not with delight and love.
2. When we don't excite and stir ourselves up to call upon the Lord.
3. When we're satisfied in the bare outward performance, and don't have those inward exercises of contrition, faith, holy sorrow, and vigorous desires, which are the life and soul of prayer.
4. When we allow our thoughts to wander, or when we run to such duties from hurry and the crowd of worldly business, not considering the greatness of our wants, and of that majesty

¹¹⁸ *Ague*: a fit of shivering or shaking. — WHG

¹¹⁹ *Slight*: to treat as unimportant, petty, or frivolous. — WHG

¹²⁰ **Isa 29:13** Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me."

that fills the throne before which we pray, and how He will be sanctified (set apart) by all who draw near to him.

5. When we don't look for the answer to our prayers; and when having done our duty, we are unsolicitous whether it produces any good effect or not.

6. When we are more studious to approve ourselves in the eyes of men, than in the eye of God.

I might add, that if we would not lose the favour of God, we must duly improve all his other ordinances. We must hear as though for our *lives*, and take heed that his word does not at any time slip our minds. We must receive the glad tidings of salvation with obedient and joyful hearts. And upon all fit occasions, in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, with holy affections and a melting zeal, keep up the remembrance of the love of Christ till he comes again; and with great constancy and seriousness, read the Scriptures that direct us how to obtain this favour of God that is our life. But if any person has so little value for the favour of God, that he will not earnestly *pray for it*, then he must go without it; and wince for his refusal of so excellent a blessing, when it will be too late to repent.

(4) *That you may not lose the favour of God that is your life, you must avoid all sloth.* What pains has God taken, what exhortations, what promises has he used to bring you near to himself? What hardships and sufferings did Christ undergo to gain your love? And will you do nothing in response to that favour of his that is so graciously bestowed and so dearly bought? Be circumspect, and walk closely with your God. Beware of everything that may stir up your Father's anger. For though he will not throw off so kind a relation, yet his wrath is very terrible. I beseech you to be very fearful of all inward backslidings, and of spiritual decays. And lest the warmth of your first burning love toward God wear away again, take heed lest the death that is in his displeasure, steal upon you by degrees; and lest from a lesser degree of zeal, total indisposition comes upon your hearts. For once you begin to slide, the descent is easy. As soon you are sleepy, rouse yourselves by those powerful motives which you may fetch from the word of God, from his promises, and from his threats. Slothful servants will never have their master's approval; you have good encouragement, manifold assistances, and the prospect of a great reward. Is your joy, your peace, your present consolation, and your hope, worth nothing? If not, then let no dangers, no difficulties whatsoever make you part with it, knowing that once it is lost, it may cost you dearly before you obtain it. Take heed that you don't begin to lose your awful sense of God, that you don't grow bold with sin. Take heed that you don't comply with the devil, who being forsaken by God, would have *you* be so; and who being shut out of heaven, would hinder *your* arrival there, or at least make you to go there uncomfortably. If he cannot hinder your walking towards that Jerusalem, he will endeavour to make you halt, and go there with pain. But to prevent this, and all other malicious designs of his, be *fervent in the spirit, serving the Lord*, Rom 12.11. And upon the Lord's first withdrawing, be restless till you find the one whom your soul loves. As you now flourish in the courts of God, take heed that you don't destroy your own fruit. Seeing that you are fixed on the Rock of Ages, take heed that you don't pull up your own anchor, and so your vessel be driven onto the sands, and your hope be shipwrecked. Make no excuses for not working hard. Use no delays; apply yourselves to the most active and zealous endeavours, so that you may prevent your own sorrow. *For the field of the sluggard will be all grown over with thorns, and nettles will cover the face of it, and its stone wall will be broken down*, Pro 24.31. These thorns are evil desires that will spring up of their own accord, without sowing. They will increase by themselves; and then you will be exposed without defence to every invader, and to all the birds of prey.

And consider that (as one says),¹²¹ the duties of godliness are not only a debt to God, but a reward to us. And in our sloth, there is not only unfaithfulness, but ingratitude: both the majesty and the mercy of God are despised. Remember what the Church says, *Song 3.1, By night, on my bed, I sought the one whom my soul loves; I sought him, but I did not find him*, etc. She did not find him, for she sought *amiss*. No wonder she was not blessed with his presence, when she sought it in such a lazy manner. And therefore, though she took pains afterwards, yet she did not meet with him. He chastised her former negligence with a longer absence — though there was no place which she did not frequent, no person whom she did not ask, yet she heard no tidings of him. The one who suffered on the cross for her, might justly expect that she would leave her bed, and quit her ease for him (Song 5.2-9).

(5) *That you may not lose the favour of God, which is your life, take heed of an inordinate affection for this world, and sensual delights.* If the care and business, the riches and projects of this world, take up your heart and the flower of your time, you will have but few thoughts of Him, and consequently but little love. The more you advance in the mortification of your appetites and your dearest lusts, the more cheerful influences you'll find of his grace. Beware that you don't love anything in this world too much — no child, no relation, no creature comfort — lest He tear these idols away from you, and the loss of an over-prized enjoyment vex your souls. He will have your *whole* hearts. You must not think that he will show you his favour if you only give him one half, and share the rest among the several objects that your mistaken affections dote upon. If you prize this favour of God, as you should, you won't too vehemently desire any present good, nor too sorrowfully bewail its departure from you. Your life will be in God, and not bound up in any of your friends, lest when they die, your peace and comfort die at the same time. If the world is set upon the throne, the disorder that is thereby offered to God will cause him to frown, and to fetch the rebel and usurper there, though it will be with your pain and grief. Sensual pleasures will clog and vitiate your appetite, so that you will not so well taste nor apprehend the sweetness that there is in God. If you have seen his face, the beauties and the glories of it will make all the world appear to you as a mean and despicable thing, as the woman who was clothed with the sun, had the moon under her feet (Rev 12.1). You will see such an attractive excellence in Christ, that you will esteem him as *the chief of ten thousand*. And the tempting, fair-spoken world will not be able to lead captive that heart which you have already given to a better Lord. While others feed on husks, you will be treated with the bread of your Father's house; while others pursue the drossy, short-lived pleasures of sense, you will have the delights of angels, and of an eternal heaven to feed upon. And your splendid satisfaction will keep you from envying those whose ignorance makes them content with lower fare; and who, when they might fly as with the wings of eagles, choose to grovel in the dust. The moon is eclipsed when the earth shadows it, and hinders its admission of the light of the sun that makes it visible. In such an eclipse, the nearer that planet is to the earth, the more durable is its darkness. So too, if we suffer an eclipse of God's favour, it is because this earth has interposed itself between Him and us. Its false allurements and promises turn our eyes downward, which should always be lifted up to that glorious Sun by whose light we see.

This world is a more dangerous enemy than we usually take it to be. And therefore the Apostle says, *If any man loves it, the love of the father is not in him*, 1Joh 2.15. Its joys are like those false fires that wander up and down in a thick and foggy night, and which lead the deceived traveller into some pit or gulf. But the joys of God are like the brightness of a summer's day. Their clearness, their comfortableness, and their continuance, render them worthy of our highest admiration. The

¹²¹ Symond's *Deserted Soul*, p. 523.

smiles of the world many times cover a designed mischief; but the smiles of God are to make us happy. Which then should we most prize: the fountain, or the polluted streams? The rich ocean, or the smaller brooks? Why should we love the creatures, when we have a God to love? Why should we dote upon a bubble that every little storm blows away, and not embrace that salvation that is offered, which is both suitable to our faculties, and not liable to perish? With angels and with glorified saints, let us make God our all, our portion, and our heart's desire. For our great Creator is much more amiable than his own handiwork. Let us leave the men who don't know God, to fall down before their idols of clay and dirt. But let us with the highest reverence, with the most cordial submission, adore Him from whose favour we have life. Let us leave them to dig in the bowels of this earth for a sordid happiness; but let us arise and go from here. Let us go and seek after God. Let us go and seek till we find him. And when we have found him, let nothing in this world — no pleasure, no pain, no promises, no threats, nor life, nor death — make us part with our dear God again. Let us never cease to sigh and to long for Him. Let us never be weary of his work, nor ever think that we can do too much for so good a Master. Let us feast ourselves with the cheerful expectation of his eternal love, and so take up the good resolution of the church — Song 4.6, *Until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away, I will get myself to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.*

(6) *That you may seek and endeavour to obtain the favour of God with more care, improve your experiences to this purpose.* Haven't you found what a pleasant thing it is to be near to Him? To have access to his throne, and to see his face? And on the contrary, haven't you known what a dismal and uncomfortable state it is to be without him? There are two sorts of experiences that may be very serviceable to you in this great affair.

1. *Those experiences that you have of all other things in common with the rest of men.* Haven't you found that the promises and friendships of this world are very changeable? Haven't you embraced a *cloud* many a time, when you've promised yourselves a real and solid happiness? Has the world given you that pleasant entertainment, that cordial satisfaction that you proposed to yourselves when you first let your minds run upon it? Haven't you a thousand times called it a very vain world? Haven't you a thousand times found it to be so? Haven't you pricked your hands and vexed your souls, when you thought to have gathered the pleasant flower that you doted on? Haven't you seen that the most beautiful rose is attended with a neighbouring thorn? Has it smelled so sweet, and lasted so long as you once thought it would? Hasn't all your wine had some wormwood and gall mingled with it? Hasn't every comfort had a mixture of a cross? And where you hoped for the greatest pleasures, haven't you met with a sad mixture of grief? Haven't you been eager and importunate, and restless for this or that creature-good? And when you have obtained it, has it been as suitable, delightful, and in every way as amiable, as it seemed to be at a distance? He must be a young man indeed, who has not found this world to be a cheat. And he must be a fool, who once he has been cheated, would allow himself to be imposed upon again. A few years' experience will make us all say with the wise man, that *all is vanity and vexation of spirit* (Ecc 2.17). And if we hope to extract more from it than so great an observer of nature as Solomon extracted, we will be miserably deceived. In our first rash desires we flatter ourselves with something here on earth that is great, and plausible, and charming. But in our more sedate and second thoughts, we find that all that is under the Sun is but a show, and a mere appearance. And when we find it to be so — as a great many already have, and all will find in a little time — it becomes us to apply ourselves to something more durable and satisfying. And that can only be the favour and love of God.

2. *Improve not only your common, but your spiritual experiences to this end and purpose.* I suppose there are a great many people here, who have been under distress of soul, and who in such distress have been brought very low. Now, what was it, I pray you, that gave you relief in so sad a case? Was it that you had many friends, and great estates, and a flourishing trade, and an abundance of outward accommodations? I am sure you will answer, *No, no; none of these things gave us the least help.* I think I hear you saying, We tried several methods for a cure, we tried several diversions and pleasures, the conversations of our friends, and whatever innocent recreation it was that we thought might give us ease. We heard sermons, we read good books, we inquired of our ministers, but we found them all to be *physicians of no value.* They did not open our eyes, nor heal our wounds, nor answer our doubts, nor refresh our tired and weary souls, till *God himself* was pleased to do it. Nothing in all the world availed us; nor could all the means we used, pull out the sting that the sense of our guilt and condemnation pierced us with. *Abanah and Pharpar, all the rivers of Damascus* (2Kng 5.12), and all the streams of sensual delights, were not able to mitigate or quench our thirst. All was desolation, and terror, and amazement, till His face was pleased to shine through the threatening cloud. We lived in darkness, and in the deepest sorrows, till He became our light and joy. We were sinking, till he held us up; and dying, till he was pleased to revive us. All the delight and mirth that the world ever gave us, were but a flash of lightning compared to that clear and serene *day* that his grace created in our hearts. His love did, indeed, mitigate our pains, and remove our sores; and one beam from him was like the dawn of heaven. He has fed us, like John the Baptist, with honey in the desert; his loving-kindness did, indeed, quench our thirst.

This I know is the sense of your souls, that have tasted how good the Lord is. And having had so pleasant a relish of his mercy, I beseech you, don't let the remembrance of it wear away. Oh! remember with delight, the transports, the sweetness, and the satisfaction that you have found in God; the settlement and the quiet that you have had when you cast your anchor on the Rock of Ages; what views you have then had of the New Jerusalem; and what a pleasant prospect you saw when you were on the Mount. Oh! remember how often you have fallen, and His kind hand has raised you up; how often you have been at the very gates of the grave, and he has been your life; how often his sympathies have melted over you, when you were rebellious; how often he has embraced you, when you were prodigals; how often he has forgiven you, and bid you be of good comfort, when you condemned yourselves. You have found all the creatures to be like a drop in the bucket; and how unable so small a drop was to gratify your earnest longings, your pantings and desires. And that after many a weary step, you found no rest till He manifested himself, and gave you that composure and stillness which in vain you sought from lower things. Haven't you found more solace in an hour's converse with God, in prayers and meditation, than in many days' discourses with the best of men? I dare say, you have found this world to be worse and worse, the more you have tried it.¹²² But the clearer views you have had of God, have shown you something in Him still more and more excellent.

How often have you come to hear his word with entangled, perplexed thoughts, and He has sent you away refreshed and satisfied? How often have you with sad hearts, and mournful looks, kneeled down in your prayer closets, and have risen again with great calmness and serenity after having had communion with Him? So that you have cried out, Oh! that I had known him sooner, and loved him with my first affections, for he very well deserves all my faculties and all the powers of my soul. Remember the large experiences you have had of the *goodness* of God! With what

¹²² *Tried it:* put it on trial; put it to the test, whether it can satisfy your deepest longings. – WHG

kindness he drew you at the first! With what gracious promises he cherished your languishing and feeble hopes! How seasonably he awakened you from the sleep of death, with his threats, and calls, and seasonable chastisements! How he has made your broken bones rejoice! How often he has enlarged your hearts in duty, and you have felt so much of his power and presence, and in so comfortable and so sweet a manner! It's as if you had not only heard of him by the hearing of the ear, but also seen him with the seeing of the eye! (Job 42.5) How often he has renewed his mercy when you thought he would never be favourable anymore! And how often, when your unbelief has made you say that he was departed, He has returned again! How often he has listened to your doleful cries, and given you many a proof of his love in the gracious answer of your prayers! How many times has your heart and flesh failed, and he has given you support! How many times have you been sorely tempted, and he has overthrown the Tempter! How many storms have put you into consternation, and he has appeared to your help and said, *It is I, do not be afraid!* It may be that He has put you into the fiery furnace; but he has been with you there, and made even the severest trials purge away your dross. He has corrected you with a very tender and skilful hand, and ordered with a most exact wisdom, all your troubles, both as to the nature of them, and as to their duration. They have not been too heavy, nor have they stayed too long, Psa 119.75.

I speak as to wise men: *judge what I say*. These experiences well-remembered, will be a means to preserve you from losing the favour of God, which is your life. As it is useful for your health to remember what hurt you, and what did you good up to now, so these spiritual experiences will be very beneficial. For you may well say with David, *I have seen an end of all perfections; but your commandment is exceedingly broad*, Psa 119.96 ¹²³

¹²³ NLT **Psa 119:96** Even perfection has its limits, but your commands have no limit. Mem.

CHAP. 5. Of Assurance.

Of Assurance. And also of the false grounds on which many are apt to conclude that they are God's favourites, when they are not so.

I. Endeavour to be assured that you enjoy God's favour. That is your life: not only to believe that it is so, but to *feel* this assurance animating your faculties, and spreading itself through every part. So that you may not only have His countenance, but the *light* of it; and that you may not walk in darkness without pleasantly beholding this glorious and reviving Sun. His favour towards you, even if it is undiscerned, will make you blessed; but nothing but the *sense* of it will cause you to rejoice. Though you are safe, yet it is very desirable to *know that you are so* — not only to be going towards heaven, but to see the Crown of Glory shining before your eyes as you go along. It is very terrible, though God is your Father, if you cannot think of him except as a Judge. Fears and doubts are disquieting and uneasy things. The restlessness and the torment that they give you, should excite you to try all means by which they may be removed. It is much better to have a vigorous and a stirring life, than the sickly, feeble motions of it that are scarcely discerned, as in *apoplexies* and other diseases, where the soul is retired inward and the spirits have so cold a motion that they scarcely make the pulse beat. What peace can you have without an evidence of your interest in God? What comfort from his promises, if you don't know whether they belong to you or not? Will it enrich you to see large treasures, if you have no share in them? What good is there in abundant fountains of consolation, if you are likely to perish and to die with thirst? You must endeavour to have your *hope as an anchor that is both sure and steadfast*, Heb 6.19. And you have encouragements given to you for so sure a hope. As one says, "Hope would be but a poor anchor, if it left the soul to the courtesy of a wave, to the clemency of a rock, to the disposing of a storm." Hope would be but a weak anchor if it let the soul be lost with uncertainties, or left it in danger of shipwreck.

Do not be satisfied that you think God's favour is your life, till you can say with David, *He is the health of my countenance, and my God*, Psal 43.5. And these two, met together, will produce a very solid and a comfortable joy when you can say with the rapture of Thomas, *My Lord, and my God!* (Joh 20.28) or with the Church, *I am my Beloved's, and he is mine*; Song 6.3. Use all the ordinances, the Word, and the sacraments to this purpose: that you may find Him whom your soul loves, Song 3.3-4. Oh, what your pleasure will be when you see that the great God of heaven is your own God! To see that Saviour of whom the prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and all your ministers, and your Christian friends have spoken so much, to be at length *your own Saviour!* How you will be at ease when you see that his excellencies are yours, and that you are among the joyful and adoring throng that wait upon him! To love him, and to have his love shown to you, and to have these mutual delights increase but never decay — to possess one another forever with renewed and repeated ecstasies — *this* is a heaven begun, that no thoughts can fully apprehend, nor words declare.

In order for this, you must *give all diligence to make your calling and election sure*, 2Pet 1.10. You must often try your hearts and your actions by the Word of God, and beg his Spirit, and obey His motions, and excite your graces, and watch against sin, and deny yourselves. The trader endeavours all he can to get a plentiful trade, and he would have a great deal of business and money flowing in upon him. The Merchant strives to have all the plentiful returns imaginable. Oh! Let us strive that our souls may not only be safe, but that they may prosper too; not only that we may pray, but pray with boldness to God, as children to a Father. And when we are able to look at him as our Father and our Friend, *then* our service will be more fervent; and all our work will

be done with greater life and heart; our slavish fears and despondence will give way to love and hope. And then everything that concerns us will undergo a most comfortable change. We will be able to hear the thunders, and the curses, and the threatenings of the Law, without astonishment and terror, because we will dwell as in God's Pavilion. We will be able to think of hell, and not be overwhelmed, because we will look at it as a dungeon from which we are *saved* by the grace of God. We will attend to the messages of the Gospel, for it will bring us *glad tidings*. The blessed angels will be your guardians, the ministers of the Church will be your directors and helpers; the malice of the wicked, and the rage of devils, will fall below us and not reach our happiness.

II. Take heed of concluding from the common mercies you enjoy, that the special favour of God is yours.

1. *You must not conclude from any of your outward privileges that you have this favour.* God may long dwell among a people by the outward testimonies of his presence, by his Word, and the means of grace, and yet leave them at last. Who was once happier than the Jews in His protection? And yet none are more miserable than they are by his departure. Jerusalem, where he had placed his Name, and that once was the glory of all cities, is now no longer remarkable for its glorious temple and its stately towers; for its riches, grandeur, and splendor with which it had previously shined. The Holy Land, the country of Judea, which our Saviour blessed with his presence, which he instructed with his heavenly sermons, and honoured with his miracles, is no longer the same Judea that it once was. It is now groaning under the cruel dominion of the Turks. And the seven churches have lost their golden candlesticks, and the blessed Guest who one walked in the midst of them. The stars that shone there are now eclipsed, and their glory is gone. It is a great mercy indeed to have the Gospel, but in the issue ¹²⁴ it will not be a mercy to you unless it shines into your hearts. If it does not prevail to the conversion of your souls, it will aggravate your ruin. For you will go from the clearest light to the thickest darkness, from the brightest day to the most dismal night.

You cannot conclude you have this favour from any common gifts of knowledge or understanding, unless you are sanctified throughout. When our Lord ascended, *he gave gifts to men*.¹²⁵ It is like those liberalities which kings scatter indifferently among their subjects on the day of their coronation, without making a distinction between the good and bad. Several partake of those pieces of gold and silver who least deserve them. But they reserve their great honours and the principal offices of the crown for their peculiar favourites, and for those who belong to the household, and wait upon their persons. So Christ distributes many favours to all who enjoy his Gospel. But there are some who are peculiar to his own family, as distinguished from the rest of men. Such are the gifts of faith, of regeneration, and adoption. *Happy was the womb that bore him, and happy were the breasts that suckled him, and yet more happy are those who keep His words*, Luk 11.27-28. *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creature*, Gal 6.15.

2. *You cannot conclude from your outward prosperity, your riches or abundance in the world, that you have this favour of God, in which is life.* Our Lord, who by his own example intended to show men better things than the goods of this world, first caused his angels to appear to the poor shepherds — not to the courts of princes and the schools of philosophers. He could have had kings wait upon him if he had pleased, and to lay their crowns and scepters at his feet. But he chose a

¹²⁴ *Issue*: here it means the outcome, result, or end product. — WHG

¹²⁵ Eph 4.8; Du Monlin's *Sermons*, XI. Decade, Sermon. 2.

train of poor followers whom he enriched with *heavenly* treasures, not with those of this earth, though the whole creation and all its glories were at his command. The poor were those who received the Gospel; and *not many noble are called*, 1Cor 1.26-27. The *poor of the world are rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom*, Jas 2.5. Though just as riches are no sign of God's election, neither is poverty a mark of grace. Yet God often builds his Church with the lower sort of people, and those who many times are not very wise for this world. Afflictions and crosses are no mark of his displeasure, nor is continued prosperity the character of His love. For many times, God lets his sun shine on the wicked to their dying day; their strength is firm; the rod is not upon them; they fear no evil; they know no sorrow. There are no tears in their eyes, no sadness in their hearts, no complaining in their families (see Job 21.7-13).

Riches of themselves are indeed great blessings. A man may do abundant good works with them, which the poorer sort of people cannot because of those straits and difficulties they are to wrestle with. They are great talents, and serviceable for great purposes (Mat 25.15-17). They afford men great leisure for the affairs of their souls. And not being perplexed with anxious cares about how to get a livelihood, they may read and meditate, and pray with more devotion. But then these soft and easy blessings, meeting with the corruptions that are in human nature, they frequently prove to be a *snare*. They frequently minister to pride, and vanity, and luxury, and excess; to sensualities and worldly lusts. And for that reason, our Saviour says, *A rich man will hardly enter the kingdom of heaven*, Mat 19.23. Few meet with heaven here, and a heaven hereafter. In Luk 16.19-21, the rich man had all manner of accommodations — a stately dwelling, a throng of admirers, soft garments, and curious entertainments composed of everything that could be fetched from the land, the sea, or the air. And in the midst of all this plenty, he had the curse of an uncharitable spirit. Poor Lazarus was clothed with rags, while the rich man ruffled in his silks. While he had his excesses and his plenty, the poor man did not have what was necessary to life. He was a modest beggar; he asked but for the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, the sweepings of his house; and yet he was denied. And to all this want, there was added an increase of miseries by his painful sores. The poor man had no friends to visit him, no physician to bind up his wounds, no cordial to support his spirits. In this sorrowful posture lay poor Lazarus; and his carcass was putrefying even before he came to die. The dogs were the only creatures kind to him; they licked his sores, and assuaged the vehemence of the pain with their healing tongues. As one expresses it, "They were human, though their master was a brute." And yet this poor man was very happy.

When his pains at length made him die, angels were sent to convey his newly-delivered soul away — to carry the one who was starved on earth, to the feast of glory where he will never be in distress or trouble anymore. The poor man had a very weary *journey*, but most sweet refreshment when he comes to his journey's *end*. He was exposed to the injuries of the weather, and the sharpness of the cold; but in Abraham's bosom he was inexpressibly comforted. He had plenty enough in his Father's house; though here, with all his begging, he could not obtain so much as one crumb. And the rich man, a little after, had his polluted and unready soul torn away, and was condemned to greater destruction for having been so cruel to this poor man. This proud and scornful wretch, with his flaming eyes, saw Lazarus at rest while he was in his torment. Dives had then become the beggar, and would gladly have had one drop to cool his burning tongue; but it was denied. The one who showed no mercy, found none, v. 23, 24. And his hell was hotter to him, for having lived so much at ease here on earth. And it increased his flames to remember how many were hastening to the same place by his ill example — and who, when they came there, would increase *his* torment.

So that, we may say to rich men what a good old minister said to a lord after the man had shown him his stately house, his gardens, his fishponds, and his other conveniences for a pleasant and easy life. *My Lord* (he said) *you need to make sure of heaven, for it will be bad going to hell from such a place as this.* Many people think that because their endeavours succeed well, their trades flourish, and their wealth increases, that surely they are loved by God, and that these things are the marks of His peculiar favour. You may live in pleasures, and yet be dead while you live. Your bodies may want for nothing, and yet your unregarded souls suffer under miserable decays. You may be lifted up to heaven with outward enjoyments, and yet they may only expose you to a greater fall, and a more amazing danger. It may be that you are healthful while others are sick; but your health is no other than a greater talent which is given to you, and for which you must render a very strict account. It may be that your ways are smooth, but do they lead you to ruin and the grave? There is nothing more formidable than spiritual judgments; and of all spiritual judgments, none are so great as for God to leave you alone to choose your own way, to take your own course, and to follow the devices of your own hearts. And it is a mark of his anger kindled at a more than ordinary rate, when he says in Hos 4.14, *I will not punish their sons and daughters anymore.* Therefore do not rest in this, but seek sanctifying grace and the pardon of your sins, with your whole heart.

3. *Do not think, that because your consciences are not troubled, that for this very reason you have God's favour.* The ease that many sinners have is distempered and will fade away. It is like the ease of an apoplexy that benumbs the sense and weakens life; it is like the slumbers of the sick that are caused by *opiates* and stupefying potions. Just as many times true believers fear where there is no cause to fear, so sinners hope where there is no cause to hope at all. Many a saint weeps who is going to Jerusalem, because he doesn't see the blessed place that is before him. And many a secure soul is asleep at the very door of hell, because he doesn't perceive the danger that is underneath. If he did, it would terrify him to see that the flood is coming, and his house is only built on the sand; to see that the sword is drawn, his adversary is on the way, and he hasn't prepared to meet him. Some indeed have questioned which is the greater sin: presumption, or despair? It is no question that they are *both* very bad. They are both *rocks*. If a man is shipwrecked, it doesn't matter much which rock he splits upon when he is cast away. And yet God will make allowances even for the despairing expressions and thoughts of his servants, in great and long desertions. He was gracious to *David*, though he despairingly said, *I will one day fall by the hand of Saul*, 1Sam 27.1. And gracious to *Zion*, though she said, *the Lord has forgotten me. My strength and my hope are perished from the Lord*; Lam 3.18. But yet it is a sin that we ought to resist and strive against — and no less against *presumption*, which flays its thousands every day. Oh how many there are! There are too many who eat and drink, and are merry, and yet don't know whether God is their friend or their enemy. Psa 55.19, *They feel no changes, and therefore they do not fear Him.* But if speedy, and serious, and hearty repentance doesn't prevent it, they will shortly feel a change that will spoil and destroy all their hopes. They'll feel a change that will at the same time conclude their life, and send them to judgment, and lodge their souls in misery. And where will their hopes be *then*?

My friends, the way of life is strait; there are abundant mistakes about it; there are abundant windings and turnings, labyrinths and dangers, by means of which you may be hindered in your pilgrimage if you don't take great care. There are several ways that are *like* this way, that have a *resemblance* to it, and yet they vastly differ from it. There is the peace of God, and there is the peace of *Satan*. It is the design of that malicious spirit to let you be quiet in your sins so that you may not see their evil, nor feel their bitterness. And then you save him the labour of making you

miserable, for you make *yourselves* so. Don't allow him to blind your eyes, nor to lead you to destruction, while you never make so much as one halt, nor startle at it. You hear others complaining of their sins, and crying out that they are forsaken, and undone, and miserable, and you thank God that *you* have no trouble; your consciences are still and quiet. I beseech you, take heed that it is founded upon good reasons; that it doesn't prove to be only a short slumber, rather than a lasting peace. It may be that you never doubted God's love for you; and it is very well if you have no *cause* to doubt. You think, it may be, that those who are distressed in soul, are so because they have committed greater sins than other men; and therefore, like the viper on Paul's hand, that vengeance fastens on them because they have been guilty of some very great and monstrous sin. But you must know, the Judgments of God are too great a deep for you to fathom. He has wise ends in those severe dispensations, though those who are at ease may have committed sins as great as those who are in trouble. Many times a great calm precedes an earthquake. Many times the sky is very clear just before the clouds gather, and the lightning and thunder come. Beware, lest you be unsafe while you are most confident. Beware, lest you go down to the grave, as thousands do, with a foolish and ungrounded hope. Remember the foolish virgins (Mat 25.1-13); and that warning of the Apostle in 1The 5.3.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ **1The 5:3** For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

CHAP. 6. How we may know we have God's Favour.

Showing by what means we may know whether we have God's favour or not. And first, *by the graces of his Spirit*, though the acting of them is neither so strong nor so comfortable at one time as at another. And secondly, *by our hatred of sin; and our being satisfied with all His providences.*

THE next thing is to *examine and test whether you indeed have this favour of God, in which is life*. There are a great many people who think God is their Friend, when indeed he is their Enemy; and a great many troubled and distressed Christians think He is their Enemy, when he is their Friend. Let us, I beseech you, be very careful in a thing that so nearly concerns both our present and our future peace. Let us take heed that neither the devil nor our own hearts cheat us in a matter that is of so vast a consequence. And we need even greater care because if we should flatter ourselves with a foolish hope that we are God's favourites, when we are not truly so — then as our vain expectations would leave us at the last, so the ruin that it would bring forth would come with a double weight upon us. For to fall from great hopes is worse than to never have hoped at all. To be miserable after we have thought ourselves happy, gives a more acute and bitter sting to that misery. There is many a one in hell, now groaning under the eternal wrath of God, who thought he would have seen the smiles of His face, and not have been terrified with His frowns; who thought he would have walked in the streets of the New Jerusalem, in liberty, and light, and peace, whereas he is now in chains of darkness, and inexpressible anguish. With what tenderness, with what caution, and with what *holy fear* we should manage such an affair as this! With what solemnity I ought to proceed, when I am inquiring whether I am a favourite of God or not; whether I belong to the living, or yet remain among the dead; whether I am an heir of heaven, or an utter stranger to the blessed place and to the God who makes it so blessed as it is? And there isn't one person who reads this, who has no cause to make such an inquiry, and to say to himself, "I feel by the warmth and vigorous motion of my spirits, that I have a natural life. I eat, and drink, and sleep, and take abundant care, and use a thousand projects to maintain this same dear and pleasant life. But while my *body* is indulged and thrives, is my poor slighted *soul* in a state of death? And while men show me favour and are friendly to me, do I have the favour of that God who is to be my Judge, and who is either the best *friend*, or the worst *enemy*?"

Now, we may proceed in this matter by such rules as these:

I. *Do you have those graces of the Spirit wrought in you, which are the certain pledges and tokens of his favour?* Are you rich in faith, and yet poor in spirit? Are you hungering and thirsting after righteousness? And when you find your own best actions fall vastly short of the strict and pure demands of the Divine Law, do you prize and seek the righteousness that is in Christ? Is that sin now bitter to your taste, and grievous to your thoughts, which was once highly esteemed and prized? Do you hate and bewail with a relenting spirit, that which was once your dearly beloved and your joy? Are you mortified to this world, and do you walk humbly, as wisely considering how weak you are, and how liable to be surprised, and to fall — always considering that you are very sinful, and very frail? These graces of faith, mortification, humility, and the like, are certain tokens of the love of God. He delights to fix his habitation in a soul thus qualified, Isa 57:15.¹²⁷ In such a soul, a heaven has begun. And it not only lives, but it will attain new strength, and proceed to further degrees of life. Though it now flourishes in the courts of the Lord, his Light shining upon it will cause it to take deeper root, and look more amiable and fresh— like those showers of rain

¹²⁷ **Isa 57:15** For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him *who* has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

that slide away from the tops of mountains, descend into the valleys, and make them more fruitful. The self-conceited will miss abundant refreshments that a soul so lowly will meet with. *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*, 2Cor 3.17. He doesn't give this to remain for a small space only, but to remain with his servants till their work is done. It is called the *earnest of our inheritance*; Eph 1.14. An earnest, you know, is part of the payment that is not to be returned again; and we are *said to be sealed with this Spirit unto the day of redemption*, Eph 4.30. As one explains it, "By that seal God distinguishes believers from other men, just as seals are employed to differentiate some things from others that are not to be regarded so much — as we seal our own goods, or papers, or some particular thing that is most precious." This expression calls us to meditate on the infinite tenderness of God's love to men. For a man does not love anything so much as that which is his own; he looks upon other things in which he has no propriety, with an indifferent and unconcerned eye. Even the stately glories of a palace do not affect him with so great a joy, as the little conveniences of his own unobserved cottage, *because it is his own*.

And further, a seal often carries the coat of arms of the one whose seal it is; or the image of some great person. So the work of the Spirit is to engrave faith, hope, and love in our hearts. These are the ensigns of the New Covenant; and they form in us the image of God, which consists in righteousness, and peace, and holiness. God does not set this mark upon any but those who are indeed His favourites, who by the tenderness and softness of their hearts, are prepared to receive those impressions.¹²⁸ But in great measure, we are passive in this matter, as the wax passively receives the marks that the seal stamps upon it. These are *saving* works of the Spirit which I have mentioned; whereas a great many common gifts are bestowed on those whom God abhors. Many a man may have light enough to show others the way to heaven, and yet never walk in it himself. The one who was a star in the firmament of the Church on earth, may sit in darkness.

1Cor 13.1-2, *Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I have become like sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could move mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

You must under this head observe these two things.

1. Not to expect to be strong in every grace alike.
2. Not to have the same comforts at all times.

1. *You must not expect to be strong in every grace alike.* We ought to strive to *be complete*, to have all the pieces of our Christian armour polished and fit for action, and well-fitted, and put upon us. But we are principally to secure and guard those parts where there is the most danger of a wound; those parts where the seat of life is. So we are first of all to look after and cherish those graces which produce and keep the rest in vigour, such as faith, and repentance, and humility. Though it is most certain that all men, even those who are God's favourites, are not of the same stature, nor the same strength; nor do they have as much skill in every duty as maybe they have in one or two. It is so ordered by the holy providence of God, that all in Christ will have tribulations. But many times they are very different from one another, so that the different grace they are to exercise under their several trials, may shine with a brighter glory.

Thus of old, Abraham was peculiarly eminent for his faith, Moses for his meekness; Job for his patience. All believers, by the privileges with which they are invested, are *stars*; yet even here one

¹²⁸ Claude sur Eph 4.30. p. 20.

star differs from another in glory. As there are several gifts of the same Spirit, that are all useful to the whole, so the graces that are wrought by Him, according to his sovereign pleasure, produce several effects according to the subjects they are in. And many times they are very much advanced or obstructed by a good or ill temper of the body. Hence, those who have an angry temper, the fieriness of their natural spirits which are apt to be enflamed on every small occasion, very much hinders that meekness and calmness which is one of the graces of the holy Spirit. And so others who are naturally tenacious (stubborn), and strict, and narrow-minded, many times smell too much of these ill qualities, even when they are converted. But it should not be so; for if there is any particular sin to which we are more inclined by our constitution, than we are to another, we should more industriously set ourselves against that sin.

2. *You must not expect a continuance of the same comforts at all times.* For the Spirit blows where he wishes, and when he will, Joh 3.8. Though the new creature is formed in you by the grace of God, yet you cannot perceive its motions with so distinct a sense at one time as at another. Though by the intercession of Christ, his favourites are secured from a total and final apostacy, yet they may fall now and then, and their life seem to decline, and a spiritual faintness come upon it, and a very deep sorrow may cover and, as it were, *bury* your hopes and your joys. There is yet that vital principle that will not see corruption; that seed of Grace that will now and then flourish with acceptable fruit. Your faith may, in violent temptations, be like the weak and undiscernible stirring of the soul. When the body is in a swoon, the soul seems for a while to be departed. But after the spirits are refreshed, it animates the whole body, and exercises all the functions and offices of life as it used to do. When the ship was most violently tossed with a tempest, yet our Lord was there; even though the poor trembling disciples thought he didn't care whether they were lost or saved. Thus Mary was drowned with tears after his resurrection. Not finding him where she expected, nor as soon, she gave way to sorrow. *They have taken away the Lord*, she says, Joh 20.13. *and I don't know where they have laid him* — when the very person that she *then* had in view, was the same dear Saviour and friend that she longed to see. And when with great tenderness and familiarity he revealed himself, and called her *Mary*, then she knew full well that it was her Master. Her poor drooping heart was filled with joy and transport; *she fell at his feet, and kissed them.* ¹²⁹

God does not equally manifest his favour, no, not even to the same person, one who sometimes triumphs, and is sometimes very desolate. It is like the vessel that is sometimes lifted up, even as to heaven itself, by the rising and the swelling waves. The next minute, that same vessel is sinking to the bottom of the sea, and ready to be swallowed in the formidable depths. Though, *if we were duly prepared*, the face of our God would appear with as amiable an aspect at one time as at another. For if any frowns are there, our sins are the cause. And because we are sinful, it is as necessary for us to weep now and then, as to always rejoice. The clouds and the showers are as needful to the earth, as constant sunshine and fairer weather. Our graces yield no delight to us, till the Spirit actuates and enlivens them. Till he *blows upon the garden, the spices do not flow out*, Song 4.16; nor do the sweetest of the flowers smell with such a perfume and such a fragrant scent, as they then do. If we would have a warm sense of the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts, it must be done by the efficacy and influence of the Holy-Ghost. He brings the most suitable truths to remembrance, and he seasonably applies those promises that are most comfortable and reviving. He raises in us holy courage and hope, and he fills our sails with his favourable blasts. He banishes that fear and those perplexing doubts that enslave us, and sets

¹²⁹ Joh 20.17 Cf. Luk 7.38.

before us the mercy and the loving-kindness of God. And He pours into our hurting and bleeding wounds, the consolations of the Gospel.

There are indeed some particular times when God is pleased to give the soul clear manifestations of His favour. And they are usually said by divines, to be in such particular circumstances as these:

1. He is pleased to condescend to *new converts*, who are suddenly cheered with mighty joys, and filled with an admiration for his grace. He considers the weakness of these tender pilgrims, and *his* joy becomes *their* strength. He feeds them as with angels' food, for he knows they have a great way to go. And therefore he carries them in his arms, and leads them gently along; and they don't meet with those sharp and heavy trials that more experienced Christians meet with. The sudden change they perceive, when they go from gross darkness into a marvellous light, when their chains are struck off, and their prison-doors set open, makes them wonder and adore. This is why they have vigorous affections, and are very active for the glory of their Saviour. This is why their zeal is so fervent, and the flame of their love burns so clear and bright.

2. Another season when God communicates to his servants peculiar manifestations of his favour, is at *the Lord's Supper*, when they see their Redeemer crucified before their eyes; when they see the torments of his body, and the agonies of his soul; when they see how pained, how overcome he was; and that all this pain was for them and for their salvation. And as surely as they receive the bread and the wine, so surely they receive this Jesus, and all his benefits — direction for the present, and a title to everlasting glory. This carries them up to the top of the Mount. This makes them taste of the Tree of Life. This sight of a dying Saviour, and of the heaven that he purchased, makes them worship him with praise, and even think of themselves as already there where he is., The believing soul goes to this table of the Lord hungry and thirsty; and from the same table he returns greatly pleased with so divine a banquet — though not without the most earnest desires for that entertainment which is reserved for it above.

3. God is pleased to give his servants a clearer manifestation of his love *when he intends to employ them in some remarkable or extraordinary service*, as he encouraged Joshua, who met with great difficulties, by saying to him, *Fear not; but be of good courage, for I am with you*, Jos 1.9. When he sets before them the labours and dangers of the combat, he displays at the same time, the greatness of the reward, and the glory of the victory. Thus He animates his soldiers to fight his battles; thus he prepares his martyrs to witness to his truth, and with such a sense of his favour, that no cup seems too bitter for them to drink, no danger too great for them to conquer. Hence Moses said, *If your presence does not go with me, do not carry us up from here*, Exo 33.15. But with that, he was content to go to whatever place of difficulty he was called. "He would rather (as one says ¹³⁰) be in a desolate and howling wilderness, than in a pleasant and a fruitful land without the presence of his God. He knew there was no sweetness in Canaan without Him — there is more sting than honey in the Land of Promise, unless He is there." And Canaan itself will prove to be a wilderness if He withdraws himself. "Thus God," as that same person says, "when he called Abraham to that great expression of obedience in sacrificing his son Isaac, He first warms his heart with his love, and seals up the Covenant of Grace to him. He spreads before him ample and comprehensive promises: *I am your God all-sufficient, I am your shield, and your exceeding*

¹³⁰ Culverwell's *White Stone*, p. 125.

great reward (Gen 17.1; 15.1). And this will bear up and support Abraham, though the staff of his old age be taken away, and cast into the fire by his own hands.”¹³¹ Or,

4. *In Prayer*. Many times God is pleased to show his favour to the soul, giving it a secret assurance of his mercy, saying, *I am your God and portion*; and so He sends the soul away, filled with good things. Or,

5. In *great straits*, and pinching wants. When there is *least* of the creature, there is usually *most* of the all-sufficient Creator. When all the cisterns of earthly comforts are broken, then this Fountain overflows and sends out His comfortable streams. He carries his *people into a wilderness, and there he speaks comfortably to them*, Hos 2.14. And He is then most kind, when the world will show them no kindness. Or,

6. After they've gotten the *victory over some lusts and corruptions* that were both dishonourable to Him, and uneasy to them. Such a conquest is attended with his approval. And that gives them a mighty joy, like the joy that the poor Israelites had when they saw their enemies drowned in the Red Sea. Or,

7. *In the day of death*. When all the shine of earthly delights is clouded, and their sun is about to set, they lift up their feeble and longing eyes toward heaven. He draws away the veil, and they see the Son of God standing at his right hand, as their advocate and mediator. And then it is that a poor weary soul says with Paul, *I desire to depart, and to be with Christ*. As Mr. Flavel says of old Mr. Lyford, that a little before his death he desired to let his friends know in what condition his soul was, and what his thoughts were about that eternity to which he seemed very near. He answered with a cheerfulness suitable to a believer and a minister, *“I will let you know how it is with me.”* And then, stretching out a hand that was withered and consumed with age and sickness, he says,

“Here is the grave, the wrath of God, and devouring flames, the just punishment of sin on the one side; and here am I, a poor sinful soul, on the other side. But this is my comfort: the Covenant of Grace, which is established on so many sure promises, has salved all. There is an act of oblivion passed in heaven: I will forgive their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more. This is the blessed privilege of all within the Covenant, among whom I am one.”

What a quiet and a blessed soul this was! How full of joy in a time of usual amazement and terror! With what strength he was furnished to fight with his last enemy! God grant that you and I may have such strength and such comfort when it is our time to die.

II. *That you may know whether you have the favour of God, in which is life, you must examine whether you esteem Him more than the world.* There are two qualifications for this esteem:

1. That it be serious and deliberate; and
2. That it be prevalent.

1. That it be *serious*. It must be the product of many solemn repeated thoughts; a viewing of Him as invested with many glorious perfections, as he is represented in his Word, and as he shines in the face of Jesus Christ — a due considering of both what He is in himself, and what he will be to you. This esteem is not wrought by a hasty glance, or a passing view, but by deep thoughtfulness, attended with calm and sedate reflections on our own guiltiness, and His mercy; on our own

¹³¹ Isaac was Abraham's “staff in his old age” — his progeny, but also his support. Isaac was offered up on an altar, and thus “cast into the fire by [Abraham's] own hands.” This is a poetic rendering of the event. — WHG

emptiness and miseries, and His all-sufficiency. And then a balancing of all things that pretend to a share in our affections, and submitting at length to the more just claim of God. It is saying in this, or a like manner,

“Lord, I yield myself to You as your own. I was dazzled for a little while with the jovial pleasures of a vain world. But now I bid them all farewell, that I may come and taste your joys. I have served sin and Satan, but they have cheated and deceived me — they have given me vexation instead of rest, and husks instead of bread. Therefore now, O my Father in heaven, poor prodigal that I am, I return to You to live in your Family, to do your work, and never to wander or be extravagant anymore. Oh! Don't give me all my portion in *this world*, but let me have an inheritance in *that world which is to come*. Let others pursue their several projects, and obtain what they pursue; let them succeed in their affairs, and bathe themselves in the softest pleasures. It is *God* that I seek; it is *He* that I will most value.”

It is a sign that a beam of heavenly light has shined upon your souls, if this is your frame.

2. Your esteem must be *prevalent*. The worst of men have some esteem of God, as a glorious, powerful, good, and happy Being. And they think those who enjoy His favour are the safest and most honourable persons. But then there are a thousand trifles that they more esteem and labour after — such as riches, or ease, or gain, or applause. But can you truly say, *I would not, if I might, have all the world, without God himself?* I would rather have Him, though in poverty, and disgrace, and trouble, than to be compassed with throngs of flowing joys without His love? If you have this favour of God, you will easily look through all the painted varnish of the world, and see its real vanity. God and things divine will not only gain your hearts, but gain them in a sovereign and a powerful degree. And till we thus prize and value Him, he is not our God, nor is his favour our portion. If you have this, you will say with David, *Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon me*, Psa 4.6. It is not outward prosperity, or grandeur, or the favour of men, or the ease of the flesh that I seek, but yourself. *You* are my exaltation, my joy, my every good — all that I wish for, and all that I desire.

III. *If you have this favour of God, you will know it by the hatred that you have of sin.* Wherever this comes, it will banish that sin, it will weaken and expel it. And even if it doesn't altogether destroy it, yet it will take away from it all its former amiableness and beauty. You will not sin with such boldness as you used to do. Indeed, you will be so far from that, that you wouldn't dare to commit the least iniquity. And if there is fixed in your souls a real and abiding hatred of sin, and if you use all good endeavours against it, it's a most certain mark that you have passed from death to life. You cannot help but remember what bitterness the remembrance of your former iniquities filled your souls with; what consternation then seized upon your poor spirits when you thought God was your enemy, and hell your portion! What would you then have given for the least beam of that Sun that now shines with his gentle beams upon your heads! How welcome was the voice of that messenger who brought you glad tidings, and assured you there was mercy and hope even for you! Before you obtained this favour of God, you have had many a restless night, and many a weary day in a solicitous inquiry: *What would become of your immortal souls forever?*

IV. *If you have this favour of God, in which is life, you will be satisfied with all his dispensations that will bring you nearer to Himself.* It is an observation not without its truth, that *wherever God gives grace, he will send afflictions to exercise that grace*. And those who have the strongest grace, must look for such conflicts, such temptations, and those assaults from the devil on their way to heaven, which will put all their grace to the utmost and largest stretch. None will come to heaven without suffering; none can tell how many millions of sufferings he may endure before the

day of salvation dawns upon him. But he is a very happy person who is not overwhelmed with these innumerable calamities; who while he swims as in a sea of grief, can lift up his head, and exercise his faith, and say, *Lord, let your will be done*. If you will be with me in the fiery furnace, and in the deep waters, then I will not fear, though those flames are very hot, and these waves roll fast one upon another. Though it is our duty to depreciate long, and severe, and heavy trials, it is a common thing in our prayers, to say, *Lord, if you will save me at last, bring any sort of affliction on me, I will refuse nothing*. But alas! alas! we generally don't know what we're saying. There are those arrows in God's quiver, which if they were shot against us, would cut us to the very soul, and make us quickly change our language. There is that unspeakable weight in his hand, that when he lays it heavily upon us, we cannot bear it. There are those pains at his disposal, and which our sins deserve, that are in all things (setting aside their duration) like the very pains of hell.

He is the good man who does not desire affliction; for he will be sure to have it whether he desires it or not. But who can submit to it when it comes upon him? Who makes himself a cross, and doesn't take it up when he finds it lying in the way? Who can say, Lord, if I must be poor in order for eternal riches, then I am very well satisfied? If I must be very low, and contemptible, and despised, before I come to you, then that lowness, and that contempt, will be my real glory. If during all the days of my pilgrimage, I must sow in tears, I will yet go on, for I know that I will reap in joy. If my corruptible body must languish away in pain, and my sinful soul have its troubles too, then I will wait in hope, and not repine or fret at your decree. If I must be friendless here, I will still prize you as my best and eternal Friend. Even when I am sorely oppressed, I will keep close to you. I will lay hold on your perfections, on your covenant, and on your promises; and I will not let you go till I am blessed.

This favour of God causes a person to rejoice in him, even though the fig tree doesn't blossom. And when any dear comfort, any relation is taken away by death, it will make him say, "My God is better to me than ten of these comforts — no, better than many thousands of them put together. And though he snatches from my embraces what I most valued in this world, yet He shall have my best affections, my desire, my love, my delight as much as ever." A soul thus prepared to be quiet under the severest dispensations, has life in the favour of God; he has that life that will never expire, but end in eternal life.

CHAP. 7. *How to preserve a sense of God's favour.*

Of several other ways by which a sense of Gods favour may be preserved in our souls; and how we may certainly know that we are in that happy state.

V. *If you have this favour of God, you will desire the continuance of it above all other things.* And this will be both an evidence of your present sincerity, and a means to convey to you a more pleasant sense of this favour. In all *outward actions*, such as prayer, hearing the Word, giving to the poor, and the like, there may be a very great resemblance between a true Christian and a hypocrite. But *spiritual desires*, being the immediate offspring of the soul, are not liable to so many cheats. And your desires after God will be very strong and earnest, and produce powerful and sensible effects, for they will be the fruit of a lively faith, and of an enlightened understanding that sees the value of a God. And this will render stronger the motions of your souls; for ignorance of God is the mother of all feeble and languishing desires. Your breathings after him will be like hunger and thirst, which are very uneasy to our nature, and give us the most raging and eager appetites. They make us not well satisfied till they meet with their proper gratifications.

Psa 42.1-2. *As the hart pants after the water-brooks, so pants my soul after you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When will I come and appear before him?* Even as that poor creature, when pursued by hunters and greatly heated with its flight, longs to be refreshed with the cool streams of water, so will you, when harassed with the temptations of the devil and his malicious and most cruel suggestions, fly with haste to the embraces and arms of God, longing and panting after him. Indeed, the warmth of your desires may be so great, that you will even, as it were, melt away in flaming zeal. Psa 84.2, *My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.* And Psa 119.20, *My soul breaks from the longing it has for your commandments.* Pro 13.12, *Hope deferred makes the heart sick.*

An eager desire for an absent amiable good, raises an agreeable sensation and something of disorder in the natural spirits. They are heated and stirred up with more vigour through the vehemence with which they move — though this very much abates their strength, and occasions what we call *fainting*. Such is the sympathy that the soul has with its dearest body, that when the soul meets with a suitable object, it is filled with warm affections. And this fills the body either with sadder, or more cheerful spirits, as it finds reasons for sadness or for joy. Yet these desires after God by holy men, do not always burn with an equal flame. For in desertions, in some very perplexing difficulty, or in great bodily indisposition and sickness, they are damped and usually cannot be so quick, so cheerful, and so sensible as at other times — though even then, they may be very sincere and acceptable. For in so gloomy a time, one groan that comes from a humble heart, may go up to God in as grateful a manner as many long prayers at another season.

In your desires for God's favour, you will regard these two things:

1. *You will remember what it was that once heightened your desires, and endeavour by the same means to quicken them when they begin to languish.* You will often consider which perfection in God it was that warmed your hearts (whether his goodness, his mercy, his truth, his unchangeable faithfulness, or the like), or what promise in the Scripture, or what act of providence towards you it was — and apply yourselves again to the same profitable methods. You will often recollect what passages they were in sermons that you heard, or in the good books that you read, that gave you the first amiable sense of God.

2. *You will carefully observe what it is that cools and damps your desires* — what passion, what worldly pleasure, what vain company, what foolish hopes, what tormenting cares, what enslaving

fears — and avoid all these, as much as it lies in you to do so. You will avoid those snares that entangled you, those temptations that clipped your wings, and made you fall back to this earth again when you were soaring aloft. Whatever secret sin it was that weakened your holy breathing after God, or whatever omission of duty it was that estranged Him from you, you will immediately begin to *mortify* that sin, and to set upon that duty. Though when we have done all we can, there will be a vast difference between what we *are*, and what we *ought to be* — between our longing, and the most glorious object after which we are to long.

But do we find no pleasure in our old lusts anymore? Do we find our hearts dead to this deceitful world, and to those objects that we once called *amiable*, and to which we sacrificed our time, our endeavours, our morning and evening thoughts? Do the things that we most admired before, now seem less eligible? Does all that we called *beautiful*, seem deformed when compared with God himself? Can every one of us sincerely say to our most beloved sins, and to the enjoyments of this world, “I once indeed overly admired you; but I will never do so again, forever. I bid you all *farewell*. Never pretend to a share in my affections, for I have now found a better good. I have long pursued you to no purpose. Now, in finding God, I have found a sure, smooth, and near way to rest. You have cheated me with vain delusions too often; but you will cheat me no more. For it is to *God* that I offer up my heart, though with grief that I did not love him sooner, when he is so infinitely good and amiable.”

VI. *If you have this favour of God, being life to you at present, then:*

1. *You have felt by experience, what a miserable thing it is to be without him.* Though, as there is wonderful variety in the works of God in nature, so there is no less variety in those of grace. His favour is not communicated the same way in all respects. Though all are redeemed by the blood of the same Redeemer, yet some groan under the painful sense of their chains and captivity much longer than others. In some, the new birth is produced by His gentle hand in a little time; and others don't have it till after many dreadful pangs and agonies. Some get to heaven with much fewer conflicts than others do, who are travelling to the same place. This variety is admirable and very wise, though we don't discern the reasons for it. Yet all who are blessed with the favour of God, cannot without astonishment survey the hideous darkness, and the woeful danger in which they lay, before this glorious Sun was pleased to shine. Oh! what would have become of me forever” says such a one, “if he had allowed me to follow my own choice, and to take my own course, and to have my own desires, when I was running even to the gates of hell. I now indeed see my sad estate as it was then. But Oh! what would have become of me, had he allowed me to continue in my fatal slumbers on the edge of ruin? If I had dreamed on, and had not awakened before the dreadful blow of death, where would my lot have been *then*? How many thousand miseries was I under, and didn't perceive my bondage, nor feel my misery? Death was creeping on me, hell was gaping to receive me, the Law cursed me, the devil led me captive, and I didn't know it — and in this woeful posture He found me. I was polluted, and cast out, and helpless, and in my own blood; then *He said to me, live!* Eze 16.6. He made the time of my danger and my provocation, to be a time of love.

So great a change, and so happy a revolution, deserve indeed a frequent and thankful remembrance. It gives a mighty pleasure to the soul to find itself safe, when it was even in the jaws of the roaring lion, ready to be torn in pieces — when the arm of the Almighty rescued the endangered and trembling prey. A sick man who has long been confined with inexpressible pain, and at the very door of the grave, doesn't think of his present health and life with greater pleasure. A mariner who has escaped shipwreck and the dangers of the sea, who lies upon a plank or broken

piece of the ship, and with great hardship and difficulty has gotten to land, does not with a greater calmness look upon the waves, and that sea which likely would have swallowed him up, than such a sinner looks upon his former miseries, and his present privilege — upon his former enmity to God, and his present reconciliation with Him.

2. *It may be that you have experienced that nothing in all the world is so very terrible as God's withdrawing from you.* Haven't you found it to be a punishment much greater than bodily pain, or sickness, or any temporal calamity? That the loss of your dearest friend, your kindest and most comfortable relation, was much more tolerable than such a loss as this: to lose the sense of his favour once you have enjoyed it. Hasn't this loss been to you, even like hell itself; or like the departure of Adam out of Paradise, once he had beheld the beauties and tasted the pleasure of that amiable place? What fear, what anxiety, and what consternation seized upon him when he was to be kept from it — never more to see the Tree of Life, never more to walk in that most delightful Garden, nor to see angels visiting his sweet habitation as they once used to? And haven't you been possessed with as great a fear, when you thought that for your iniquities, God had turned into your enemy?

I could bear any other affliction, says the *poor deserted soul* — but to be forsaken by God, is so terrible that I cannot bear it. How can I see frowns in his face, and live? I have had many disappointments, and vexations, and crosses, and in all these I could lift up my head and hope. But now I am destroyed on every side, and my hope is gone. Up till now, when the world had badly used me, I could go to the Throne of Grace, and my heavenly Father would give my weary soul pleasant entertainment, and speak comfortably to me. But now he doesn't visit and refresh me as he used to; and his blessed face that I once saw with peace, is now hidden and covered with a cloud. I have my former worldly comforts, my friends, and my estate. But alas, my God is gone, and what do these avail? I once read his Word with joy; now it fills me with gall and wormwood. I once sat under his shadow with great delight and his fruit was pleasant to my taste; but now I am thirsty and have nothing with which to quench my thirst. I am now scorched with heat, and I have no shelter, no cool shady retirement where I may fly for ease.

Job 23.8-9. *Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he works, but I cannot behold him. He hides himself on the right hand, so that I cannot see him.* You will most earnestly pray against so sad a state as this, if you have ever experienced the favour of God to be your life.

Oh Lord! Do not hide yourself from my poor soul. Whatever else I lose, let me not lose you and your love. Do not take me for your enemy, nor let your terrors fall upon me. Do not cast me off, O my Father, though I have been very disobedient. And if God departs, your mourning for his absence will be like the mourning of a mother for the death of an only son, or like the sadness of so many poor children who bewail a lost father. They are left destitute, and can do nothing without his advice and help. You will follow your God with tears and supplications, and say with Christ in great agony, but with great faith, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* Why do you forget the work of your own hands? *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak.* Why do you leave me in this doleful wilderness where there is no water, to be a prey to Satan and my own fears? I have indeed wandered about, seeking rest, and find none. Put out your loving hand, and guide me to yourself. I have indeed deserved this usage, for you were with me, and I didn't value your presence; you called, but I didn't obey your voice; you stood at my door, but I shut you out.

Woe, woe unto me that I have sinned; woe unto me, that I did not improve ¹³² your grace, your presence, and your love, as I should have done. But though I have been a prodigal, you are a Father still. And though I haven't done as becomes a child, yet I will return to you, because you will not cast off the comfortable name of a Father. This, I say, is how those who have experienced God's favour mourn for his absence! Their spirits are like the tender flowers that hang their heads when the sun is set, and they walk more disconsolately than any subject can be supposed to do. Someone who once shared in the special graces of his Prince, may at length see him; but because of his crimes, he is looked upon with a severe or a less favourable eye.

VII. *If you enjoy the favour of God, you will have a great value for his Word, for the Spirit, and the blood of Christ.* You value his WORD as revealing this God to you, and persuading you by many comfortable promises and entreaties to accept him; and not only so, but conveying to you saving light and knowledge, with its great and powerful efficacy. You will love the Word because of the many supports and consolations which you have received from it. You will love it as the rule of your duty; and all its precepts will be dear to you, as conveying life and strength to you. You will love it so as to read it often, so as to meditate upon it, and to store it up in your hearts. You will love it as the instrument of your regeneration, and rejoice in it not only for a season, but forever.

You will value and obey the SPIRIT who drives home revealed truths to your hearts. And when you were destitute of this life, He convinced you of your miserable state. And He restored vigor and motion to those faculties of yours that were stupefied and benumbed — chasing away their ancient darkness, and guiding them to their proper objects; and causing those objects so revealed, to produce glorious effects in your once barren souls.

You will also prize all the ORDINANCES of God in which you may have *communion* with Him, such as prayer, hearing, meditation, and the like.¹³³ It will leave a sensible grief on your minds, when you miss these ordinances by your own fault.

VIII. *You will be very humble and heavenly minded.* His favour fills all his servants with the lowest and most self-abasing thoughts. You will never speak of him, but in terms full of respect; never pray to him, but with great reverence and veneration. The nearer access you have to him, the more you will discern of his infinite holiness and purity, and how vile you are when compared with him. You will wonder at His condescensions, and cast down your crowns before the throne. You will imitate the humble language in 2Sam 9.7-8. When David told Mephibosheth, *You will eat bread at my table continually*, he bowed himself and said, *What is your servant that you should look upon such a dead dog as I am?* This will cause you to admire the distinguishing grace of God that is granted to you, more than to many others in the world — great numbers of which are buried in ignorance or open idolatry, and the rest in profaneness or hypocrisy. Many, it may be, are passed by in the same families where you live; while *you* are alive, your next neighbour is perhaps dead. And then, if you have obtained this favour, you will be *heavenly minded*. Your treasure and your hearts will be above. You will taste and relish spiritual and divine things, and never be more pleased than when you are least earthly and carnal. And this holy temper will be your comfort and security against the temptations of Satan, and the evils of this lower world — like those birds that soar aloft are out of the danger of the guns and the snare of the fowler, but he catches those that fly nearer to the ground.

¹³² *Improve*: to employ something to good and profitable use. — WHG

¹³³ The Lord's Supper being the primary reminder of the atoning BLOOD of Christ. — WHG

IX. *You may then know that you have the favour of God, if you are industrious and zealous in the performance of all holy duties.* If you perform them not only from the force of awakening convictions, but from love and delight. If you refuse no service that may glorify him, even though it seems to thwart your worldly interest, and to be painful to the flesh. And it is impossible not to find a very calm and cheerful progress in your obedience, when you know that God accepts what you do. Just as it is a mighty encouragement to a servant's labour, when he sees that his Master is very well pleased with his work. Darkness, you know, with its many inconveniences, greatly puts a stop to diligence; yet it is quickened and excited by the return of light. So if God's countenance shines upon you, it will make you not only walk uprightly, but even run in the way of his commandments, with enlarged hearts, Psa 119.32. And you will associate with those who are serious, holy persons; for the living do not usually take pleasure in being among the dead.

X. And lastly, *if this favour of God is your life, it will make you patiently long for heaven.* This favour will be sweeter to your taste than *honey or the honeycomb*. It will yield a more delightful relish to your renewed appetite, than all the joys of this world. The little drops that now and then refresh your hearts, will cause you to pant for those rivers of pleasure that are at his right hand forevermore. Are you weary of sinning, weary of your imperfect faith, hope, and love? Does the prospect that you have of God at this distance, render him so amiable to your souls, that you would gladly be with him where He is? Are you so sensible of the evil of your sin, that you would gladly be in that place where you will sin no more forever — where your panting soul will have all its longings turned into eternal contentment and delight? You will often lift up to heaven your longing eyes, and send there many a fervent wish; saying with David, *Oh! When will I come and appear before God?* Psa 42.2. When will it be that I see his glorious face, and feel beyond all doubt that I am loved by Him, and that I love him better than I do now? — where the joys of *hope* will be turned into *fruition*, and when that which I now have only in the *promise*, I will have in the sweetest and most comfortable *possession*! When will I be near his throne, and see that glorious majesty that I have adored? When will I see that face all serene, and have no black or mournful cloud to interpose between my God and me forever? Oh that I might join in the *Hallelujahs* of the Blessed! Oh that I were in that land of eternal light and joy, and in that agreeable society of holy souls who have already shot the gulf, and rest from all their labours; for I am weary with beholding vanity. These and similar, will be the motions of a holy soul. For its warfare with sin, the world, and the devil, is so painful that it cannot but desire to be *released*. Its ignorance is so great, that it cannot but long to be overspread with pure and eternal light. *The captive exile hastens that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail.* (Isa 51.14)

But then this longing must be attended with *patience*. For we may sin even in desiring heaven, when we desire it with too much precipitancy and haste. And many times even good men are very much to blame in this. Many times when a person meets with some heavy sickness, or some very troublesome affliction, he is apt to say, *Oh that God would now take me to heaven!* There is a great deal of *self-love* in this. And our nature, when it finds itself oppressed, would gladly be at ease. But we must not forget that we must bear the cross and suffer, before it will be our time to reign. We must hold on in our race, even though the weather is foul and stormy. Many thousands of pains may be our lot before God will call us from here. And so the first thing that we are to desire is that we may have faith and submission with which to bear those pains, and to persevere till he is pleased to call us. Some, indeed, he is pleased to dismiss from this earth to his heaven, all of a sudden. But if you consider, you will find that most of his servants have *long* troubles, *manifold* agonies, *tedious* conflicts, and *heavy* pains, before they come to that glory. And in this respect, they find the gate that leads to life is *very* strait and narrow. The Land of Promise is

indeed a pleasant land; it flows with milk and honey. But there are many giants to conquer on our way there. Your desires for heaven cannot be truly regular, unless you are content to glorify Him by suffering, as well as by doing his will.

Even with patience, there may be an earnest and affectionate desire to be with God. And thus some of the saints have breathed out their prayers,

“Oh time! Run fast, and remove days and hours out of the way, that I may enjoy, *forever* enjoy the beloved of my soul! Farewell all my friends and relations, for I am going to better friends. Farewell all my temporal possessions, for I am now going to be possessed of *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that does not fade away*. Farewell eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and all my pleasures and recreations; for I am now going to the Supper of the Lamb, and will not need these weak supports of frail nature anymore.”

And others have cried out,

“Oh, my God! Let me not remain in darkness, and provoke you, and hazard my salvation, and please the devil, and add sin to sin! Oh why is my desire still unsatisfied? When will I have nothing more to wish for? When will it once be, that I will be delivered? Oh, *come Lord*, lest I be weary of my work and duty; lest my graces be like poor tired soldiers who fall into confusions, and so lose the day. Happy is the man who loves you above all. Happy is the man whose hope and trust are in You. But happiest is the one who is *with* You, where I also long to be.”

Thus I have finished the application. And I hope there are several of my Readers whose consciences, after such a trial, salute them with happy tidings and say, *You are those who have God's favour*. And oh what happy people they all are! They will be happy in life, happy in their death, and happy forevermore.

Some will say, happy are the men who are rich and great, who have thriving trades, numerous attendants, and swelling titles; who have plenty of gold and silver; who need not take care how to live, and are freed from all the pinching anxieties of a poor and a low estate, Psa 144.15. It may be said to every such person, in the language of the angel Gabriel to the blessed Virgin, *Hail you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you*, Luke 1.28. And in v. 30. *Fear not, Mary, for you have found favour with God*. And what indeed can they fear, whose friend He is, that is so good, and so powerful!

CHAP. 8. The privileges of those who have God's favour.

Of the several privileges that belong to those who have God's favour.

1. *When you have this favour, all your sins are pardoned.* Your God will not remember your iniquities anymore. All the vanities of your childhood and youth, all your omissions and your commissions, will not rise against you to condemn you. Though you have often quenched the Holy Spirit, and stifled his convictions, yet all this — and many thousands of other sins that made you dead in Law — will be blotted out. All your sins of ignorance, and all those that have been done against light, and love, and knowledge, will be covered by this grace of God.

2. *All your prayers will be heard.* Being pardoned, and your guilt removed, you will have *access with boldness unto God*, who will give you either the very things you desire, or those of another kind that are better. Your persons are acceptable, and so will all your duties be, and therefore successful because Christ is your intercessor. As he has once purchased life for you with his blood, he will apply it to you for your further purification, Heb 9.11-14. ¹³⁴ Indeed, you will not only prevail for mercies for yourselves, but being favourites in the Court of heaven, you will be in a capacity to obtain many blessings for others too. Mat 18.19, *If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by my Father who is in heaven.* God, as one says, sometimes stands upon a number of voices for carrying some public mercy, because He delights in the harmony of many praying souls. He also loves to oblige and gratify many in the answer and return of the same prayer. And therefore it is our duty to beg the prayers of those that we think are good people, because of their interest in God. *Many seek the ruler's favour*, Pro 29.26. Their wants and their ambition push them forward, and make them very compliant and respectful to those in whose power it is to do them considerable kindnesses. And they make a peculiar address to those who are principal favourites. It is reckoned a main step to promotion, to have a friend in court. It is to our great advantage to be remembered in the prayers of those who share in God's favour.

3. *When you are the favourites of God, he will accept your sincere services, though they are mingled with many failings.* The meanest oblations that you lay upon his altar, will be gratifying; while the more pompous and costly sacrifices of others will be disesteemed. Your inward groans will move His tender heart sooner than their howlings and their loudest cries, Pro 15.8. He will cherish your feeblest breathings for him, and add more strength to the bruised reed, and more flame to the smoking flax. He will register your good actions, and not upbraid you with your evil ones. *There was some good thing in Abijah toward the Lord God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam*, 1Kng 14.13, and He took peculiar notice of it. At the last day, our Lord mentions the charities and the bounties of his people, which they themselves had forgotten long ago. He will not reject your faith, though there are many doubts mingled with it; nor cast off your desires, though they have a great deal of deadness, and lack many further degrees of life and fervour. He will remember his Covenant, though you forget your duty. Mal 3.17, *I will spare them, as a man spares his own son who serves him.*

4. *God will either preserve you from outward dangers, or give you strength to bear them.* He will be afflicted in all your afflictions, and tenderly regard you as the apple of his eye. What can

¹³⁴ **Heb 9:11-14** But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

you fear, while you have so great a Defender? What may you not hope for, when you have so good a Benefactor? As he said to Abraham, Gen 15.1, *Fear not. I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward.* A reward to quicken your service, and a shield to keep you from hurt in the day of battle. Or as in Dan 10.19, *O man, greatly beloved! Fear not. Peace be to you. Be strong — yes, be strong!* What safety he must have had, who had the Almighty for his helper! What honour he must have had, whom an angel called *greatly beloved!*

5. *He will keep you in his favour, so that you will not finally be cast away.* Though you are saved as by fire, and with great difficulty, yet you will surely be saved. He may suspend his influences, but he will not change his covenant. He may be angry, but he will not be so forever. You may fall and bruise yourselves, but his gentle hand will heal your wounds, Rom 8.39.¹³⁵ The one who loved you when you were prodigals, will not shut you out when you return home again. The one who pitied you in your blood, will not reject you when his image is upon you, even though sullied with manifold defects. Your life is hidden with him in Christ (Col 3.3); and though it is weakened by various temptations and troubles, yet it will spring forth again. Christ is the Vine, of which you are the branches. Though your life is exposed to many storms, yet in him it is very safe. And you will not expire by a total death, because Christ himself will never die. The faithfulness of God, and the life of Christ, are both unchangeable supports to you. You need not fear the rage of your enemies while your Saviour is your guide; for he will bring forth judgment to victory (Mat 12.20).

6. *Sixthly and lastly, God will be your God.* His wisdom and his power will direct and save you. If I could tell the tradesman who is setting up, that I would help him to a plentiful trade; if I could assure the merchant of the successful arrival of his ships; if I could tell the poor how to be rich, and the rich how to get all they wish for, then I would be a very acceptable messenger. But to you that have the favour of God, here are even *better* tidings! The Lord of heaven and earth is yours! And if you can count the stars, or the sands of the sea, or the drops of rain, then you may be able to number the benefits that will accrue to you by such a privilege. Whatever is truly useful to your spiritual welfare, whatever is in all the large dominions of God that will do you good, you will be sure to *receive*. God the Father will be your *reconciled* Father; God the Son your Mediator; God the Holy Ghost your Sanctifier. You will in no distress lack an all-sufficient and almighty Friend. You will have all your holy prayers heard and granted; life and death will be yours; the mercy of God will relieve you when you are in misery. 2Cor 6.18, *I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.* And he will say, as in Jer 32.41, *I will rejoice over them to do them good, with my whole heart, and my whole soul.*

To be a child of a King, sounds great, and carries with it a high degree of honour. But to be the children of the King of kings is infinitely more honourable. To have so great a Father is an unspeakable and mighty privilege. All the dignities that ambitious courtiers seek with all their fawning arts, are but little trifles when compared with this. All the renown that soldiers purchase with their sweat and blood, is but a disgrace when compared with the glory of being a son or daughter of the Most High God. The Queen of Sheba, when she beheld Solomon in the splendor of his Court, and saw that the wisdom of his actions exceeded all the reports she had heard, cried out with wonder, *Happy are your men, and happy are these your servants who stand continually before you, and hear your wisdom!* (1Kng 10.8). How much more we may say, Happy are the servants of the Living God, who serve him day and night, who wait at his Temple, and who sing his praises; who see with what wisdom He manages all the great affairs of his vast and large

¹³⁵ **Rom 8:39** nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

kingdom. And that same eye that is in the wheels (Eze 10.12) watches for them. And all is carried on with a peculiar respect to *His glory*, and to *their salvation*. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is their Father; the angels are their guard; the Spirit is their teacher; afflictions are their medicine. 1Cor 3.21-22, *All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas. The stars* in the right hand of Christ shine to give them light. *The world is theirs*, as much as is necessary to promote their real welfare. *Life is theirs*, in which to prepare for happiness. And *death is theirs*, to convey them to it. *They are Christ's*: his brethren and his subjects. And *Christ is God's*: who is delighted with his Son, and with them in Him.

This is the privilege of a favourite of God. He may now be poor and lowly, affronted and disgraced. But the day draws near when the same person who is disesteemed by the sons of pride, will be owned by his Great Lord: clothed with garments of praise, and led out in triumph. And applauding angels say to the grief of the wicked, *Thus it will be done to the man whom the King of heaven delights to honour.* ¹³⁶

Thus you have set before you that which is life indeed — a life that will never close with death. Keep your mind full of these pleasant ideas. Endeavour to get a greatness of soul that may not cease aspiring after these glorious privileges. And look with contempt upon all other grandeur and magnificence. Having seen how honourable it is to be favoured by the Lord of Hosts, let us all resolve that we will never admire this vain world anymore. For we have now discerned a *better world*.

The End of the Second Part.

¹³⁶ Paraphrase of Est 6.11.

**A DISCOURSE
Concerning
TROUBLE of MIND,
AND THE DISEASE of MELANCHOLY.**

PART III.

Psa 30.5

Weeping may endure for a night; but joy comes in the morning.

CHAP. 1. *The many miseries of this mortal life.*

Of the many miseries of this mortal life, that are the usual occasions of sorrow for the sons of men; with respect both to their bodies and souls.

1. *The life of man is full of sorrow.* Yet it is not to be understood as being full of darkness and calamity in every part. We indeed have stormy days, but then we have fair weather too. We have not only the sharpness of the winter that pierces us with its cold, and frosts, and snow; but we also have the mild and favourable summer afterwards, that causes the whole frame of Nature to rejoice; that brings to us many grateful pleasant things; that gives us occasion to praise the wisdom of our Maker; that has made a world so beautiful in which we are to dwell; that has provided all innumerable comforts for us, not only those which are absolutely necessary to maintain our life, but those which may give us delight, and recreate our sense.¹³⁷ We can turn our eyes in no direction without beholding wonders of his goodness — his Sun, his Moon, his Stars — whose influences are for our benefit, as well as for his glory; and daily give us cause to say with David, Psa 8.4, *Lord, what is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you visit him!* He doesn't willingly grieve the children of men. He doesn't make us weep always, but affords us frequent occasions of rejoicing — whereas all our time might be like one rainy day, from the rising of the sun to its going down. However, his Providence *does* permit us to be laden with many miseries before we come to another world. And let us take a view of them; for it will be useful to subdue our pride, to keep us from vainglory, to make us remember that we are not at home, that our rest is not here, and that we should earnestly desire a better state.

(1) *Let us consider man in his first arrival in the world, or in his infant state.* And there we discern this same creature that in his later years makes so great a noise and bustle in the world, is a poor helpless thing. He is in no way able to cherish the newly begun life, nor to keep the candle that is lit, from expiring the same minute in which it began to shine. Man comes crying into the world. This is an action very suitable to him at his entrance into a world whose pleasures are floating and transient, but whose griefs are very sure. Other creatures are endued with instincts and inclinations for their own preservation. They know in some measure, as soon as they begin to live, how to maintain their own life. But man, of all others, is most destitute and helpless in this respect. He is so tender and so frail, that the least cold or dangers more easily affect him. God has put that great love into parents, that they do as well as they can to support, and comfort, and help their children. And with God's blessing, and their own great care and labour, they make a shift to rear these little plants. But then there are abundant diseases that begin to set upon the new-born creatures — convulsions and other pains which greatly torment and vex them, which they are not able to express, and which we don't know. But we are sure

¹³⁷ *Recreate*: as in recreation — it gives new life or energy to us, a renewed “sense.”

they begin at times to weep and be sorrowful. And their pains and sorrows also afflict their parents, and make them weep *with* them when they see their miseries. But indeed, they cannot help them. This soft and tender age is easily troubled and disquieted. Every little thing troubles and molests them. So that, the first hour of the night in which we travel when we begin to live, is an hour of sorrow.

(2) *When we get over the weakness of our infant state, and begin to have more strength, and reason dawns a little, and yields us a little light to guide ourselves, that light is mingled with darkness. Our small skill has abundant imprudence, and we run into a thousand dangers that we don't see; and those dangers make us weep and be sorrowful. Our careless youth is full of miseries, and the blooming rose has many thorns about it. When our reason begins to display itself with our increasing years, then the several tasks that are set for us, the several things we are obliged to learn in order for a good and well-improved education, bring forth grief and pain. Our unwillingness to labour, and the corrections that we meet with if we don't, both afflict us. Our ignorance is our misery, and the difficulties that are planted about the Tree of Knowledge, frighten and vex us. Many of our early days are spent digging for this hidden treasure which we cannot find without vast toil and sweat. And when we have found it, it doesn't satisfy. It's true indeed, our early youth has many pleasures, many recreations and diversions to sweeten it. And we are then devoid of the many cares of life that afterwards pierce our hearts. But even then, we are so confident and so foolish, so apt to trust our own understandings, and so backward to receive the advice of others who are more experienced, that we often wound ourselves, and sow those seeds of sorrow that yield us an uncomfortable harvest many years afterwards. And when in our freer time we come to reflect upon what we have done, that reflection makes us weep, to think that we have done so little for God, or for our own souls; and that we lost so great a part of our age in trifles and vanities. For we can then say by sad experience, *childhood and youth are vanity*, Ecc 11.10.¹³⁸ The joys that we were pleased with then, are past and gone; but the wounds that we then received, many times hurt and bleed afresh.*

(3) *When we have gotten the yoke of our masters and instructors off our necks, and begin to manage and guide ourselves and our actions, we still have many sorrows with reference to the common affairs of life; and with respect to knowledge and understanding.*

2. *With reference to the common affairs of life.* They are usually very many. They bring along with them a huge train of cares, of grave anxieties and solicitude. If men have no employment or business, they grieve for the lack of it. And if they are employed, they are hurried, and disturbed, and grieved, and vexed. They meet with many people who are false and treacherous, with many businesses that are intricate and perplexed. And thus their plodding heads are stung with cares, and their breasts with sorrow, all groaning under the curse, and proving the punishment to be true, that in the sweat of his brow man must eat his bread, Gen 3.19. Ecc 2.23, *All his days are sorrows, and his travel grief; even in the night, his heart takes no rest. This is also vanity.* All his drudgery and toil are to small purpose. It is indeed vanity, when a man deprives himself of *sleep, the sweet repose of Nature*, and next to the grace of God, the greatest blessing in the world.

The poor are almost everywhere shedding tears of impatience and discontent for the straitness of their circumstances. They are mourning because they are likely to lack what would bear their charges to the grave.¹³⁹ And the rich are troubled how to secure the riches they enjoy, and fear to

¹³⁸ *Youth is vanity*: a vapor, a breath that cannot last. – WHG

¹³⁹ They lack the funds even to pay for their own burial. – WHG

lose them, as many have done before; for they cannot live long. But they will see many whom a few days, and some unforeseen accidents, have brought from the greatest heights to the lowest poverty; whom the rising Sun found rejoicing, and whom he left plunged in tears, for their sudden miseries. How many foreheads do you see covered with a cloud of grief, for their losses and their disappointments! Look into the country fields, there you see toiling at the plow and scythe;¹⁴⁰ look into the waters, there you see tugging at oars and cables; look into the city, there you see a throng of cares, and hear sorrowful complaints of bad times, and the decay of trade; look into studies, and there you see paleness and infirmities, and fixed eyes; look into the court, and there are defeated hopes, envyings, underminings, and tedious attendance. All things are full of labour, and labour is full of sorrow; and these two are inseparably joined with the miserable life of man.

3. In the next place, consider *the miseries of the body of man*, that make him weep and mourn. Persons of weak constitutions are liable to tedious and languishing pains that afflict them for many months together; and those who are of a stronger temper, to pains that are so sharp and so violent that they dispatch them, it may be, in a week or two. Man is seldom without pain, and always near to sickness — to sickness that will make him groan and sigh whether he will or not. And some sickness is *all sorrow throughout*, such as *Melancholy*, which is all sad. It hasn't one bright or clear side; all is disconsolate and grievous, stagnating the blood, changing the brisk and cheerful motion of the spirits, and fixing the mind unavoidably on shocking and dreadful objects. The melancholy of Job is verified so: *His flesh will have pain, and his soul within him will mourn*, Job 14.22. The several seasons of the year have their inconveniences which annoy poor mortal men. Not only is the winter quarter (as one expresses it) full of storms, and cold, and darkness, but the beauteous spring has storms and sharp frosts; the fruitful teeming summer is melted with heat, and choaked with dust; and the autumn is full of sickness. How can the eyes help but shed innumerable tears, when they consider the doleful pains to which they themselves, and all the other parts of the body, are exposed! How can the man help but groan to find himself present in such a body from which he cannot be dislodged for many painful years, and in which he has no delight or ease! What grief is it to him to have no help or relief, when his spirits are broken, and his heart is overwhelmed? To have many cutting afflictions upon him, and the fear of more to come? Ecc 8.6-7, *To every purpose there is time and judgment; and therefore the misery of man is great upon him. For he doesn't know **what** will be; so who can tell him **when** it will be?* To be daily dying in anguish and vexation, and not to be able to die! To be surrounded with troops of diseases — of agues, fevers, consumptions, cholic, gout, stone — and not to be able to keep any of these away, nor to run away from them when they come!

4. Add to all these natural sorrows, those which are *distributed by God in Judgment*. Such are the tyrants that God suffers long to flourish and triumph in the world, who tread on the necks of others to advance themselves; and glut themselves with the blood of the innocent. They dare to do what is most unjust, to gratify their lawless ambition, and their lustful desire for empire. And from them and their arbitrary designs, flow innumerable injuries, and wrongs, and robberies, and mischief, Ecc 4.1.¹⁴¹

And then the other judgments: plagues and famine, spreading contagions, or bloody wars — PLAGUES that at the same time seize and kill; that conquer wherever they come, and send thousands of miserable mortals to the grave suddenly; that tear children from their mother's

¹⁴⁰ Bp. Hall, Vol. 1. p. 451.

¹⁴¹ **Ecc 4:1** Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, But they have no comforter-- On the side of their oppressors there is power, But *they* have no comforter.

breasts; that separate one part of the family from another, and make them afraid of each other's company; or else send them together to that house which is prepared for all living; that turn flourishing cities into solitudes, and put a stop to all commerce and trade.

Or FAMINE that kills by as sure but slower methods; that makes them know they are dying before they die; that causes them to walk to and fro with pale, meagre, and drooping looks, and turns a fruitful land into barrenness; where the poor starving children come begging to their mothers for bread, and they have none to give, but are forced to see them die before their eyes, as in Lam 4.10.

Or WAR, where many children are deprived of their fathers, many wives of their husbands, many who lived plentifully, bereaved of all their dear and pleasant things. War, which fills every place with blood and violence, with noise and clamour, and oppression and woe; that lays countries waste and desolate; and sacrifices multitudes of harmless people to its cruel rage and fury. These are the terrible voice of God, which will cause us to weep, and be afraid.

5. *Consider men as associated together in their several relations* — and so their sorrows, and their cause for weeping, is increased. The courts of Princes have their occasions of grief and trouble; they too grieve, though their grief is more pompous, and clad in a more solemn dress. Those who have numerous and great kindred and alliance, are more often in mourning than others; for death more often visits their greater friends and acquaintance. There are few families without sorrow. The house that now rejoices, is quickly turned into a house of mourning. And where this day there is nothing but the sound of the timbrel, the harp, and the viol, it may be that the next day there is the voice of crying and lamentation. How many parents who have long prayed for children, and have at length obtained them, then see them snatched away with an early stroke, and the flower wither in the blossom that they began to dote upon, and their eyes closed by death as soon as they had but peeped into the world? And how many do we find in tears, because they but bring forth children to the grave, *and will not be comforted, because they are not* (Jer 31.15); and they find a greater sorrow in parting with them, than in bringing them forth? How many parents are there, whose children live several years — to whose education they contribute all they can, and hope to have them to be the staff and comfort of their old age — and when they begin to flourish, a storm comes and destroys the fair and goodly fruit.

And while they look for abiding joys from their dutiful obedience, and holy conversation, they are forced to follow the promising and hopeful youths to the grave. They mourn like David, even for a bad son: *O Absalom! my son! my son! I wish to God that I had died for you! O Absalom! my son! my son!* (2Sam 18.33) But again, how many parents are there weeping for the disobedience of their children who are likely to be the heirs of wrath, and to fall into destruction? It costs them many a tear and a sigh, to think that their children are children of the devil, and brands ¹⁴² of hell! How it sinks their souls to see that all their prayers and exhortations, and all their cost and charge, is likely to be in vain! What sorrow can be greater than to think that what they have done for them, will aggravate their condemnation; and that they must find their children, *their now dear and beloved children*, at the left-hand of Christ on the great day — and thoughts of this send them mourning to the grave! How many congregations are there mourning for the death of their faithful ministers whom they will never hear, and with whom they will never pray again? It grieves them to see those stars set, who gave them light; and see those ambassadors called home, who entreated them to be reconciled! How many soldiers are bewailing the death of their General, who in the midst of all his victories and their applause, was suddenly snatched away!

¹⁴² *Brand*: firewood; a piece of wood that has been burned or is burning.

6. *Death is another occasion of weeping to the sons of men*, as are also many of death's violent and quick approaches. Ecc 9.12, *For man knows not his time; like the fish that are taken in an evil net, and the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it comes suddenly upon them.* Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and wept when he had his summons to depart (2Kng 20.2-3). And if so good a man was that much concerned, then how much more should *most* be concerned! It is a very melancholy thought to someone in the flesh, to think that he and his dear body must shortly part; and that the body in which he has eaten, and drunk, and slept at ease — which has been treated so kindly, and clothed so neatly — will be turned into the grave, and there in a very hideous manner, consumed away. As children cry when they come into the world, so they generally weep when they go out again. Often a dying man says, I must leave you my dear friends, my comfortable children, my pleasant acquaintances, and never see you anymore! I must never eat, nor drink, nor talk with you anymore! I must not walk in my pleasant gardens, nor survey my habitation, nor visit my friends, nor they me, anymore forever! I am going into the cold and lonely grave. And I must by myself, without your company, travel that unknown and solitary path.

The change of state, the greatness of the next world, and the different way of living out of the body, and the many dreadful pains that are in their last concluding agonies, make men see the period of life with weeping eyes. And when they are dying, it dissolves their friends to tears to see their wan and pale looks, to hear their last and dreadful groans. And immediately after death, it melts them to see the person with whom a few days before they comfortably discoursed, and lived, now changed into a mere lump of earth. For that soul who made it active and vigorous, has fled away when they follow him to the grave. It troubles them to part. It troubles them to think what their friend is, and what they themselves are likely to be shortly. And when they come home, the house is no longer so pleasant as it was. They miss the one who made it so; and the one whom it must never know again, forever. Thus mourners not only go about the street, but they are to be found almost everywhere, in every country, and in every family. Job 14.1, *Man who is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble.*

7. *As to his soul, man is exposed to abundant sorrows.* He labours under a miserable darkness in his UNDERSTANDING, and his natural ignorance creates an abundance of trouble and vexation in his soul. He has foolish hopes, and extravagant desires, and a vain curiosity to know many things which he will *never* know. And then the light of his understanding is apt to be eclipsed and confounded with the irresistible diseases of the body, so that it is impossible for him to think in sickness in the same manner as he used to do in health.

His WILL also ministers to his sorrow, for he *wills* and *affects* an abundance of things that are contrary to his real interest.¹⁴³ If he has the things that he is apt to will, they give him new torment and disquiet, and will suffer innumerable miseries from his precipitant and eager inclinations.

KNOWLEDGE is the greatest ornament of a rational soul; and yet that too has its troubles. Ecc 1.18, *For in much wisdom there is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.* It is not to be attained without great pains and difficulties, without laborious and diligent search, and vast perplexities — whether we consider the blindness of our understandings, or the intricacy of things themselves; the many dark recesses of Nature, the implication of causes and effects, besides those incidental difficulties which are occasioned by the subtlety and entanglement of error. The variety of intricate opinions, the many involutions of controversies and disputes, are

¹⁴³ He purposes to do, and he has affections for, many things that are not in his best interest. — WHG

apt to whirl a man about with a vertigo of contradictory probabilities. And instead of settling, they amuse and distract the mind, so that *much study is wearisome to the flesh*.¹⁴⁴ And besides, it makes further trouble for the soul, in that the more a man knows, the more he sees there is yet to be known. And the higher he climbs, the more and more he sees of the journey he has yet to go.

And the one who is versed in the knowledge of the world, sees an abundance of mistakes and disorders which he cannot remedy, and which it is very sad to behold. By knowing a great deal, he is liable to an abundance of contradiction and opposition from the more peevish, self-willed, and ignorant parts of mankind, who are vexed because he will not think and say as *they* do. And they are very prone to censure and condemn the things they do not understand, for it is most easy to do. Whereas, to pierce into the *reasons* for things, requires a mighty labour, and a succession of deliberate and serious thoughts to which the nature of man is averse. But to lazily and hastily judge, requires no trouble. And were it not that it is a man's *duty* to know, and that his soul (if it has anything of greatness and amplitude in its faculties) cannot be satisfied without it, it would be a much safer and quieter course to be *ignorant*.

Study and painful inquiries after knowledge, oftentimes exhaust and break our spirits, and prejudice our health, and bring upon us those diseases to which the careless and unthinking are seldom liable. Ecc 1.13-15. *I have seen all the works that are done under the Sun, and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit; that which is crooked, cannot be made straight; and that which is lacking, cannot be numbered.*

¹⁴⁴ Bp. Wilkin's Sermons. p. 174. (Ecc 12.12)

CHAP. 2. The fall of Adam was the cause of our miseries.

Showing, that the fall of Adam was the cause of all our miseries; and in how excellent a condition the blessed angels are in; and the folly of those who expect to meet with nothing in the world, except what is easy and pleasant.

Inference 1. Seeing that the life of man is a state of weeping, what sin there must be in the fall of Adam, that so provoked God to send so many miseries upon his own creatures! Had Adam not fallen, we would always have rejoiced and never mourned; we would always have sung the praises of God with delight, and never have *hung our harps upon the willows* (Psa 137.2). We would always have lived on the food of angels, pure and celestial joys, and not have had that bread of sorrows which we now have to feed on. We may justly cry out, *O Adam!* What was it that you did when you raided the forbidden fruit! Why did you ruin yourself and us, your helpless posterity, in one day? By one act you turned the pleasant world into a place of woe, and made yourself and us, of free men, to become prisoners of this earth. It was a sad day indeed that opened a sluice to that vast inundation of miseries that have from that time overwhelmed the lower world. From that came storms and tempests, wars and desolations, and all the burdens under which we groan, and which we cannot escape. It is to this spring that we may trace all our troubles. Oh how happily, how pleasantly we might have lived, had we not apostatized! And now we can only say, *Woe to us, for we have sinned!* (Lam 5.16) And when any plagues molest us, we can only say, This is the fruit of our own choice; this is the product of our own iniquity! Though, thanks be to God, through the blood of Jesus Christ we have a way to escape at length from all those plagues and sins.

Inference 2. Seeing that this life is full of weeping, how much happier are the blessed angels than we are! At the view of the harmony and order of the world's creation, those sons of the morning sang together. It pleased them to see their Creator's glory so appear, and they still continue to sing and praise him. Not a sad look has clouded their faces from that time to this; not a troubled thought has possessed their minds. Those holy spirits are always joyful, serene, and undisturbed. They are not linked to such bodies as we have; and consequently, they are not liable to so many thousands of miseries. A soul in the flesh is forced to sympathize with the body, its neighbour and companion. And it is altered or changed as to its joys and griefs, according to the several objects that are suitable or disagreeable to that body. And yet our embodied condition gives us some privileges of which the angels, being spirits, are not capable. For by this means we can glorify God by suffering for Him; and by our patience in our several trials, we can convert many to the faith of Christ, which the angels' spiritual nature gives them no opportunity to do. As long as we are united to the body, so long we must expect to be afflicted. And when this union is happily dissolved, then the time of our freedom and our pleasure comes. In the resurrection we will be *as the angels of God* (Mat 22.30). We won't be busied in those perplexing and intricate affairs that now molest us. We will be like them in vigor, and activity, and joy. We will indeed have bodies, even then, but spiritualized, and not capable of mourning and lamentation. Nor by their heaviness, pains, and indispositions, will they be a hindrance any longer to the nimbler operations of our souls. It should comfort us to think that one day we will have such excellent companions — so knowing, kind, and loving as angels are — and that then we will rejoice as well as they, and with our common praise, we will give our great Creator an eternal hymn of thanks.

Inference 3. They have a wrong notion of the life of man, who expect to find nothing in it but what is pleasant! And because now their *mountain stands strong*, they say with David, they *shall never be moved!* Psa 30.6-7. However clearly their sun may now shine, sooner or later storms and darkness will overtake them. The day is coming that will cast a veil on all their smiling glory, and

turn their laughter into mourning and lamentation. For *man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards*, Job 5.7. This world is like a hospital or *lazaretto*,¹⁴⁵ full of various miseries and calamities. And therefore, those who promise nothing to themselves but diversion and mirth, and soft and easy pleasures, labour under manifold mistakes, which arise from these two causes:

1. *Lack of experience and consideration*. Hence it is that young people, and those who have lived but a little while, are mightily taken with the sweetness and delight of life. Whereas those who have tried it some years longer, find several crosses, and disappointments, and vexations in it. And though the morning of their day was clear, yet they see many thick clouds gather as the shadows of the evening are drawing on. It is nothing else but gross *ignorance* that occasions the loud and mad triumphs of so great a part of the world. For if they surveyed but a little of the condition of their suffering neighbours, and the weakness of their own bodies — the uncertainty of their hopes, and the vanity of their desires — they would sit down and bewail their miseries; and they would find their biggest joys to be confined with grief. Or,

2. *It arises from this: that they resolve not to disturb their present ease and pleasure with any mournful meditations*. They'll shut their ears against all sad and doleful stories, hasten from the sight of all those dismal objects which would make them grave and solid. They won't ruffle their thoughts with anticipations of evil and future trouble. They are now at ease, and they hope they will be so very long. This false expectation has no other cause than their unwillingness and aversion to think of a coming change. And because they feel no pain, sickness, or inconvenience, they will not spoil their music with groans and sighs. They will eat, drink, and be merry, and hang sorrow, and cast care away. But as all the mirth of sailors cannot hinder the winds and storms, so this insensibleness and jollity cannot keep the evil day further off. Rather, it swells the clouds, and lays in matter for a more durable and intolerable sorrow. They may, in their jovial humours, and with their full cups, drown their own understandings. But they cannot by this means overwhelm their miseries, which after the fumes of that gratifying wine are past, will have a resurrection. They may say indeed, as in Isa 57.11, *Come, we will fill ourselves, and tomorrow will be as this day, and much more abundant*. But perhaps they may never see that morrow; or if they do, it may bring with it some great or unavoidable calamity. We know David said in his prosperity, *I shall never be moved*. And yet as soon as God *hid his face*, David *was troubled*, Psa 30.6-7.

So it is unreasonable to conclude from our present delight, that we will never grieve. We may as well argue, because we are now in health, we will never be sick; or because we are now alive, we will never die. Such false conclusions, and such vain hopes, only increase our later troubles, and make them heavier. As it is said of Babylon the Great, Rev 18.7-8, *However much she has glorified herself and lived deliciously, give her that much torment and sorrow. For she says in her heart, I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will see no sorrow. Therefore her plagues will come in one day — death, and mourning, and famine*. Our miseries are sure, but our joys are uncertain; our pleasures endure but a moment, but our sorrows last a long time; our pleasures no sooner begin to live, than they begin to die. And when we would prolong their date with art, their continuance occasions either torment or loathing.

Grief (as one says ¹⁴⁶) is more familiar to man than pleasure. For one vain contentment, we meet with a thousand real sorrows. These come uncalled for, and present themselves of their own proper motion; they are linked one to another. But pleasures are sought with pain, and we are

¹⁴⁵ *Lazaretto*: a hospital for persons with infectious diseases (especially leprosy). – WHG

¹⁴⁶ Senault, *Use of the Passions*, p. 475.

forced to pay more for them than they are worth. Sorrows are sometimes entirely pure, and touch us to the quick as they make us incapable of consolation. But pleasures are never without some mixture of sorrow. They are always dipped in bitterness. And we are much more sensible of pain than of pleasure. For a slight disease troubles all our most solid contentments: a fever is able to make conquerors forget their victories, and to blot from their minds all the pomp of their triumphs. Though in some cases, we may make our sorrows greater in our imagination than they are in reality. For we are more ingenious and more particular in the computation of our *griefs*, than of our *mercies*.

Many a thorn that annoys us, is of our own planting. And for one cross that God sends, our uneasiness and impatience makes a thousand more. We apprehend some things to be evil, which are not truly so. And sometimes we augment our real evils beyond their natural proportion; and so we add new weight to that burden which made us groan before. Yet for all that, and abstracting from our irregularities since the fall, man is a very dolorous and mournful creature. And our being so, should excite us to take heed we don't wound ourselves afresh when we are already wounded; nor lay in matter for new griefs, when our unavoidable ones may be great enough.

There are two ways by which we aggravate our own miseries:

1. By putting a higher value on things than they really deserve, by loving them more than we should. And then the separation made between them and us, gives us a weightier sorrow.
2. By seeking out of ourselves many things to make us happy; whereas we should labour that our souls be duly ordered, and our desires kept within their just and lawful bounds.

Inference 4. We have cause to admire the wisdom of the Divine Providence, that seeing the life of man is so very miserable, He has also ordered it to be very short. Though our days are evil, yet they are but few. And as daytime is for hard labour, there is a succession of comfortable nights in which we may go to rest. We find it a long tedious time to be in sorrows for fifty or sixty years. But how loud our groans would be, if we were condemned to this toil and these weepings for many thousands of years! *The greater our misery* (as one says), *the less time it is likely to last*. The sorrows of a man's spirit being like ponderous weights, the greatness of their burden makes a swifter motion and descent into the grave, to rest and ease our wearied limbs, and to knock off our fetters that eat us to the very bones.

Thus I have shown what sorrows are common to the sons and daughters of men. In the next place I will show what peculiar occasions Christians have for weeping, above other men.

CHAP. 3. Good Christians have unique occasions for weeping.

Of the peculiar occasions of weeping that good Christians have, more than other men.

1. *The Christian weeps for his own sins.* He is convinced of his own folly and bewails it. By the enlightening of the Spirit, he has a more tender heart than others — a more distinct view of the odiousness and malignity, of the poisonous nature and dangerous qualities of sin. And what was pleasant in the commission of sin, he finds by costly experience, to be but gall and wormwood afterwards. This weeping is not the effect of mere softness, or weakness of temper, or from a lack of courage. There is nothing more reasonable, more just or honourable, than to bewail our offences that we are guilty of against the Law of God. And to what purpose has He given us innocent passions, if not that they should be moved when suitable objects present themselves? The Christian says with David, Psa 51.3, *I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me.* And such a sight of an object that is so disagreeable, pierces and wounds his very soul, and makes it dissolve in a genuine and kindly grief and trouble. He says,

“Oh! what have I done against my God, and my Saviour, and the Holy Spirit! Oh! how basely have I forgotten a gracious and a loving God; a God who has remembered me all my days for good! He has loved me, and I have hated him; He has called me, and I have disobeyed his voice; He has provided for me, and I have rebelled. He has been a Father, but I have been undutiful, and prodigal, and disobedient. And now his slighted, his *forgotten* love and kindness, wounds me to the very soul. Oh! what I thought of, when I did not think of Him! What my vain, foolish heart loved, when I did not love Him who is altogether amiable! What was it that I cared for, or in what did I spend my time, that I did not care for my soul, nor in pleasing my God who spared me, and bore with me with admirable patience! *I have sinned. What have I done to you, O you preserver of men? I will put my mouth in the dust,* Job 7.20-21. I will loath and abhor myself for my iniquities, if by doing so there may be hope. I have wandered, but my wanderings have cost me dearly. I have been in a strange land, and with tears I will return home saying, *Bless me, even me also, O my Father!*”¹⁴⁷

And then the love of Jesus constrains the poor Christian to be sorrowful, saying,

“Did He leave his heaven for me, who many times would not leave a sin for him; for me who was a lost sheep, a dying malefactor, an enemy by my evil works! Did he come to rescue me, when I was in the very jaws of the roaring lion, and at the door of hell. And will I not be grieved to think that I have requited him so badly for all his love! They were *my* sins that made him astonished, and troubled, and exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. And yet alas, I have done what I could to increase his agonies by my new sins. It was my sin that filled the bitter cup, that betrayed, that whipped, that exposed the Son of God to such injurious usage— my sin that wounded his breast, and raked in his sides, and nailed him to the tree, and made him die. And can I look upon what I have done, and not be troubled? Can my eyes behold him hanging on the cross, and my heart not be affected? Never was there any sorrow like his sorrow; never was there any love like his love; never was there disobedience more inexcusable; never was sin more sinful than mine has been! I have often made light of that which pressed him down to the grave. I have rejoiced at that which made him mourn and weep. But I will not do so again, forever.”

¹⁴⁷ Rogers ties Gen 27.34 (Esau) to Luk 15.18 (the prodigal son), illustrating two different outcomes of a sinner's broken heart: the *reprobate* losing his father's blessing, but the *elect* receiving grace and mercy. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” (Rom 9.15). The one sorrows for what he didn't gain; the other sorrows for his offenses. — WHG

And then it troubles the good Christian to think how often he has refused the motions of the blessed Spirit; and how often, when the Spirit has moved upon his heart with a design to do him good, he has sent Him away grieved and vexed. All this is occasion for grief, though it doesn't always express itself in tears. For there is a *rational* sorrow as well as a *sensitive* one. And though this sorrow may be more passionate, yet the other is more lasting and durable. For those who are converted in their younger days, the warmth and heat of their glowing and beginning zeal, more easily dissolves and melts them into tears, and the rivers flow *then*, more than they do afterwards. Yet when the flood ceases, the fruitfulness appears; and when their tears are dried up, yet their hatred of sin remains. For these outward expressions of sorrow are very much influenced by the temper and constitution of the physical body, 2Cor 7.10-11.¹⁴⁸ As in the first birth, so it is in the second: as soon as they are born, they cry. No sooner are they brought from darkness into His marvellous light, than they wonder at their folly, and at the grace of God that saved them from it. And that wonder produces both love *and* grief. First their hearts are softened with His love, and then they mourn for their provocations — although, what good Christians bewail their sins with is not a *lazy grief*, but serious endeavours to *new obedience*. It is like the farmer after profitable showers of rain: he sets himself with a renewed industry to cultivate the ground. And it is only reasonable that our eyes (which are too often the instruments of sin to us) should help us to bewail that sin by tears. Isa 38.15, *I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul*.

2. *Those who are good Christians, also weep for the sins of others.* The love they have for the name of God, causes them to grieve for the reflections and dishonours that are thrown upon it by wicked men. They cannot without sorrow, behold or hear of the sins of men in general — the sins of kingdoms, and provinces, and towns; the sins of families; the sins of their fellow-citizens, their brethren, and their neighbours. The tears that they shed, are tears of compassion for the very sad and miserable condition of the world. While others mock sin, and through the blindness of their folly, *know not what they do*, good men lament their unconcernedness and insensibility while they see others playing on the hole of asps, and touching firebrands, and sporting with death. They cannot see men treat their heavenly Father with insolence and scorn, without their hearts, in a just zeal for His glory, rising up against them — not with indecent passions for their ruin, but in a hearty longing for their reformation. Psa 119.136, *Rivers of water run down my eyes, because they do not keep your Law*. Thus says the Prophet to his hearers, Jer 13.17, *My soul will weep in secret places for your pride; my eyes will weep sore, and run down with tears*. Our love for our neighbour, and our zeal for God's glory, obliges us to this. It must grieve us to think what men are doing when they sin; how great a God they provoke to punish them; and how great a misery they are bringing on their own souls. It must grieve us to think how unsafe a way they go, and what a dismal end there will be to that way, Phi 3.19.¹⁴⁹

In Jer 9.1, the Prophet wishes, *Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people*. And yet (as one observes ¹⁵⁰) when he pronounced these sad words, the misery of the Jews had not yet arrived. Jerusalem still subsisted in its magnificence and splendor: its temple had not lost that admirable

¹⁴⁸ **2Cor 7:10-11** For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. ¹¹ For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, *what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication!* In all *things* you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

¹⁴⁹ **Phi 3:19** whose end is destruction, whose god is *their* belly, and *whose* glory is in their shame-- who set their mind on earthly things.

¹⁵⁰ Dubose. *Sermons*, page 1.

beauty which made it the wonder of the world; its palaces had lost nothing of their pomp; its walls and fortresses were entire; and the daughter of Zion was princess among the provinces. But he spoke thus, foreseeing that their abounding sins, and their hardness and obstinacy, would certainly bring upon them the judgments of God.

We must consider what we ourselves were, when we were in the house of bondage, and serving diverse lusts — how enslaved and how miserable. So that the remembrance we have of our former danger may quicken us to do others all the good we can, that they may not fall into hell while we are looking on, and not doing all that is in our power to hinder their going there. We may be excited to this compassionate sorrow, by the kind example of our Lord, Luk 19.41.¹⁵¹ He wept for those who rejoiced; he pitied those who had no pity for their own souls. Because their hearts were hardened, his was very soft and tender. It is matter of mourning and lamentation, to consider how few there are who profess religion in its strictness; and among those, how many are scandalous, or backsliders, or hypocrites. It has often been observed that among the bitter ingredients of our Lord's passion, this was none of the least: to foresee that there would be so many who, by their final impenitence and persevering in wickedness, would receive no benefit by it.¹⁵² And if we may judge by proportion, the angels in heaven who rejoice at the conversion of one sinner, also mourn and lament for the irreclaimable wickedness of so many millions in the world.

To a zealous MAGISTRATE, it is an occasion of sorrow to see in his dominions, the great King and Ruler of the world so little valued. And his grief will stir him to use all the wholesome methods he can, by good laws and a necessary severity, to keep the divine laws and authority from being scorned and trampled on by profane and blasphemous sinners. To a good PARENT, it is an occasion of grief to see the undutifulness and miscarriages of his children; and it is very cutting to think that he has brought forth those who will be his torment, and factors for the devil.¹⁵³ To a MINISTER, it is an occasion of grief when he meets with a careless hearer, or an unfruitful people, that he is likely to see them perish under the means of safety; and that he is likely to be their accuser on the Great Day; and that they are likely to be separated forever when the Judgment comes. It is with a heavy heart, and many a tear, that he thinks of their forlorn state, Rom 9.1-2.¹⁵⁴ *You know in what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, Act. 20.18-19. For the space of three years I did not cease to warn every man night and day with tears, Act 20.31.*

3. *Good Christians weep for the manifold tribulations and persecutions they meet with*, when God is pleased for their chastisement, to let loose the passions and the fury of wicked men whose “tender mercies” are cruelty. *Song 2.2, As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters.*¹⁵⁵ She is beautiful and glorious, but surrounded with difficulties and tribulations. *Psa 84.6, As they pass through the valley of Baca, they make it a well; the rain also fills it with pools.* They are satisfied, indeed, to endure in the hope of heaven; yet their sorrows and torments make them go there weeping. They have *sense* as well as *religion*; and their sensible nature, whether

¹⁵¹ **Luk 19:41** Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it.

¹⁵² Norris's *Discourse on the Beatitudes*, pag. 44.

¹⁵³ *Factor*: A businessman who buys or sells for another in exchange for a commission. — WHG

¹⁵⁴ **Rom 9:1-2** I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.

¹⁵⁵ John Gill's commentary on this verse says, “These are manifestly the words of Christ concerning his church, whom he calls *my love*... Here she is compared to one among ‘thorns,’ by which may be meant *wicked men*, comparable to thorns for their unfruitfulness and unprofitableness; for their being hurtful and pernicious to good men; and for their end, which is to be burned — especially persecutors of religion.” — WHG

they will or not, will be affected. They cannot be sick without groaning and sighing as others do; they cannot feel tortures, racks, tedious imprisonments, and flames, without shrinking back a little at them. Even the Apostles, those great and courageous believers, were *troubled* and *perplexed*, though *not overthrown*, 2Cor 4.8. In times of persecution, there is a general license to do mischief, a bold oppressing of the poor, a scornful despising of the afflicted and the desolate. They complain of this in Psa 123.4: *Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those who are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud*. And the scorn of evil men is so base a thing, that the most patient cannot help but be somewhat concerned by it. Psa 42.3-4, *My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, Where is your God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me*.

It's true, the servants of Christ esteem it an abundant matter of joy when they fall into diverse tribulations. Their minds are quiet, and very well satisfied. They love their Master, and they will never leave him. They will follow him to the Cross, and die with him there. But inasmuch as they are composed of flesh and blood, and have a nature that is tender, soft, and averse to suffering (as others have), and that nature has several things that engage it to the world — several relations and friends to part with — they cannot with respect to these, leave this earth without some grief and sorrow. As the hearers of Paul wept that they would see his face no more, it was even likely to break his heart that he was to leave friends so affectionate, so loving, and so kind. And we must think they did not part at last without flowing eyes on either side, Act 21.13.

4. *Christians, however easy their own circumstances, still have an occasion of sorrow from that sympathy they have with their brethren who are in distress*. The spirit of our compassionate Lord dwells in their heart; and as He is afflicted with all the afflictions of his people, so are they. They are all members of the same body, and one part of the body cannot rejoice while another is in pain. Thus they *weep with those who weep*, Rom 12.15. To hear of the desolations of others, is extremely grievous to them. Nor can they laugh and be merry while others sigh and groan (see Jer 4.31; 8.21-22; 14.17-20). They cannot cheer themselves with music, when the harps of others are *hanging on the willows* (Psa 137.2). See Lam 1.12, 16; 2.11-12. This Book of the Lamentations is so very lamentable, that it well deserves to be read and considered by us, to insure the miseries of our neighbours may affect us as they ought to do. Job 30.35, *Didn't I weep for the one who was in trouble? Wasn't my soul grieved for the poor?*

It must be a very hellish temper, that has no relentings for the sufferings of others — even such a *diabolical temper* as reigns in France this day. By the encouragement of a *cruel King*, and as *cruel a Clergy*, the poor Protestants have undergone barbarous and more than heathen severities.¹⁵⁶ If they had anything human left, they could not have used those poor harmless and innocent people as they have done. But they have long since degenerated into wolves; and to this day they retain their brutal and savage nature, tearing to pieces the sheep of Christ without any provocation. And though some have had such a brazen impudence as to say they have all along used nothing but sweet and gentle methods with them, there are witnesses enough, and too many (if it pleased God) in all parts of Europe, who tell us melancholy stories of their hellish cruelties. Had there been the

¹⁵⁶ Louis XIV (1643–1715) made religious reunification one of his priorities. At first Huguenots were locally challenged in court about the legitimacy of their churches and banned from certain guilds. Daytime funerals and psalm singing outside the church were outlawed. Violence soon followed legal harassment when, starting in Poitou in 1681, provincial governors were authorized to use military force to obtain conversions. These campaigns, called *dragonnades*, ravaged major Protestant provinces and Huguenots converted by the thousands. Believing that the Huguenot church had become an empty shell, Louis XIV revoked the *Edict of Nantes* in October 1685, thereby outlawing Calvinism in France. Over 400,000 Huguenots fled or died. [Huguenots | South Carolina Encyclopedia \(scencyclopedia.org\)](https://www.scencyclopedia.org/entry/huguenots)

lowest degrees of Christianity left in that execrable country, they could not, they *dared not* have proceeded to such barbarities as they have done, where neither the gray hairs of the most aged and venerable, nor the tears of widows, nor the sighs of prisoners could ever yet prevail for the least mitigation. They have exceeded the worst of former ages in the cruelty of their torments. Any other eyes but theirs would weep to see what they inflict on their fellow creatures. Any other hearts would soften at the groans and the cries of so many miserable people. But nothing can make an impression on them. Their dungeons, gallies, racks, and gallows, are the only things they can think of with which to vex those who are better than themselves, those who have been guilty of no crime, unless it was *an excess of loyalty to a King who is an enemy to mankind*, as well as *their* enemy. By his allowance, the vilest of men are permitted to do all those villainous and wicked things which raise a just horror in all who have any zeal for the glory of God. To see such men, seeding their cruel eyes with woeful spectacles of the distressed and sorrowful, whom they have made so. The most pathetic melting expressions have not been able to draw the least pity from the breasts of these inhuman monsters. Will men never be ashamed of their antichristian barbarity? ¹⁵⁷

Will they never know that it is the *beast* in John's Revelations, who makes himself drunk with the blood of saints, devours their flesh, makes war on them, and overcomes them; and is therefore called *beast, lion, bear, and leopard*. For whoever behaves himself towards Christians, as the Church of Rome behaves itself towards us, must have renounced reason and humanity, and been transformed into a savage beast. Those French persecutors are so bad they cannot be reproached. We cannot, even if we would, bespatter or throw dirt on them, for they are already so defiled. It is impossible to create in the minds of others, any idea of them that would be base enough.

And it is our shame, the stain of our country, and a dishonour to the name of *Englishman*, that in our country — in *ours*, that is naturally inclined to pity, and compassion for the miserable — there should be found any who wish well to a tyrant so tyrannical, and to a people so nourished and so fed with blood, as his soldiers and creatures are. It is our judgment that we are so blinded, and so stupefied, and thrown into so deep a sleep, that we do not perceive our own blindness. But I would be very sorry if I spoke to any such men. I hope and I believe that there are none here who are so under the curse of God — a curse that is the more terrible, as it is contrary to all that love of God, of our neighbour, and of our country, that we ought to have. And if we are in any way cursed, it is because we have had no more compassion for our brethren who have suffered such grievous things, that we have not wept more at the sight of their sorrows, but instead, we still have too many among us of the complexion of those in Amos 6.6.¹⁵⁸ Men are generally unaffected by the miseries of others. They are like the Priest and the Levite who left the poor wounded person without any help (Luk 10.31-32). They don't fix their eyes or minds on sad objects, for they find them very disagreeable. ¹⁵⁹

5. *Another occasion for the weeping of good Christians, is both from the duties of religion, and the more than ordinary providences and dispensation of God which call them to it.* There are several things which, though very pleasant in the consequence, are in themselves very sorrowful. I already mentioned the bitterness of repentance; and the trouble for the afflictions of others. And

¹⁵⁷ Pastoral Letter 2d.

¹⁵⁸ **Amo 6:6** Who drink wine from bowls, And anoint yourselves with the best ointments, But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

¹⁵⁹ Rogers illustrates here, what he said in point 3, about *the lily among the thorns*. God permitted the Huguenots to be cruelly treated, to elicit the compassion of other believers (to suffer as they suffer), and to expose the sinful indifference of those who remain unaffected by it. – WHG

there are also the duties of *self-denial and mortification*; of *crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts*; of *dying daily*, and of *keeping our hearts weaned from an inordinate affection* for the enjoyments and comforts of the world. All good Christians are to be in heaviness for a season, and to sow in tears. And to these duties may be added the calls we have to more *public and solemn humiliations* by the necessity of our own affairs, the judgments of God, and the pride, rage, and success of His enemies and ours. And this is the duty to which we are now called. Let us take care that our days of fasting and prayers may be mingled with the tears of true repentance and contrition, so that God who has been *for us* up to now, may not be *against us*; and that we may not smart under the spiritual judgments which are most formidable and severe of all, according to that saying in Isa 22.12-13.¹⁶⁰

Thus good Christians have many just subjects for weeping. They weep to see themselves as in exile, and at a distance from their beloved country. They weep to find themselves compassed about with many infirmities, and unbecoming passions that cause them to be engaged in continual war. They weep that they are exposed to so many furious assaults of the devil, and that they have so little strength with which to resist him. They weep when they consider that their good and gracious God is so much dishonoured and forgotten in his own world.

Inference 1. What need all good Christians have for faith and patience. For *faith*, to conclude that God does all very well in holiness and wisdom, even though he allows the world and the Church to groan under so many miseries and tribulations. And for *patience*, to submit to what He appoints for our lot, and not to repine or murmur at it in the least. Without faith we will be apt to stumble at these seeming disorders, and the unequal distributions of his Providence. And without patience, we will be apt to struggle under the necessary cross; to be tired and to say, *It is in vain to wait upon the Lord*.

Inference 2. Good Christians have great reason to quietly leave the world, and to die when God is pleased to call them. It is a world of misery, of sorrows and vexation. We should not be fond of our chains, nor delight in tears, nor embrace our griefs; but remember that we will leave all these troublesome things behind us when we come to lie down in the quiet grave. For *there the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest*, Job 3.17. Surely we do not esteem this strange land to be better than our Father's house; we don't think that the Vale of Tears ¹⁶¹ is better than the joys of Heaven. To that heaven, then, let us often lift up our weeping eyes; and with the hope of that, let us comfort our sad and mournful hearts. Let us hasten there; let us long to be there; let us steer our distressed and weary souls into that haven. Let us breathe after that Paradise that will not be molested with the poisonous venom of the serpent, and where no thorns or briars grow. Let us not be fond of a perpetual storm, nor be so foolish as to think that our sighs are better than praises and hallelujahs. In our desires, let us hasten from this diseased world, which by its low situation is apt to suffer an inundation of innumerable miseries; and let us prepare for that world where there is eternal health and joy.

¹⁶⁰ NLT **Isa 22:12** At that time the Lord, the LORD of Heaven's Armies, called you to weep and mourn. He told you to shave your heads in sorrow for your sins and to wear clothes of burlap to show your remorse. ¹³ But instead, you dance and play; you slaughter cattle and kill sheep. You feast on meat and drink wine. You say, "Let's feast and drink, for tomorrow we die!"

¹⁶¹ Psa 84.6, the Valley of Baca – representing the tribulations of life, which we must all pass through. – WHG

CHAP. 4. What dreadful apprehensions a deserted soul has.

Showing what dreadful apprehensions a soul has, that is under desertion; and in several respects how very sad and doleful its condition is, from the *author's own experience*.

THE next thing I design to insist upon, is to show that the time of God's forsaking of a soul, is a very dark and mournful time. It is not only night, but a weeping, *stormy* night. And it may not be unuseful to you, who perhaps up to now have lived in the beams and cheerful light of day, to know *what passes in this sorrowful and doleful night*. And in this matter, I will not borrow information from others, but I will give you *my own experience*.

1. *In this night, the deserted soul is overwhelmed with continual thoughts of the holiness, and majesty, and glory of the Lord*. Nor does it think of Him with any manner of delight; rather, according to that psalm of Asaph, Psa 77.3, *I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed*. How deplorable a case such a soul is in, that cannot think of its God and its Creator without grief and sorrow; that fixes on nothing in Him but his terrible and severe attributes! In other cases when a man is distressed on earth, and he beholds vexation and disquiet there, he can lift up his eyes towards heaven, and see joy and comfort for himself there. But in this woeful case, there is neither the light of the sun, the moon, nor the stars for many days. The face of God is hidden and covered with a dreadful cloud. Job 31.23, *Destruction from God was a terror to me; and because of his highness, I could not endure*.

2. *The deserted soul in this mournful night looks upon God as its enemy; and as intending its hurt and ruin by the sharpness of His dispensations*. And this makes it incapable of receiving any consolation from the creatures. For will it say to them, Alas! if God is my enemy, as I apprehend him to be, which of you can be my friend? I have a dreadful sound of His displeasure in my ears; and which of you can bring me any glad tidings? If his power, his irresistible power is against me, who can fend off the killing blow? Job 19.6, 8, *Know now that God has overthrown me; and has compassed me with his net... He has fenced up my way so that I cannot pass; and He has set darkness in my paths*. So also verses 9-11. And Psa 88.7, *Your wrath lies hard upon me, and You have afflicted me with all your waves*. If in such desertion, God were apprehended to be upon a design for the future happiness and welfare of the soul, it would bear up with courage, or with hope. But having no such belief, it must sink and languish. The stroke that wounds us in such a case, is even more painful, as it is edged with a sense of wrath. Psa 102.9-10. *I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of Your indignation and Your wrath; for You have lifted me up, and cast me down*. Thus the weeping person vents his sorrows.

God never gives his people such a bitter cup, unless he mingles love and mercy with it. But alas, I taste nothing but gall and wormwood, nothing but misery and vexation. He is with his people, but he has forsaken *me*. He has cast me into a fiery furnace where I am daily burnt and scorched, and he is not with me there. He is like a roaring lion to me, and who can turn away his powerful wrath? Ruth 1.20, *The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me*. I have often heard that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the Living God; and now I find it to be so. All the wrath of men is nothing compared to His. One frown of his is more intolerable than all their rage and persecution.

Job 16.12-13, *I was at ease, but he has broken me asunder. He has also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his target. His archers surround me; he cleaves my reins asunder, and does not spare. He pours out my gall upon the ground* (also Job 10.16-17). Oh! what anguish, what desolation is caused in the soul by such thoughts as these! I dare not look up to heaven, says the mourning person, for there I see how great a God I have against me. I dare

not look into his word, for there I see all his threats as so many barbed arrows to strike me to the heart. I dare not look into the grave, because from there I am likely to have a doleful resurrection. And what can a poor creature do, who apprehends the Almighty to be his enemy? It is a common thing to say, “Why do you so lament and mourn? You have many mercies left, many friends who pray for you, and pity you.” Alas! what help is there in all this, if God himself is gone? Nothing is then looked upon as a mercy. And as for the prayers of others, the distressed person will say, “They can do me no good, unless I have faith; and I find that I have none at all. For that would purify and cleanse my heart; but I do nothing else but sin. And God, as he is holy, *must* set himself against me, his enemy.”

3. *In this doleful night, the soul has no evidence at all of its former grace.* So that in this night, the Sun has not only set, but there is not one star that appears. Such a person looks at himself as altogether void of the grace of God. He looks at all his former duties as having been insincere or hypocritical. He feels his heart hardened at present, and concludes that it was *never* tender. He finds himself at present listless and indisposed, and concludes that he *never* had any true life and motion. And so he expresses his sorrows in this, or a like manner:

“I thought I belonged to God, but now I find I am none of his. I thought I had been upright, but now I see I was mistaken. The storm has come, and that house that I built upon the sand, is now washed away. Those who are Christ’s, he will enable to persevere to the end — but I have fallen from grace; I am an apostate. If I had any share in the intercession of the great Redeemer, he would not leave me thus sad and desolate. I thought that I had been planted in his vineyard, and had brought forth fruit; but now I am cut down as a barren tree. Oh, how greatly I have been deceived. I imagined myself to be an heir of heaven, and now I am seized with the pangs of hell! I now see that I was *never* right, *never* born again, *never* renewed by the Spirit, *never* changed from death to life. And Oh! what will become of me, who flattered my own soul to ruin; who thought myself safe when I was not; and well when I was diseased! To come to misery after I thought so long of happiness, is a double misery. After all my prayers, my endeavours, and my hopes, I am likely to be a reprobate and a castaway.”

And such a soul concludes itself to be in a condition much more dangerous than those are, who never named the name of Christ, who never pretended to religion, because it reckons *their* misery will be much more tolerable than its own. It judges itself to be a hypocrite; and then all the threats that are made against such persons, every moment overwhelms it with inexpressible confusion.¹⁶² Thus the graces of the Spirit, and the former fruits of holiness, are not discerned in this sad and mournful night.

4. *During this sadness, the soul cannot think of Christ himself with any comfort.* For it argues thus: He will be a Saviour to none but those who believe; I have no faith, and therefore he will be no Saviour to me. He that is like the Lamb of God to his servants, will be like the Lion of the Tribe of Judah to me; he that deals gently with them, will tear me to pieces. I have heard of his sufferings and his death; but if his blood has not cleansed and purified *me*, then I am likely to perish for all that. I heard his voice, and I disobeyed it; I heard his Gospel, and did not improve it; and now even the glad tidings of salvation are not so glad to me. I did not know in the long day that I had, the things that belonged to my peace; and now they are hidden from my eyes. Now I have to deal with the great and the dreadful God himself, and I have none to plead my cause. Oh how can I resist his power, or bear his wrath? Christ indeed called me, but I did not open to him, and now

¹⁶² As in “confusion of face” (Dan 9.8 KJV) — we’re so ashamed, we don’t know which way to turn. — WHG

he calls no more. He seems to be angry and enraged against me for my disobedience. And though I have sometimes cried, *Have mercy on me, you Son of David!* he passes by, and does not regard my cries. And O what shall I do when he comes in the clouds of heaven, when I am to stand at his bar, and to be punished as an unbeliever! To *others*, that will be a day of refreshment; but what will it be to *me*? The thoughts of it are now startling!”

And thus by a sense of unbelief, the deserted soul is plunged in the waves, and sees no way of escape. And by this unbelief it thinks of God as absolutely considered. Thoughts of Him are as terrible *as if there were no Mediator*. It continually says, “I have all my sins to answer for, and I have none to undertake for me. I am condemned, and have none to procure a pardon and salvation for me.”

5. *In this night, the soul is full of terror.* And how can it be otherwise, when every thought of God and of Christ overwhelms it! Job 6.4. *For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison of which drinks up my spirit; the terrors of God set themselves in array against me.* Such arrows that are shot by an Almighty arm with great power and force, being so directed, must pierce very deep; deep and painful must the wounds be that God makes. And then, they are *poisoned* arrows too, that being dipped in his wrath, inflame the wounds they make, and put the distressed person into inexpressible pain and anguish. Night is a time of terror, especially in commotions, uproars, and like mischiefs (Psa 91.5¹⁶³). And in this night, it is much more so when a man’s own conscience discharges a thousand accusations against him for his guilt. For then every sin gives a blow; and all being set in an array together, they make a formidable force. And when God makes peculiar impressions of his wrath, and it falls on the naked soul with its scorching burning drops, there is then not one quiet thought, nor one easy moment. All is amazement, confusion, and woe. Lam 3.3, *Surely He has turned against me; He turns his hand against me all day.*

A person who is thus distressed, sits and muses on his misery, and would gladly find something that might be comfortable; but he *cannot*. What he first thinks of is tormenting. And he exchanges that uneasy thought for another; and that is as tormenting as the first. There is a circulation of flaming disquieted thoughts, and such a person dwells as in a fiery furnace, or as in a thicket of briars. Whichever way he turns, he is pained and wounded. All the terrible places of Scripture that are made against the wicked, continually present themselves to his consideration, and he thinks that he will most certainly have their portion. By still believing God is *against* him, everything in nature that is frightful, frightens him. From all the terrible things imaginable, he fetches something that still more afflicts him. And he will imagine thus:

“Suppose I were to be sawn asunder, to be burnt, to be flayed alive, or to be torn to pieces. Oh what a sad thing that would be! And yet I am in a case worse than all of this, for I am now continually racked with guilt, and I am likely to be in hell forever.”

We may indeed feel the terrors of the Lord, but they are so very terrible, we cannot express them. They wound our most sensible and tender part; they cause our very souls to pine and languish away; they fix our minds on the contemplation of everything that is sad and doleful; they fill us with confusion. As Heman says, Psa 88.15-17, they are terrors that *surround* us; they seize upon every faculty, and distress us in every part. To have God against us, his *holiness* to dazzle us, his *power* to overthrow us, his *Law* to condemn us, our *consciences* to accuse us, is the sum of terrors!

¹⁶³ **Psa 91:5** You shall not be afraid of the *terror by night*.

6. *Fear is another occasion for sorrow*, and the night is usually a time of horror; we are then apt to be imposed upon with false, as well as with real dangers. We can think of nothing but our misery. And continually, unavoidably thinking about it, makes us more miserable, Job 13.21.¹⁶⁴ These fears are like so many fetters from which we cannot fly; and when we think to shake them off, we put ourselves to more pain. *If I say I will forget my complaints, I will put off my heaviness, and comfort myself; I am afraid of all my sorrows, for I know that you will not hold me innocent*, Job 9.27-28. we are frightened by the greatness and majesty of God, with the glory of his being, and the thunder of his power. We are frightened with the view of our innumerable sins, and with the dangers that attend them. Thoughts of heaven frighten us because we think we have lost that blessed place; and thoughts of hell are no less frightful, because we think we will soon be there. Thoughts of life are frightful, because we live with anguish and horror; nor can we bear thoughts of death, because we dare not die.

7. *It is a night of weeping for deserted souls, because they find no heart to pray, and no life in prayer*. They fall upon their knees, and cover the altar of the Lord with tears, but He doesn't seem to regard them. They beg, and he gives them no relief; they cry, and he doesn't answer — and this fills them with shame and grief, Lam 3.7-8. The thoughts of these poor people are in a continual hurry, and so they are full of wanderings in the performance of their duty. Grief, by saddening the spirits, destroys the freedom of our speech, for joy is the mother of eloquence and fluency. And when their prayers would move up towards heaven, this sorrow damps their vigor and makes their prayers so they cannot fly. And finding that they are still perplexed even after prayer, and still as uncomfortable as before, they are apt to throw it off and say, *It is vain to pray*. Such was Saul in 1Sam 28.15, *God has departed from me, and answers me no more*.

Sorrow is naturally a very dull and sluggish thing. A man has no heart to go about any work when he is very sad; and this faintness occasions a *new* trouble. We are vexed when we don't pray; and when we *would*, we *cannot*. Sorrows damp our faith, our love, and our hope; and so they spoil our duties. For without these, they are without life, and without acceptance. And sometimes our grief is so violent, that it finds no vent; it strangles us, and we are overcome. *I am so troubled, that I cannot speak*, Psa 77.4. In our desertions, it is like a man who gets slightly hurt. At first he walks up and down; but not looking in a timely way to prevent a growing mischief, the neglected wound begins to fester, or turns to gangrene, and brings him to greater pain and loss. So it is with us many times, in our *spiritual* sadness. When we are first troubled, we pray and pour out our souls before the Lord. But afterwards, the waters of our grief drown our cries, and we are so overwhelmed that even if we might have all the world, we *cannot* pray — or at least we can find no enlargement, no life, no pleasure in our prayers. And God himself seems to take no delight in them, and that makes us even sadder, Psa 22.1.¹⁶⁵

8. *Such persons have no patience with which to bear their evils*. Oh! who is he that can bear the wrath of God? One thought of him as a reconciled Father would sweeten the heaviest cross. But one view of him as an enemy, causes all our strength to depart, and melts our very souls. In bodily evils, the mind lends its assistance, and furnishes the natural spirits with courage. But when it is itself weakened and troubled, what is it able to do? The wounded soul is most commonly fretful and impatient. The sight of heaven inspires our breasts with vital heat, and makes us quiet and

¹⁶⁴ **Job 13:20-22** Only two *things* do not do to me, then I will not hide myself from You: ²¹ Withdraw Your hand far from me, And let not the dread of You make me afraid. ²² Then call, and I will answer.

¹⁶⁵ **Psa 22:1** My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? *Why are you so far from helping me, and from the words of my groaning?*

submissive under every dispensation. But the daily sight and fear of hell fills us with tumult and disorder. The language of deserted people for the most part is in *groans*, and in their prayers they *chatter like a crane, or a swallow, or mourn like a dove*, Isa 38.14.

9. *They usually see no prospect of relief or deliverance, and that increases the sorrows of their doleful night.* They are covered in the deep pit, and see no way *to fly from it*, Job 33.30. They are wounded, and carry their wounds with them wherever they go. They are continually fixing their mournful eyes upon destruction and the grave, Job 7.9. Now and then they indeed have some intermissions. But they are like the small breathings and refreshments of a person who is newly taken off the rack, only to be carried to the rack again. The tears of these poor deserted people are not like the tears of Mary in the Garden; for as soon as she began to weep, she beheld the Lord. He quickly came to her help, and changed her sorrows into consolations. And his sweet voice in a moment ran through all the powers of her soul, and made her heart leap with joy, and scattered light upon it. But in *this* case, he allows his servants to be tossed for a long and doleful night, before he is pleased to speak and calm the storm. They are like persons straitly besieged, who have no relief at hand — like thirsty persons who have no water; hungry and have no bread. Psa 142.4. *I looked on my right hand, and beheld there was none who would know me; refuge failed me.*

10. *This night of weeping is even more sorrowful, because it is the time of Satan's cruelty.* When our spirits are broken with long and painful afflictions, then this cowardly spirit sets upon us. He knows that he can easily perplex us when we are already thrown upon the ground. When the sun sets, then the beasts of the field creep abroad. When God has departed, the devil comes. He comes and torments us with innumerable fears. He comes and triumphs over us, insults us, and says,

“Where is your God *now*? What do you think of sin *now*? What has *now* become of all your hearing, your reading, and your many prayers? You thought to have escaped my power, and now I have you within my reach. Now remember that at such or such a time you sinned, and therefore God has forsaken you. You weep, and your tears are *just*; for you are miserable, and likely to be with me forever.”

Satan makes use of our sore afflictions, to represent God to us as tyrannical, and as one who will certainly destroy us. And it is our grief, and our misery, that we have so little in our desertions to answer to him. When we really *believe* that God is departed from us, what can we say? How this roaring lion most cruelly molests us, when our glory and our strength is gone. Though at other seasons we can oppose his malice, and confidently say, *The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you* (Zec 3.2). Satan is indeed a knowing and subtle spirit. He knows our weakness, sees our trouble, and urges even the very Scriptures and providences of God upon us to our disadvantage; and he does that with a marvellous importunity and diligence. He shoots at us with fiery darts that are extremely painful. And he comes to shoot them when we are under a sense of God's displeasure — which is like thrusting a red-hot iron into a wound that is already very sore. It pleases the devil to hear us groan, and to see us sad. And when we are already pressed down with our evils, he will be sure to throw more weight upon us. Our groans are his music; and when we wallow in ashes, drown ourselves in tears, spread out our hands for help, and roar till our throat is dry, he gluts his cruel heart with looking upon our woes. It is the most pleasant sight to him, to see God hiding himself from His child, and that child broken with fears, torn in pieces with griefs, made a brother to dragons, a companion to owls, under restless anxieties, perpetual lamentations, feeble, and sorely broken — their tongue clinging to their jaws, their bowels boiling,

their bones burnt with heat, and their flesh consumed.¹⁶⁶ He sets upon us after we have been long troubled, and weary with our march in the doleful night. And the sorrow of our sorrows is that God may for a long while leave us in Satan's hands. And by his usage of Job, we know what his temper is, Luk 22.31.¹⁶⁷ It is the *hour* and the *power* of darkness.

11. *Sometimes this sorrow is mixed with deep despair.* It is a tempestuous and stormy night. And as Paul said in another case, *All hope of their being saved is taken away* (Act 27.20). I will surely perish, says the mourning soul. I am damned; I am lost forever; I am already as though in hell, under inexpressible, insupportable pains and amazing fears. The Lord will be favourable no more. He has shut up his sympathies and tender mercies. He is gone; he is gone *from me*; and he is *forever* gone. No more will I call him Father; no more will I behold his shining face; no more will I hear his kind and loving voice. He is my Judge and my Enemy, and I am afraid that he will be so forever. He has cast me off; he has forsaken me; he has condemned me, and I am lost forever. I am now likely to have my poor soul gathered with sinners and with bloody men. I am now never likely to see that heaven where I once hoped to go. I see nothing but ruin, nothing but desolation, nothing but blackness of darkness. And these unbelieving, despairing conclusions, produce hard and strange thoughts of God, and an enmity toward Him in our minds.

12. *They look at their present troubles as an introduction to more, thinking these are but the beginning of sorrows.* Isa 38.13, *I reckoned till morning, that like a lion, so He will break all my bones; from day even to night you will make an end of me.* How often do we hear such persons saying, Oh! what will become of me if I should die in such a state as I am now in, in such horror and amazement? Where will my guilty soul then go? Alas! I am in no way prepared to give up my accounts; and yet I am likely every moment to be called away. If I cannot bear *these* pains, and *this* wrath, what will I do to bear an eternal hell? If I tremble so now, what will I do when the blow is given, and the final sentence passed? I have but one change to make, and it is likely to be a sad and woeful change, God knows! I dare neither live nor die! Oh! what will I do? Where will I go? I must not stay, and I dare not depart. I am now sorely tormented, and I must be so forever and forever, and *worse* too! I now see that the gate is strait, and the way is narrow, and that there will be few indeed who will be saved.

The shadows of the evening are stretched out upon me, and what will I do if it proves to be an eternal night? For it is the glory of faith to show us future things as if actually present; and to give us joy from them, so considered. So too, it is the torment of despair to make poor distressed souls believe they are as if in hell, while they are yet on earth; and that they are actually scorched with that wrath that is to come in greater measures.

13. *From all these follow strange discourses and expressions of sorrow.* They are forced to complain, to cry out, and to weep bitterly. Job 7.11, *Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.* They speak (without any manner of concern or fear) things that both vex themselves and make others tremble. They scarcely care what they say of God or of themselves. *My soul is weary of my life; I give leave to myself to utter my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul,* Job 10.1. Indeed, they frequently proceed to wish they had *never been born*, knowing it is better not to be, than to be miserable, Job 3.1-3; 10.16-18. They may even proceed so far as to wish to be destroyed, that they may know the worst. Such is the sorrow of their hearts, and so violent. Job 6.26, *Do you imagine*

¹⁶⁶ Dr. Gilpin on *Satan's Temptations*, Part 2. p. 281.

¹⁶⁷ **Luk 22:31** And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat."

to reprove the words and the speeches of one who is desperate, which are like wind? And there are two things that make their sorrows more sorrowful:

(1) Comparing their state with that of others.

(2) Comparing it with their own former state.

(1) *It makes them sadder when they consider the case of others* — with what peace and joy they live, with what hope and comfort, while they are themselves drowned in sorrows. Others (says the *deserted soul*) can sing the praises of God with delight, while I am overwhelmed, and my harp is hung upon the willows. Others can go into the solemn assemblies, and hear his Word, but I am confined in my thick darkness, and dare not go there. Others have the hope of heaven, and I have the daily fear of hell. I am likely to see others enter into glory, and myself shut out. Oh! what have my sins done? If I had not greatly sinned, I might have had as much quiet, and comfort, and peace as they; and I who am now cut down for my unfruitfulness, might have been serving God with as much cheerfulness, and light, and hope as they do.

(2) *When the deserted soul compares its present with its former state.* To a person in misery, it is a great increase of misery to have once been happy. For David, it was an occasion for new tears when he remembered his former joys, Psa 42.3-4.¹⁶⁸ Time was, says the poor soul, when I thought of God with comfort, and when I thought of him as my own God. And to lose a God that I once enjoyed, is the loss of all my losses; and of all my terrors, the most terrible. Time was, when I could go and pray to Him, and ease myself in prayer. But now I have no boldness, no hope, no success in prayer. I cannot call him *my Father* anymore. Time was, when I could read the Bible, and treasure up the promises, and survey the land of Canaan as my own inheritance.

“But now I dare not look into the Word, lest I read of my own condemnation there. The Sabbath was formerly to me like one of *the days of heaven*. But now it is also, as well as the rest, a sad and a mournful day. I formerly rejoiced in the name of Christ. *I sat under his shadow*, Song 2.3. I was in his eyes, as one who found favour. But now my soul is like the deserts of Arabia: I am scorched with burning heat. From how great a height I have fallen! How fair I once was for heaven, and for salvation; and now I am likely to come short of it! I was once flourishing in the courts of the Lord, and now all my fruit is destroyed and withered away. *His dew laid all night on my branches* (Job 29.19), but now I am like the mountains of Gilboa: no rain falls upon me. Had I never heard of heaven, I could not have been so miserable as I am now. Had I never known God, the loss of Him would not have been so terrible as it is now likely to be. Job 29.2-3, *Oh! that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; When his candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness!*”

These are some of the sorrows that deserted souls often meet with. And indeed, it is but a small part of what they feel in this dark and stormy night. Before I proceed any further, I will answer two objections. For I foresee that some may object to what I have said.

¹⁶⁸ **Psa 42:3-4** My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, "Where is your God?" 4 When I remember these *things*, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise, With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast.

CHAP. 5. Answering some Objections.

Answering some objections; and further about the doleful state of a deserted soul; and why God is pleased to allow a very tempestuous and stormy night to come upon his servants in this world.

Obj. 1. *You make a great deal of noise and bother about desertions, and God's forsaking of the soul; and it is nothing in the world but fancy or imagination, and the whimsies and the fumes of Melancholy.*

Ans. It is not a new thing for us to hear such language from atheistic and profane people — from men who are covered with ignorance and sloth: with *ignorance*, because they don't know the ways of God and his dispensations; and *sloth*, because they will not search into the methods of his government. To grant them for once that it is imagination, is no less tormenting, because *it is so*. For a man who strongly *imagines* himself to be miserable, is *truly* miserable; if a man thinks he is unhappy, then while that thought remains, he is unhappy. But they would do well if they could but once grant themselves leave to consider a little; and then they would find reason to suspect their own foolish objections. As it appears by what we read of him, who was a man more distressed with the sense of God's anger, than David? Yet he was of a musical and a pleasant temper, of a ruddy and a sanguine constitution. Do they think that such a great prince as Job, was led merely by humour and fancy when he complains so much about the arrows of the Almighty? Or that Heman, Asaph, and many others, were men of no clear understandings? It is their ignorant pride that makes these objectors talk so boldly about the judgments of God, which they don't understand. But if their consciences are ever awakened with a sense of guilt, they'll find something more terrible than fancy or imagination in what I have now discoursed about.

Obj. 2. *You make a way to discourage men from all religion.* If it is such a mournful business, it is better to let it alone, and to rejoice and be merry, and to take our ease and our pleasure. Go by yourselves to heaven, if you will; we'll join ourselves to more cheerful companions. We see those who are jovial and brisk, who know no sorrow while they live, and who die in peace. And we will unite ourselves to *their* assembly.

Ans 1. In answer to this, I desire them to consider that it is not our *religion* that is the cause of our sorrows; but our *wanderings* and our *deviation* from it. If we were always obedient, we would have an eternal day. Our heavenly Father chastises us because we are undutiful. And He does not delight to grieve the children of men; even in these necessary corrections, he carries on a profitable design for our future and final good. It is true, this is nothing but anguish of conscience that draws up a process against itself, that presents itself as though before the tribunal of God, without hope of pardon or escape. And the weight of mountains would not be a load so heavy as this. It is a night in which we are kept waking with our danger, whether we will or not. Wicked men, though they have as great a burden, yet they are not sensible of — they don't *feel* — the bitterness of sin. They are like fishes bred in the sea, that don't taste the saltiness of the water. They are like swine that find something agreeable to their meaner appetites, even in that which is most nauseous to other creatures. When wicked men sin, they don't feel the weight of it, for it is their nature to do amiss. Their iniquities are like waters that are not heavy in their own element. As intellectual joy is most refined, pure, and durable, so trouble of the mind is the most troublesome of all others.

Job 6.2-3. *Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balance together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea; therefore my words are swallowed up.*

Ans. 2. *Sorrow is usually attended with great pain of body too; and so a man is wounded and distressed in every part. There is no soundness in my flesh because of your anger, says David (Psa 38.3). The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison of which drinks up my spirit, Job 6.4. Sorrow of heart contracts the natural spirits, makes all their motions slow and feeble; and the poor afflicted body usually declines and wastes away. Therefore, says Heman, My soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave, Psa 88.3. In this inward distress, we find our strength decay and melt even as wax before the fire. For sorrow, which is an ungrateful languor of the soul,¹⁶⁹ darkens the spirits, obscures the judgment, blinds the memory as to all pleasant things, and beclouds the lucid part of the mind. It causes the lamp of life to burn weakly. In this troubled condition, the person cannot be without a countenance that is pale, wan, and dejected, like someone seized with strong fear and consternation. All his motions are sluggish, and no sprightliness or activity remains. Pro 17.22, *A merry heart does good, like medicine; but a broken spirit dries the bones.* From this come those frequent complaints in Scripture:*

My moisture is turned into the drought of summer (Psa 32.4);

I am like a bottle in the smoke (Psa 119.83);

My soul clings to the dust (Psa 44.25);

My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death (Job 16.16);

My bones are pierced in me, in the night season, and my sinews take no rest (Job 30.17);

By the great force of my disease, my garments are changed... He has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes, Job 30.17-19.

Many times indeed, the trouble of the soul begins from the weakness and indisposition of the body. Long affliction, without any prospect of remedy, in the process of time begins to distress the soul itself. David was a man often exercised with sickness, and the rage of enemies. And in almost all the instances that we meet with in the Psalms, we may observe that the outward occasions of trouble brought him under an apprehension of the wrath of God for his sin, Psa 6.1-2.¹⁷⁰ And the reason given, is verses 5-6. ¹⁷¹ All his griefs run into this more terrible thought, that God is his *enemy* — “as little brooks lose themselves in a great river, and change their name and nature.” ¹⁷² It most frequently happens that when our pain is long, and sharp, and helpless, and unavoidable, we begin to question the sincerity of our estate towards God; even though at its first assault we had few doubts or fears about it. Long weakness of body makes the soul more susceptible to trouble, and to uneasy thoughts.

I would have more largely insisted on the troubles of a deserted soul, except that I find them so excellently described by Dr. Gilpin in the second part of his learned and experiential *Treatise of Satan's Temptations*. And I must refer my Reader to that, not knowing any other book that with so much exactness and truth, sets forth these inward and spiritual afflictions.

I now proceed to inquire why God allows such a night, so tempestuous and so frightful, to come upon his servants.

¹⁶⁹ *Natural History of the Passions*, p. 152.

¹⁷⁰ **Psa 6:1-2** O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger, Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure. ² Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am weak; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are troubled.

¹⁷¹ **Psa 6:5-6** For in death *there is* no remembrance of You; In the grave who will give You thanks? ⁶ I am weary with my groaning; All night I make my bed swim; I drench my couch with my tears.

¹⁷² Dr. Gilpin on *Satan's Temptations*, Part 2, p. 296.

1. *That they may be conformable to Christ.* As *they* are tempted and distressed, so was *he*. As it is a season of darkness with their souls, so it was also with his holy soul, that was full of amazement under a sense of God's wrath — though he never indeed despaired, as many of his servants are apt to do under the violence of sorrow. Isa 53.3, *He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.* When he was so saddened for our sakes, it is reasonable to think that we should sometimes taste of the bitter cup, and not always rejoice and be at ease. If God did not spare his only Son, why should we expect to feel nothing but what is very mild and gentle? And our Lord has told us, *The world will rejoice, but you will be sorrowful*, Joh 16.20-22. The sufferings of Christ were to give satisfaction to the Divine Justice. Ours are not to be looked upon with such an eye; but by these terrors and desertions, we learn to value and esteem the love of Christ, who was pleased to redeem us when it cost him so very dearly; and who was pleased not to decline the field of battle, even though it was not to be managed without vast labour, and a mighty pain. And the Apostle says, *Rejoice, in as much as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings*, 1Pet 4.13.

2. *Another reason may be because our fall and ruin came by pleasure.* It was a delight, though a very short one, that made our forefather Adam apostatize. And it is equitable that we should be cured by something contrary to what occasioned our disease. Seeing that our joys are dangerous, He makes our grief and sorrows to be healthful and medicinal.

3. *It is a very proper season in which to be sorrowful.* Among all the other excellent appointments of providence, this is one: that there should be *a time to weep*, Ecc 3.4. There is nothing strange or uncouth in this night of weeping. All our fathers have in some respect passed under a cloud — a cloud that has dissolved in rain, and which has given much trouble to the good pilgrims as they went along. 1Pet 1.6, *Now for a season you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.* It is not more strange to see mourning in the Church on earth, than to see storms or snow in winter. Everything is beautiful in its season; and so is this affliction. The night is useful to the world, though not so pleasant as the day. Our sickly state will not allow us to have anything but what is gratifying to our palates. The wise God, therefore, instead of very *pleasant* things, many times confers the *best* upon us. We must allow the Great Master of the family to maintain its order, prosperity, and welfare by his own methods — to chastise us when, and how, and as long as he pleases. For his strokes, though very painful, are yet very just. And it is in order for some *better* thing that he designs for us, that at present we are made to grieve. For grief, as one observes, is an imperfect passion, not made for itself, but for some higher use; as are all the rest of the declining affections, such as hatred for love, fear for confidence, and the like. And so sorrow is made for joy, to which it is subservient — as lancing and searing are not for *themselves*, but for ease and *remedy*; a bitter potion is not for *sickness* (which it may cause for a time), but for *health*. So sorrow is made for joy, and joy is the end of sorrow. And God, we may be sure, will have his end. ¹⁷³

4. *To show His own sovereignty, both in afflicting and comforting.* He causes such a Prince as Job to sit upon a dunghill, in anguish and trouble, while another sits in unclouded glory on the Throne. He pulls down one, and sets up another, and does whatever He wills in heaven or earth. It is the withdrawing of his Spirit that is an occasion for mourning to the soul; and He variously acts upon it. For though he does not deny what is absolutely necessary to the well-being of the Christian, many times He does not grant what would make it very comfortable. For wise reasons He many times allows the hearts of his people to be overwhelmed with sorrow, when he could make them brimful of joy — as in nature he lets the earth gape for thirst, when he could

¹⁷³ Dr. Harris's *Sermons*, p. 277. [Robert Harris (1581-1658) – WHG].

immediately refresh it with seasonable showers. Who in all this mysterious variety of his administrations, can say to him, *What are you doing?* (Job 9.12) Some countries are desert — they are barren and forsaken, burnt up with scorching heat, and filled with beasts of prey. Others are inhabited and fruitful, and greatly blessed. And He sees fit to have the parts of his dominions thus qualified. Some he draws with *the sweet savour of his ointments*; they perceive nothing but what is gratifying and refreshing. But others he sorely terrifies with the greatness of his power, his holiness and majesty; and they never eat or live with pleasure. The Captain of our salvation causes some of his soldiers to meet with much more formidable dangers than others do. They have more sweat, and fatigue, and toil, and painful duty, though he will be sure to help them himself when they are ready to give way. The manner of his dispensations to his servants is various, both in life, and at death. Some are *chastened all day long, and with sore pain upon their beds too*; while others have no pain at all. Some go drooping to the grave, bowed down with His displeasure, while His favour and his gracious eye makes others go there smiling.

Enoch and Elijah had a pleasant removal from the world. Their passage from here was very short, and very glorious. But most men groan a long while before they are called away. And he then does it to show his own *power*, that when the wound appears to be desperate, he can give a cure with a word. When the night is most full of horror, He can bring the reviving day. When the storms are highest, he need but say to the waves, to our doubts, and to our fears, *Be still*, and immediately there is a calm. What is God, so great and so good a God, not able to do? He that produced from mere chaos, this beautiful and pleasant world, need only say to us in the middle of our doleful darkness, *Let there be light*, and it shall be so. Job 5.18, *He makes sore, and binds up; he wounds, and his hands make whole*. It is in acknowledgment of this sovereign ability, that David prays, *Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones which you have broken may rejoice*, Psa 51.8. Why is this so? Hadn't Nathan told him that his sin was pardoned? Yes; but all the testimonies of men are nothing without the inward witness of the Holy Spirit. God has committed to men the administration of his Word; but He reserves the Spirit to Himself — that Spirit which gives consolation to our hearts, and peace to our consciences. When Mary and Martha were in sorrow for their brother's death, it is said in Joh 11.19, *Many of the Jews came from Jerusalem to comfort them*. But they received no comfort till Christ himself came there.

CHAP. 6. Why Melancholy and Troubled People love Solitariness.

Showing why it is, that melancholy and troubled people love solitariness; and why it is, that serious persons are not so light and frothy in their conversations as others are; with some other inferences deducible from the foregoing doctrine; with some advice to those who have never been deserted, and to those who are complaining that they *are*.

Inference 1. From this you see the reason why people in trouble love solitariness. They are full of sorrow; and sorrow, if it has taken deep root, is naturally reserved and flees all conversation. Grief is a thing that is very silent and private. Those people who are very talkative and clamorous in their sorrows, are never very sorrowful. Some are apt to wonder why melancholy people delight to be alone so much; and I'll tell them the reasons for it:

1. Because the disordered humours of their bodies alter their temper, their humours, and their inclinations, such that they are no longer the same as they used to be. Their very distemper is averse to what is joyous and diverting. And those who wonder at them, may as wisely wonder why they will be diseased, which they would *not* be if they knew how to help it. But the *disease of Melancholy* is so obstinate, and so unknown to all but those who have it, that nothing but the power of God can totally overthrow it; and I know no other cure for it.

2. *Another reason why they choose to be alone* is because other people don't generally mind what they say, nor believe them. Rather, they *deride* them, which they usually don't so cruelly do with those in *other* distempers. No man is to be blamed for avoiding society when they don't afford the common credit to his words that is due to the *rest* of men. But,

3. Another, and the *principal* reason why people in trouble and sadness choose to be alone, is because they generally apprehend themselves as singled out to be the targets of God's peculiar displeasure. And by their sharp afflictions, they are often a terror to themselves, and a wonder to others. It even breaks their hearts to see how low they have fallen, how oppressed those are, who once were as easy, as pleasant, and as full of hope as others. Job 6.21, *You see my casting down, and are afraid.* Psa 71.7, *I am a wonder to many.*

And it is usually unpleasant for others to be with them. Psa 88.18, *Lover and friend you have put far from me, and my acquaintances into darkness.* And though it was not so with the friends of Job, it greatly affected them to see a man they had once known as happy, to then be so miserable; one whom they had seen so very prosperous, to be so very poor, and in such sorry and forlorn circumstances. This poor man was changed — they didn't know him. Job 2.12-13, *And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and didn't know him, they lifted up their voice and wept; and every one of them tore his mantle, and sprinkled dust on their heads towards heaven. So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.* The Prophet represents someone under spiritual and great afflictions thus: *he sits alone, and keeps silence,* Lam 3.28.

Inference 2. From this we see the reason why the servants of God don't have such light and frothy spirits as others. They don't always indeed mourn; but even when they rejoice, it is with a serious and solid joy. Their own sins, and the fear they have of sinning, and the concern they have for the sins of others, cause them to walk softly. The many miseries to which they are liable, and the many miseries they see the Church of God groaning under, keep them from innumerable follies, from many frivolities and vanities in conversation, which others do not hesitate at — though frequently, when their countenances are grave, their hearts are full of the liveliest joys.

Inference 3. What a mean, sorry thing a Christian is many times in this world, as to his outward appearance. A mourner never makes so great a show as one in triumph does. His graces, and his excellencies are many times like the ground in winter: covered with rain and storm, which keep him from being regarded much. Because Christ was *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*, the Jews therefore saw *no beauty or attractiveness in him, that they should desire him; they hid their faces from him because he was stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted*, Isa 53.2-4. The life of all believers is hidden with God in Christ, Col. 3.3. It is maintained with suitable nourishment, formed by the Gospel, and preserved by the Spirit. But because of innumerable temptations and weaknesses, the glory of their grace is very much eclipsed. It is hidden under a thousand crosses and infirmities, and doesn't yet appear in the clearest light. A Christian in this world is like a King who travels *incognito* in a strange land. He is coarsely treated by men who do not know the greatness of his birth and quality. He travels in the garb of a pilgrim, clothed with heaviness, and has tears for his food and drink. Or he is like the sun ascending to its meridian, but obscured from our sight with many thick and watery clouds. Job 30.26-28. *When I looked for good, then evil came to me. And when I waited for light, then darkness came. My heart boiled, and did not rest. The days of affliction confronted me. I went mourning without the sun. I stood up, and cried in the congregation.* Now the servants of God are going to the port of blessedness, as Jonas went to the shore, covered with the waters of affliction. Now, to a careless eye they seem like seed buried in the ground, quite cast away; but they will arise with new lustre.

Inference 4. This assures us, that there is another, and a happier life after this. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted, Mat 5.4. *He who goes forth weeping, etc.*, Psa 126.6. *A little while and you will see me*, Joh 16.16. This sorrow is the forerunner of abiding joy. These tears of holy persons are fruitful and profitable tears. And those souls who now are vexed with the sins of others, and their own, will before long be sweetly refreshed. The night is long and doleful, but the morning comes that will cause them to forget all their former trouble. God puts their tears into his bottle (Psa 56.8). Though in appearance they fall upon the earth unregarded, and seem to be lost, even then they fall into the lap of his Providence, which will make them fructify by his blessing, to their eternal joy. This little grain that is sown, will return again into their bosoms with measure filled up, and running over. And their floods of tears that now surrounded them, will be turned into rivers of pleasure forevermore.¹⁷⁴ *If in this life only we had hope, we would of all men be most miserable*, 1Cor 15.19. Miserable indeed, if we were obliged to bear so many crosses, to meet so many dangers and such various calamities, and have no reward. But thanks be to God, *this is not our case*. While we look upon this world, upon the manifold evils that are here, we *weep*. But when we lift up our eyes to that pure, and calm, and blessed world that is above, we may be cheerful and rejoice. *Here* we are tossed among rocks and shelves, with threatening waves and high winds; but *there* we behold our rest. In this wilderness we are pursued by roaring lions, and annoyed with hunger, thirst, and other inconveniences. But we are, all the while, on our journey to the Promised Land, and will shortly be there. And *then* we will receive a blessed period (an end) to all our conflicts and difficulties.

Inference 5. Seeing there is such a weeping night for the servants of God, this verifies and confirms that maxim of the Gospel, that strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life. We must go there through the very depths, and wade through many seas of grief. Though all others find it difficult because of the frequent self-denials and mortifications to which they are obliged — because of the many sins that beset them, and the many sufferings they must undergo

¹⁷⁴ Charles de La Rue, *Recueil de Sermons* (Paris, 1694), p. 119.

— yet deserted souls find it to be a strait way indeed. For them, it is covered with thorns and briars. You *whose mountain is yet strong*, and whose hopes are yet unshaken, think it is easy. But if you ever come to be sorely tempted, and afflicted with long and sharp trials; if you come to be greatly pained in your bodies, and greatly troubled in your souls; if you are awakened with the sight of hell, and the threatenings of the Law, and broken with the terrors of the Almighty — then you will join your cry to ours, and say that the way is very strait. Job, and Haman, and Asaph, and David, and all others have found it to be so. There is indeed a lion in the way. That must not be an excuse for sloth, but rather a motive for our courage. We must take more caution and be more watchful to avoid him. The sense of God's displeasure is like a hot furnace, into which many of his children are thrown, though they will come out unhurt. And when they have come out, they will be like gold. Yet it is grievous to the senses, when they must be saved as by fire; when they must come to their crown by racks and torments, by anguish and tribulation; and to heaven by the very Gates of Hell.

I will close this chapter with two exhortations:

1. *With respect to those with whom it is yet day, and who have never been forsaken by God.*
 2. *To those disconsolate souls, with whom it is as yet a weeping and a mourning night.*
1. *If you have not been forsaken, and have ever had the light of God's countenance shining on you, beware of the approach of night.* Prevent as much as you can, the declining of the day. I have shown you what a pit I and some others have fallen into. Take warning by our danger, and take heed lest you also come into the same doleful case. You have the smiles of your heavenly Father; you have ever been with him. Oh! do not provoke him to turn those reviving smiles into killing frowns. Don't be secure, don't be self-confident, don't be faithless, but believe, and guard your faith, and be watchful. For *your enemy, the devil, goes about seeking whom he may devour*. Work while it is day. For when this night comes, I can assure you by sad experience, that you *cannot* work. Pray *now* with fervour, for *then* you cannot pray. Read and hear the Word of God *now*, for *then* you will find no taste even for the Bread of Life. Beware of indifference and lukewarmness; beware of grieving the Spirit, and of slighting his motions. For all these are the shadows of this doleful night. Your day is comfortable and your journey pleasant while the sun shines. Oh! make haste to your eternal home, lest your feet stumble on the dark mountains. If you linger, wrath will overtake you — terrible and amazing wrath, such as you cannot now believe, and such as you then cannot bear. Credit the report that we bring you from the land of darkness, and do not go on the way that will lead you there. We have fallen among thieves and robbers, among temptations, and dangers, and trials, that deprived us of all our comforts. Don't tread a path where you will surely be set upon and greatly wounded, even if you escape. Though maybe you will say with Job, 29.18, *I will die in my nest, and multiply my days as the sand*.
2. *Do not severely judge or censure persons under spiritual trouble.* It is night for them, indeed; but they may live to see the morning come. God has overthrown them, but He will build them up again. They are in darkness, but do not rejoice over them, for He will be a light to them. Don't speak to the hurt of those he has wounded; don't look on with unconcernedness, or a secret pleasure in the time of your brother's trouble. Job 30.11, *Because he has loosed my cord and afflicted me, they also have let loose the bridle before me*. Do not censure these mysterious dispensations of God and of His providence. Stay till you see the beautiful structure that he will cause to rise from these ruins. When they are tempted by the devil, do not be like Job's friends; don't play the devil to them, and insult them, or increase their misery. It was a very great sin in those good men, to aggravate Job's trouble by their rash discourses, and by their sinister

interpretations of it. God himself decided the case for his servant, and told them that they had not spoken by Him the things that were right. Don't be hasty to judge persons who are weeping, even *despairing* for their sins. They are in bitterness, but God may speedily remove it. He may change their wilderness into a paradise. He will perfect his power in their weakness, turn their evils into good, and their darkness into a marvellous light. And so, stay till you see the end (the purpose) of the Lord. He has taken their comforts from them to *improve* them, and to restore these to them on better terms. He has removed their pots of water, but it may be that He will send them back full of wine. For (as one observes) God is prone to bring about most of his greatest ends by seeming to look quite another way from what he has a special purpose to bring to pass. He seldom proceeds in a direct way to his ends; or in such a way as the creature would think stood most with reason to take. Rather, when his business lies in the east, he takes his journey, as it were, full west; and when he has a mind to build, he batters down; when his design is for light, his method and his way is through the greatest darkness.

Let the great instance of *Job* forever repress our bold censures of afflicted and miserable people. Who would have thought that a Man so distressed, would ever have been delivered! That one who had so many pains, would be cured! One so poor, so derided, so scorned by drunkards, and boys, and the meanest of the people, would be honoured and esteemed again! And yet all this happened to him. *His end was better than his beginning*. He lived to see the funeral of his griefs, and the resurrection of his comforts. The Lord who had afflicted him, took off his heavy hand, and turned back his captivity. He re-established him in all his former splendor, and for his short darkness, made him shine with a double glory, and *gave him twice as much as he had before*. And for a year or two of trouble, He gave him many pleasant, *long* years of joy, till he *was old and full of days*; till he was satisfied with living, and calmly desired to die. And the scope of the Book of Job is (as Dr. Patrick quotes it from *Maimonides*) to establish the great article of Providence, and thereby to preserve us from error in thinking that God's knowledge is like our knowledge; or his intention, providence, and government, is like our intention, providence, and government. This foundation being laid, nothing will seem hard to a man, whatever happens. Nor will he fall into dubious thoughts concerning God — whether He knows what has befallen us or not, and whether He takes any care for us. Rather, he will be inflamed more vehemently in the love of God. As it is said at the end of this prophecy, *Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*. So say our wise men. Those who act out of love, will rejoice in chastisements (see Jas 5.11).

As for *you with whom it is yet night*, I will add only this: though I have myself come as to the quiet shore, yet I sympathize with you who are yet labouring in the deep. You are *afflicted and tossed with tempests*. But as in Isa 54.10-11:

The mountains will depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness will not depart from you. Nor will the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord, who has mercy on you. O you afflicted, tossed with tempests and not comforted, behold, I will lay your stones with fair colours, and lay your foundations with sapphires.

I know you think it is a long night, and so it is; but it is not eternal. The day will break, and the shadows flee away. Your wise Physician is preparing cordials for your hearts, and balsam for your wounds. Let him have your desires; address your prayers to him. With your weaker arms, still be reaching out to him. You are scorched with wrath, but He will be a refreshment for your heat. You are in darkness, but he is the Sun of Righteousness, who will chase all the clouds away. Fly to this *City of Refuge*; depart for this *Fountain of Living Waters*. And while you are condemned in your own thoughts, look to this Advocate and Mediator, and He will plead your cause. The wrath that

burns you, may be hot as hell, but his blood will extinguish the tormenting flame. The devil may be too strong for you, therefore beg help from this Jesus who has overcome him, and who will teach you to get the victory. He takes pleasure in helping those who have no helper. And when there is none to deliver you, his own arm will bring salvation. *He has borne our grief, and with his stripes we are healed.* Trusting in his satisfaction, you may freely implore the mercy of his Father — no, you may even appeal to his *Justice*; for he will not have two payments for the same debt. You may say, “You have promised to pardon sin for the sake of your well-beloved Son. Let it be unto me according to your word.” You may in vain complain of your troubles to those who have never felt the like. They may grieve you more by their harsh expressions. But remember that when you go to *Christ* for help, you go to one who is experienced, to one who has tasted of the same bitter cup; to one who was himself forsaken by God for a season, and knows how sad it is with you in the same case. And *those who come to him, he will in no way cast out.*

CHAP. 7. *The joy that fills a soul when God's favour returns.*

Of the great joy that fills a soul when the favour of God returns to it, after having been long in darkness. And that joy is great in several respects: as it was unexpected; as it reveals God is reconciled, and gives the mourner possession of Christ by faith, through the influence of the Holy Spirit; it revives his graces, delivers him from the insults of the devil, and shows the soul its interest in the promises.

Joy comes in the morning, Psa 30.5. I have shown in several chapters, what a mournful night it is to a deserted soul, when God is withdrawn, and what then passes. It is now time to hasten to what is more pleasant and reviving, according to the order of Divine Providence, which appoints that where there has been weeping in the night, there should be joy in the morning. Hence we may observe, *The return of God's favour to a soul is matter of great joy to it*; or these words may denote the promptness and readiness of divine consolations.

Three things are the usual occasions of joy, all of which are found in this case:

1. *The remembrance of some danger that we have recently escaped.*
2. *The possession of a present good.*
3. *The solid expectation of some future happiness.*

1. First, *the remembrance of a past danger occasions a livelier sense of joy*. As past joys renew our grief and make our sorrows more sorrowful, so the *griefs* that are past give us a sweeter and better taste of joy. After long sickness and acute pain, it is very pleasant to be at ease. It is pleasant to rest when we have been tired all day with hard labour. The laurels ¹⁷⁵ of a soldier flourish with a purer green when they have been obtained with a mighty difficulty; the danger of the combat brightens the glory of the succeeding triumph. It is gratifying to the mariner to stand on firm land, and from there to behold the waves in which he would likely have been thrown away. One who has been long in chains, rejoices to find himself at liberty. It is pleasant after a man has long been thirsty, to be refreshed with the fountain of living waters. It renders the joy more accomplished, and more satisfying, when refreshment comes after long and grievous miseries. After long despair, the least beam of hope is more reviving. A man who has lost his way all night, has cause to rejoice at the sight of day. As to persons newly converted, their faith is full of joy when they compare their former danger, and their present safety — their former darkness and the shining light that guides their paths.

So too for souls who have been in great anguish and tribulation for sin, who have apprehended themselves to be cast out of the presence of the Lord, it is very pleasant to behold His face again. It is pleasant to those who because of their sore affliction, have been companions to owls and dragons,¹⁷⁶ to come into religious assemblies; and instead of solitary groans and tears, to join with the multitudes of those who keep holiday.¹⁷⁷ The soul is then like that of the returning prodigal. It finds itself in the arms and embraces of a loving Father, and well-treated when it looked (as it justly might) for rebukes and wrath.

Thunder, and lightning, and storms, make calm and pleasant weather more gratifying to us. It is pleasant after a long absence, to meet our friend again; we find joy sparkling in our eyes, and in our breasts, at the sight of those whom we haven't seen for many sad and doleful years, and yet whom we *longed* to see. And what heightens our pleasure is when an *unexpected* blessing arrives.

¹⁷⁵ *Laurel*: a wreath of laurel foliage worn on the head as an emblem of victory. — WHG

¹⁷⁶ KJV **Job 30:29** I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls (NKJ *jackals* and *ostriches*).

¹⁷⁷ *Keep holiday*: to "remember (honor) the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exo 20.8; Isa 58.13).

That mercy fills us with the biggest joy, which is extremely suitable to us, and yet which we didn't hope to receive. The crown sat easier on David's head, after he had so often thought he would have fallen by the hands of Saul — as we taste life with a better relish when there has been but one step between us and death. With what transports a kind mother sees her son coming home, whom she gave up for lost and dead! What a cheerful interview Jacob had with his son, after he so often thought he had been torn to pieces! As soon as he came near, Jacob fell upon his neck, and there the revived soul of the poor old man was ready, even with an excess of pleasure, to melt away. He never thought to have seen *his Joseph, his dear Joseph* anymore. He was going down to the grave, even with sorrow for Joseph's apprehended death — and the news of his son's welfare made him young and alive again. For at hearing of it, the spirit of Jacob revived, and *Israel said, "It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."* (Gen 45.28)

And so the Jews, having liberty to return from Babylon, were so surprised with the favour of their sudden deliverance, and the greatness of the mercy, that they could hardly think it true. It seemed to be the mere effect of imagination, which during the interruption of our usual thoughts by sleep, can put several deceits upon us. *Psa 126.1-2, When the Lord returned again the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dreamed.* They were delivered in a manner illustrious and surprising, and it is expressed as a *dream* for three reasons:

- (1) A man does not foresee what he dreams of. A man who is apt to be cherished with sound and refreshing sleep, doesn't know whether he will dream or not. So this deliverance came to them when they did not think of it.
- (2) It arrived without any pain to those who were delivered; as when we dream that we are in repose, and have no trouble. And this heightens the glory of a deliverance, and the love of the deliverer, when the person delivered takes no care about it.
- (3) This deliverance was above all that they could hope for; as if a man dreamed of something like it, but which he didn't see when he was awake. For such are the *Chimeras* ¹⁷⁸ which the imagination then forms, and which don't fall under the notice of our senses. Such a thing was never heard or seen before.¹⁷⁹

The return of comfort to a soul that was even *expiring* in grief and sadness, is like the raising of Lazarus was to his mourning sisters. They thought that if the Lord had been there, he would not have died. But they did not in the least think that he would be raised again. The review of our former miseries increases the sense of our present happiness. The light which the grace of the Gospel brought into the world, and that dissipated the obscurities that encompassed it, made the Apostles full of admiration and of wonder. When they thought of their former ignorance and error, and the light and knowledge that God had given them, they were ever wondering at the *riches* of His grace — that instead of the corruption in which they were plunged, it gave them sanctification, joy, and hope. What a surprise it was to the poor shepherds who were in the field watching their flock by night, *Luk 2.9*, to see an *Angel*, and the *Glory of the Lord* shining around them! To see such a Glory when they had less thought of it, nor expected so great a grace.¹⁸⁰

But it is usual with God to bestow the most eminent favours when men are not looking for them. — as when Christ came to seek sinners, when they had not thought of him. And when their minds

¹⁷⁸ *Chimera*: a mythical fire-breathing creature (Greek mythology).

¹⁷⁹ Monsieur Charles, *in loc.*

¹⁸⁰ Jean Claude (1619-1687), *Traite de la Composition d'un Sermon* [Essay on the Comp. of a Sermon], p. 267.

were filled with *other* objects, *they were afraid*. For great objects, when they present themselves suddenly to us, usually give us great astonishment. For our spirit on these occasions doesn't have the liberty to use its forces, and most frequently, they are then dissipated; and that dissipation causes *fear*. When a soul has long had itself under the sentence of condemnation, a pardon from God is *very* comfortable. Our former darkness increases our present comfort, as shadows set off the light.

2. *Joy arises from the possession of a present good*. Thus the presence of God is unspeakably sweet to a soul from which He was once departed:

(1) *As it now thinks of Him as reconciled*.

(2) *As by faith it has possession of Christ*, by whom God's favour is restored. As our sadness came by unbelief, so our joy comes by faith.

(1) When it was in anguish, every thought of God was terrible and amazing. But now nothing is so refreshing, so desirable, so satisfying, as to think of him. Psa 94.19, *In the multitude of my thoughts within me, your comforts delight my soul*. Now the poor sinner doesn't look at Him as an enemy, but as a Father. He no longer sees in his hand a flaming sword, but a scepter of grace; he no longer hears his angry voice, but his gentle comfortable calls and invitations. This is according to that saying in Isa 66.13: *As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you, and you will be comforted. And when you see this, your heart will rejoice, and your bones will flourish like an herb*. Oh what a joy it is to the soul, to find God is with it! — to behold the wonders of his pardoning mercy! to see that all its unbelief, all its impatience, all its murmurings in its wilderness condition, will not finally obstruct its journey to the Land of Promise. To be pardoned when they thought themselves actually dying in their guilt, heightens the mercy of escape.

It is true: God loves his people even when he is angry with them. He designs their good by the sharpest and severest strokes. And when he withdraws, it is so that they may give a better welcome to him at his return. When our lower region is most cloudy, the sun is still full of light; but it is pleasant for us to see the clouds vanish, and the sky clear, and to be refreshed with his enlivening beams again. God indeed is the same forever. Our distresses, our fears, and our troubles, do not alter his kindness. These several variations in us, make no change in Him — no more than the several alterations in the air infer a diversity in the sun, which is one and the same itself, even though the changes are multiplied here below. Yet even *paternal* wrath is still wrath; and his love is what we should earnestly desire, the manifestation of which we should greatly rejoice. It was once the saying of Mr. Peacock, under great distress of conscience, *Oh God reconcile me to you, that I may taste one dram of your grace, by which my miserable soul may receive comfort!* Such was his longing after him. And afterwards, when the storm began to cease, being put in mind of God's mercy to him, he said, *Oh the sea is not so full of water, nor the sun of light, as God is of goodness; his mercy is ten thousand times more!* The good man longed for but a *drop* before, and God had given him full *draughts* of consolation. So far are the ways of God above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts.

In our sore trials we think of God as a frowning judge; but when we are delivered, we see him as our best friend — that he is really kind to us, of whom we were so afraid. Who can express the joy of having him at peace with us? There is a heaven in the smiles of a reconciled God. Picture to yourselves, as one expresses it,¹⁸¹ a person who is condemned to death for his crimes. At the same

¹⁸¹ De Lang,-Treize Sermons, page 850.

time that he prepares to undergo it, he sees a herald from the King bringing his pardon in his hand, who stops the execution by crying, *Mercy, mercy for the miserable man!* With what transports of joy the poor malefactor sees this messenger, and hears these tidings! Such and so pleasant is the joy that a deserted Christian finds after he has heard the sentence of ruin, and saw it *near* when the Law condemned him, and his conscience echoed the voice of the Law — to find he is *absolved*, that the sentence is reversed, and the sins that made him afraid are blotted out. Then the mourning soul dares to look up to God, no longer being at war with him, nor afraid of the thunder of his power. Then it is refreshed with His sweet and amiable attributes. And then the disorders and the pangs that it felt within, are vanished, and all is quiet. Then it doesn't dwell as in the shadow of death, nor as on the borders of eternal grief.

(2) Secondly, *as the deserted soul by faith obtains possession of Christ*, so it is full of joy; and Christ is both the object and the author of it. He has purchased it by his own blood, and has borne our griefs, that we might not mourn forever. Having him is a constant inexhaustible source of joy to the believer, to be possessed by this Saviour, who is the *brightness of the glory, and the express image of the Father*: his word, his wisdom, his love, and his goodwill. He is the treasury of the Father's graces, in whom *his fulness dwells*. This Divine Saviour is our light that chases away the darkness of our night, and who dries our eyes with his gracious hand. *This* is that Glorious Sun that arises with healing in his wings, who not only cheers our hearts, but cures our wounds, dispels the night, and makes the voice of sighing expire at the first dawning of the day. *This* is the Tree of Life, the Celestial Manna, who gives us immortality.¹⁸² This is our David who defeats our enemies; our Solomon who establishes among us a sweet and inviolable peace. He expiates our crimes, and gives our minds rest. He saves us from the wrath to come. He delivers us from our sins, from hell, and from our slavish fears. At length, he causes us, in our darkest and most tempestuous nights, to hear his voice saying, *It is I. Do not be afraid.*

We are first saddened by unbelief; and faith first revives us. And this faith is attended with joy and peace when the poor deserted soul begins to apprehend its interest in Christ, and how all its apprehensions are changed, saying,

“Up to now, in my terrible anguish, I thought that He was my certain enemy, that I had no portion in his blood, nor any share in his intercession; that as I was under unbelief, so I would be vastly more miserable than those who never heard of him — than heathens, and pagans, and all the rest of men to whom the Gospel never came. I then thought, and was fully persuaded, that I would not hear of him with comfort anymore. I then thought that I would see him coming in the clouds *to my terror*; that I would be placed at his left hand, and from there be commanded to *depart*. And now he has come in a way of mercy and of love. He has pleaded for me, when I had nothing to say for myself. And his Word has calmed the storms that made me so much afraid. He cast an eye of love upon me, when I expected nothing but his frowns. Now I can go and pray in his encouraging name — and now I have *hope* when I pray. His satisfaction and his intercession are both the constant fountains of my joy.”

3. *This joy that comes after a night of sad and mournful desertion, is the work of the blessed Spirit.* He is styled by way of eminence, the *Comforter*; and peace is one of the fruits of the Spirit. He causes us to close with Christ, and to embrace the promises. He assists our weakness, and teaches us to pray. He convinces us of sin, and lays us low, so that he may raise us up again. He humbles, and purifies, and fits our hearts for lasting and abiding joys. This joy is *not the product*

¹⁸² See Daillé, *Commentary on Phil. 4.4.*

of a natural temper, but a disposition that has its origin from heaven, and leads us there. It is not the pleasant motion of our natural spirits to which it owes its birth. Rather, as our grief was in our souls, so this joy is too. As our consciences were disquieted, so the Spirit works in them a stillness and repose.

4. *This joy revives our graces.* In this mournful night we were quite destroyed with the violence and fury of the storm. We were like the ground in winter: destitute and forlorn, and no fruit appeared. But the manifestation of God's favour is like the return of spring to us. *Song 2.11-13, For lo the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.* That solitary season is now gone, in which nothing but doubts, fears, despondence, and accusations overwhelmed the soul. The floods that kept it under are dried, and there is now a cheerful and a pleasant alteration. The clouds have vanished, and the sky is bright. A new world and face of things now appears. His return to God's ancient mercies, is like Noah's entrance into the world after it had been cleansed and washed by the deluge. God's favour makes our tears like the gentle dew of night, which with the warming kindly beams of the sun, makes the plants and herbs, the gardens and the flowers, look fresher and greener. When God departs, our weakness toward what is good increases.¹⁸³ We have no power left, but *the joy of the Lord is our strength*, Neh 8.10. This is like the return of health and good digestion to someone who has been long sick. It causes a new ferment and motion in the blood, and makes all his actions accompanied with more life and vigor. Men under strange fears and amazement are incapable of service; and when we are *deserted*, so are we. When we apprehend ourselves as castaways, we offer *the bread of mourners*, if we offer at all. But none of our sacrifices are made with joy and gladness of heart. A man whose bones are broken cannot go about his work. And when our spirits are wounded, if we work at all, we but lamely set about it. We may halt a little, but we cannot *run the way of God's commands*. Our sorrows make us serious and thoughtful; but it is *joy* that makes us active. It is the oil of gladness that causes our wheels to move, and causes us to advance forward, like the chariots of Aminadab (Song 6.12). One who is hungry or thirsty uses but feeble endeavours, compared to what one does who is newly refreshed.

5. *This joy that comes in the mornings after a night of weeping, is very pleasant to the soul, as it is then delivered from the insults and triumphs of the devil.* In that doleful night, that evil spirit continually terrifies and frightens us. But when the morning comes, the one who dreads the light flies away. Then it is with us in some measure, as it was with our Saviour in the wilderness. *When the devil left him, Angels came and ministered to him.* Yet there is a vast disparity between him and us. He conquered and was in no way worsened by it; but we come bleeding from the field of battle. Our souls are defiled with the devil's temptations. The hurts we receive in our conflicts, now and then pain us; and they yield us remembrances of our sin by their pain and hurt, maybe to our dying day. However, it is a *joy* to us to think that though we were beset on every side, yet we have escaped like a bird out of the snare of the fowler. *The snare is broken, and we have escaped*, Psa 124.7. God has brought our souls out of the deep dungeon, for the one who was our jailer did not have power enough to keep us there. The deliverance that we've had is so strange, and so miraculous, that our going out is like that of Peter, in Act 12.9. *He went out and didn't know that what was done by the Angel was true, but thought he saw a vision.* It was wonderful to Peter, who had looked for a sudden execution next day, to come to his praying friends in safety.

¹⁸³ That is, in God's absence, our inclination towards what is good decreases. – WHG

So it is for us, who thought we were doomed to die a while ago. The devil has winnowed us; and oh, that we could say our chaff is gone! This archer has sorely shot at us; but thanks be to God, he has not obtained his design, which was our total ruin. We have been in a very fiery furnace. Oh that it was with *us*, as it was with the three children who came out, and were not hurt at all (Dan 3.26-27). We have been in a den of lions, in a howling wilderness, but we have not perished there. It is a pleasure that we now have something to answer the great accuser of the brethren — that by faith in our great Captain, we can now ward off the accuser's blows, and quench his fiery darts.

6. *This joy that comes in the morning after desertion, is from the propriety (ownership) that we have in God, and in the promises of the Gospel.* As David says, Psa 42.11, *He is the health of my countenance, and my God.* It is pleasant to know that God is good; but it is more pleasant to us when we *taste* his goodness — when we can say with the Blessed Virgin, Luk 1.46-48. *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour, for he has regarded the lowly estate of his handmaiden.* It is pleasant to hear of Christ, but it is more pleasant by far when, with old Simeon, we embrace him in our arms, and say with the Church, *I am my beloved's, and he is mine.* Then the soul will be cheered with perpetual delight, saying, "Having God, I have enough." *Enter into your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you* (Psa 116.7). When the soul can reflect on and think of Him as its own portion, then the sorrows and darkness of the night are gone. For it has God, who is all *light*, and *with Him is no darkness at all.* To see the light, and to possess it, are the same thing. There is, as one observes, a *reflected* and a *direct* light. I see palaces, and mountains, and towns, and fields, and trees, with a reflected light; and so I *see* them without *possessing* them. But I see the light of the sun and of the stars by direct rays; and in *seeing* them, I *possess* them. For rejoicing in the light of the Sun, and possessing it, are the same thing. We now see God, indeed, by a reflected light, which comes to us from the creatures. And so all those who see Him, do not possess him. But in heaven, God will be seen without veils and reflections. His light will be a *direct* light, which will fill us throughout.¹⁸⁴

It was a comfort to the Patriarchs and holy men of old, to have the hope of Christ's appearance. They saw his day afar off, and they rejoiced. But how much more is it a comfort to that soul which has actually seen him come, not only spreading his beams to remove the general darkness of the world, but shining with a peculiar light and heat unto itself. It is peculiarity that endears most things to us: our own friends, our own relations, our own joys, are the most pleasant. It is not from Christ's being singly considered as a Mediator that we derive this comfort; but from the reflection that we are able to make of *our happiness in him.* It is *that* which creates the sweetest motions in our hearts. Before this propriety, there may be a calmness of spirit, and lesser degrees of complacency,¹⁸⁵ expressing themselves in love, hope, and desire. But it is the actual possession of a good *as our own*, that is the parent of real joy. The Christian may find some comfort in beholding the incarnation, the sufferings, and the promise of Christ's second coming. But when the soul can say, "He died and rose again *for me*," this touches it with a very lively satisfaction, and makes the soul say, as in Hab 3.17:

Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there is no herd in the stalls — yet I will rejoice in the LORD. *I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

¹⁸⁴ Isaac Newton (1642-1727) was a contemporary of Rogers; hence this little science lesson. — WHG

¹⁸⁵ *Complacency*: a sense of contented self-satisfaction. — WHG

CHAP. 8. *The joy that comes after a long desertion.*

Of the further properties of the joy that comes to a soul after long desertion, it is irresistible, though usually gradual; it revives the body and the natural spirits. It fills the recent mourner with the hope of glory, and causes him to express his delight to others. From all of which we may justly admire the wisdom of the Divine Providence.

7. *This joy is irresistible.* All the darkness of the night cannot hinder the approach of the welcome day. So neither can all our doubts, nor our fears, nor all the horrors of the night, hinder the beams of God's favour when he is pleased to shine upon us. Job 34.29, *When he gives quietness, who then can make trouble?* Notwithstanding all the directions and the helps that our ministers or our friends give us in our trouble, we may refuse to be comforted. But when *God* speaks the word, we must obey. He *creates the fruit of the lips, peace, peace.* We can no more resist his Almighty power, than the first chaos could withstand His command when, in the language of a God, he spoke and said, *Let there be light.* Our escape from our spiritual troubles bears some proportion to the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. As that was not owing to an ordinary or created power, so neither is ours — but to a power that is celestial and divine. It was not, as one observes,¹⁸⁶ the effect of the power of God on the ways of nature, such as the rising of the sun, the return of seasons, or the fruitfulness of the earth; but the effect of a power altogether infinite and supernatural. It's not according to the usual laws of nature, nor the course of ordinary providence.

8. *This joy is usually gradual, and not all at once.* I say “usually,” for sometimes persons in great distress and agonies of soul have been suddenly relieved in their darkest night; and in the deepest dungeon, a great light has shined upon them. Those who one hour cried out that they were damned and lost, the next hour triumphed in the hope of glory. And from the fear of hell, they have come to a glorious view of heaven, to their own exceeding comfort, and the comfort of all who heard them. But though God may do what He pleases, this is not his ordinary way. As the night comes, and the sun goes down by degrees, so the morning comes, and the sun arises by the same degrees. As it rarely happens that sufferers fall into great distress of conscience all of a sudden, some lesser afflictions will make way for greater strokes. Also, seldom are any comforted immediately. Rather, their comfort comes like the break of day: there are some faint streaks of light (some little supports and quiet hopes) before the sun rises. And in this, God accommodates himself to the weakness of our nature. For a sudden passage from a great affliction to a great joy, is a thing which our tender nature is hardly capable of bearing. Usually the consciences of those who have long been very terrified and afflicted, begin to be calm as the humours of the body that have been disordered return to their ancient course. For however long the spirits and blood are disordered, that is how long the soul will unavoidably be in some unpleasant agitation.

9. *This joy has a pleasant influence on the body, and revives it, with the reviving mind.* They fall sick and droop together, and they recover and rejoice together. When God is our God, it causes health in our countenances, as well as pleasure in our hearts. And though I know that many poor people who have long been amazed with the fear of God's wrath, have very feeble, sickly bodies till the day of death, yet this calmness and peace of mind greatly mitigates their pains. It pours honey and sweetness into the bitterest cup. For what is it that makes affliction in trouble of mind so intolerable, if not that the afflicted person looks at it as the *beginning* of sorrows — as a few drops before a *more dreadful* storm, a mere *introduction* to hell and woe? But when the sting of

¹⁸⁶ Claude, *Traite de Jesus Christ Liv. v. 12.*

guilt is removed, and sin is pardoned, that yoke which used to gall them before, sits very easy on their shoulders. Pro 15.13, *A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance*. Joy as well as grief cannot be dissembled, if it is real and very strong. Joy in the heart is like rain at the root of the grass; after being moistened to the bottom, the grass appears much greener and more flourishing. Pro 17.22, *A merry heart does good, like a medicine*. Even that cheerfulness which arises from natural and ordinary causes, is very healthful, and adds very much to the strength and vigour of the body. Much more, then, will that joy promote it, which is founded on the Word of God, and on the hope of His acceptance. And no question, David was referring to this when he said,

Psa 51.8, *Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones which you have broken may rejoice*.

Psa 35.10, *All my bones will say, Lord, who is like you, who delivers the poor from him who is too strong for him; and the needy from the one who plunders him?*

No troubles waste our natural spirits more than our inward griefs and fears; no joys refresh and make them more sprightly than the joys of our souls. See Job 33.24-26. *God is gracious to him, and says, Deliver him from going down into the pit. I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's. He shall return to the days of his youth. He shall pray to God, and He will be favourable to him, and he shall see His face with joy*. Those who have written about long life and the means to obtain it, advise us to keep our minds always full of splendid and illustrious objects, of histories, and the contemplations of nature, and the like. But *the best medicine is a quiet conscience*. And though all our religion will not indeed save us from sickness, it will enable us to *bear* it — not to be overly concerned and overwhelmed with the manifold and unavoidable calamities of this mortal life. This is joy indeed, that will recreate our souls and our bodies too — that will prepare the one for its passage to glory, and the other for its lying in the grave. Thus our soul, which is our glory, *will rejoice*, and *our flesh also will rest in hope*, Psa 16.9. And at length, as they have both mourned, so they will rejoice together, and that is forevermore. For when God is pleased to speak, and to help us both in our bodies and our souls, it is *multiplied salvation*, and many thousand cures in one.

The 3rd GENERAL RELIEF, mentioned earlier, is that *joy arises from the hope of some future good*. And this good must be both *very agreeable to the soul, and very certain*. For if it is not so, there cannot be any other than a weak and a trembling joy. There is great pleasure in an expectation of what is to come, if it is great, and lasting, and attainable. Now, to one who has the returning-sense of God's favour, it is very pleasant to look for that hour or day, or rather for that *cheerful eternity*, when he will have the same reviving smiles of his heavenly Father, in a brighter and more conspicuous manner — when not only the night of weeping is gone, but that morning has come which will *shine more and more to a perfect day*, Pro 4.18. And thus the comfortable person will say, "If the taste that I have now of God is so sweet, Oh! what the full enjoyment of him will be! If I am entertained in this foreign land as with the bread of angels, what feasts will refresh me when I am at home! — when I am past the storms, and beyond the grave, and sin and tears will give me no further molestation!" The first fruits make it too long till the full harvest. Thus the Apostle says, *We rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. And this made the Church say, *Make haste, O my beloved, and be like a gazelle, or a young stag on the mountains of spices* (Song 8.14). Expectation of any main event (as one says) is a great advantage to a wise heart. If the fiery chariot had fetched Elijah unseen, we would have doubted the favour of his transportation.

10. *This morning joy will express itself. As our griefs cause us to groan and sigh, so this joy makes us manifest our gladness in an open pleasant way*. The reviving sense of God's favour so fills our hearts, that we cannot conceal or stifle it, without dishonour to Him, and prejudice to

ourselves. When we apprehend that we are happy, we take a peculiar pleasure in communicating to others the notice of that happiness; and we are much more pleased by such a communication. This joy is always attended with an expression of the mercies of our Deliverer, so that we cannot help but say to our brethren, *Come and behold what God has wrought for us!* Behold what salvation His own arm and power has accomplished! So it is in Psa 51.12-13: *Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free spirit; then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will be converted to you.* Then I will be able to tell them that your ways, however rugged they seem for a while, at length they are even and pleasant ways; that they lead to life and happiness. And beholding the beams of your love, which make me so pleasant and so cheerful, they will by such a sight, also be encouraged to religion. To the same purpose is Psa 16.9, *My heart is glad, and my glory rejoices.* David's inward joy was not able to contain itself. We testify of our pleasure on lower occasions, even at the gratification of our senses: when our ear is filled with harmonious melody; when our eye is fixed on admirable and beauteous objects; when our smell is revived with agreeable aromas; and our taste is made so, by the delicacy and rareness of provisions. And much more will our soul show its delight, when its faculties that are of a more exquisite constitution, meet with things that are in all respects agreeable and pleasant to them.

And in God, they meet with *all* those. With his light, our understanding is refreshed. And so is our will refreshed with his goodness and his love. So in Psa 126.1-2, *When the Lord returned again the captivity of Zion, then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.* It was a sign that their hearts were very full of joy, seeing that the mouth and tongue poured it out in such great abundance. Indeed, their neighbours could not help but take notice of it: *They said among the heathen, the Lord has done great things for them,* far beyond the methods of an ordinary providence. Their liberty was strange and miraculous; it surpassed all imaginable reasons. And behold, as people take delight in going over and over again a pleasant thing, they echo this saying of the heathens, saying, *verse 3. The Lord has done great things for us, of which we are glad.* Others knew it only by report, that God had been so good to them; but *they* knew it by sweet experience. In the delivered people it was indeed an inward jubilation, with a loud cry, and song of triumph. As when God has *withdrawn*, we are forced to speak in the anguish and bitterness of our souls, so when He returns, the return is so pleasant that we cannot hold our tongues. In our troubles there is a latent grief that is so sinking and so very sad, that no words can express it. So in the good hope of God's acceptance, there is a sweetness that cannot be declared. *You rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,* 1Pet 1.8.

We dare not relate specifically about our grievous sufferings, lest we discourage many poor people, who are apt enough by themselves to sink and be discouraged. Or if we *would*, we *cannot*, for they are so very terrible. So the sight of God, after long darkness, fills us with wonder, and with pleasing astonishment. We *feel* that we are delighted, but we cannot fully tell what it is to *be* so delighted. And sometimes we are in such transporting joys, that like the blessed Apostle when he had the view of Paradise, whether we are in the body or out of it, we scarcely know; The poor soul is so transported, that it is surrounded with delight in every way. Will God dwell in such a heart as mine, that has been so full of murmurings, and so full of unbelief? Will he pardon and accept me? Will I, who in my own sad thoughts was doomed to die, have the hope of glory, and instead of my slavish fears from the dread of hell, have the sight of heaven? Will I be his favourite, of whom I had such hard and unbecoming thoughts? Oh! what *grace* is this! How unlooked for! How undeserved! And yet how suitable! *Is this the manner of men, O Lord God?* Is this your kind usage of a poor sinner, and of so great a sinner as I have been? This is grace indeed! This is all *free love*

and mercy! How can this be passed over in silence? Such a person, having escaped after such apprehensions of so near a danger, is like the lame man who was healed:

Leaping up, he stood and walked, and entered into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God ...and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. Acts 3.8-10

Inward anguish many times causes the distressed to roar out vehemently, so heavy is the load that presses them. On the contrary, when the fear of wrath is *removed*, they rejoice with shouting and a loud voice, like those who conquer, or reap the harvest. For when a man is under inward anguish and tribulation, he looks at himself like a beacon burning on a hill, to give warning to others, and to show them the danger of sin. So when he comes to peace and hope again, he wishes that he might be placed on a mountain, and enabled to trumpet out to all the world *the riches of the grace of God*. So that, as none may *presume* when they see his misery, none may *despair* when they see his safety and his escape from that misery.

*Inference 1.*¹⁸⁷ *The wisdom and the beauty of the divine providence.* As in the world there is a comfortable succession of night and day, so in His servants' mourning, after the sorrows of the night, the joy of the morning comes. This night comes, and this morning dawns, when it is most proper to do so. *He has made everything beautiful in His time, Ecc 3.11.* The storms, and rain, and cold of winter, are as beneficial to the universe, as the summer's heat. Though from our self-love, we judge God either with more admiring, or less becoming thoughts, as He deals well or ill with us. But it is not particular churches or particular persons alone that God regards, but his *whole creation*. His providences to us contribute to the good of that creation. We don't know to what uses God will put us; but it ought to support us somewhat, to think that whatever state we are in, we are serving His design. However pressing, and however violent our dangers and tribulations, He can save us even by methods contrary to those which our reason apprehends. By throwing us down, he can make us more established; and by seeming to destroy us, he can promote our welfare. He can make unlikely things advance his purpose. It is many times darker just before the break of day. And the shadow going backward on Ahaz's sundial, was to be a sign of Hezekiah's longer life, Isa 38.8.

Therefore (if you will allow me a small digression) it is a very evil thing for men to censure the Providence of God, because of the present miseries that He allows his servants to be afflicted with. There are many who think it is a piece of zealous loyalty not to blame their superiors for the higher matters of government, which are above their reach. And yet they dare to arraign at their bar the Supreme Ruler of the world, if what He does is not according to the model of their fancies; or isn't suitable to their imaginations; or because while others are gratified, their own inclinations are crossed and disappointed — not considering that the difference and variety of circumstances among particular men are necessary to the *general* and *public* good. To censure God, and to reflect upon His conduct, is as if a country clown, who never travelled beyond the smoke of his own cottage, were to condemn the proclamation of a King, or the votes of a Parliament, when he doesn't know the great reasons of state that these actions depend on.

But as St. Basil observes, when men are first crossed in their worldly affairs, for lack of patience they begin to doubt whether God indeed regards the things of this world — whether he takes notice of particular men. When they see no end of their miseries, but one evil is continually attended with another, they are blasphemously apt to think there is no God. God can bring affliction to test

¹⁸⁷ *Inference 2* is at the start of the next chapter. — WHG

and manifest the graces of his people. The stars, which are a chief part of the glory of the worlds, are most illustrious and visible when the day is gone. And then God makes the sun rise again, which displays new objects to us.

The rods of God many times are very sharp. But in the end, we will find they were dipped in honey, and managed with love. The conduct of providence is always wise and good, but very often mysterious and unfathomable. And in nothing is this more so, than in his bringing an abundance of his servants to heaven by the very gates of hell; and in allowing Satan to buffet and vex them so that they may triumph over him in the end. He puts them in great perplexities so that the sweet wonders of His deliverance may be more apparent. *We went through fire and through water; but you brought us out into a wealthy place*, Psa 66.12. Thus he preserved Moses in a cradle of bullrushes, and would not let the great infant perish, though he was in manifest danger either to be carried away by the force of the water, or to be devoured by the crocodiles with which that river abounded. So Noah was preserved in the Ark, not by any art in navigation, but by the government and conduct of God himself. He hastens deliverance, many times, when it seems to be at the remotest distance. *In the evening it shall be light* (Zec 14.7) — in a season when it was not to be expected. In all his works of nature and of grace, He makes things *further* his design, that seem to be *contrary* to what he designs. Thus (some observe) the earth hangs on nothing in the midst of the fluid air, though it is the heaviest of all the elements. He renders it fruitful for the production of all necessary things, though of itself it is cold and dry. And so the sea, which by its situation is above the earth, and seems to threaten it with new deluges, is yet kept in its own channels. For after it has been raised even to the clouds in threatening waves, its fury dies again into a calm, and observes the bounds that God has set for it.

Thus our Lord Jesus also works. By being tempted, he conquered the tempter; and by dying, he subdued death. And so at the sending of the Spirit, first the house shook and trembled, and then it was filled with the Glory of the Lord — first, deep sorrows, and then as mighty joys. First John *heard a voice like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of a great thunder; and then the voice of harpists harping with their harps, and they sang a new song before the throne*, Rev 14.2. A due consideration of the providences of God will keep us from the absurd opinion of the heathens, that the Deity envied the felicity of men, and that whoever was most prosperous, was near to a sudden overthrow. Even the learned men among them were so apprehensive of it, that they dared not acknowledge their own income (even if it was ordinary) without an excuse. On this account, the emperor Augustus, in whose days the Saviour of the world was born, once a year turned beggar, and received alms from those of the common people who would give to him. He mistrusted his own felicity, and dreaded that *invidiam numinis* ¹⁸⁸ which was so frightful in those days. ¹⁸⁹

The heathens had but parcels (portions) of the Scripture, and those too were largely adulterated by tradition. No wonder if they made a contrary use of it. And by sad experience — finding the effects of Adam's fall and God's curse, and not being well-informed about all the particulars — the devil was also busy with *them* as he had been with *Eve*, to promote a misapprehension of God, as if the devil were envious.¹⁹⁰ Whereas, upon due consideration, what in the judgment of blind and corrupt nature seemed envy and malignity, will appear to be mercy, used by God as a profitable

¹⁸⁸ *invidiam numinis*: the jealousy of the Divinity. — WHG

¹⁸⁹ See instances of this in Dr. Casaubon's *Original Cause of Temporal Evils*. [Probably Meric Casaubon (1599-1671), son of Isaac Casaubon. He was the first to translate *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius into English. — WHG]

¹⁹⁰ See Dr. Casaubon, p. 27.

medicine or antidote against the greatest and most dangerous infection of the soul. For crosses and afflictions in this world are not the effects of envy in the Supreme Dispenser of all things, but arguments for His goodness and providence. *All things work together for good to those who love God*, Rom 8.28. Sickness and health, poverty and riches, anguish, fear, and horror, will contribute to their salvation. And thus in the most fiery furnaces, and the most painful troubles, they will find the refreshments of His grace. His providences work *together*; they are *in concert*, and are not to be taken apart as if composed of diverse ingredients. For there are some medicines that, if taken alone, might kill the patient. But when they are joined with others which, by their contrary qualities being counterpoised, they temper their excess and do marvellous things. God many times lets our darkness stay long, so that we may know what a pleasant thing it is to see the light.

CHAP. 9. *The ends that God has in Afflictions.*

Of the different ends that God has in the afflictions of the good and the wicked; and what reason we have to be reconciled to his providence. And that we must be satisfied that God carries us to heaven in his own way and method.

Inference 2. This shows us the different ends that God has in the afflictions of the good and of the wicked. To the one they are *medicinal*, to the other *penal*; to the one they are done in *love*, to the other in *wrath*; to the one they are the shadows of an eternal *night*; to the other the forerunners of the *morning*. Often his people are thrown down by their fears, by Satan, and the world. But just as often they may say, *Do not rejoice against me, O my enemy*, etc. (Mic 7.8) They may be dejected, but they may say with David, *O my soul, hope still in God*, etc. (Psa 42.5) Afflictions (as one says) are common to the good and the bad, as the entrance into the bottom of the sea was common to the Israelites and to the Egyptians. But the Israelites, conducted by a cloud and a pillar of fire, were enlightened, and assured, and passed in safety, and came out praising God. But to the Egyptians, this cloud that separated them was full of darkness, and they were drowned in the waves, while the others stood on the dry land. So God comforts his people by the light of his word, and the support of hope from his holy promises; whereas the wicked are finally swallowed up by sadness and despair. The righteous fall, and they rise again; but the feet of the wicked stumble on the dark mountains, and never rise again.¹⁹¹

Though indeed, as the same person observes, the Chaldeans formerly measured their natural day differently from the Israelites. They put the day first, and the night after; but the Israelites did the contrary, according to the order that was observed in the Creation. For in the beginning darkness was upon the face of the deep, and of every one of the six days it is said, *The evening and the morning made the first day*. So the times of the world and of the Church are differently disposed. For the world begins hers by the day of temporal prosperity, and finishes it by a night of darkness and anguish that is eternal. But the Church, on the contrary, begins hers by the night of adversity, which she suffers for a while, and ends them by a day of consolation which she shall have forever. The Prophet in Psalm 30 begins with the anger of God, but ends with His favour. As of old, when they entered into the Tabernacle, they at first saw unpleasant things — such as the knives of the sacrificers, the blood of victims, and the fire that burned on the altar, which consumed the offerings. But when they passed a little further on, there was the Holy Place — the Lampstand of Gold, the Showbread, and the Altar of Gold on which they offered perfumes. Finally, there was the Holy of Holies — with the Ark of the Covenant, and the Mercy-Seat, and the Cherubim — which was called *the Face of God*.¹⁹²

Inference 3. This may then reconcile you to His Providence. The night of trouble makes you not see the beauty of the Church — though she is blackened, she is beautiful still. He that makes his *sun to shine on the unthankful and the evil* (Mat 5.45), will not always cover himself with clouds from his own people. His common care has provided for the pleasure of his creatures — fruit to delight their tastes; and flowers and various colours to delight their eyes and their smell; rivers, and trees, and meadows, and groves, and all the variety of nature, to recreate and entertain them. And if all this accommodation is made for *rebels*, then He will not fail to entertain his subjects with joys of a better kind. *Joy is sown for the righteous* (Psa 97.11), and it will arise in the time of harvest; and that time will shortly come. If God has done so much to gratify the senses of his

¹⁹¹ Fautheur, *Sermons*, first part, p. 132.

¹⁹² Mussard, *Sermons sur divers Textes*, p. 30. [^{ASV} **Heb 9:24** For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us.]

creatures with suitable satisfactions, the souls of his people who are more noble, will not be disappointed of those which are celestial and divine. For joy is that which, with a sweet violence, attracts the heart of man. God regards the distressed, and has a peculiar pity for those who are in the greatest trouble, as mothers tend with a peculiar care, the weakest child. The world indeed admires, flatters, and waits upon those on whom the sun shines, and who are in a prosperous condition. As rivers run into the sea where there is no need of water, so the world heaps its friendships and kindnesses on those who least need them, and forsakes the disgraced, the poor, and those who are in want.¹⁹³ But God, when his servants are in the greatest troubles, encourages them by his Name, which is *the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Consolations*. He is most mindful of them, and visits them most, and gives them his comfortable presence most, when they are most afflicted. *He comforts us in all our tribulations*, 2Cor 1.4. He will not give them constant ease — they will not be excused from the common inconveniences of the fall, from sickness or from death — but He is himself willing to be their own portion. He is, in all, their own God. They will labour, but have rest; they will fight, but he will crown their heads with victory; *they will sow in tears, but reap in joy* (Psa 126.5). The waves and the floods that now overwhelm them, will be turned into rivers of pleasure forevermore.

The use of exhortation is in these following particulars.

Use 1. Be very well satisfied that God carries you to heaven in the way that he thinks most proper. It would indeed be a very desirable thing to be at ease, and to travel with his light about us. But if we must go to heaven through darkness, and danger, and calamity, let us be satisfied that His will is done, even though we go there weeping and groaning, You think, perhaps, that someone doesn't deserve the name of *Christian*, who will not allow God to guide him in *any* way, so long as it is to salvation. But alas, how few there are who are satisfied with His methods! When his candle shines on our tabernacle, we are well-enough pleased. But when he begins to correct and chasten us for a long season, then we murmur and repine. And when we meet with difficulties, and tears, and troubles one upon another, then we think he is a hard Master. This is our common case, and our common folly. We can all make the prayer of Jabez, 1Chr 4.10, *Oh that you would bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me*. But how few can heartily say with our blessed Lord, *If the cup must not pass, your will be done!* He could bring you to heaven without a tear or a sigh; but if not, who can resist his order, or blame his providence?

He led the children of *Israel* forty years wandering to and fro in a great and *terrible wilderness, in which there were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, and no water*, Deu 8.15 — when He could have led them quickly to the land of Canaan. You must not think to come to heaven without many a sad heart, and many weeping eyes. You must travel to the Mount of God through the Valley of Baca (Psa 84.6). The Ark that had a Noah in it, did not immediately rest; the great waters did not abate in one day, nor fall into their old channels. Your passage to glory may be safe, though it is very troublesome; and the rods that seem to be the most painful, may be the most necessary for you. For though the Israelites met with various troubles, yet *He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation*, Psa 107.7. It may be that you will be shipwrecked into the haven; though you are *saved, it will be as by fire*. Through many a sharp cross, and many a bitter tribulation, and in the fire, your comforts and your ease may suffer loss for a time — but it will be made up again. Afflictions ruin none who belong to God; and many a

¹⁹³ Thomas Manton (1620-1677), *Serm. on 2The 2.17*, p. 432. [Works, vol. 3]

Christian will say at last, *I would have perished, if I had not perished. I would have been undone forever, if I had not been afflicted.*

Out of the ruins of the flesh, God raises the glorious structure of the new creature. And from the destruction of our earthly comforts, he causes heavenly joys to spring. Let us not find fault with God's providence, for He will turn *our water into wine*; our tears of grief into the most pleasant joys. And as at the marriage of *Cana*, we will have the best at last. Our afflictions will increase our grace. And before long, we will mount up from the wilderness of this world, fraught *with myrrh and frankincense, and all the spices of the merchants*. Let us not find fault if we meet with the bitter waters of Marah on our journey to the Land of Promise.¹⁹⁴ Thirst and bitterness are the portion of pilgrims. It is enough for us that we will have rest at last. We must not expect that the providence of God would go out of its ordinary course for us. Let us confide in his goodness, his faithfulness and loving-kindness, his word and promise. This is the quiet harbour into which we must put our trembling souls. These are the consolations that will make our bitter waters sweet.

Submit therefore to God. Pour out your hearts to him, even though you are long afflicted, and with one wave upon another.

¹⁹⁴ Hall, *On the Marriage in Cana*, p. 162.

CHAP. 10. Conclusion of the whole Treatise.

The conclusion of the whole treatise. With directions to those who have been formerly in the darkness of a sorrowful night, and now enjoy the light of day.

Use 2. Let us, with whom it was once night, improve that morning-joy that now shines upon us, and do that briefly in these particulars:

(1) *Let us be continual admirers of God's grace and mercy to us.* He has preceded us with his goodness, when he saw nothing in us but impatience and unbelief. When we were like Jonas in *the belly of hell*, his heart yearned over us, and his power brought us safely to land. What did we do to hasten his deliverance, or to obtain his mercy? If he had never come to our relief till he saw something in us to invite him, we would not yet have been relieved. We contribute no more to our restoration, then we do to the rising of the sun, or the approach of day. We were like those dry bones in Eze 37.1, without motion and without strength. And we also said that *we were cut off for our parts, and our hope was gone; ...and he caused breath to enter into us, and we live* (Eze 37.11-14). Who is a God like our God, who pardons iniquity, transgression, and sin? Who does not retain his anger forever? Who is slow to wrath, and delights in mercy? Who has been displeased with us for a moment, but gives us hope of his everlasting kindness? Oh! what love is due from us to Christ, who has pleaded for us when we ourselves had nothing to say! Who has brought us out of a den of lions, and from the jaws of the roaring lion!

Let us say, as Mrs. Sarah Wight,

“I have obtained mercy, who thought my time of mercy past forever. I have hope of heaven, who thought I was already damned by unbelief. I said many a time, there is no hope in your end, and I thought I saw it. I was so desperate, I didn't care what became of me. Often I was at the very brink of death and hell, even at the very gates of both; and then Christ *shut* them. I was like Daniel in the lions' den, and he stopped the mouth of those lions, and delivered me. The goodness of God is unsearchable. How great is the excellency of his majesty, that yet he would look upon such a one as I! That he has given me peace, who was full of terror, and walked continually as amidst fire and brimstone!”¹⁹⁵

(2) *Let us walk humbly, and be full of cautious fear, that we not offend a God who is so terrible, and not grieve a Benefactor who is so good.* Let us walk softly all our days, remembering there was but a step between us and hell. Oh! let us put our mouths in the dust; let us loathe and abhor ourselves for the manifold iniquities that we were guilty of during the darkness of the night. And now that the morning has come, and it is such a morning as we never hoped to see, let us *walk as children of the day*; so that having come out of the furnace, we may be as gold that is refined.

(3) *Though we rejoice, yet we must rejoice with trembling* — with trembling, lest another night so black, so frightful, and so dismal come upon us. Let our obedience be livelier, and *like the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain*. But let us remember that our joy is not yet perfect, though it is like the light of the morning when the sun rises. It is not *a morning without clouds*, 2Sam 23.4. The sun will be clouded with many fogs and mists, for it is yet but a morning sun. It will shine with greater glory at its height, when the noonday and our complete salvation comes. The devil who has tempted us will assault us again. Let us *watch*, so that his designs may not take effect. For it may be that he has left us but for a season. Alas! our

¹⁹⁵ See her *Life* written by Mr. Jessey, page 40. [Henry Jessey (1603-1663); in *The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced* (London, 1647). – WHG].

unbelief and our other sins are not yet wholly dead. Let us rejoice that the face of God now shines on us. But let us tremble to think what would become of us if it were hidden again. Let us rejoice that we have good hope through grace; but let us tremble lest *despair and the pains of hell* should again take hold upon us. The fear that we have of future suffering, somewhat diminishes now the brightness of our joy. Yet we should not live under the perpetual bondage of such fears, but trust in God, and hope that he will *be our guide even unto death* (Psa 48.14). We are indeed brought out of *the miry pit, and the deep clay* (Psa 40.2); yet we cannot help but tremble at our foregoing misery. We are like a person who, after a shipwreck, has with great difficulty gotten safely to land on a plank. He finds himself in an assured place, and rejoices in it. Nevertheless, the noise of the waves, and the great agitation that he was so recently in, makes him tremble. He remains a good while astonished at his former danger, and his present safety. Let us not have a trembling of distrust, but of vigilance and holy care. Let us not doubt the promises of God, but keep down our own pride and carnal security. Let us pray that as He has *set our feet on a rock*, so he *would establish our goings* — remembering how low we have fallen, into what depths, and under what calamities we have constant cause to be afraid. Psa 149.6, *Let the high praises of God be in our mouths, and a two-edged sword in our hands*. Let us be like those soldiers who, though they have newly gotten the victory over their enemies and rejoice for it, yet amidst all their acclamations, they stand on guard — lest the remainder of those who are unsubdued, should rally their scattered forces and attack them again, to their disadvantage.

(4) *We must be very active in the service of our good God*. We must begin to travel while the morning lasts, and while we have the day before us.

(5) *Our mouths must be full of praise to Him who has delivered us*. Shall we not praise him, to whom we vowed praises when we were in trouble? Shall we not praise him, who alone has wrought salvation for us? *None but he could help us*, and he has *done* it. He has magnificently delivered us, far above all our hopes. Oh, how much more pleasant it is to you and me, to call him *Father*, than to fear him as a Judge! How much more pleasant to celebrate his praises, than to mourn for his departure; to tune our harps after our captivity, than to have them hanging on the willows! Oh, Let us praise Him, for He deserves our praise. Let us praise Him, for he has remembered us in our low estate. Let us praise Him — for his terrors, his rebukes, and his frowns are gone (Psa 116.1-2; 37.6, etc.). The lightning and thunder, the horror and the darkness of the tempestuous night is over, and a cheerful and a calm day now revives us. Let us praise Him, for he is infinitely excellent. Let us praise Him, for he expects our praise. So David writes,

Psa 116 1-5. *I love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my supplications, because he has inclined his ear to me; therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yes, our God is merciful.*

Psa 27.6, *Now my head will be lifted up above my enemies round about me. Therefore I will offer in his Tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing; yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.*

Did we ever hope to see the Light of God again? Did we ever hope to think of heaven as our own portion, and of Christ as our own Saviour? Did we ever hope that we would thus be at ease, and thus joyful as we now are? *God is our helper, God is our refuge, and our stronghold*, Psa 46.1. *Blessed be the name of the Lord*.

(6) Let us call upon our brethren and our friends, to help us to praise the Lord (Psa 145.2, 3, 8, 9, 14). As for myself, I make these requests: *Bless the Lord, O house of Aaron and Levi*. Bless him

you *ministers of the Gospel* who prayed for me in my trouble, and have had your prayers granted. Bless the Lord, *O House of Israel*, and all you people everywhere who sympathized, and also kindly remembered me in my desolate condition. Bless him you *old men*, that you have gotten so far towards the haven, without being thrown into the waves, and as much endangered by the rocks as I have been. Bless him, that you have not met with such violent temptations, and great sorrows as I have met with, though I set out long after you. Bless the Lord you *young men*, that you have not been weakened on the way with sore affliction, and with the terrors of the Lord, which I long groaned under. Bless him everyone, *both small and great*, against whom he does not proceed in such painful and severe providences, and in such long and sharp afflictions. Bless the one you see before your eyes,¹⁹⁶ and *a person recently brought from the borders of the grave and hell* to help your faith; one for whom you were concerned, and for whom you prayed, and *one who still needs and begs your prayers* that he may never come to such a sad and doleful night again.

It is a common custom to congratulate our friends' recovery from sickness, or when they return from some foreign land. But nothing more deserves our common thanks, than when a person has come out from under the sense of God's displeasure, to a sense of His favour and love again. Thus it was with Job, 42.11, *Then all his brethren came to him, and all his sisters, and all those who had been of his acquaintance before, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him.* And with a design to excite others to praise God with him, is that saying in Psa 66.16: *Come and hear all you who fear God, and I will declare what he has done for my soul.* Or as the Father of the prodigal said to his obedient son, who repined at the kind usage that the father gave to the son who was less dutiful, upon his returning home: Luk 15.32, *It was fitting that we should make merry, and be glad, for your brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost and is found.*

It is the design of God that the great and eminent deliverances which He gives to some of his servants, should be taken notice of by all the rest — that as they usually bring along with them a common benefit, so He should have a common return of praise. Psa 66.8, *O bless our God, you people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard, Who holds our soul in life, and does not allow our feet to be moved.* And joining with others who have been in great distress and have escaped, corresponds to the obligation we are under in that precept to *rejoice with those who rejoice.* And it is an encouragement to those who are yet in trouble. Psa 130.7, *Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him there is plenteous redemption.* And to those who are yet at ease, we may say as Paul said to [Agrippa],¹⁹⁷ that we wish they were like us in some respects — that is, except for our bonds, anguish, and tribulation, that they also had such experiences of the goodness and mercy of God (Act 26.29).

(7) *Let us always wait and hope for that eternal felicity which will at length dawn upon all his people in the great morning of the Resurrection;* and at their entrance into heaven there will be joy indeed. *There is no night there.* It is a place that is continually blessed with a bright and shining day. It is true (as one says) that as in nature the nights are not equal; those of the winter are much longer than those of the summer. But however long they are, they are always followed with the light of day. So whatever diversity there is among the afflictions of the faithful — to one they are much longer than to another — yet they will have an end; as Jacob wrestled all night, but in the morning got the victory. I confess that sinners in this world have their pleasures. But they are so

¹⁹⁶ That is, Timothy Rogers himself. — WHG

¹⁹⁷ Originally, "Felix."

beset with thorns, so attended with fears and pains, so short, and so vanishing, that they don't deserve the name. But in heaven, the Sun that rises in the morning of our new glory will never set again. Those pleasures are not like those of sin, which are for a season, but are forevermore. There, our now imperfect joy will be complete and full. It will be satisfying and eternal too. We will feel the love of God in so sweet and transporting a manner, that we will never doubt whether he loves us or not. We will *always behold our Father's face*. He will look on us with delight, and we will look on him with praise and joy. This world, because of its lowness, is subject to inundations and miseries, and innumerable vicissitudes of pain and grief. But that high and glorious world is the place of triumph, and of victory. Then we will see our *sin* that made us weep, be itself totally defeated; then we will see that *devil* who tempted us, *trodden under our feet*, and never able to tempt us anymore.

Let us often remember that saying of our Lord, Joh 16.21-22, *A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow, because her hour has come; but as soon as she has delivered the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. And accordingly, you now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.* Oh! what a glorious morning will that be, that will have no cloud to obscure its light, and never be followed with a sad or gloomy night! *As our sufferings here abounded, our consolations then will much more abound* (2Cor 1.5). We will forget all our labour and all our trouble, when we see what a glorious Kingdom we are born to, even though it was by pangs and torment. Our joy will be like the joy of harvest — of a harvest that will requite us well for all our care and toil. Our hopes here are like the first streaks of light in the sky, that show the coming of the day; but our possession of blessedness will be like the Sun in the fulness of his glory. That delight will indeed be the Sabbath of our thoughts, and the sweet and perpetual calmness of our minds, which will never more be in horror and anguish. Precious and admirable are those tears that end so well, and which prepare us for so good an estate. Who would not choose to weep thus, that he may rejoice forever? Lift up your eyes to the Jerusalem above, the City of the Living God, you mourners and prisoners of hope, for it is the City of Peace.

Rev 21.3-4. *Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his People. And God himself will be with them, and be their God. And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. Neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things have passed away.*

THE END.