

The  
**Godly Man's Picture,**

Drawn with a  
**Scripture Pencil,**

or,  
*Some Characteristic Marks  
of a Man who is Going to Heaven*

**By Thomas Watson**

**1666**

*Psa 32.6. For this shall every one that is godly pray to You.*

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to more closely match this edition of the work:*

**SELECT DISCOURSES of the Rev. Thomas Watson**

ON IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING SUBJECTS

Vol. I. (Blackie, Fullarton & Co., GLASGOW, 1829)

Discourse VIII, pp. 383-620.

[http://books.google.com/books/about/Discourses\\_on\\_Important\\_and\\_Interesting.html?id=IOdLAAAAYAAJ](http://books.google.com/books/about/Discourses_on_Important_and_Interesting.html?id=IOdLAAAAYAAJ)

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by William H. Gross [www.onthewing.org](http://www.onthewing.org) Jan 2015

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## Christian Reader

The soul being so precious, and salvation so glorious, it is the highest point of prudence to make preparations for the eternal world. It is beyond all dispute, that there is an inheritance in light; and it is most strenuously asserted in Holy Scripture that there must be a fitness and suitability for it (Col. 1:12). If anyone asks, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" the answer is, "The one who has clean hands, and a pure heart" (Psa. 24:4). To describe such a person is the work of this ensuing treatise. Here you have *the godly man's portrait*, and see him portrayed in his full lineaments.

What a rare thing godliness is! It is not airy and puffed up, but solid, and such as will take up the heart and spirits. Godliness consists in an exact harmony between holy *principles* and *practices*. Oh, that all into whose hands this book shall providentially come, may be so enamored with piety as to embrace it heartily. So sublime is godliness that it cannot be delineated in its perfect radiance and luster, though an angel should take the pencil. Godliness is our wisdom. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom" (Job 28:28). Morality without piety is profound madness. Godliness is a spiritual queen, and whoever marries her, is sure of a large dowry with her. Godliness has the promise of the present life and of that which is to come (1Tim. 4:8). Godliness gives assurance, yes, holy triumph in God; and how sweet is that! (Isa. 32:17).

It was old Latimer who said, "When sometimes I sit alone, and have a settled assurance of the state of my soul, and know that God is my God — I can laugh at all troubles, and nothing can daunt me." Godliness puts a man in heaven before his time. Christian, aspire after piety; it is a lawful ambition. Look at the saints' characteristics here, and never leave off until you have got them stamped upon your own soul. This is the grand business which should swallow up your time and thoughts. Other speculations and quaint notions are nothing, compared to the priceless soul. They are like *wafers* which have fine words printed upon them, and are curious to the eye, but are thin, and yield little nourishment. But I will not keep you longer in the *porch*. Should I have enlarged upon any one characteristic of the godly man, it would have required a volume — but designing to go over many, I have contracted my sails, and given you only a brief summary of things. If this piece conduces to the good of souls, I will have my desire. That the God of grace will effectually accomplish this shall be the prayer of him who is

*Yours in all Christian affection,*

Thomas Watson

## Chap. 1. The INTRODUCTION

HOLY David at the beginning of this psalm, shows us what true happiness consists in; not in beauty, honor, riches (the world's trinity) — but in the forgiveness of sin. “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven” (v. 1). The Hebrew word “to forgive” signifies “to carry out of sight,” which agrees well with the words of Jeremiah: “In those days, says the Lord, the sins of Judah shall be sought for, and they shall not be found” (Jer. 50:20). This is an incomprehensible blessing, and such as lays a foundation for all other mercies.

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I will just glance at it, and lay down these five assertions about it:

**1. Forgiveness of sin is an act of God's free grace.** The Greek word for “forgive” (*charizomai*) makes clear the origin of pardon. Pardon does not arise from anything inherent in us, but it is the pure result of free grace (*charis*). “I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions for my own sake” (Isa. 43:25). When a creditor forgives a debtor, he does it freely. Pardon of sin is a fine thread, spun out of the heart of free grace. Paul cries out, “I obtained mercy” (1Tim. 1:13) — “I was be-mercied.” The one who is pardoned is all strewn with mercy. When the Lord pardons a sinner, he not only pays a debt, but he gives a legacy!

**2. God, in forgiving sin, remits the guilt and penalty.** Guilt cries for justice. No sooner had Adam eaten the apple, than he saw the “flaming sword” and heard the curse; but in remission, God indulges the sinner. He seems to say this to him, “Though you have fallen into the hands of my justice and deserve to die, yet I will absolve you; and whatever is charged against you shall be discharged.”

**3. Forgiveness of sin is through the blood of Christ.** Free grace is the impulsive cause; Christ's blood is the meritorious cause. “Without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). Justice would be revenged either on the *sinner*, or on the *surety*. Every pardon is at the price of blood.

**4. Before sin is forgiven, it must be repented of.** Therefore repentance and remission are linked together: “that *repentance* and *remission* of sins should be preached in his name” (Luk. 24:47). Not that repentance in a popish sense *merits* forgiveness. Christ's blood must wash our tears: but repentance is a *qualification*, though not a *cause*. The one who is humbled for sin, will value pardoning mercy more. When there is nothing in the soul but clouds of sorrow,

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and now God brings a pardon — which is setting up a rainbow in the cloud to tell the sinner that the flood of wrath shall not overflow him — O what joy there is at the sight of this rainbow! The soul that before was steeped in tears, now melts in love to God (Luk. 7:38, 47).

**5. God having forgiven sin, he will call it to remembrance no more,** (Jer. 31:34). The Lord will make an act of indemnity; he will not upbraid us with former unkindnesses. “He will cast our sins into the depths of the sea” (Mic. 7:19). Sin will not be thrown in like a *cork* which rises up again — but like *lead* which sinks to the bottom. How we should all labor for this covenant-blessing!

**(1) How sad it is to lack it!** It must go badly with the malefactor who lacks his pardon. All the curses of God stand in full force against the unpardoned sinner; his very *blessings* are cursed (Mal. 2:2). Caesar wondered at one of his soldiers who was so merry when he was in debt. Can the sinner be merry who is heir to all God's curses, and does not know how soon he may take up his lodgings among the damned?

## (2) How sweet it is to *have* it!

- a. The pardoned soul is out of the gunshot of hell (Rom. 8:33). Satan may accuse, but Christ will show a discharge!
- b. The pardoned soul may go to God with boldness in prayer. Guilt clips the wings of prayer, so that it cannot fly to the throne of grace; but forgiveness breeds confidence. The one who has his pardon, may look his prince in the face with comfort.

David had obtained this great mercy of pardon, as appears in verse 5: "You forgave me." And because he had found God to be "a God of pardons" (Neh. 9:17), he therefore encourages others to seek God in the words of the text: "For this cause shall everyone who is godly pray to you."

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## Chap. 2. Opening the NATURE of Godliness

*Everyone that is godly.*

It will first be enquired, "*What is godliness?*" I answer in general, "Godliness is the sacred impression and workmanship of God in a man, whereby from carnal, he is made spiritual." When godliness is wrought in a person, he does not receive a new soul, but he has "another spirit" (Num. 14:24). The faculties are not new, but the qualities are; the strings are the same, but the tune is corrected. Concerning godliness, I will lay down these seven maxims or propositions:

**1. Godliness is a REAL thing.** It is not shadow, but substance. Godliness is not the feverish conceit of a sick brain; a Christian is no enthusiast, one whose religion is all made up of fancy. Godliness has truth for its foundation; it is called "the way of truth" (Psa. 119:30). Godliness is a ray and beam that shines from God. If God is true, then godliness is true.

**2. Godliness is an INTRINSIC thing.** It lies chiefly in the heart: "circumcision is that of the heart" (Rom. 2:29). The *dew* lies on the leaf; the *sap* is hidden in the root. The *moralist's* religion is all in the leaf; it consists only in externals, but godliness is a holy sap which is rooted in the soul: "In the hidden part, you shall make me know wisdom" (Psa. 51:6). The Chaldee expounds it, "In the close place of the heart."

**3. Godliness is a SUPERNATURAL thing.** By nature we inherit nothing but evil. "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sin worked in our members" (Rom. 7:5). *We sucked in sin as naturally as our mother's milk;*

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but godliness is the "wisdom from above" (Jas. 3:17). It is breathed in from heaven. God must light up the lamp of grace in the heart. *Weeds* grow by themselves; *flowers* are planted. Godliness is a celestial plant that comes from the New Jerusalem; therefore it is called a "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22). A man has no more power to change himself, than to create himself.

**4. Godliness is an EXTENSIVE thing.** It is a sacred leaven which spreads itself into the whole soul: "May the God of peace sanctify you wholly" (1Thes. 5:23). There is light in the understanding, order in the affections, pliability in the will, exemplariness in the life. We do not call a black man white, because he has white teeth. The one who is good only in some part is not godly. Grace is called "the new *man*" (Col. 3:10), not a new *eye*, or *tongue*, but a new *man*. The one who is godly is good all over; though he is regenerate only in part, yet it is in *every* part.

**5. Godliness is an INTENSE thing.** It does not lie in a dead formality and indifference, but is vigorous and flaming: "fervent in spirit" (Rom. 12:11). We call water *hot* when it is hot in the

third or fourth degree. The one whose devotion is inflamed is godly, and his heart boils over in holy affections.

**6. Godliness is a GLORIOUS thing.** As the jewel is to the ring, so is piety to the soul, bespangling it in God's eyes. Reason makes us men; godliness makes us earthly angels; by it we "partake of the divine nature" (2Pet. 1:4). Godliness is near a kin to glory: "glory and virtue" (2Pet. 1:3). Godliness is glory in the seed, and glory is godliness in the flower.

**7. Godliness is a PERMANENT thing.** Aristotle says, "Names are given from the habit." We do *not* call someone who blushes ruddy — but someone who has a ruddy complexion (1Sam. 17:42). A blush of godliness is not enough to name someone a Christian —

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but godliness must be the temper and complexion of the soul. Godliness is a fixed thing. There is a great deal of difference between a stake in the hedge — and a tree in the garden. A stake rots and molds — but a tree, having life in it, abides and flourishes. When godliness has taken root in the soul, it abides to eternity: "his seed remains in him" (1John 3:9). Godliness being engraved in the heart by the Holy Spirit, as with the point of a diamond, can never be erased.

### Chap. 3. A Reproof to those who are only PRETENDERS to Godliness

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous, but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness." Matthew 23:27-28

Here is a sharp rebuke to those who are alchemy<sup>1</sup> Christians, who only make a show of godliness, like Michal, who put "an image in the bed," and so deceived Saul's messengers (1Sam. 19:16). These our Savior calls "whited sepulchers" (Matt. 23:27) — their beauty is all paint! In ancient times a third of the inhabitants of England were called Picts, which signifies "painted". It is to be feared that they still retain their old name. How many are painted only with the vermilion of a religious profession; their seeming luster dazzles the eyes of beholders, but there is nothing but putrefaction within! Hypocrites are like the swan, which has white feathers but a black skin; or like the lily, which has a fair color but a bad scent. "You have a name to live, but you are dead" (Rev. 3:1). These the apostle Jude compares to "clouds without water" (Jude 12). They pretend to be full of the Spirit, but they are empty clouds; their goodness is but a religious cheat.

**Ques:** But why do people content themselves with a show of godliness?

**Ans:** This helps to keep up their fame. "Honor me before the people" (1Sam 15.30).

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Men are ambitious for credit, and wish to gain repute in the world; therefore they will dress themselves in the garb and mode of religion so that others may write them down as saints. But what, alas! Is one better for having others commend him and yet his conscience condemns him? What good will it do a man when he is in hell, that others think he has gone to heaven? Oh, beware of this: counterfeit piety is double iniquity.

**1. To have only a show of godliness is a God-enraging sin.** The man who is a pretender to saintship, his heart tells him he has nothing but the name; he carries Christ in his Bible but not in his heart. Some political design spurs him on in the ways of God; he makes religion a

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<sup>1</sup> Changeable in outward appearance; having only a form godliness (2Tim 3.5).



lackey to his carnal interest. What is this but to abuse God to his face, and to serve the devil in Christ's livery? Hypocrisy makes the fury rise up in God's face; therefore he calls such people "the generation of his wrath" (Isa. 10:6). God will send them to hell to do penance for their hypocrisy!

**2. To make only a show of godliness is self-delusion.** Ajax in his frenzy mistook sheep for men; but it is a worse mistake to take a *show* of grace, for *grace*. This is to cheat yourself: "deceiving your own souls" (Jas. 1:22). The one who has counterfeit gold instead of true gold, wrongs himself most. The hypocrite deceives others while he lives, but he deceives himself when he dies.

**3. To have only a name, and make a show of godliness, is odious to God and man.** The hypocrite is born under a sad planet; he is abhorred by all. Wicked men hate him because he makes a show, and God hates him because he *only* makes a show. The wicked hate him because he has so much of a mask of godliness, and God hates him because he has no more than a mask. "You have almost persuaded me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). The wicked hate the hypocrite because he is almost a Christian, and God hates him because he is *but* almost.

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**4. To be only comets, and make a show of piety, is a vain thing.** Hypocrites lose all they have done. Their dissembling tears drop *beside* God's bottle; their prayers and fasts prove abortive. "When you fasted and mourned, did you at all fast to me, even to me?" (Zech. 7:5). As God will not recompense a slothful servant, neither will he recompense a treacherous one. The hypocrites' entire reward is in this life. "They have their reward" (Matt. 6:5): it is a poor reward — the empty breath of men. The hypocrite may make his acquittance<sup>1</sup> and write, "Received in full payment." Augustus Caesar had great triumphs granted to him, but the senate would not allow him to be consul, or sit in the senate-house. Hypocrites may have the praise of men — but though these triumphs are granted to them, they shall never have the privilege of sitting in the senate house of heaven. What acceptance can he look for from God, whose heart tells him he is no better than a charlatan in divinity?

**5. To have only a pretense of godliness will yield no comfort at death.** Will painted gold enrich a man? Will painted wine refresh someone who is thirsty? Will the paint of godliness stand you in any stead? What, were the foolish virgins better for their "blazing lamps" when they lacked oil? What is the lamp of profession without the oil of grace? Someone who has only a painted holiness, shall have a painted happiness.

**6. You who have nothing but a specious pretext and mask of piety, expose yourself to Satan's scorn.** You shall be brought forth at the last day, as Samson was, to be the devil's sport (Jdg. 16:25). He will say, "What has become of your vows, tears, confessions? Has all your religion come to this? Did you so often defy the devil, and have you now come to dwell with me? Could you find no weapon to kill you except what was made of gospel metal?"

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Could you not suck poison anywhere except out of the ordinances? Could you find no way to hell except by counterfeit godliness?" What a vexation this will be, to have the devil so reproach a man! It is sad to be the object of his insults in this life: Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, when she saw that she might avoid the infamy, put asp's to her breasts and died. What will it be to have the devil triumph over a man at the last day!

Let us therefore take heed of this kind of *pageantry* or *devout stage-play*. What may make us fear our hearts more is when we see tall cedars in the church that are worm-eaten with

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<sup>1</sup> A legal document evidencing the discharge of a debt or obligation.



hypocrisy. Balaam was a prophet, Jehu a king, Judas an apostle — all of them stand to this day on record as hypocrites.

It is true that the seeds of this sin are in the best Christian; but as it was with leprosy under the law — all who had swellings or spots in the skin of the flesh were *not* considered unclean and put out of the camp (Lev. 13:6) — so all who have the swellings of hypocrisy in them are not to be judged hypocrites; for these may be the spots of God's children (Deut. 32:5). What distinguishes a hypocrite is when hypocrisy is predominant in him, and is like a spreading cancer in the body.

**Ques:** When is a man under the dominion and power of hypocrisy?

**Ans:** There are two signs of its predominance:

1. A squinty eye, when one serves God for sinister ends.
2. A right eye, when there is some sin dear to a man, which he cannot part with.

These two are as clear signs of a hypocrite as any I know. Oh, let us take David's candle and lantern, and search for this leaven, and burn it before the Lord!

Christian, if you mourn for hypocrisy — yet find this sin so potent that you cannot get the mastery of it, go to Christ.

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Beg of him that he would exercise his kingly office in your soul; that he would subdue this sin, and put it under the yoke. Beg of Christ to exercise his spiritual surgery on you. Desire him to lance your heart and cut out what is rotten, and that he would apply the medicine of his blood to heal you of your hypocrisy. Often make that prayer of David: "Let my heart be sound in your statutes" (Psa. 119:80). Lord, let me be anything rather than a hypocrite." Two hearts will exclude one from one heaven.<sup>1</sup>

## Chap. 4. Showing the CHARACTERISTICS of a Godly Man

*2nd Inquiry:* It will be enquired in the next place, "Who is the godly man?" For the full answer to this, I will lay down several specific signs and characteristics of a godly man. The first fundamental sign is,

### Sec. 1. A godly man is a man of KNOWLEDGE.

"The prudent are crowned with knowledge" (Pro. 14:18). The saints are called "*wise virgins*" (Matt. 25:4). A natural man may have some discursive knowledge of God, but he "knows nothing yet as he ought to know" (1Cor. 8:2). He does not know God *savingly*. He may have the eye of natural reason open, but he does not discern the things of God in a spiritual manner. Waters cannot go beyond their spring-head. Vapors cannot rise higher than the sun draws them. A natural man cannot act above his sphere; he is no more able to judge sacred things rightly than a blind man is able to judge colors.

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- (1) He does not see the evil of his heart. If a face is ever so black and deformed, yet it is not seen under a veil; the heart of a sinner is so black that nothing but hell can pattern it, yet the veil of ignorance hides it.
- (2) He does not see the beauties of a Savior. Christ is a pearl of great price, but a *hidden* pearl.

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<sup>1</sup> Psa 119:113 I hate the double-minded, But I love Your law. See also Jas 1.6-8.

But a godly man is taught by God: “the anointing teaches you of all things” (1John 2:27), that is, all things essential to salvation. A godly man has “the good knowledge of the Lord” (2Chr. 30:22). He has “Sound wisdom” (Pro. 3:21). He knows God in Christ. To know God *out* of Christ is to know him as an enemy, but to know him *in* Christ is sweet and delicious. A gracious soul has “the savor of his knowledge” (2Cor. 2:14). There is a great difference between one who has *read* about a country, or viewed it on the map, and another who has *lived* in the country, and tasted its fruits and spices. The knowledge with which a godly man is adorned, has these eight rare ingredients in it:

**1. It is a GROUNDED knowledge.** “If you continue in the faith *grounded*” (Col. 1:23). It is not simply believing “*as my church believes.*” Saving knowledge rests on a double basis: the Word and Spirit. The one is a guide, the other a witness. Saving knowledge is not changeable or doubtful, but has a certainty in it. “We believe and are *sure* that you are that Christ” (John 6:69); “Being always confident” (2Cor. 5:6); a godly man holds to no more than he will die for. The martyrs were so confirmed in their knowledge of the truth, that they would seal it with their blood.

**2. It is an APPRECIATIVE knowledge.** The lapidary who has the skill to value a jewel, is said to know it. The one who esteems God above the glory of the heavens (Psa. 113:4), and the comforts of the earth (Psa. 73:25), knows him. To compare other things with God is to debase deity, as if you were to compare a *glow-worm* with the *sun*.

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**3. The knowledge of a godly man is QUICKENING knowledge.** “I will never forget your precepts, for you have *quickened* me with them” (Psa. 119:93). Knowledge in a natural man’s head is like a torch in a dead man’s hand; true knowledge animates. A godly man is like John the Baptist, “a *burning* and a *shining* lamp.” He not only *shines* by illumination, but *burns* by affection. The spouse’s knowledge made her “love-sick” (Song 2:5). “I am wounded with love.” I am like a deer that is struck with an arrow; my soul lies bleeding, and nothing can cure me but a sight of him whom my soul loves.

**4. Divine knowledge is APPLIED.** “I know that my redeemer lives” (Job 19:25). A medicine is best when it is *applied*. This applicative knowledge is joyful. Christ is called a “surety” (Heb. 7:22). Oh what joy, when I am drowned in debt, to know that Christ is my surety! Christ is called an “advocate” (1John 2:1). The Greek word for advocate, *parakletos*, signifies a comforter. Oh, what comfort it is when I have a bad cause, to know Christ is my advocate, who never lost any cause that he pleaded!

**Ques:** But how shall I know that I am making a right application of Christ? A hypocrite may think he applies when he does not. Balaam, though a sorcerer, still said, “*my God*” (Num. 22:18).

**Ans. 1:** The one who rightly applies Christ puts these two together, *Jesus* and *Lord*. “Christ Jesus my *Lord*” (Phil. 3:8). Many take Christ as a *Jesus*, to save them; but they refuse him as *Lord*, to rule them. Do you join “*Prince* and *Savior*” (Acts 5:31)? Would you be *ruled by Christ’s laws* as well as *saved by his blood*? Christ is “a *priest upon his throne*” (Zech. 6:13). He will never be a priest to intercede, unless your heart is the throne where he sways his scepter. A true applying of Christ is when we so take him as a husband, that we give ourselves up to him as a Lord.

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**Ans. 2:** The one who rightly applies Christ, fetches virtue from him. The woman in the Gospel, having touched Christ, felt virtue coming from him and her fountain of blood was dried up (Mark 5:29). This is to apply Christ: when we feel a sin-mortifying virtue flow from

him. Naturalists tell us there is an antipathy between the diamond and the loadstone, in that if a piece of iron is laid by the diamond, the diamond will not allow it to be drawn away by the loadstone. In the same way, knowledge which is applicatory, has an *antipathy against sin*, and will not allow the heart to be drawn away by it.

**5. The knowledge of a godly man is TRANSFORMING.** “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are *changed* into the same image” (2Cor. 3:18). As a painter looking at a face draws a face like it in the picture, so looking at Christ in the mirror of the gospel, we are changed into his likeness. We may look at other objects that are beautiful, yet not be made beautiful by them. A deformed face may look at beauty, and yet not be made beautiful. A wounded man may look at a surgeon, and yet not be healed. But this is the excellence of divine knowledge: that it gives us such a sight of Christ that it makes us partake of his nature: as Moses when he had seen God’s back parts, his face shone; some of the rays and beams of God’s glory fell on him.

**6. The knowledge of a godly man is a SELF-EMPTYING.** Carnal knowledge makes the head giddy with pride (1Cor. 8:1, 2). True knowledge brings a man out of love with himself. The more he knows, the more he blushes at his own ignorance. David, a bright star in God’s church, still thought himself rather a *cloud* than a *star* (Psa. 73:22).

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**7. The knowledge of a godly man is GROWING.** “*Increasing* in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10). True knowledge is like the light of the morning, which increases on the horizon until it comes to the full meridian. So sweet is spiritual knowledge that the more a saint knows, the thirstier he is for knowledge. It is called “the riches of knowledge” (1Cor. 1:5). The more riches a man has, the more he still desires. Though Paul knew Christ, yet he wanted to know him more: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection” (Phil. 3:10).

**8. The knowledge of a godly man is PRACTICAL.** “His sheep *follow* him for they know his voice.” (John 10:4). Though God requires knowledge more than burnt-offering (Hos. 6:6), yet it is a knowledge accompanied with obedience. True knowledge not only mends a Christian’s *sight*, but it improves his *pace*. It is a reproach to a Christian to live in a contradiction to his knowledge, to know he should be strict and holy, and yet to live loosely. Not to *obey* is the same as not to *know*: “The sons of Eli did not know the Lord” (1Sam. 2:12). They could not help but know, for they taught others the knowledge of the Lord; and yet they are said not to *know* because they did not *obey*. When knowledge and practice appear together, like Castor and Pollux, then they herald much happiness.

**Use 1: Let us test ourselves by this characteristic:**

**1. Are they godly, who are still in the region of darkness?** “It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.” (Pro. 19:2). Ignorant people cannot give God “a *reasonable* service” (Rom. 12:1). It is sad that after the *Sun of Righteousness* has shone so long in our hemisphere, people would still be under the power of ignorance. Perhaps in the things of the world they know enough that none will exceed them, but in the things of God they have no knowledge. Nahash wanted to make a covenant with Israel, that he might “put out their right eyes” (1Sam. 11:2).

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The devil has left men their left eye — knowledge in secular matters — but he has put out their right eye — they do not understand the mystery of godliness. It may be said of them as of the Jews, “to this day the veil is upon their heart” (2Cor. 3:15). Many Christians are no better than baptized heathen! What a shame it is to be without knowledge! “Some do not have the knowledge of God; I say this to your shame” (1Cor. 15:34). Men think it is a shame

to be ignorant of their trade, but it is no shame to be ignorant of God. There is no going to heaven blindfolded. “For this is a people without understanding; therefore their Maker will not have mercy on them.” (Isa. 27:11).

Surely ignorance in these days is great. It is one thing not to know, and another thing not to be *willing* to know: “They loved darkness rather than light” (John 3:19). It is the owl that loves the dark. Sinners are like the Atlantes, a people in Ethiopia, who curse the sun. Wicked men shut their eyes *willfully* (Matt. 13:15), and God shuts them *judicially* (Isa. 6:10).

**2. Are they godly who, though they have knowledge, do not know “as they ought to know”?** They do not know God experientially. How many knowledgeable people are ignorant? They have *illumination*, but not *sanctification*. Their knowledge has no powerful influence on them to make them better. If you set up a hundred torches in a garden, they will not make the flowers grow; but the *sun* is influential. Many are so far from being better for their knowledge, that they are worse: “your knowledge has perverted you” (Isa. 47:10). The knowledge of most people makes them more cunning in sin; these have little cause to glory in their knowledge. Absalom might boast of the hair of his head, but that hanged him; so these may boast of the knowledge of their head, but it will destroy them!

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**3. Are they godly who, though they have some glimmering of knowledge, have no fiducial application of Christ?** Many in the old world knew there was an ark, but they were drowned because they did not get into it! Knowledge which is not applied will only light a man to hell! It would be better to live as a savage than to die an infidel under the gospel. *Christ not believed in* is dreadful. Moses’ rod, when it was in his hand, did a great deal of good; it wrought miracles. But when it was out of his hand, it became a serpent. So Christ, when laid hold of by the hand of faith, is full of comfort; but not laid hold of, he will prove a serpent to sting!

**Use 2: Because we would evidence that we are godly, let us labor for this good knowledge of the Lord.** What pains men will take to gain natural knowledge! I have read of one Benchorat, who spent forty years finding out the motion of the eighth sphere.<sup>1</sup> What pains, then, should we take in finding out the knowledge of God in Christ! There must be *digging* and *searching* for it, as one would search for a vein of silver. “If you seek her as silver” (Pro. 2:4-5).

*Motive 1.* This is the **best** knowledge. It as far surpasses all other knowledge, as the diamond surpasses a stone. No jewel we wear so adorns us as this: “she is more precious than rubies” (Pro. 3:15). “But where can *wisdom* be found? Where does *understanding* dwell? Man does not know the price of it, says the deep. It is not in me; it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx or the sapphire.” (Job 28:12-18). The dark chaos was a fit emblem of an ignorant soul (Gen. 1:2); but when God lights up the lamp of knowledge in the mind, what a new creation there is! Here the soul sparkles like the sun in its glory.

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*Motive 2.* This knowledge is **comforting**. We may say of worldly knowledge, as Solomon did, “He that increases knowledge, increases sorrow” (Ecc. 1:18). The knowledge of arts and sciences is a *gathering of straw*; but to know God in Christ is the *gathering of pearl*. This knowledge ushers in salvation (1Tim. 2:4).

**Ques: But how shall we get this saving knowledge?**

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<sup>1</sup> Refers to the ancient astrological theory of *trepidation*, which asserts that the precession of the equinoxes reverses direction every 640 years. It asserts that the equinoxes move through the ecliptic at the rate of 1 degree in 80 years over a span of 8 degrees, after which they suddenly reverse direction and travel back over the same 8 degrees.

**Ans:** Not by the power of nature. Some speak of how far well-improved *reason* will go; but, alas! the plumb-line of reason is too short to fathom the deep things of God! A man can no more reach the saving knowledge of God by the power of reason, than a pigmy can reach the pyramids. The light of nature will no more help us see Christ, than the light of a candle will help us understand. “The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, nor can he know them” (1Cor. 2:14).

What shall we do, then, to know God in a soul-saving manner? I answer, let us implore the help of God’s Spirit. Paul never saw himself blind until a light shone from heaven (Acts 9:3). God must anoint our eyes before we can see! What need did Christ have to bid Laodicea to come to him for eye-salve, if she could see before (Rev. 3:18)? Oh, let us beg the Spirit, who is “the Spirit of revelation” (Eph. 1:17). Saving knowledge is not by *speculation* but by *inspiration*; “the inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding” (Job 32:8).

We may have excellent *notions* in divinity, but the Holy Spirit must enable us to know them in a *spiritual* manner. A man may see the figures on a sun-dial, but he cannot tell how the day goes unless the sun shines. We may read many truths in the Bible, but we cannot know them savingly until God’s Spirit shines upon us: “the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God” (1Cor. 2:10).

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The Scripture reveals Christ *to* us, but the Spirit reveals Christ *in* us (Gal. 1:16). The Spirit makes known what all the world cannot, namely, the sense of God’s love.

**Use 3: You who have this saving, sanctifying knowledge flourishing in you, bless God for it!** This is the heavenly anointing. The most excellent objects cannot be seen in the dark — but when the light appears, then every flower shines in its native beauty. So while men are in the midnight of a natural state, the beauty of holiness is hidden from them; but when the light of the Spirit comes in a saving manner, then those truths which they slighted before, appear in that glorious luster, which transports them with wonder and love.

Bless God, you saints, that he has removed your *spiritual cataract*, and has granted you to discern those things which by *nature’s spectacles* you could never see. How thankful Christ was to his Father for this! “I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes” (Matt. 11:25). How you should admire free grace: that God has not only brought the *light* to you, but given you *eyes* to see it; that he has enabled you to know the truth “as it is in Jesus” (Eph. 4:21); that he has opened not only the eye of your understanding, but the eye of your conscience! This is a mercy you can never be thankful enough for, that God has so enlightened you that you should not “Sleep the sleep of death.”<sup>Psa 13.3</sup>

## Sec. 2. A godly man is a man moved by FAITH.

As *gold* is the most precious among the metals, so is *faith* among the graces. Faith cuts us off from the wild olive tree of nature, and grafts us into Christ. Faith is the *vital artery of the soul*: “The just shall live by faith” (Hab. 2:4). Those who are destitute of faith, though they breathe, yet they lack life.

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*Faith is the quickener of the graces*; not a grace stirs until faith sets it working. Faith is to the soul what the animal spirits are to the body; they excite lively activity in it. *Faith excites repentance*. When I believe God’s love for me, this makes me weep that I should sin against so good a God. *Faith is the mother of hope*; first we believe the promise, then we hope for it. Faith is the oil which feeds the lamp of hope. Faith and hope are two turtledove graces; take away one,

and the other languishes. If the sinews are cut, the body is lame; if this sinew of faith is cut, hope is lame. *Faith is the ground of patience*; the one who believes that God is his God, and that all providences work for his good, patiently yields himself to the will of God. Thus faith is a living principle.

The *life* of a saint is nothing else but a life of faith. His *prayer* is the breathing of faith (Jas. 5:15). His *obedience* is the result of faith (Rom. 16:26). A godly man lives in Christ by faith, as the beam lives in the sun: “I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). A Christian, by the power of faith, sees above human reason, treads above the moon (2Cor. 4:18).<sup>1</sup> By faith his heart is finally quieted; he trusts himself and all his affairs to God (Psa. 112:7). As in a time of war, men get into a garrison and entrust themselves and their treasures there, so “the name of the Lord is a strong tower” (Pro. 18:10), and a believer entrusts all that he is worth in this garrison. “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day” (2Tim. 1:12). God trusted Paul with his gospel, and Paul trusted God with his soul.

*Faith is a panacea*, or a remedy against all troubles. It is a godly man’s sheet anchor<sup>2</sup> which he casts out into the sea of God’s mercy, and is kept from sinking in despair.

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**Use:** Let us test ourselves by this characteristic. Alas, how far from being godly are those who are destitute of faith! They are altogether drowned in sense. Most men are spiritually blind; they can only see just before them (2Pet. 1:9). I have read of a people in India who are born with one eye. Such are they who are born with the eye of *reason*, but lack the eye of *faith*. Because they do not see God with bodily eyes, they do not believe in a God. They may as well not believe they have souls because these cannot be seen either.

Oh, where is the one who lives in *excelsis*, the highest, who has gone into the upper region and sees “things not seen” (Heb. 11:27)? “If men lived by faith, would they use sinful means for a livelihood?” (Chrysostom). If there were faith, would there be so much fraud? If faith lived, would men, like dead fish, swim downstream? In this age there is scarcely so much faith to be found among men, as there is among the devils, “for they believe and tremble” (Jas. 2:19). It was a grave and serious comment of Mr. Greenham,<sup>3</sup> that he did not fear Papism would be England’s ruin, but atheism. I will not expand on this topic, having largely done so in another discourse.

### Sec. 3. A godly man is fired with LOVE to God.

“I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.” Psalm 116:1

Faith and love are the two poles on which all religion turns. A true saint is carried in that chariot, “the midst of which is paved with love” (Song 3:10). As faith quickens, so love sweetens every duty. The sun mellows the fruit, so love mellows the services of religion, and gives them a better relish. A godly man is sick from love: “Lord, you know that I love you” (John 21:16).

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“Though, dear Savior, I denied you, it was for lack of strength, not for lack of love.” God is the fountain and quintessence of goodness. His beauty and sweetness lay constraints of love upon a gracious heart. God is the saint’s portion (Psa. 119:57). And what portion is more loved? “I

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<sup>1</sup> **2Co 4:18** We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

<sup>2</sup> A spare or emergency anchor.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Greenham (1535?-1594?) – Puritan preacher at Christ Church, Newgate. In 1592 he wrote his *Treatise of the Sabbath* (pub. 1599). It was said that no book in that age made a greater impression on people’s practice.



would hate my own soul,” says Augustine, “if I found it not loving God.” A godly man loves God and therefore he delights to be in his presence; he loves God and therefore he takes comfort in nothing without him. ‘Have you seen him whom my soul loves?’ (Song 3:3).

The pious soul loves God and therefore thirsts after him. The more he has of God, the more he still desires. A sip of the wine of the Spirit whets the appetite for more. The soul loves God and therefore rejoices to think “of his appearing” (2Tim. 4:8). He loves him and therefore he longs to be with him. Christ was in Paul’s heart, and Paul would be in Christ’s bosom (Phil. 1:23). Once the soul is like God, it would gladly be with God. A gracious heart cries out, “O that I had wings, that I might fly away, and be with my love, Christ!” The bird desires to be out of the cage, though it is hung with pearl.

Such is the love a gracious soul bears to God, that many waters cannot quench it: he loves even a frowning God.

Though I am out of sight and clean forgot,  
Let me not love thee, if I love thee not.<sup>1</sup>

A godly man loves God, though he is reduced to straits. A mother and her child of nine years were about to perish of hunger. The child looking at its mother said, “Mother, do you think God will starve us?” “No, child,” said the mother, “he will not.” The child replied, “But if he does, we must love him, and serve him.”

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**Use:** Let us test our godliness by this touchstone: Do we love God? Is he our treasure and center? Can we, with David, call God our “joy,” yes, our “exceeding joy” (Psa. 43:4)? Do we delight in drawing near to him, and “come before his presence with singing”? (Psa. 100:2) Do we love him for his *beauty* more than his *jewels*? Do we love him, when he seems not to love us?

If this is the sign of a godly man, how few will be found in that number? Where is the man whose heart is dilated in love to God? Many *court* him, but few *love* him. People are for the most part eaten up with self-love; they love their ease, their worldly profit, their lusts, but they do not have a drop of love for God. If they loved God, would they be so willing to be rid of him? “They say to God, Depart from us” (Job 21:14). If they loved God, would they tear his name by their oaths? Does the one who shoots his father in the heart, love him? Though they worship God, they do not love him; they are like the soldiers who bowed the knee to Christ, and mocked him (Matt. 27:29). The one whose heart is a grave in which the love of God is buried, deserves to have that curse written on his tombstone, “Let him be Anathema Maranatha” (1Cor. 16:22). A soul void of divine love is a temper that best suits damned spirits. But I will waive this, and pass to the next.

#### Sec. 4. A godly man is LIKE God.

He has the same judgment as God; he thinks of things as God does; he has a Godlike disposition; he “partakes of the divine nature” (2Pet. 1:4). A godly man bears both God’s *name* and *image*; *godliness* is *God-likeness*. It is one thing to *profess* God, another thing to *resemble* him.

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A godly man is like God in holiness. Holiness is the most brilliant pearl in the King of Heaven’s crown: “glorious in holiness” (Exod. 15:11). God’s power makes him mighty; his mercy makes him lovely; but his holiness makes him glorious. The holiness of God is the intrinsic purity of his nature and his abhorrence of sin. A godly man bears some kind of analogy with God in this. He has the holy oil of consecration upon him: “Aaron the *saint* of the Lord” (Psa. 106:16). Holiness

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<sup>1</sup> From George Herbert’s “The Affliction,” 1633.



is the badge and mark of Christ's people: "The people of your holiness" (Isa. 63:18). The godly are a *holy* as well as a *royal* priesthood (1Pet. 2:9). Nor do they have only a frontispiece of holiness, like the Egyptian temples which were only fair outside; but they are like Solomon's temple, which had gold inside. They have written upon their heart, "Holiness to the Lord." The holiness of the saints consists in their conformity to God's will, which is the rule and pattern of all holiness.

Holiness is a man's glory. Aaron put on garments "for glory and for beauty" (Exod. 28:2). So when a person is invested with the embroidered garment of holiness, it is for glory and beauty.

The goodness of a Christian lies in his holiness, just as the goodness of the air lies in its clarity, and the worth of gold lies in its purity.

**Ques:** In what do the godly reveal their holiness?

**Ans. 1:** *In hating "the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23).* The godly set themselves against evil, both in purpose and in practice. They are fearful of what looks like sin (1Thes. 5:22). The appearance of evil may prejudice a weak Christian. If it does not defile a man's own conscience, it may offend his brother's conscience; and to sin against him is to sin against Christ (1Cor. 8:12). A godly man will not go as far as he may, lest he go further than he should;

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he will not swallow all that others (bribed with preferment<sup>1</sup>) may plead for. *It is easy to put a golden color on rotten stuff.*

**Ans. 2:** *The godly reveal their holiness in being advocates for holiness.* "I will speak of your testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed" (Psa. 119:46). When piety is slandered in the world, the saints will stand up in its defense; they will wipe off the dust of a reproach from the face of religion. Holiness defends the godly, and the godly will defend holiness; it defends them from danger, and they will defend it from disgrace.

**Use 1:** How can those who are unlike God be reputed to be godly? They have nothing of God in them, not one shred of holiness. They call themselves Christians, but blot out the word holiness; you may as well call it day at midnight.

So impudent are some, that they boast they are none of the holy ones. Is it not the Spirit of holiness which marks off the sheep of Christ from the goats? "You were sealed (or marked) with the Holy Spirit" (Eph. 1:13). And is it a matter for men to boast of, that they have none of the Spirit's earmark upon them? Does the apostle not say that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14)? Those who bless themselves in their *unholiness* had best go ring the bells for joy, that they shall never see God.

There are others who hate holiness. Sin and holiness never meet without fighting. Holiness discharges its fire of zeal against sin, and sin spits its venom of malice at holiness. Many pretend to love Christ as a Savior, but they hate him as he is the Holy One (Acts 3:14).

**Use 2:** Let us labor to be like God in holiness.

**Motive 1.** *This is God's great design which he drives on in the world.* It is the end for which the Word is preached.

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The silver drips of the sanctuary are to water the seed of grace, and make a crop of holiness spring up. What use is there in the promises, except to bribe us to holiness? What are all

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<sup>1</sup> A church position that provides profit or prestige.

God's providential dispensations for except to promote holiness? As the Lord makes use of all the seasons of the year, frost and heat, to bring on the harvest, so all prosperous and adverse providences are for promoting the work of holiness in the soul. What is the end of the mission of the Spirit except to make the heart holy? When the air is unwholesome by reason of fog and mist, the wind is a fan to winnow and purify the air. So the blowing of God's Spirit upon the heart is to purify it, and make it holy.

**Motive 2.** *Holiness is that alone, which God is delighted with.* When Tamerlane was presented with a pot of gold, he asked whether the gold had his father's stamp on it. But when he saw it had the Roman stamp, he rejected it. Holiness is God's stamp and impress; if he does not see this stamp on us, he will not own us.

**Motive 3.** *Holiness fits us for communion with God.* Communion with God is a paradox to the men of the world. Not everyone who hangs about the court speaks with the king. We may approach God in our duties and, as it were, hang about the court of heaven — yet not have communion with God. What keeps up the communication with God, is holiness. The holy heart enjoys much of God's presence; he feels heart-warming and heart-comforting virtue in an ordinance. Where God sees his likeness, there he gives his love.

### **Sec. 5. A godly man is very exact and careful about the WORSHIP of God.**

The Greek word for "godly" signifies a right worshipper of God. A godly man reverences divine institutions, and is more for the *purity* of worship than the *pomp*.

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Mixture in sacred things is like a dash in the wine, which though it gives it a color, it only adulterates it. The Lord wanted Moses to make the tabernacle "according to the pattern in the mount" (Exod. 25:40). If Moses had left out anything in the pattern, or added anything to it, it would have been very provoking to God. The Lord has always given testimonies of his displeasure against those who have corrupted his worship. Nadab and Abihu offered "strange fire" (different than what God had sanctified on the altar); "And fire went out from the Lord, and devoured them" (Lev. 10:1, 2). Whatever is not of God's own appointment in his worship, he looks upon as "strange fire". And no wonder he is so highly incensed at it, for it is as if God were not wise enough to appoint the manner in which he would be served. Men will prescribe to him, as if the rules for his worship were defective, and they will attempt to amend the copy, and superadd their own inventions.

A godly man dare not vary from the pattern which God has shown him in the Scripture. And probably this is not the least reason why David was called "a man after God's own heart," because he kept the springs of God's worship pure, and in sacred matters he did not introduce anything of his own devising.

**Use:** By this characteristic we may test ourselves, whether we are godly. Are we tender about the things of God? Do we observe that mode of worship which has the stamp of divine authority on it? It has dangerous consequences to make a medley in religion.

1. *Those who would add to one part of God's worship will be as ready to take away from another.* "Laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the traditions of men" (Mark 7:8). Those who would bring in a *tradition*, will in time lay aside a *command*.

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The Papists are very guilty of this; they bring in altars and crucifixes, and lay aside the second commandment. They bring in oil and cream in baptism, and leave out the cup in the

Lord's Supper. They bring in praying for the dead, and lay aside reading the Scriptures intelligibly to the living. Those who would introduce into God's worship that which he has *not* commanded, will be as ready to blot out that which he *has* commanded.

2. *Those who are for outward mixtures in God's worship, usually disregard the vitals of religion* — living by faith, leading a strict mortified life — these things are less minded by them. *Wasps* have their combs, but there is no honey in them; the religion of many may be likened to those ears which turn all into straw.

3. *Superstition and profaneness kiss each other.* Has it not been known that those who have kneeled at a pillar, have reeled in drunkenness against a post? <sup>1</sup>

4. *Those who are devoted to superstition are seldom or never converted:* "publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matt. 21:31). This was spoken to the chief priests, who were high formalists, and the reason why such people are seldom worked upon savingly is because they have a secret antipathy against the power of godliness. The snake has a fine color, but it also has a sting. So too, men may look zealous and devout outwardly, but retain a sting of hatred in their hearts against goodness. This is why those who have been most hot for superstition have been most hot for persecution. The Church of Rome wears white linen (an emblem of innocence), but the Spirit of God paints her in scarlet (Rev. 17:4). Why is this? Not only because she puts on a scarlet robe, but because her body is dyed scarlet, having soaked her hands in the blood of the saints (Rev. 17:6).

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Let us then, because we would demonstrate that we are godly, keep close to the rule of worship, and in the things of Jehovah, go no further than we can say, "It is written."

## **Sec. 6. A godly man is a SERVANT of God, not a servant of men.**

This characteristic has TWO DISTINCT BRANCHES. I will speak of both in order.

### **Branch 1. A godly man is a servant of God**

"We are the servants of the God of heaven" (Ezra 5:11);

"Epaphras, a servant of Christ" (Col. 4:12).

**Ques:** In what sense is a godly man a servant of God?

**Ans:** In seven respects:

**1. A servant leaves all others, and confines himself to one master;** so a godly man leaves the service of sin, and takes himself to the service of God (Rom. 6:22).<sup>2</sup> Sin is a tyrannizing thing; a sinner is a slave when he sins with the most freedom. The wages which sin gives may deter us from its service: "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Here is damnable pay! A godly man enlists himself in God's family, and is one of his menial servants: "O Lord, truly I am your servant; I am your servant" (Psa. 116:16). David repeats himself,<sup>3</sup> as if he had said, "Lord, I have taken a pledge; no one else can lay claim to me; my ear is bored to your service."

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<sup>1</sup> Alluding to a Roman Catholic priest kneeling at the pillar of the communion table where the Eucharist wine is kept, only to become drunk afterward as he consumes the leftover wine.

<sup>2</sup> **Rom 6:22** But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

<sup>3</sup> Originally, "uses an ingemination."

**2. A servant is not independent, at his own disposal, but at the disposal of his master.** A servant must not do what he pleases, but must be at the will of his master. Thus a godly man is God's servant; he is wholly at God's disposal; he has no will of his own. "Your will be done on earth." Some will say to the godly, "Why can you not do as others do?"

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Why will you not drink and swear, and profane the sabbath as others do?" The godly are God's servants; they must not do what they would — but are under the rules of the family; they must do nothing except in what they can show their master's hand.<sup>1</sup>

**3. A servant is bound.** There are covenants and indentures<sup>2</sup> sealed between him and his master. Thus there are indentures drawn in baptism; and in conversion,<sup>3</sup> the indentures are renewed and sealed. There we bind ourselves to God to be his sworn servants: "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep your righteous judgments" (Psa. 119:106). A godly man has tied himself to the Lord by vow, and he makes conscience of his vow. He would rather die by persecution than live by perjury (Psa. 56:12).

**4. A servant not only wears his master's uniform, but he does his work.** Thus a godly man works for God. Paul "spent and was spent for Christ" (2Cor. 12:15). He outworked all the other apostles (1Cor. 15:10). A godly man is active for God to his last breath, (Psa. 119:112). Only "the dead rest from their labors" (Rev. 14:13).

**5. A servant follows his master;** thus a godly man is a servant of God. While others wander after the beast, he follows after the Lamb (Rev. 13:3; 14:4). He will tread in the steps of Christ. If a master leaps over hedge and ditch, the servant will follow him: A godly man will follow Christ through afflictions. "If any man would come after me, let him take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luk. 9:23). Peter followed Christ on the water. A godly man will follow Christ though it is death at every step. He will keep his goodness when others are bad. Just as all the water in the salt sea cannot make the fish salty, but they still retain their freshness, so all the wickedness in the world cannot make a godly man wicked, but he still retains his piety; he will follow Christ in the worst of times.

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**6. A servant is satisfied with his master's allowance.** He does not say, "I would have such provisions made ready." If he has short fare, he does not find fault. He knows he is a servant, and accepts his master's carving. In this sense, a godly man is God's servant; he is willing to live on God's allowance; if he has but few leftovers, he does not grumble. Paul knew he was a servant; therefore whether more or less fell to his share, he was indifferent (Phil. 4:11). When Christians murmur at their condition, they forget that they are servants, and must live on the allowance of their heavenly Master. You that have the least bit from God, will die in his debt.

**7. A servant will stand up for the honor of his master.** He cannot hear his master reproached, but will vindicate his credit. Thus, every godly man will stand up for the honor of his Master Christ. "My zeal has consumed me" (Psa. 119:139). A servant of God testifies for his truths. Those who can hear God's name reproached, and his ways spoken against, yet be silent, God will be ashamed of such servants, and discard them before men and angels.

**Use:** Let us declare ourselves godly, by being servants of the most high God. Consider:

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<sup>1</sup> That is, to which their Master would give his approval or authority.

<sup>2</sup> A contract binding one party into the service of another.

<sup>3</sup> Here "conversion" refers to transformation (sanctification): the progressive display of godliness.

**Motive 1. *God is the best Master.*** He is punctilious in all his promises: “There is no God like you, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keeps covenant with your servants...” verse 56, “not one word of all his good promise has failed” (1Kings 8:23,56). God is of a most sweet and gracious disposition. He has this property, that he is “slow to anger” (Psa. 103:8) and “ready to forgive” (Psa. 86:5). In our needs, he relieves us; in our weakness, he pities us. He reveals his secrets to his servants (Psa. 25:14; Prov. 3:32). He waits on his servants. Was there ever such a Master?

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“Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he comes, finds them watching. Truly I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them sit down to meal, and will come and serve them” (Luk. 12:37). When we are sick, he makes our bed: “You will make all their bed in their sickness” (Psa. 41:3). He holds our head when we are fainting. Other masters may forget their servants, and cast them off when they are old, but God will not. “You are my servant, O Israel; you shall not be forgotten by me” (Isa. 44:21). It is a slander to say that *God is a hard Master.*

**Motive 2. *God’s service is the best service.*** There are six privileges in God’s service:

(1) FREEDOM. Though the saints are bound to God’s service, they serve him freely. God’s Spirit, who is called a “free Spirit” (Psa. 51:12), makes them free and cheerful in their obedience. The Spirit carries them on the wings of delight. This makes duty a privilege; it does not *force*, but *draws*; it enlarges the heart in love, and fills it with joy. God’s service is perfect freedom.

(2) HONOR. David the king professes himself one of God’s pensioners: “I am your servant” (Psa. 143:12). Paul, when he would blaze his coat of arms, and set forth his best heraldry, does not call himself “Paul, a Hebrew of the Hebrews,” or “Paul, of the tribe of Benjamin,” but “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:1). Theodosius thought it was a greater dignity to be God’s servant, than to be an emperor. Christ himself, who is equal with his Father, is nevertheless not ashamed of the title “servant” (Isa. 53:11). Every servant of God is a son; every subject is a prince! It is more honor to serve God than to have kings serve us. The angels in heaven are servitors<sup>1</sup> to the saints on earth.

(3) SAFETY. God takes care of his servants; he gives them protection. “You are my servant; fear not; I am with you” (Isa. 41:9, 10).

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God hides his servants: “In the secret of his tabernacle he shall hide me” (Psa. 27:5). That is, he shall keep me safe, as in the most holy place of the sanctuary, where none but the priests might enter. Christ’s wings are both for healing and for hiding, for curing and for securing us (Mal. 4:2). The devil and his instruments would soon devour the servants of God, if He did not set an invisible guard about them, and cover them with the golden feathers of his protection (Psa. 91:4). “I am with you, and no man shall set on you to hurt you” (Acts 18:10). God’s watchful eye is ever on his people, and the enemies shall not do the mischief they intend; they shall not be destroyers, but physicians.

(4) GAIN. Atheists say, “It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances?” (Mal. 3:14). Besides the cover which God gives in this life (sweet peace of conscience), he reserves his best wine until last: he gives a glorious kingdom to his servants (Heb. 12:28). The servants of God may be enslaved and abused for a while, but they shall have promotion at last: “where I am, there shall my servant be” (John 12:26).

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<sup>1</sup> Someone who performs the duties of an attendant for someone else.



(5) ASSISTANCE. Other masters apportion work for their servants, but do not help them in their work. But our Master in heaven not only gives us work, but strength: “you strengthened me with strength in my soul” (Psa. 138:3). God bids us serve him, and he will *enable* us to serve him: “I will cause you to walk in my statutes” (Ezek. 36:27). The Lord not only fits *work* for us, but fits *us* for our work; along with his *command*, he gives *power*.

(6) SUPPLIES. A master will not let his servants be in need. God’s servants shall be provided for: “truly you shall be fed” (Psa. 37:3). Does God give us a *Christ*, and will he deny us a *crust*? He is “the God who has fed me all my days” (Gen. 48:15).

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If God does not give us what we *crave*, he will give us what we *need*. The wicked are fed, who are but dogs (Phil. 3:2). If a man feeds his *dog*, surely he will feed his *child*! Oh, then, who would not be in love with God’s service?

**Motive 3. We are engaged to serve God.** We are “bought with a price” (1Cor. 6:20). This is a metaphor taken from those who ransom captives from prison by paying a sum of money for them. They are to serve those who ransomed them. So when the devil had taken us prisoners, Christ ransomed us with a price, not of money, but of blood. Therefore we are to serve him only. If anyone can lay a better claim to us than Christ, we may serve them; but Christ having the best right to us, we are to cling to him and enroll ourselves forever in his service.

I pass now to the second branch of this characteristic.

### **Branch 2. A godly man is not the servant of men**

“Do not be the servants of men” (1Cor. 7:23).

**Ques:** But is there no service that we owe to men?

**Ans:** There is a threefold serving of men:

1. There is a **civil** service that we owe to men, as inferior to superior. The servant is a *living tool*, as Aristotle said.<sup>1</sup> “Servants, obey your masters” (Eph. 6:5).
2. There is a **religious** service that we owe to men, when we are serviceable to their souls: “your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2Cor. 4:5).
3. There is a **sinful** serving of men. This consists of three things:
  - (1) When we prefer men’s injunctions before God’s institutions. God commands one thing; man commands another. God says, “Sanctify the Sabbath.” Man says, “Profane it.” When *men’s edicts* have more force on us than *God’s precepts*, this is to be the servants of men.

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(2) When we voluntarily prostitute ourselves to the impure lusts of men, we let them lord it over our consciences. When we are pliable and conformable to anything, either Arminian or atheist; either for the Gospel or the Koran. When we will be what others would have us be, then we are like Issachar, who is “a strong donkey crouching down between two burdens” (Gen. 49:14). This is not *humility*, but *sordidness*, and it is men-serving.

(3) When we are advocates in a bad cause, pleading for any impious, unjustifiable act — when we baptize sin with the name of religion, and wash the devil’s face with our oratory — *this* is to be the servants of men. In these cases, a godly person will not so unman himself, as

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, vol. 1, iv.

to serve men. He says as Paul, "If I pleased men, I would not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10); and as Peter, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

**Use:** How many leagues distant from godliness, are those who serve men — who either for fear of punishment, or from hope of promotion, comply with the sinful commands of men — who would put their conscience under any yoke, and sail with any wind which blows profit. These are the "Servants of men;" they have abjured their baptismal vow, and renounced the Lord who bought them.

To the one who is so bendable as to change into any form, and bow as low as hell to please men, I would say two things:

1. You who have learned all your postures — who can cringe and tack about<sup>1</sup> — how will you look Christ in the face another day? When you say on your death bed, "Lord, look on your servant," Christ will disclaim you, and say, "My servant? No! You renounced my service; you were "a servant of men;" Depart from me; I do not know you." What a cooling card<sup>2</sup> this will be at that day!

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2. What does a man get by sinfully enslaving himself? He gets a blot on his name, a curse on his estate, a hell in his conscience; no, even those who he basely stooped to serve, will scorn and despise him. How the high priests kicked Judas aside! "You see to it!" (Matt. 27:4).

So that we may not be the servants of men, let us abandon *fear* (Est. 8:17) and advance *faith*. Faith is a world-conquering grace (1John 5:4). It overcomes the world's music and furnace;<sup>3</sup> it steels a Christian with divine courage, and makes him stand immovable, like a rock in the midst of the sea.

## Sec. 7. A godly man PRIZES CHRIST.

To illustrate this, I will show:

1. That Jesus Christ is precious in himself.
2. That a godly man esteems him as precious.

### 1. Jesus Christ is precious in himself.

"Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, **precious**" (1Pet. 2:6).

**(1) Christ is compared to "a bundle of myrrh"** (Song 1:13). Myrrh is very precious; it was one of the chief spices from which the holy anointing oil was made (Exod. 30:25).

(1) Myrrh has a *perfuming* nature. So Christ perfumes our persons and services so that they are a sweet aroma to God. Why is the church, that heavenly bride, so perfumed with grace, unless Christ, that myrrh tree, has dripped upon her? (Song 3:6)

(2) Myrrh has an *exhilarating* nature. The smell of it comforts and refreshes the spirits. So Christ comforts the souls of his people when they are fainting under their sins and sufferings.

**(2) Christ is compared to a pearl:** "When he had found one pearl of great price" (Matt. 13:46). Christ, this pearl, was little in regard to his humility, but of infinite value.

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<sup>1</sup> Tack: to turn and adjust the sail to every wind that blows.

<sup>2</sup> Something that dashes hopes.

<sup>3</sup> Dan 3.5, 6. As soon as you hear the sound of... music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold... Whoever does not... will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.



Jesus Christ is a pearl that God wears in his bosom (John 1:18); a pearl whose luster drowns the world's glory (Gal. 6:14); a pearl that enriches the soul, the angelic part of man (1Cor. 1:5); a pearl that enlightens heaven (Rev. 21:23); a pearl so precious that it makes us precious to God (Eph. 1:6); a pearl that is cordial and restorative; a pearl of more worth than heaven.

**The preciousness of Christ is seen in three ways:**

**(1) He is precious in his PERSON;** he is the picture of his Father's glory (Heb. 1:3).

**(2) He is precious in his OFFICES** which are several rays of the Sun of Righteousness:

a. Christ's PROPHETIC office is precious (Deut. 18:15). He is the great oracle of heaven; he has a preciousness above all the prophets which went before him; he teaches not only the *ear*, but the *heart!* He who has the key of David [Rev 3.7](#) in his hand, opened the heart of Lydia (Acts 16:14).

b. Christ's PRIESTLY office is precious: this is the solid basis of our comfort. "Now he has appeared once to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). By virtue of this sacrifice, the soul may go to God with boldness. "Lord, give me heaven; Christ has purchased it for me; he hung upon the *cross*, that I might sit upon the *throne!*" Christ's *blood* and *incense* are the two hinges on which our salvation turns.<sup>1</sup>

c. Christ's REGAL office is precious: "He has on his robe and on his thigh, a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS!" (Rev. 19:16). Christ has a pre-eminence above all other kings for majesty; he has the highest throne, the richest crown, the largest dominions, and the longest possession: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever" (Heb. 1:8). Though Christ has many assessors,<sup>2</sup> yet no successors. Christ sets up his scepter where no other king does; he rules the *will* and *affections*; his power binds the *conscience*. The angels take the oath of allegiance to him (Heb. 1:6).

Christ's KINGSHIP is seen in two royal acts:

1. In ruling his people.
2. In ruling over his enemies.

**(1) In ruling his people.** He rules with clemency; his regal rod has honey at the end of it. Christ displays the ensign of mercy, which makes so many volunteers run to his standard (Psa. 110:3). Holiness without mercy, and justice without mercy, would be dreadful — but mercy encourages poor sinners to trust in him.

**(2) In ruling over his enemies.** He pulls down their pride, makes foolish their policy, restrains their malice. "The remainder of wrath, You shall restrain;" or as it in the Hebrew, "You shall girdle up" (Psa 76.10). That stone "cut out of the mountain without hands, which struck the image" (Dan. 2:34), was an emblem, says Augustine, of Christ's monarchical power, conquering and triumphing over his enemies.

**(3) Christ is precious in his BENEFITS.** By Christ all dangers are removed; through Christ all mercies are conveyed; in his blood flows justification; purgation; fructification;

<sup>1</sup> Exo 30.1-10.

<sup>2</sup> Assessor — a judge or evaluator under the chief judge: Eph 2.6; 1Cor 6.3.

pacification; adoption; perseverance; glorification. This will be a matter of the most sublime joy unto eternity. We read that those who had passed over the sea of glass stood with their harps and sang the song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev. 15:2, 3). So too, when the saints of God have passed over the glassy sea of this world, they shall sing hallelujahs to the Lamb who has redeemed them from sin and hell, and has translated them into that glorious paradise where they shall see God forever and ever.

The second thing to be illustrated is that,

## **2. Every godly man sets a high value and estimate on Christ.**

“To you therefore who believe, he is precious!” (1Pet. 2:7). In the Greek it is, “an honor.”

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Believers have an honorable esteem of Christ. The psalmist speaks like one captivated with Christ’s amazing beauty: “there is none upon earth that I desire besides you” (Psa. 73:25). He did not say he *had* nothing; he had many comforts on earth, but he *desired* none but God; as if a wife were to say that there is no one’s company she prizes like her husband’s. How did David prize Christ? “You are fairer than the children of men” (Psa. 45:2). The spouse in the Song of Solomon looked upon Christ as the *Coriphaeus*, the most incomparable one, “the chief among ten thousand” (Song 5:10). Christ outvies all others: “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my lover among the sons” (Song 2:3). Christ infinitely more excels all the beauties and glories of this visible world, than the apple tree surpasses the trees of the wild forest.

Paul so prized Christ that he made him his chief study: “I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ” (1Cor. 2:2). He judged nothing else of worth. Paul best knew Christ: “have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” (1Cor. 9:1). He saw him with his bodily eyes in a vision when he was rapt up into the third heaven (2Cor. 12:2); and he saw him with the eye of his faith in the blessed supper. Therefore he knew him best. Consider how he slighted and devalued other things in comparison with Christ: “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Phil. 3:8). Gain he counted loss, and gold he counted dung, for Christ. Indeed, a godly person can but choose to set a high valuation upon Christ; he sees **a fullness of worth in him:**

1. *A fullness in regard to variety.* “In whom are hidden all treasures” (Col. 2:3). No country has all commodities from its own growth; but Christ has in himself all kinds of fullness — fullness of merit, of spirit, of love. He has a treasury adequate for all our wants.

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2. *A fullness in regard to degree.* Christ does not have only a few drops or rays of goodness, but is more full of it than the sun is full of light; he has the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9).

3. *A fullness in regard to duration.* The fullness in the creature, like the brooks of Arabia, is soon dried up — but Christ’s fullness is inexhaustible; it is a fullness over-flowing and ever-flowing.

And this fullness is for believers: Christ is, as Luther says, a common treasury or magazine for the saints: “of his fullness have all we received” (John 1:16). Put a glass under a *still* and it receives water out of the still, drop by drop. So those who are united to Christ have the dews and drops of his grace distilling on them. Christ may well, then, be admired by all those who believe.

**Use 1:** If a godly man is a high prizer of Christ, then what is to be thought of those who do not put a value upon Christ? Are they godly or not? **There are four sorts of people who do not prize Christ:**

1. *The Jews*. They do not believe in Christ: “to this day, the veil is upon their heart” (2Cor. 3:15). They expect their future age and a Messiah still to come, as their own Talmud reports. They blaspheme Christ; they slight *imputed* righteousness; they despise the virgin Mary, in derision calling her *Marah*, which signifies bitterness; they vilify the gospel; they deny the Christian sabbath; they hold Christians an abomination; they hold that it is not lawful for a Jew to take medicine from a Christian. Schecardus relates the story of one Bendema, a Jew who was bitten by a snake. A Christian came to heal him, but he refused his help and chose to die rather than be healed by a Christian; so the Jews hate Christ, and all that wear his uniform.

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2. *The Socinians*, who acknowledge only Christ’s humanity; this is to make him below the angels — for human nature, simply considered, is inferior to the angelic (Psa. 8:5).

3. *Proud professors*,<sup>1</sup> who do not lay the whole stress of their salvation upon Christ, but would mingle *their dross* with *his gold*, *their duties* with *his merits*. This is to steal a jewel from Christ’s crown and implicitly deny that he is a perfect Savior.

4. *Airy speculators*, who prefer the study of the arts and sciences before Christ; not that the knowledge of these is not commendable: “Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22). Human learning is of good use to prepare for the study of better things, just as a coarser dye prepares the cloth for a richer and deeper dye. But the fault is when the study of Christ is neglected. The knowledge of Christ ought to have preeminence. It was surely not without a mystery that God allowed all Solomon’s writings about birds and plants to be lost — but what he wrote about spiritual wisdom was miraculously preserved — as if God would teach us that, to know Christ (the true Wisdom), is the crowning knowledge (Pro. 8:12). One leaf of this tree of life will give us more comfort on a deathbed than the whole realm of human science. What is it to know all the motions of the orbs, and the influences of the stars, and in the meantime be ignorant of Christ, the bright Morning Star (Rev. 22:16)? What is it to understand the nature of minerals or precious stones, and not to know Christ, the true Cornerstone (Isa. 28:16)? It is undervaluing, indeed, despising Christ, when with the loadstone we draw iron and straw to us, but neglect the one who has refined gold to bestow on us (Rev. 3:18).

**Use 2:** Is it the sign of a godly person to prize Christ? Then *let us test our godliness by this*: Do we set a high estimation on Christ?

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**Ques:** How shall we know that?

**Ans. 1:** If we prize Christ, then in our judgments *we prefer him before other things*. We value Christ above honor and riches; the Pearl of Great Price lies nearest our heart. The one who prizes Christ esteems the gleanings of Christ better than the world’s vintage. He counts the worst things of Christ better than the best things of the world. Moses esteemed “the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt” (Heb. 11:26). And is it thus with us? Has the price of worldly things fallen? Gregory Nazianzen solemnly blessed God that he had anything to lose for Christ’s sake. But alas, how few Nazianzens are to be found! You will hear some say they have honorable thoughts of Christ, but they prize their land and estate above him. The young man in the Gospel preferred his bags of gold before Christ. Judas valued thirty pieces of silver above him. May it not be feared, if an hour of trial comes,

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<sup>1</sup> Professor: someone who professes faith in Christ — *i.e.*, a *Christian*; here it is a nominal Christian.

that there are many who would rather renounce their baptism, and throw off Christ's uniform — than hazard the loss of their earthly possessions for him?

**Ans. 2:** If we prize Christ, *we cannot live without him*; things which we value, we do not know how to be without. A man may live without music, but not without food. A child of God can lack health and friends, but he cannot lack Christ. In the absence of Christ, he says as Job, "I went mourning without the sun" (Job 30:28). I have the *starlight of creature comforts*, but I need the *Sun of Righteousness*. "Give me children," said Rachel, "or I die" (Gen. 30:1). So the soul says, "Lord, give me Christ, or I die; one drop of the *water of life* to quench my thirst."

Let us *test by this*: Do they prize Christ if they can manage well enough without him? Give a child a rattle and it will not pay attention to gold. If men have but worldly accommodations, corn and wine, they can be content well enough without Christ.

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Christ is a spiritual Rock (1Cor. 10:4). Let men have but "oil in the cruse" <sup>1Kng 17.12</sup> and they will not care for honey out of the rock.<sup>1</sup> If their trading is gone, they complain — but if God takes away the gospel, which is the ark in which Christ the manna is hidden, they are quiet and tame enough. Do they prize Christ, if they can sit down and be content without him?

**Ans. 3:** If we prize Christ, then *we will not grudge any pains to get him*. The one who prizes gold, will dig for it in the mine. "My soul follows hard after God" (Psa. 63:8). Plutarch reports of the Gauls, an ancient people in France, that after they tasted the sweet wine of the Italian grape, they sought after that country, and never rested until they arrived at it. The one in whose eye Christ is precious, never rests until he has gained him: "I sought him whom my soul loves; I held him, and would not let him go" (Song 3:1, 4).

*Test by this*: Many say they have Christ in high veneration, but they are not industrious in the use of the means to obtain him. If Christ would drop like a ripe fig into their mouth, they could be content to have him — but they will not put themselves to too much trouble to get him. Does someone prize his health if he will not put himself on medicine or exercise?

**Ans. 4:** If we prize Christ, then *we take great satisfaction in Christ*. What joy a man takes in what he counts as his treasure! The one who prizes Christ makes him the head of his joy. He can delight in Christ when other delights are gone: "Though the fig tree does not flourish, yet I will rejoice in the Lord" (Hab. 3:17-18). Though a *flower* in a man's garden dies, yet he can delight in his *money* and *jewels*. The one who esteems Christ can find his solace in Christ, when there is autumn upon all his other comforts.

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**Ans. 5:** If we prize Christ, then *we will part with our dearest cravings for him*. Paul said of the Galatians that they so esteemed him that they were ready to pull out their own eyes and give them to him (Gal. 4:15). The one who esteems Christ, will pull out that lust which is as precious as his right eye! A wise man will throw away a poison for a medicine. The one who sets a high value on Christ will part with his pride, unjust gain, and sinful ways (Isa. 30:32). He will set his feet upon the neck of his sins.

*Test by this*: How can they be said to prize Christ if they will not leave a worthless thing for Him; or if they prefer a damning pleasure above a saving Christ!

**Ans. 6:** If we prize Christ, *we will think we cannot have him at too high a cost*. We may buy gold for too much, but we cannot purchase Christ for too much. Though we part with our

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<sup>1</sup> Speaking of God's provision for Jacob in dearth, and Israel's later waywardness in plenty (Deu 32.8-15).

blood for him, it is not a lost bargain. The apostles rejoiced that they were so graced as to be dis-graced for Christ (Acts 5:41). They esteemed their fetters more precious than bracelets of gold. Do not let him who refuses to bear his cross, say that he prizes Christ. “When persecution arises because of the word, he quickly stumbles.” (Matt. 13:21).

**Ans. 7:** If we prize Christ, *we will be willing to help others to a part in him.* What we consider excellent, we desire our friend to have a share in it. If a man has found a spring of water, he will call others so that they may drink and satisfy their thirst. Do we commend Christ to others? Do we take them by the hand and lead them to Christ? This shows how few prize Christ, because they do not strive more that their relations should have a part in him. They get land and riches for their posterity, but they have no care to leave them the Pearl of Great Price for their portion.

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**Ans. 8:** If we prize Christ, then *we prize him in health as well as in sickness; in wealth as well as in poverty.* A friend is prized at all times; the Rose of Sharon is always sweet. The one who values his Savior rightly has as precious thoughts of him in a day of prosperity as he does in a day of adversity. The wicked make use of Christ only when they are in straits — as did the elders of Gilead who went to Jephthah when they were in distress (Jdg. 11:7). Themistocles complained about the Athenians, that they only ran to him as they did to a tree, to shelter them in a storm; sinners desire Christ only for shelter. The Hebrews never chose their judges except when they were in some imminent danger; godless people never look to Christ except at death, when they are in danger of hell.

**Use 3:** Because we would prove to the world that we have the impress of godliness on us, let us be prizers of Jesus Christ; he is elect, precious to us. Christ is the wonder of beauty. Pliny said of the mulberry tree, that there is nothing in it except what is therapeutic and useful: the fruit, leaves, and bark. So there is nothing in Christ except what is precious. His name is precious, his virtues are precious, his blood is precious — more precious than the world.

Oh then, let us have endearing thoughts of Christ; let him be accounted our chief treasure and delight. **This is the reason why millions perish — because they do not prize Christ.** Christ is the door by which men are to enter heaven (John 10:9). If they do not know this door, or are so proud that they will not stoop to go in at it, how can they be saved?

That we may have Christ-admiring thoughts, let us consider:

**1. We cannot prize Christ at too high a cost.** We may prize other things above their value. That is our sin. We commonly overrate the creature;

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we think there is more worth in it than there is; therefore God withers our gourd, because we over-prize it. But we cannot raise our esteem of Christ high enough: he is beyond all value! There is no ruby or diamond on which the jeweler cannot set a fair price. He can say it is worth so much and no more. But Christ’s worth can never be fully known. No seraphim can set a due value on him. His are unsearchable riches (Eph. 3:8). Christ is more precious than the soul, than the angels, than heaven.

**2. Jesus Christ has highly prized us.** He took our flesh upon himself (Heb. 2:16). He made his soul an offering for us (Isa. 53:10). How precious our salvation was to Christ! Shall we not prize and adore the one who has put such a value upon us?

**3. Not to prize Christ is highly imprudent.** Christ is our guide to glory. It is folly for a man to slight his guide. He is our physician (Mal. 4:2). It is folly to despise our physician.

What, are we to set lightly by Christ for things of no value? “You blind fools!” (Mat. 23:17). How is a fool tested, except by showing him an apple and a piece of gold? If he chooses the *apple* before the gold, he is judged to be a fool, and his estate is beggared. How many such **idiots** are there who choose the gaudy, empty things of this life before the Prince of Glory! Will not Satan beggar them in the end, as fools?

**4. Some slight Christ** now and say, “There is no beauty in him that he should be desired” (Isa. 53:2). There is a day coming shortly when Christ will slight them as much. He will set as lightly by them as they do by him. He will say, “I do not know you” (Luk. 13:27). What a slighting word that will be, when men cry, “Lord Jesus, save us!” and he says, “I was offered to you, but you would have none of me; you scorned me, and now I will set lightly by you and your salvation. Depart from me, I do not know you!” This is all that sinners get by rejecting the Lord of life. At the Day of *Judgment*, Christ will slight those who have slighted him in the Day of *Grace*.

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### Sec. 8. A godly man is an evangelical WEEPER.

David sometimes *sang with his harp*; and sometimes *his eye* wept: “I water my couch with my tears” (Psa. 6:6). Christ calls his spouse his “dove” (Song 2:14). The dove is a weeping creature. *Grace dissolves and liquefies the soul*, causing a spiritual thaw. *The sorrow of the heart runs out at the eye* (Psa. 31:9).

The Rabbis report that the same night on which Israel departed from Egypt towards Canaan, all the *idols* of Egypt were broken down by lightning and earthquake. So too, at that very time at which men go out from their natural condition, towards heaven, all the *idols of sin* in the heart must be broken down by repentance! A *melting heart* is the chief branch of the covenant of grace (Ezek. 36:26), and it is the product of the Spirit: “I will pour upon the house of David the spirit of grace, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, *and they shall mourn for him*” (Zech. 12:10).

**Ques: But why is a godly man a weeper?** Is not sin pardoned, the ground of joy? Has he not had a transforming work upon his heart? Why then does he weep?

**Ans:** A godly man finds sufficient matter for weeping:

**1. He weeps for the INDWELLING of sin**, the law in his members (Rom. 7:23), the outbursts and first risings of sin. His nature is a poisoned fountain. A regenerate person grieves that he carries about with him, that which is enmity to God!

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His heart is like the wide sea in which there are innumerable *creeping things* (Psa. 104:25) — vain, sinful thoughts. A child of God laments *hidden* wickedness; he has more evil in him than he knows of. There are those *meanderings* in his heart which he cannot trace — an unknown world of sin. “Who can understand his errors?” (Psa. 19:12).

**2. A godly man weeps for the ADHERENCE of corruption.** If he could get rid of sin, there would be some comfort, but he cannot shake off this viper! Sin clings to him like leprosy! Though a child of God forsakes his sin, yet sin will not forsake him. “Concerning the rest of the *beasts*, they had their *dominion* taken away, yet their *lives* were prolonged for a season” (Dan. 7:12). So though the *dominion* of sin is taken away, yet its life is prolonged for a season; and while sin *lives*, it *molests*! The Persians were daily enemies to the Romans, and they would always be invading their frontiers: so sin “wars against the soul” (1Pet. 2:11). And there is no cessation of arms until death. Will this not cause tears?

**3. A child of God weeps that he is sometimes overcome by the PREVALENCE of corruption.** “The evil I would not do, *that* I do.” (Rom. 7:19). Paul was like a man carried *down* the stream. How often a saint is overpowered by pride and passion! When David had sinned, he steeped his soul in the *brinish tears of repentance*. It can only grieve a regenerate person to think that he should be so foolish — after he has felt the sting of sin — as yet to put this fire in his bosom again!

**4. A godly heart grieves that he CANNOT BE MORE HOLY.** It troubles him that he shoots so short of the rule and standard which God has set. “I would,” he says, “love the Lord with all my heart. But how defective my love is! How far short I come of what I *should* be; no, of what I might have been! What can I see in my life, but either *blanks* or *blots*?”

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**5. A godly man sometimes weeps out of the sense of GOD’S LOVE.** Gold is the finest and most solid of all the metals, yet it is the soonest melted by fire. *Gracious* hearts, which are *golden* hearts, are the soonest melted into tears by the fire of God’s love. I once knew a holy man, who was walking in his garden and shedding plenty of tears, when a friend came on him accidentally and asked him why he wept. He broke forth into this pathetic expression: “Oh, the love of Christ! The love of Christ!” Thus we have seen the cloud melted into *water* by the sunbeams.

**6. A godly person weeps because the sins he commits are in some sense worse than the sins of other men.** The sin of a justified person is very odious:

**(1) because he acts *contrary to his own principles*.** He not only sins against the rule, but against his principles, against his knowledge, vows, prayers, hopes, experiences. He knows how dearly sin will cost him — yet he ventures upon the forbidden fruit!

**(2) because it is a sin of unkindness** (1Kings 11:9). Peter’s denying of Christ was a sin against *love*. Christ had enrolled him among the apostles. He had taken him up into the Mount of Transfiguration and shown him the glory of heaven in a vision. Yet after all this dazzling mercy, it was base ingratitude that he should deny Christ! This made him go out and “weep bitterly” (Matt. 26:75). He baptized himself, as it were, in his own tears! *The sins of the godly go nearest to God’s heart*. Others sins *anger* God, these *grieve* him! The sins of the wicked pierce Christ’s *side*; the sins of the godly wound his *heart*! The unkindness of a *spouse* goes nearest the heart of her husband.

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**(3) because it reflects more dishonor upon God.** “By this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme” (2Sam. 12:14). The sins of God’s people put *black spots on the face of piety*. Thus we see what cause there is, why a child of God should weep even after conversion.

Now this sorrow of a godly man for sin, is not a despairing sorrow. He does not mourn without hope. “Iniquities prevail against me” (Psa. 65:3): there is the holy *soul weeping*. “As for our transgressions, you shall purge them away” (Psa. 65:3): there is *faith triumphing*.

Godly sorrow is excellent. There is as much difference between the sorrow of a godly man and a wicked man as there is between the water of a spring which is clear and sweet, and the water of the sea which is salty and brackish. **A godly man’s sorrow has these three qualifications:**

**(1) It is INWARD.** It is a sorrow of *soul*. Hypocrites “disfigure their *faces*” (Matt. 6:16). Godly sorrow goes deep; it is a “pricking at the heart” (Acts 2:37). True sorrow is a spiritual martyrdom; therefore it is called “soul affliction” (Lev. 23:29).



**(2) It is SINCERE.** It is more for the evil that is *in* sin than the evil which follows *after*; it is more for the *spot* than the *sting*. Hypocrites weep for sin only as it brings affliction. I have read of a fountain that never sends forth streams except the evening before a famine: hypocrites never send forth the streams of their tears, except when God's judgments are approaching.

**(3) It is INFLUENTIAL.** It makes the heart better: "by the sadness of the countenance, the heart is made better" (Ecc. 7:3). Divine tears not only *wet*, but *wash*; they purge out the love of sin!

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**Use 1.** How far from being godly are those who scarcely ever shed a tear for sin! If they lose a near relation, they weep. But though they are in danger of losing God and their souls, they do not weep. How few know what it is to be in an agony for sin, or what a broken heart means! Their eyes are not like the "fishpools in Heshbon," full of water (Song 7:4); but rather like the mountains of Gilboa, which had "no dew" upon them (2Sam. 1:21). It was a greater plague for Pharaoh to have his *heart turned into stone* than to have his *rivers turned into blood*.

Others, if they do sometimes shed a tear, are never the better for it. They go on in wickedness, and do not drown their sins in their tears!

**Use 2:** Let us labor for this divine characteristic: Be weepers! This is "a repentance not to be repented of" (2Cor. 7:10). It is reported of Mr. John Bradford, the martyr, that he was of a melting spirit; he seldom sat down to his meal unless some tears trickled down his cheeks. There are two lavers to wash away sin: *blood* and *tears*. The *blood of Christ* washes away the guilt of sin; *our tears* wash away the filth.

Repenting tears are **precious**; God puts them in his bottle (Psa. 56:8). They are **beautifying**; a tear in the eye, adorns more than a ring on the finger; oil makes the *face* shine (Psa. 104:15), tears make the *heart* shine. Repenting tears are **comforting**; a *sinner's* mirth turns to *melancholy*; a *saint's* mourning turns to *music*! Repentance may be compared to myrrh, which though it is bitter to the taste, is comforting to the spirits. Repentance may be bitter to the *flesh*, but it is most refreshing to the *soul*. Wax that *melts* is fit for the seal: a melting soul is fit to take the stamp of all heavenly blessings. Let us give Christ the *water of our tears*, and he will give us the *wine of his blood*!

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## Sec. 9. A godly man is a lover of the WORD

"O how love I your law!" Psalm 119:97

**1. A godly man loves the WRITTEN Word.** Chrysostom compares the Scripture to a garden set with nuts and flowers. A godly man delights to walk in this garden and sweetly console himself. He loves every branch and parcel of the Word:

**(1) He loves the COUNSELING part of the Word, as it is a directory and rule of life.** The Word is the mercurial statue<sup>1</sup> which points us to our duty. It contains in it *credenda et facienda*, things to be *believed* and *practiced*. A godly man loves the aphorisms of the Word.

**(2) He loves the THREATENING part of the Word.** The Scripture is like the Garden of Eden; as it has a *tree of life* in it, so it has a *flaming sword* at its gates. This is the threatening of the Word. It flashes fire in the face of every person who goes on obstinately in wickedness. "God will wound the hairy scalp of the one who still goes on in his trespasses."

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<sup>1</sup> That is, a herald pointing the way, and giving needed intelligence.

(Psa. 68:21). The Word gives no indulgence to evil; it will not let a man halt between *sin* and *God*. The true mother would not let the child be divided (1Kings 3:26), and God will not have the heart divided. The Word thunders out threatenings against the very appearance of evil. It is like that flying roll, full of curses (Zech. 5:1).

A godly man loves the *menaces* of the Word. He knows there is love in every threat. God would not have us perish; therefore he mercifully threatens us, so that he may scare us from sin. God's threats are like the sea mark, which shows the rocks in the sea and threatens death to those who come near. The threat is a curbing bit to check us, so that we may not run headlong to hell. There is mercy in every threat.

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**(3) He loves the CONSOLATORY part of the Word – the promises.** He goes feeding on these as Samson went on his way eating the honeycomb (Jdg. 14:8, 9). The promises are all marrow and sweetness. They are our bezoar-stone,<sup>1</sup> an antidote when we are fainting; they are the conduits of the water of life. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me your comforts delight my soul" (Psa. 94:19). The promises were David's harp to drive away sad thoughts; they were the breast which milked out divine consolation to him.

#### **A godly man SHOWS HIS LOVE for the Written Word:**

**(1) By diligently READING it.** The noble Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11). Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures (Acts 18:24). The Word is our *Magna Charta* for heaven; we should be daily reading over this charter. The Word shows what is truth, and what is error. It is the field where the pearl of great price is hidden. How we should dig for this pearl! A godly man's heart is the library to hold the Word of God; it dwells richly in him (Col. 3:16). It is reported of Melanchthon that when he was young, he always carried the Bible with him and greedily read in it. The Word has a double work: to *teach* us and to *judge* us. Those who will not be taught by the Word, shall be judged by the Word. Oh, let us make ourselves familiar with the Scripture! What if it were as in the time of Diocletian, who commanded by proclamation that the Bible be burned? Or as in Queen Mary's days, when it meant death to have a Bible in English? *By diligent conversing with Scripture, <sup>2</sup> we may carry a Bible in our heads!*

**(2) By frequently MEDITATING on it.** "It is my *meditation* all the day" (Psa. 119:97). A pious soul meditates on the *verity* and *sanctity* of the Word.

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He not only has a few transient thoughts about it, but leaves his mind *steeping* in the Scripture. By meditation, he sucks honey from this sweet flower, and prepares a meal of holy truths for his mind.

**(3) By DELIGHTING in it.** It is his *recreation*. "Your words were found, and I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight" (Jer. 15:16). Never did a man take such delight in a dish that he loved, as the prophet did in the Word. And indeed, how can a saint help but take great satisfaction in the Word because all that he ever hopes to be worth is contained in it. Does a son not take pleasure in reading his father's will and testament, in which the father conveys his estate to him?

**(4) By HIDING it.** "Your word have I hidden in my heart" (Psa. 119:11) — as one hides a treasure so that it will not be stolen. The Word is the jewel; the heart is the cabinet where it

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<sup>1</sup> Even in the 1600's, these stones were believed to have the power of a universal antidote against any poison.

<sup>2</sup> That is, by engaging or interacting with it.

must be locked up. Many hide the Word in their memory, but not in their heart. And why would David enclose the Word in his heart? "That I might be kept from sinning against you." As one would carry an antidote around him when he comes to an infected place, so a godly man carries the Word in his heart as a spiritual antidote to preserve him from the infection of sin. Why have so many been poisoned with error, others with moral vice, unless they have not hidden the Word as a holy antidote in their heart?

**(5) By DEFENDING it.** A wise man will not let his land be taken from him, but will defend his title to it. David looked upon the Word as his land of inheritance: "Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever" (Psa. 119:111). And do you think he would let his inheritance be wrested from his hands?

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A godly man will not only dispute for the Word, but die for it: "I saw under the altar the souls of those who were slain for the word of God" (Rev. 6:9).

**(6) By PREFERRING it above the most precious things.**

a. Above FOOD. "I have esteemed the words of his mouth above my necessary food" (Job 23:12).

b. Above RICHES. "The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands in gold and silver" (Psa. 119:72).

c. Above worldly HONOR. The story of King Edward the Sixth is memorable. On the day of his coronation, when they presented three swords before him, signifying to him that he was monarch of three kingdoms, the king said, "There is still one sword missing." On being asked what that was, he answered, "The Holy Bible, which is the "Sword of the Spirit," and is to be preferred before these ensigns of royalty."

**(7) By TALKING about it.** "My tongue will speak of your word" (Psa. 119:172). As a covetous man talks about his rich purchase, so a godly man speaks of the Word. What a treasure it is, how full of beauty and sweetness! Those whose mouths the devil has gagged, who never speak of God's Word, indicate that they never reaped any good from it.

**(8) By CONFIRMING to it.** The Word is his sundial, by which he sets his life, the balance in which he weighs his actions. He copies out the Word in his daily walk: "I have kept the faith" (2Tim. 4:7). Paul kept the *doctrine* of faith, and lived the *life* of faith.

**Ques:** Why is a godly man a lover of the Word?

**Ans. 1:** Because of the EXCELLENCE of the Word.

**1. The Word is our pillar of fire to guide us.** It shows us what rocks we are to avoid; it is the map by which we sail to the New Jerusalem.

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**2. The Word is a spiritual optic glass through which we may see our own hearts.** The glass of nature, which the heathen had, revealed spots in their lives; but *this* glass reveals spots in the imagination. *That* glass revealed the spots of their unrighteousness; *this* reveals the spots of our righteousness. "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom. 7:9). When the Word came as a glass, all my opinion of self-righteousness died.

**3. The Word of God is a sovereign comfort in distress.** While we follow this cloud, the rock follows us. "This is my comfort in my affliction: for your word has quickened me" (Psa. 119:50). *Christ is the fountain of living water, the Word is the golden pipe through which it runs!* What can revive at the hour of death except the word of life (Phil. 2:16)?

**Answer 2.** *Because of the EFFICACY it has had upon him.* This day-star has risen in his heart, and ushered in the Sun of Righteousness.

**2. A godly man loves the PREACHED Word;** preaching is a commentary on the Written Word. The Scriptures are *sovereign oils and balsams*; preaching the Word is pouring them out. The Scriptures are *precious spices*; preaching the Word is the pounding of these spices, which creates a wonderful fragrance and delight. The Word preached is “the rod of God’s strength” (Psa. 110:2), and “the breath of his lips” (Isa. 11:4). What was once said of the city of Thebes — that it was built by the sound of Amphius’ harp — is much more true of soul-conversion; it is built by the sound of the gospel harp. Therefore preaching the Word is called “the power of God unto salvation” (1Cor. 1:24). By this, Christ is said now to speak to us from heaven (Heb. 12:25). This ministry of the Word is to be preferred before the ministry of angels.

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A godly man loves the Word preached, partly from the good he has found by it: he has felt the dew fall with this manna. And he loves it preached, partly because it is God’s institution. *The Lord has appointed this ordinance to save him.* The king’s image turns the coin into currency. The stamp of divine authority on the Word preached makes it an engine conducive to men’s salvation.

**Use:** Let us test by this characteristic, whether we are godly: *Are we lovers of the Word?*

1. *Do we love the **written** Word?* What sums of money the martyrs gave for a few leaves of the Bible! Do we make the Word our bosom friend? As Moses often had “the rod of God” in his hand, so we should have “the Book of God” in our hand. When we need direction, do we consult this sacred oracle? When we find our corruptions are strong, do we make use of this “sword of the Spirit” to hew them down? When we are disconsolate, do we go to this bottle of the Water of Life for comfort? Then we are lovers of the Word!

But alas, how can those who are seldom conversant with the Scriptures say they love them? Their eyes become sore when they look at a Bible. The two testaments are hung up like rusty armor, which is seldom or never made use of. The Lord wrote the law with his own finger; but though God took pains to *write* it, men will not take pains to *read* it. They would rather look at a pack of cards than at a Bible!

2. *Do we love the **preached** Word?* Do we prize it in our judgments? Do we receive it into our hearts? Do we fear the loss of the preached Word more than the loss of peace and trade? Is it the removal of the ark, which troubles us?

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Again, do we attend to the Word with **reverential** devotion? When the judge is giving his charge on the bench, all attend. When the Word is preached, the great God is giving us his charge. Do we listen to it as we would to a matter of life and death? This is a good sign that we love the Word.

Again, do we love the **sanctity** of the Word? The Word preached is to beat down sin and advance holiness. Do we love it for its spirituality and purity? Many love the Word preached only for its eloquence and notions. They come to a sermon as they would to a music lecture (Ezek. 33:31, 32), or as they would to a garden to pick flowers — but not to have their lusts subdued, or their hearts bettered. These are like a foolish woman who paints her face, but neglects her health!

Again, do we love the **convictions** of the Word? Do we love the Word when it comes home to our conscience and shoots its arrows of reproof at our sins? It is the minister’s duty sometimes to reprove. The one who can speak smooth words in the pulpit, but does not know how to

*reprove*, is like a sword with a fine handle, but *without an edge!* “Rebuke them sharply” (Titus 2:15). Dip the nail in oil — reprove in love, yes — but strike the nail home! Now Christian, when the Word touches on your sin and says, “*You are the man!*” do you love that reproof? Can you bless God that “the sword of the Spirit” has divided between you and your lusts? This is indeed a sign of grace, and it shows that you are a lover of the Word.

A corrupt heart loves the comforts of the Word, but not the reproofs: “they hate the one who *reproves* in the gate” (Amos 5:10). “Their eyes flash with fire!” Like venomous creatures that at the slightest touch, spit poison, “When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and gnashed their teeth at him!” (Acts 7:54). When Stephen touched them to the quick, they were furious and could not endure it.

**Ques:** How shall we know that we love the reproofs of the Word?

**Ans. 1:** When we desire to sit under a heart-searching ministry. Who cares for medicine that will not work? A godly man does not choose to sit under a ministry that will not work upon his conscience.

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**Ans. 2:** When we pray that the Word may confront our sins. If there is any traitorous lust in our heart, we would have it found out and executed. We do not want sin *covered*, but *cured!* We can open our breast to the sword of the Word and say, “Lord, kill this sin!”

**Ans. 3:** When we are thankful for a reproof: “Let the righteous strike me; it will be a kindness; let him rebuke me, it will be like excellent oil; let my head not refuse it” (Psa. 141:5). David was glad for a reproof. Suppose a man were in the mouth of a lion, and another were to shoot the lion and save the man; would he not be thankful? So when we are in the mouth of sin, like the mouth of a lion, and the minister by a reproof shoots this sin to death, will we not be thankful? A gracious soul rejoices when the sharp lance of the Word has pierced his abscess. He wears a reproof like a jewel on his ear: “Like an earring of gold, so is a reprover on an obedient ear.” (Pro. 25:12). To conclude, it is convincing preaching that must do the soul good; a nipping reproof prepares us for comfort, just as a nipping frost prepares for the sweet flowers of spring.

## Sec. 10. A godly man has the SPIRIT of God residing in him

“The Holy Spirit which dwells in us” (2Tim. 1:14; Gal. 4:6). The schoolmen move the question whether a man receives the Holy Spirit himself or not? Montanus held that the godly have God’s Spirit in them in such a way, that they partake of his essence, and become one person with him; but this amounts to no less than blasphemy; it would then follow that every saint should be worshipped.

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I conceive that the Spirit is in the godly *per modum influxus*; he flows in them in measure. They have the presence and receive the sacred influences of the Spirit. When the sun comes into a room, it is not the body of the sun that is there, but the beams that sparkle from it. Indeed, some divines have thought that the godly have more than the indwelling of the Spirit; though to say how it is more, is ineffable; and it is fitter for some seraphic pen to describe, than for mine. The Spirit of God reveals itself in a gracious soul in two ways:

**1. By its motions.** These are some of that sweet perfume which the Spirit breathes upon the heart, by which the heart is raised into a kind of angelic frame.

[**Question 1:** But how may we distinguish the motions of the Spirit from a delusion?

**Ans:** The motions of the Spirit are always consonant with the Word. The *Word* is the chariot in which the *Spirit* of God rides; whichever way the tide of the Word runs, that is the way the wind of the Spirit blows. [Joh 3:8](#)

**Question 2:** How may the motions of the Spirit in the godly be distinguished from the impulses of a natural conscience?

**Ans. 1:** A natural conscience may sometimes provoke to the same thing as the Spirit does, but not from the same principle. Natural conscience is a spur to duty, but it drives a man to do his duties from fear of hell, just as the galley slave tugs at the oar for fear of being beaten. Whereas the Spirit moves a child of God from a more noble principle: it makes him serve God out of *choice*, and to consider duty as his *privilege*.

**Ans. 2:** The impulses of a natural conscience drive men only to *easier* duties of religion, in which the heart is less exercised — like perfunctory reading or praying. But the motions of the Spirit in the godly go further, causing them to do the most irksome duties, like self-reflection, self-humbling; and yes, perilous duties, like confessing Christ's name in times of danger. Divine motions in the heart are like new wine which seeks to vent itself. When God's Spirit possesses a man, it carries him full sail through all difficulties!]

**2. By its virtues.** These are various.

**(1) God's Spirit has a TEACHING virtue.** The Spirit teaches convincingly (John 16:8). He so teaches that it persuades.

**(2) God's Spirit has a SANCTIFYING virtue.** The heart is naturally polluted; but when the Spirit comes into it, it works sin out, and works grace in. The Spirit of God was represented by the dove, an emblem of purity. The Spirit makes the heart a temple of purity and a paradise for pleasantness. The holy oil of consecration was nothing but a prefiguring of the Spirit (Exod. 30:25). The Spirit sanctifies a man's *imagination*, causing it to mint holy meditations. He sanctifies his *will*, biasing it to good, so that now it will be as delightful to *serve* God, as before it was to *sin against* him. Sweet powders perfume the linen. So God's Spirit in a man perfumes him with holiness, and makes his heart a map of heaven.

**(3) God's Spirit has a VIVIFYING virtue.** "The Spirit gives life" (2Cor. 3:6). As blowing in an organ makes it sound, so the breathing of the Spirit causes life and motion.

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When the prophet Elijah stretched himself upon the dead child, it revived (1Kings 17:22); so God's Spirit stretching himself upon the soul, infuses life into it.

As our life is from the Spirit's operation, so is our liveliness: "The Spirit lifted me up" (Ezek. 3:14). When the heart is bowed down and is listless to its duty, the Spirit of God lifts it up; it puts a sharp edge on the affections; it makes *love* ardent, and *hope* lively. The Spirit removes the weights of the soul and gives it wings: "Before I was ever aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib" (Song 6:12). The wheels of the soul were pulled off before, and so it drove on heavily — but when the Spirit of the Almighty possesses a man, he runs swiftly in the ways of God, and his soul is like the chariots of Amminadib.

**(4) God's Spirit has a JURISDICTIONAL virtue.** It rules and governs. God's Spirit sits paramount in the soul; it checks the violence of corruption; it will not allow a man to be vain and loose like others. The Spirit of God will not be put out of office; it exercises its authority over the heart, "bringing every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2Cor. 10:5).

**(5) The Spirit has a MOLLIFYING virtue.** Therefore it is compared to fire which softens the wax. The Spirit turns flint into flesh: "I will give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26). How shall this be effected? "I will put my Spirit within you" (v.27). While the heart is hard, it lies

like a *log*, and is not wrought upon either by judgments or mercies — but when God's Spirit comes in, it makes a man's heart as tender as his *eye*, and yielding to divine impressions.

**(6) The Spirit of God has a CORROBORATING virtue.** It infuses strength and assistance for work; it is a "Spirit of power" (2Tim. 1:7). God's Spirit carries a man above himself, "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16).

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The Spirit confirms faith and animates courage. It lifts one end of the cross, and makes it lighter to bear. The Spirit gives not only a sufficiency of strength, but an excess.

**Ques:** How shall we know whether we are acting in the strength of God's Spirit, or in the strength of our own abilities?

**Ans. 1:** When we humbly cast ourselves upon God for assistance, as David going out against Goliath cast himself upon God for help: "I come to you in the name of the Lord" (1Sam. 17:45).

**Ans. 2:** When our duties are divinely qualified, and we do them with pure aims.

**Ans. 3:** When we have found God going along with us, we give him the glory for it all (1Cor. 15:10). This clearly evinces that the duty was carried on by the strength of God's Spirit more than by any innate abilities of our own.

**(7) God's Spirit has a COMFORTING virtue.** Despondency may arise in a gracious heart (Psa. 43:5), just as the sky, though it is a bright lucid body, has *clouds* interposed. This sadness is usually caused through the malice of Satan who, if he cannot *destroy* us, will *disturb* us. But God's Spirit within us sweetly cheers and revives. He is called "the Comforter" (John 14:16). These comforts are real and infallible, hence they are called "the seal of the Spirit" (Eph. 1:13). When a deed is sealed, it is firm and unquestionable. So too when a Christian has the seal of the Spirit, his comforts are confirmed. Every godly man has these revivings of the Spirit in some degree; he has the seeds and beginnings of joy, though the flower is not fully ripe and blown.

**Ques:** How does the Spirit give comfort?

**Ans. 1:** By showing us that we are in a state of grace. A Christian cannot always see his riches. The work of grace may be written in the heart like shorthand which a Christian cannot read.

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The Spirit gives him a key to open these dark characters, and spell out his adoption, at which point he has joy and peace. "We have received the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God" (1Cor. 2:12).

**Ans. 2:** The Spirit comforts by giving us some ravishing apprehensions of God's love. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5). God's love is a box of precious ointment, and it is only the Spirit who can break this box open, and fill us with its sweet perfume.

**Ans. 3:** The Spirit comforts by carrying us to the blood of Christ. When a man is weary and ready to faint, we take him to the water, and he is refreshed; so too, when we are fainting under the burden of sin, the Spirit takes us to the fountain of Christ's blood. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened..." (Zech. 13:1). The Spirit enables us to drink the *waters of justification* which run out of Christ's side. The Spirit applies whatever Christ has purchased; it shows us that our sins are done away in Christ, and though we are spotted in ourselves, we are undefiled in our Head.



**Ans. 4: The Spirit comforts, by enabling the conscience to comfort.** The child must be taught before it can speak. The Spirit opens the mouth of conscience, and helps it to speak, and witness to a man that his state is good, whereupon he begins to receive comfort: “My conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 9:1). Conscience draws up a certificate for a man, then the Holy Spirit comes and sets his hand to the certificate.

**Ans. 5: The Spirit conveys the oil of joy through two golden pipes:**

1. The ordinances.
2. The promises.

**1. The ORDINANCES.** As Christ in his prayer had his countenance changed (Luk. 9:29), and a glorious luster on his face, so in the use of holy ordinances, the godly often have such raptures of joy and soul-transfigurations, that they have been carried above the world, and despised all things below.

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**2. The PROMISES.** The promises are comforting:

(1) For their **sureness** (Rom. 4:16). God in the promises has laid down his truth as a pledge.

(2) For their **suitableness**, being calculated for every Christian’s condition. The promises are like a medicinal garden. There is no disease that some herb may not be found there to cure it. But the promises of themselves cannot comfort, except as the Spirit enables us to draw consolation from these honeycombs. The promises are like a limbeck<sup>1</sup> full of herbs; but this limbeck will not drip unless a fire is put under it. So when the Spirit of God (which is compared to fire) is put to the limbeck of the promises, those promises distill consolation. Thus we see how the Spirit is, in the godly, by its virtues.

**Obj:** But is being *filled* with the Spirit the sign of a godly man? Are the wicked not said to *partake* of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:4)?

**Ans:** Wicked men may partake of the Spirit’s *working*, but not of its *indwelling*. They may have God’s Spirit act *on* them; but the godly have it enter *into* them (Ezek. 3:24).

**Obj:** But do the unregenerate not *taste* the heavenly gift (Heb. 6:4)?

**Ans:** With them, it is as with cooks, who may have a *smack* and *taste* of the meat they dress, but they are not nourished by it. *Tasting* is used in that verse as opposed to *eating*. The godly have not only a drop or a taste of the Spirit, but in them he is like a river of living water (John 7:38).

**Use 1:** It brands as ungodly, those who have none of God’s Spirit. “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom. 8:9). And if he is none of Christ’s, then whose is he? To what regiment does he belong?

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It is the misery of a sinner, that he has none of God’s Spirit. I think it is very offensive to hear men who never had God’s Spirit in them, say, “Do not take your holy Spirit from us” (Psa. 51:11). Will drunkards and swearers say they have God’s Spirit in them? Do those who are malicious and unclean have God’s Spirit? It would be blasphemy to say these have the Spirit. Will the blessed Spirit leave his celestial palace to live in a foul prison? A sinner’s heart is a jail, both for darkness and noxiousness, and will God’s free Spirit be confined to a prison (Psa. 51:12)? A

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<sup>1</sup> A still that uses steam and a condenser to extract the healing ingredients of the herbs.

*sinner's heart is the emblem of hell.* What would God's Spirit do there? Wicked hearts are not a temple, but a hog-sty, where the unclean spirit makes his abode — “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2).

We would be loath to live in a house haunted by evil spirits; a sinner's heart is haunted. “After the morsel, Satan entered” (John 13:27). Satan *abuses* the godly, but he *enters* the *wicked*. When the devils went into the herd of swine, “they rushed down a steep place into the sea” (Matt. 8:32). Why is it that men rush so greedily to commit sin, unless the devil has entered into these swine?

This cuts off from being godly, those who not only lack the Spirit, but deride it: like those Jews who said, “These men are full of new wine” (Acts 2:13). And indeed, so were the apostles— they were full of the wine of the Spirit. How God's Spirit is scoffed at by the sons of Belial! O wretches, to make those tongues which should be organs of God's praise, into instruments to blaspheme! Have you none to throw your sarcasms at but the Spirit? Deriding the Spirit comes very near to despising him. How can men be sanctified except by the Spirit? Therefore to reproach him, is to toy with their own damnation.

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**Use 2:** If you would be listed in the number of the godly, then labor for the blessed indwelling of the Spirit. Pray with Melancthon, “Lord, inflame my soul with your Holy Spirit;” and with the spouse, “Awake, O north wind; and come, O south wind; blow on my garden” (Song 4:16). Just as a mariner would desire a wind to drive him to sea, so beg for the prosperous gales of the Spirit, and the promise may add wings to prayer. “If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Spirit to those who ask him?” (Luk. 11:13). God's Spirit is a rich jewel. Go to God for it: “Lord, give me your Spirit. Where is the jewel you promised me? When shall my soul be like Gideon's fleece, wet with the dew of heaven?”

**Consider how necessary the Spirit is.** Without it we can do nothing acceptably to God:

**1. We cannot PRAY without it.** It is a Spirit of supplication (Zech. 12:10). It helps both the conception and affection of it: “The Spirit helps us, with sighs and groans” (Rom. 8:26).

**2. We cannot resist TEMPTATION without it.** “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8). The one who has the *tide of corrupt nature*, and the *wind of temptation*, must be carried down the stream of sin, if the contrary wind of the Spirit does not blow.

**3. We cannot be FRUITFUL without the Spirit.** [“The golden rain from heaven waters the thirsty hearts.”] Why is the Spirit compared to dew and rain, if not to show us how unable we are to bring forth a crop of grace, unless the dew of God falls upon us?

**4. Without the Spirit, no ORDINANCE is effectual to us.** Ordinances are the conduit pipes of grace, but the Spirit is the spring. Some content themselves that they have a “Levite for their priest” (Jdg. 17:13), but never look any further — as if a merchant were to be content that his ship has good tackling and is well manned, even though it never had a gale of wind.

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The ship of ordinances will not carry us to heaven, even if an angel were the pilot, unless the wind of God's Spirit blows. The Spirit is the soul of the Word, without which the Word is but a dead letter. Ministers may prescribe medicine, but it is God's Spirit that must make it work! Our hearts are like David's body when it grew old: “They covered him with clothes, but he got no heat” (1Kings 1:1). So though the ministers of God ply us with prayers and counsel as if with hot

clothes, we are still cold and chilly until God's Spirit comes; and then we say, as the disciples, "Did our hearts not burn within us!" (Luk. 24:32). Oh therefore, what need we have of the Spirit!

**You who have the blessed Spirit** manifested by his energy and vital operations:

**1. Acknowledge God's distinguishing love.** The Spirit is an earmark of election (1John 3:24). Christ gave the *money bag* to Judas, but not His Spirit. The Spirit is a love token. Where God gives his Spirit as a pledge, he gives himself as a portion. The Spirit is an epitomizing blessing; it stands for all good things (Matt. 7:11). What would you be without the Spirit, if not like so many carcasses? Without this Spirit, Christ would not profit you. The blood of God is not enough without the breath of God. Oh then, be thankful for the Spirit. This lodestone will never stop drawing you until it has drawn you up to heaven.

**2. If you have this Spirit, do not grieve it** (Eph. 4:30). Shall we grieve our Comforter?

**Ques:** How do we grieve the Spirit?

**Ans. 1:** When we unkindly repel its motions. The Spirit sometimes whispers in our ears and calls to us as God did to Jacob, "Arise, go to Bethel" (Gen. 35:1). So the Spirit says, "Arise, go to prayer; retire to meet your God." Now when we stifle these motions and entertain temptations to vanity, this is grieving the Spirit. If we restrain the *motions* of the Spirit, we lose the *comforts* of the Spirit.

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**Ans. 2:** We grieve the Spirit when we deny the work of the Spirit in our hearts. If someone gives another a token, and that person were to deny it, and say he never received it, this would be to abuse the love of his friend. So, Christian, when God has given you his Spirit, witnessed by those meltings of heart and passionate desires for heaven, and yet you deny that you ever had any renewing work of the Spirit in you, this is high ingratitude, and a grieving of the good Spirit. Renounce the sinful works of the *flesh*, but do not deny the gracious work of the *Spirit*.

## Sec. 11. A godly man is a HUMBLE man

He is like the sun in the zenith, which when it is at the highest, shows least. Augustine calls humility "the mother of the graces." But before I show you who the humble man is, I will lay down three distinctions:

**1. I distinguish between *being humbled*, and *humble*.** A man may be humbled and not humble. A sinner may be humbled by affliction. His *condition* is low, but not his *disposition*. A godly man is not only humbled, but humble. His heart is as low as his condition.

**2. I distinguish between *outward humility*, and *inward*.** There is a great deal of difference between humble behavior, and a humble spirit.

(1) A person may behave humbly towards others and yet be proud. Who was more humble than Absalom in his outward behavior? "When people tried to bow before him, Absalom wouldn't let them. Instead, he took them by the hand and embraced them." (2Sam. 15:5). But though he acted humbly, he aspired to the crown (v. 10). *Here was pride dressed in humility's mantle!*

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(2) A person may behave humbly towards God and yet be proud. "Ahab put on sackcloth and fasted and went softly" (1Kings 21:27); but his heart was not humble. A man may bow his head like a bulrush and yet lift up the ensigns of pride in his heart.

**3. I distinguish between *humility* and *policy*.** Many make a show of humility to work their own ends. The Papists seem to be the most humble, mortified saints, but it is subtlety rather

than humility. For by this means, they get the revenues of the earth into their possession. They may do all this, and yet have no godliness.

**Ques: How may a Christian know that he is humble, and consequently godly?**

**Ans. 1: A humble soul is emptied of all swelling thoughts of himself.** Bernard calls humility a self-annihilation. “You will save the humble” (Job 22:29). In the Hebrew it is “him that is of low eyes.” A humble man has lower thoughts of himself, than others can have of him. David, though a king, still looked at himself as a worm: “I am a worm, and no man” (Psa. 22:6). Bradford, a martyr, still subscribes himself *a sinner*. “If I am righteous, yet will I not lift up my head” (Job 10:15) — like the violet which is a sweet flower, but hangs down its head.

**Ans. 2: A humble soul thinks better of others than of himself.** “Let each esteem others better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3). A humble man values others at a higher rate than himself; and the reason is because he can see his own heart better than he can another’s. He sees his own corruption, and thinks surely it is not so with others; their *graces* are not as weak as his; their *corruptions* are not as strong. “Surely,” he thinks, “they have better hearts than I do.”

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A humble Christian studies *his own infirmities*, and *another’s excellences*; and that makes him put a higher value on others than on himself. “Surely I am more brutish than any man” (Pro. 30:2). And Paul, though he was the chief of the apostles, still calls himself “less than the least of all saints” (Eph. 3:8).

**Ans. 3: A humble soul has a low esteem of his duties.** Pride is apt to breed inside our *holy things*, just as the worm breeds inside the *sweetest fruit*, and froth comes from the most *generous wine*. A humble person not only bemoans his sins, but also his duties. When he has prayed and wept, “Alas,” he says, “how little I have done! God might damn me for all this!” He says, like good Nehemiah, “Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me” (Neh. 13:22). “Remember, Lord, how I have poured out my soul; only spare me and pardon me.” He sees that his best duties weigh many grains too light; therefore he desires that Christ’s merits may be put into the scales. The humble saint blushes when he looks at his copy. He sees that he cannot write evenly, nor without blotting the page. This humbles him, to think that his best duties run dregs.<sup>1</sup> He drips *poison* on his *sacrifice*. “Oh,” he says, “I dare not say I have prayed or wept; those which I write down as duties, God might write down as sins!”

**Ans. 4: A humble man ever presents bills of indictment against himself.** He complains, not of his *poor circumstances*, but of his *poor heart*! “Oh, this evil heart of unbelief!” “Lord,” says Hooper,<sup>2</sup> “I am hell, but you are heaven.” A hypocrite is forever telling how good he is; a humble soul is forever saying how bad he is. Paul, that high-flown saint, was caught up into the third heaven; but how this bird of paradise bemoans himself for his corruptions! “O wretched man that I am!” (Rom. 7:24).

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Holy Bradford<sup>3</sup> signs himself, “the hard-hearted sinner.” The more *knowledge* a humble Christian has, the more he complains of ignorance; the more *faith* he has, the more he bewails his unbelief.

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<sup>1</sup> That is, instead of pouring like clear fine wine, they’re the gritty residue dripping from the bottom of the barrel.

<sup>2</sup> John Hooper (c.1498- Feb 1555) Bishop of Gloucester & Worcester; Reformer; martyred under Mary Tudor.

<sup>3</sup> John Bradford (1510- Jul 1555) Prebendary of St. Paul’s; Reformer; martyred under Mary Tudor. Just before he was burned at the stake at Smithfield with a young man named John Leaf, he turned to him and said, “Be of good comfort brother; for we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night!” A century later, in his *Worthies of England*,

**Ans. 5: A humble man will justify God in an afflicted condition.** “Nevertheless, You are just in all that is brought upon us” (Neh. 9:33). If men oppress and slander, the humble soul will acknowledge God’s righteousness in the midst of severity: “Lo, I have sinned” (2Sam. 24:17). “Lord, my pride, my barrenness, my sermon-surfeiting,<sup>1</sup> have been the procuring cause of all these judgments.” When clouds surround God, “righteousness is the habitation of his throne” (Psa. 97:2).

**Ans. 6: A humble soul is a Christ-magnifier** (Phil. 1:20). He gives the glory of all his actions to Christ and free grace. King Canute<sup>2</sup> took the crown off his own head and set it on a crucifix. So a humble saint takes the crown of honor from his own head and sets it upon Christ’s. And the reason, is the love that he bears for Christ. Love can part with anything for the object loved. Isaac loved Rebekah and he gave away his jewels to her (Gen. 24:53). The humble saint loves Christ entirely; therefore he can part with anything for him. He gives away to Christ the honor and praise of all he does. “Let *Christ* wear those jewels!”

**Ans. 7: A humble soul is willing to take a reproof for sin.** A wicked man is too high to stoop to a reproof. The prophet Micaiah told King Ahab of his sin, and the King said, “I hate him!” (1Kings 22:8). Reproof to a proud man, is like pouring water on lime, which grows hotter. A gracious soul loves the one who reproves: “rebuke a wise man, and he will love you” (Pro. 9:8). The humble-spirited Christian can bear the reproach of an *enemy*, and the reproof of a *friend*.

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**Ans. 8: A humble man is willing to have his name and intelligence eclipsed, so that God’s glory may be increased more.** He is content to be outshined by others in gifts and esteem, so that the crown of Christ may shine brighter. This is the humble man’s motto: “Let me decrease; let Christ increase.”<sup>Joh 3.30</sup> It is his desire that Christ should be exalted; and if this is effected, whoever is the instrument of it, he rejoices. “Some preach Christ of envy” (Phil. 1:15). They preached to take away some of Paul’s hearers; “Well,” he says, “Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice” (v.18). A humble Christian is content to be laid aside, if God has any other tools to work with which may bring him more glory.

**Ans. 9: A humble saint is content with that condition which God sees is best for him.** A proud man complains that he has no more; a humble man wonders that he has so much: “I am not worthy of the least of all your mercies!” (Gen. 32:10). When the heart lies low, it can stoop to a low condition. A Christian looking at his sins wonders that things are no worse with him. He says that his mercies are greater than he deserves. He knows that the worst piece which God carves for him, is better than he deserves; therefore he takes it thankfully upon his knees.

**Ans. 10: A humble Christian will bow to the lowest person and the lowest office;** he will visit the poorest member of Christ. Lazarus’ sores are more precious to him than Dives’ purple robes.<sup>3</sup> He does not say, “Stand aside, do not come near me, for I am holier than you” (Isa. 65:5); but he “condescends to men of low estate” (Rom. 12:16).

**Use 1:** Is humility the inseparable character of a Christian? Then let us test our hearts by this touchstone. Are we humble? Alas, where does their godliness appear of those who are swollen with pride and ready to burst? But though men are proud, they will not confess it. This bastard

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Thomas Fuller wrote that Bradford endured the flame "as a fresh gale of wind in a hot summer's day, confirming by his death the truth of that doctrine he had so diligently and powerfully preached during his life."

<sup>1</sup> That is, having had his fill of sermons, he wanted no more.

<sup>2</sup> King of Denmark and Norway who forced Edmund II to divide England with him; on the death of Edmund II, Canute became king of all England (994-1035).

<sup>3</sup> “Dives,” Latin for “rich man,” was taken for his name in the parable of *Lazarus and the Rich Man* (Luk 16.19-31).

of pride is born, but none will admit they are the father. Therefore let me ask a few questions, and let your conscience answer:

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**1. Are those not proud, who are given to boasting?** “Your boasting is not good.” (1Cor. 5:6).

(1) Who boast in their **riches**. Their hearts swell with their estates. Bernard calls pride the rich man’s cousin. “Your heart is lifted up because of your riches.” (Ezek. 28:5).

(2) Who boast in their **apparel**. Many dress themselves in such fashions as to make the devil fall in love with them. Beauty marks, gaudy attire, naked breasts — what are these, if not the flags and banners which sinful pride displays?

(3) Who boast in their **beauty**. The body is but dust and blood kneaded together. Solomon says, “Beauty is vain” (Pro. 31:30). Yet some are so vain as to be proud of vanity!

(4) Who boast in their **gifts**. These trappings and ornaments do not distinguish them in God’s eyes. An *angel* is a creature of great abilities; but take away an angel’s humility, and he is a devil!

**2. Are those not proud who have a high opinion of their own excellences?** Looking at themselves in the magnifying glass of self-love, they appear in their own eyes to be better than they are. Simon Magus claimed that he was someone great (Acts 8:9). Alexander [the Great] felt the need to be the son of *Jupiter* and of the race of the gods. Sapor, King of Persia, styles himself the “Brother of the Sun and Moon.” I have read of a pope who stepped on the neck of Frederick the Emperor; as a cloak for his pride he cited the text, “You shall tread upon the lion, and trample the dragon underfoot” (Psa. 91:13). **There is no idol like self; the proud man bows down to this idol.**

**3. Are those not proud who despise others?** “The Pharisees trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, and despised others” (Luk. 18:9). The Chinese people say that Europe has one eye, and they have two, and all the rest of the world is blind.

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A proud man looks at others with an eye of scorn, as Goliath looked at David: “When the Philistine looked around and saw David, he disdained him” (1Sam. 17:42). Those who stand on the pinnacle of pride, look down upon other men as no bigger than crows.

**4. Are those who trumpet their own praise not proud?** “Before those days, Theudas rose up, *boasting himself* to be somebody” (Acts 5:36). A proud man is the herald of his own good deeds; he blazes his own fame, and his vice lies in this: to paint his own virtue.

**5. Are those not proud, who take for themselves the glory due to God?** “Is this not great Babylon, which *I* have built?” (Dan. 4:30). So says the proud man, “Are these not the prayers I have made? Are these not the works of charity I have done?” When Herod had made an oration and the people cried out he was like a god (Acts 12:22), he was well content to have that honor done to him. *Pride is the greatest sacrilege; it robs God of his glory!*

**6. Are those not proud who are never pleased with their condition?** They speak harshly of God, assessing his care and wisdom as if he had not dealt well with them. God himself cannot please a proud man, but like Momus,<sup>1</sup> he is forever finding fault, and flying in the face of heaven.

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<sup>1</sup> The Greek god of blame and mockery.



Oh, let us search if there is any of this *leaven of pride* in us. Man is naturally a proud piece of flesh; this sin runs in the blood: our first parents fell by their pride — they aspired to Deity. There are seeds of this in the best, but the godly do not allow it in themselves. They labor to kill this weed by mortification. But certainly, where this sin reigns and prevails, it cannot stand with grace. You may as well call someone who lacks wisdom, *a prudent man*, as to call someone who lacks humility, *a godly man*.

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**Use 2:** Labor for this characteristic: *be humble*. It is an apostolic exhortation, “Be clothed with humility” (1Pet. 5:5). Put it on as an embroidered robe. It is better to lack anything than to lack humility. It is better to lack intelligence than humility. No, it is better to lack “the comforts of the Spirit” than lack humility. “What does the Lord require of you, but to walk humbly with your God?” (Mic. 6:8).

**1. The more worth any man has, the more humble he is.** Feathers fly up, but gold descends! The golden saint descends in humility. Some of the ancients have compared humility to the Celidonian stone,<sup>1</sup> which has little substance, but is of rare virtue.

**2. God loves a humble soul.** It is not our high birth, but our low hearts, that God delights in. A humble spirit is God’s prospect: “to this man I will look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit” (Isa. 66:2). A humble heart is God’s palace! “I live in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a humble spirit” (Isa. 57:15). Great personages, besides their houses of state, have lesser houses which they retreat to on occasion. Besides God’s house of state in heaven, He has the humble soul for his retiring house, where he takes his rest, and makes himself comfortable. Let Italy boast that it is the garden of the world for pleasure. But a humble heart glories in this: that it is the Privy-Chamber<sup>2</sup> of the great and glorious King!

**3. The times we live in are humbling.** The Lord seems to say to us now, as he did to Israel, “Remove your ornaments, that I may know what to do with you.” (Exod. 33:5). My displeasure is breaking out; I have eclipsed the light of the sanctuary; I have stained the waters with blood; I have shot the arrow of pestilence. Therefore lay down your pride — “Remove your ornaments!” Woe to those who lift themselves up, when God is casting them down. When should people be humble, if not when under the rod?

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“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God” (1Pet. 5:6). When God afflicts his people, and cuts them short in their privileges, it is time then to “sew sackcloth over their skin, and defile their horn (or honor) in the dust” (Job 16:15).

**4. What a horrid sin pride is!** Chrysostom calls it “the mother of hell.” Pride is a complicated evil, as Aristotle says. Justice encompasses all virtue in itself; so pride encompasses all vice. It is a spiritual drunkenness; it flies up like wine into the brain, and intoxicates it. It is idolatry; a proud man is a self-worshipper. It is revenge; Haman plots Mordecai’s death because he would not bow the knee to him. How odious this sin is to God! “Everyone that is proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord!” (Pro. 16:5).

**5. The mischief of pride.** It is the neck-breaker of souls! “Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, etc.” “Doves,” says Pliny, “take a pride in their feathers; and in flying high, they at last fly so high that they become a prey to the hawk.” Men fly so high in pride, that at last they become a prey to the devil, the prince of the air.

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<sup>1</sup> May refer to the Swallow Stone, *Chelidonium*, mentioned by Plutarch, Pliny the Elder, and other ancients.

<sup>2</sup> The “Presence Chamber” — the room in which the King receives guests into His presence.

**6. Humility raises one's esteem in the eyes of others.** All give respect to the humble: "Before honor is humility" (Pro. 15:33).

**Ques:** What means may we use to be humble?

**Ans. 1:** Let us set before us the golden pattern of Christ. He commenced a *doctor in humility*. "But made himself of no reputation, and was made in the likeness of flesh" (Phil. 2:7). O what an abasement it was for the Son of God to take our flesh! No, that Christ should take our *nature* when it was in disgrace, being stained with sin — this was the wonder of humility. *Look upon a humble Savior, and let the plumes of pride fall!*

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**Ans. 2:** Study God's immensity and purity; a sight of glory humbles. Elijah wrapped his face in a mantle when God's glory passed before him (1Kings 19:13). The stars vanish when the sun appears.

**Ans. 3:** Let us study ourselves.

*First*, our **dark** side. By looking at our faces in the mirror of the Word, we see our *spots*. What a world of sin swarms in us! We may say with Bernard, "Lord, I am nothing but either sinfulness or barrenness."

*Secondly*, our light side. Is there any **good** in us?

1. *How disproportionate is it to the means of grace we have enjoyed?* There is still something lacking in our faith (1Thes. 3:10). O Christian, do not be proud of what you have, but be humble for what you lack.

2. *The grace we have is not of our own growth.* We are indebted to Christ and free grace for it. As he said of that axe which fell in the water, "Alas, master, for it was *borrowed*" (1Kings 6:5), so I may say of all the good and excellence in us: "It is borrowed." Would it not be folly to be proud of a ring that is loaned to us? "For who makes you to differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive?" (1Cor. 4:7). The *moon* has no cause to be proud of her light when she borrows it from the sun.

3. *How far short do we come of others?* Perhaps other Christians are giants in grace; they are in Christ not only *before* us, but *above* us. We are but like the *foot* in Christ's body; they are like the *eye*.

4. *Our beauty is spotted.* The church is said to be "fair as the moon" (Song 6:10) which, when it shines brightest, has a dark spot in it. Faith is mixed with infidelity. A Christian has in his very grace, that which may humble him.

5. *If we would be humble, let us contemplate our mortality.* Shall dust exalt itself? Thoughts of the grave should bury our pride. They say that when there is a *swelling* in the body, the hand of a dead man stroking that part cures the swelling. The serious meditation of death is enough to cure the swelling of pride.

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## **Sec. 12. A godly man is a PRAYING man.**

"Let everyone who is godly pray to You." Psalm 32:6

As soon as *grace* is poured in, *prayer* is poured out! "But I give myself to prayer" (Psa. 109:4). In the Hebrew it is, "but I prayer;" prayer and I are all one. Prayer is the soul's communion with heaven. God comes down to us by his Spirit, and we go up to him by prayer. Caligula placed his effigies in the capitol, *whispering in Jupiter's ear*; **prayer whispers in God's ear!** A godly

man cannot live without prayer. A man cannot live unless he takes a breath; nor can the soul, unless it breathes forth its desires to God. As soon as the babe of grace is born, it cries. No sooner was Paul converted than “behold, he prays!” (Acts 9:11). No doubt he prayed before, being a Pharisee, but it was either *superficially* or *superstitiously*. But when the work of grace had passed upon his soul, behold, now he *prays!*

A godly man is on the mount of prayer every day. He begins the day with prayer. Before he opens his *shop*, he opens his *heart* to God! We burn sweet perfumes in our houses; a godly man’s house is a house of perfume; he airs it with the incense of prayer. He engages in no business without seeking God. Scipio never entered into the senate house, without first ascending the capitol where he did his devotion. A godly man consults God in everything; he asks God’s permission and his blessing. The Grecians asked counsel at their oracles; so a godly man enquires at the divine oracle (Gen. 24:12; 1Sam. 23:3, 4). A true saint continually shoots his heart up to heaven by sacred exclamations of prayer.

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**Ques:** Is prayer a sign of a godly man? May not a hypocrite pray eloquently and with seeming devotion?

**Ans:** He may: “They seek me daily” (Isa. 58:2). But a hypocrite does not pray “in the Spirit” (Eph. 6:18). A man may have the *gift* of prayer, and not have the *spirit* of prayer.

**Ques:** How shall we know that we have the spirit of prayer?

**Ans:** When the prayer which we make is spiritual.

**Ques: What is it, to make a SPIRITUAL PRAYER?**

**Ans. 1: When we pray with KNOWLEDGE.** Under the law, Aaron was to “light the lamps” when he burned the incense on the altar (Exod. 30:7). Incense typified prayer, and lighting the lamps typified knowledge. When the incense of prayer burns, the lamp of knowledge must be lit: “I will pray with the understanding” (1Cor. 14:15). We must know the majesty and holiness of God, so that we may be deeply affected with reverence when we come before him. We must put up those petitions that are exactly adequate and agreeable to God’s will. “Do not be rash with your mouth, to utter anything before God” (Ecc. 5:2). The Lord would not have the *blind* offered to him (Mal. 1:8). How can we pray with *affection* when we do not pray with *judgment*? The Papists pray in an unknown tongue. Christ may reply to them as he did to the mother of Zebedee’s children, “You do not know what you ask” (Matt. 20:22). He that prays he knows not how, shall be heard he knows not when.

**Ans. 2: A spiritual prayer is when the HEART and SPIRIT pray.** There are not only words, but desires. It is excellent when a man can say, “Lord, my heart prays.” Hannah “prayed in her heart” (1Sam. 1:13). The sound of a trumpet comes from within; and the excellent music of prayer comes from within the heart. If the heart does not accompany duty, then it is *speaking*, not *praying*.

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**Ans. 3: A spiritual prayer is a FERVENT prayer.** “An effectual *fervent* prayer... avails much” (Jas. 5:16). The heart, like the mainspring, should carry the affections in a most zealous and rapid manner. *Fervency* is the wing of prayer by which it ascends to heaven. Prayer is expressed by sighs and groans (Rom. 8:26). It is not so much the *gifts* of the Spirit, as the *groans* of the Spirit God likes. Prayer is called a “wrestling” (Gen. 32:24) and a “pouring out of the soul” (1Sam. 1:15). Prayer is compared to incense (Psa. 141:2). Incense without fire makes no sweet smell. Prayer without fervency is like incense without fire. Christ prayed with “strong cries

and tears” (Heb. 5:7) — crying prayer prevails. When the heart is inflamed in prayer, a Christian is carried, as it were, in a fiery chariot up to heaven.

**Ans. 4: A spiritual prayer is what comes from a BROKEN HEART.** “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit” (Psa. 51:17). The incense was to be *beaten*,<sup>1</sup> to typify the breaking of the heart in prayer. It is not the eloquent tongue, but the melting heart that God accepts.

Oh, says a Christian, I cannot pray as others do; as Moses said to the Lord, “I am not *eloquent*.” But can you weep and sigh? Does your soul melt out at your eyes? God accepts broken expressions when they come from broken hearts. I have read of a plant that bears no fruit, but weeps forth a kind of gum which is very costly. So, though you do not flourish with those gifts and expressions as others do, yet if you can weep forth tears from a contrite heart, these are exceedingly precious to God, and he will put them in his bottle. Jacob wept in prayer and had “power over the angel” (Hos. 12:4).

**Ans. 5: A spiritual prayer is a BELIEVING prayer.** “Whatever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive” (Matt. 21:22). The reason why so many prayers suffer shipwreck, is because they split against the *rock of unbelief*; praying without faith, is like shooting without bullets.

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When faith takes prayer by the hand, then we draw near to God. We should come to God in prayer as the leper did: “Lord, if you will, you can heal me” (Matt. 8:2). It is a disparagement to Deity to have such a whisper in the heart, that “God’s ear is heavy and cannot hear” (Isa. 59:1). What is said of the people of Israel may be applied to prayer: “They could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb. 3:19).

**Ans. 6: A spiritual prayer is a HOLY prayer.** “Therefore lift up holy hands” (1Tim. 2:8). Prayer must be offered on *the altar of a pure heart*. Sin that is lived in, makes the heart hard, and God’s ear deaf. Sin stops the mouth of prayer. Sin does what the thief does to the traveler — it puts a gag in his mouth so he cannot speak. Sin poisons and infects prayer. A wicked man’s prayer is sick from the plague, and will God come near him? The loadstone loses its virtue when it is spread with garlic;<sup>2</sup> so does prayer when it is polluted with sin. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psa. 66:18). It is foolish to pray against sin, and then to sin against prayer. A spiritual prayer, like the spirits of wine, must be refined and taken off the lees and dregs of sin, “that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness” (Mal. 3:3). If the heart is holy, this altar will sanctify the gift.

**Ans. 7: A spiritual prayer is a HUMBLE prayer.** “Lord, you have heard the desire of the humble” (Psa. 10:17). Prayer is asking for alms, which requires humility. “The publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but beat upon his breast saying, God be merciful to me, a sinner” (Luk. 18:13). God’s incomprehensible glory may even amaze us, and strike a holy consternation<sup>3</sup> into us when we approach near to him: “O my God, I blush to lift up my face to you” (Ezra 9:6).

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It is lovely to see a *poor nothing* lie prostrate at the feet of its Maker. “Behold, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord — I who am but dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27). The lower the *heart* descends, the higher the *prayer* ascends.

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<sup>1</sup> That is, pounded and ground down with mortar and pestle to break it up into fine pieces that burn readily.

<sup>2</sup> This was a persistent Roman myth, disproved by William Gilbert in 1634, but ignored by Watson in 1666.

<sup>3</sup> Fear resulting from the awareness of danger.

**Ans. 8: A spiritual prayer is when we pray IN THE NAME OF CHRIST.** To pray in the name of Christ is not only to *name* Christ in prayer, but to pray *in the hope and confidence* of Christ's mediation. As a child claims his estate in the right of his father who purchased it, so we come for mercy in Christ's name, who has purchased it for us in his blood. Unless we pray thus, we do not pray at all; no, we rather provoke God, as it was with Uzziah when he wanted to offer incense without a priest. God was angry and struck him with leprosy (2Chr. 26:16-19). So when we do not come in Christ's name in prayer, we offer up incense without a priest, and what can we expect but to meet with wrath?

**Ans. 9: A spiritual prayer is when we pray out of LOVE for prayer.** A wicked man may pray, but he does not *love* prayer. "Will he delight himself in the Almighty?" (Job 27:10). A godly man is carried on the wings of delight. He is never so well as when he is praying. He is not forced with *fear*, but fired with *love*. "I will make them joyful in my house of prayer" (Isa. 56:7).

**Ans. 10: A spiritual prayer is when we have SPIRITUAL ENDS in prayer.** There is a vast difference between a spiritual prayer, and a carnal desire. The ends of a hypocrite are secular and carnal. He looks askew in prayer;<sup>1</sup> it is not the sense of his spiritual needs that moves him, but rather lust. "You ask amiss, that you may spend it on your lusts" (Jas. 4:3). The sinner prays more for *food* than *grace*. God does not interpret this as *praying*, but as *howling*.

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"They *howled* upon their beds; they assemble for corn and wine." (Hos. 7:14) Prayers which lack a good *aim* lack a good *answer*. A godly man has spiritual ends in prayer. He sends out his prayer as a merchant sends out his ship, that he may have large returns of spiritual blessings. His design in prayer is that his heart may be more holy, and that he may have more communion with God. A godly man engages in the *trade of prayer*, that he may increase the *stock of grace*.

**Ans. 11: A spiritual prayer is accompanied with the use of MEANS.** There must be *means* as well as prayer. When Hezekiah was sick he not only prayed for recovery, but he "laid a lump of figs to the boil" (Isa. 38:21). This is how it is in the case of the soul: when we pray against sin, *and* avoid temptations; when we pray for grace, *and* improve opportunities for it — this is *laying a fig to the boil* which will make us recover. To pray for holiness, and neglect its means, is like winding up the clock and pulling off the weights.

**Ans. 12: A spiritual prayer is that which leaves a SPIRITUAL FRAME behind, upon the heart.** A Christian is *better* after prayer. He has gotten more strength over sin, as a man gets strength by exercise. The heart after prayer keeps a tincture of holiness, as the vessel savors and relishes of the wine that is put into it. Having been with God on the mount, Moses' face shined. So too, having been on the mount of prayer, our *graces* shine and our *lives* shine. This is the sign of a godly man: he prays in the Spirit. This is the right kind of praying. The *gift* of prayer is ordinary, like culinary fire. But *spiritual* prayer is more rare and excellent, like elementary fire which comes from heaven.

**Use 1:** Is a godly man of a praying spirit? If so, then these exclude a man from being godly:

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**1. Those who do not pray at all.** Their houses are unhallowed houses. It is made the note of a reprobate that "he does not call upon God" (Psa. 14:4). Does that indigent creature think he will have alms, if he never asks for it? Do they think they will have mercy from God, who never seek it? Truly then, God would befriend them more than he did his own Son. "He offered up prayers and supplications with strong cries" (Heb. 5:7). None of God's children are *tongue-tied*. "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your

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<sup>1</sup> A glance that is directed to one side as if with doubt, suspicion, or envy.

hearts, crying, *Abba, Father*" (Gal. 4:6). Creatures by the instinct of nature cry to God: "The young ravens cry" (Psa. 147:9). "The lions seek their meat from God" (Psa. 104:21). Not to cry to God, is worse than brutish.

**2. Others may pray, but it is seldom.** Like that profane atheist that Heylin<sup>1</sup> speaks of, who told God that "*he was no common beggar*, he had never troubled him before; and if God would hear him now, he would never trouble him again."

**3. Others may pray, but not "in the Holy Spirit"** (Jude 20). They are rather *parrots*, than *weeping doves*. Their hearts do not melt in prayer; they exercise their invention<sup>2</sup> more than their affection.

**Use 2:** Because you would prove the new birth, cry "Abba, Father;" be men of prayer. Pray at least twice a day. In the temple there was the *morning* and *evening* sacrifice. Daniel prayed three times a day. Indeed, he so loved prayer that he would not neglect prayer to save his life (Dan. 6:10). Luther spent three hours every day in prayer.

**Obj:** But what need is there of prayer, when God has made so many promises of blessings?

**Ans:** Prayer is the condition annexed to the promise. Promises turn upon *the hinge of prayer*: "I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them." (Ezek. 36:37). A king promises a pardon, but it must be sued for.

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David had a promise that God would build him a house, but he sues for the promise by prayer (2Sam. 7:25). Christ himself had all the promises made sure to him — and yet he prayed and spent whole nights in prayer.

Therefore if you would be counted godly, be given to prayer. Prayer sanctifies your mercies (1Tim. 4:5). Prayer weeds out sin. Prayer waters grace.

That I may encourage Christians and hold up their heads in prayer, as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands (Exod. 17:12), let me propound these few considerations:

**1. Prayer is a seed sown in God's ear.** Other seed sown in the ground may be picked up by the birds, but this seed (especially if watered with tears) is too precious to lose.

**2. Consider the power of prayer.** The apostle, having set out the whole armor of a Christian, brings in prayer as the chief part (Eph. 6:18). Without this, says Zanchius, all the rest are of little worth. By prayer, Moses divided the Red Sea. By prayer, Joshua stopped the course of the sun and made it stand still (Josh. 10: 13). Indeed, prayer made the *Sun of Righteousness* stand still: "and Jesus stood still" (Luk. 18:40). Prayer is the inlet to all blessings, spiritual and temporal. When Aurelius Antoninus went against the Germans, he had in his army a regiment of Christians, who upon their earnest prayer, obtained rain for the refreshment of his army; and because of the power of their prayers, he called them "the thundering regiment." Prayer has a power in it to destroy the insolent enemies of the church. We read that "the two witnesses" have a flame on their lips — fire proceeds out of their mouths which devours their enemies (Rev. 11:3, 5). This fire is certainly to be interpreted as their prayers. David prayed, "Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness" (2Sam. 15:31). This prayer made Ahithophel hang himself.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Heylin (1599-1662), Chaplain to Charles I under Abp. William Laud; prolific writer; opponent of Puritans.

<sup>2</sup> The imagination of their minds.



Moses' prayer against Amalek did more than Joshua's sword. Prayer has a kind of *omnipotence* in it; it has raised the dead, overcome angels, cast out devils; it has influence upon God himself (Exod. 32:10): Jacob's prayer held God: "I will not let you go, till you bless me" (Gen. 32:26). Prayer finds God free, but leaves him bound.

**3. That Jesus Christ prays over our prayers again.** He takes the dross out, and presents nothing but pure gold to his Father. Christ mingles his sweet aromas with the prayers of the saints (Rev. 5:8). Think of the dignity of his person — he is God; and the sweetness of his relationship — he is a Son. Oh then, what encouragement is here for us to pray! Our prayers are put in the hand of a Mediator. Though as they come from us they are weak and imperfect — yet as they come from Christ they are mighty and powerful.

**4. Consider the sweet promises which God has made for prayer.** "He will be very gracious to you at the voice of your cry" (Isa. 30:19). "Then you shall go and pray to me, and I will hearken to you. And you shall seek me and find me when you shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:12, 13). "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear" (Isa. 65:24). These promises keep the head of prayer above water. God is bound with his own promises, as Samson was bound with his own hair.

Let us then double our files, and with our Savior, pray yet more earnestly (Luk. 22:44). Let us be importunate suitors, and resolve with Bernard that *we will not come away from God, without God*. Prayer is a petard<sup>1</sup> which will make heaven's gates fly open.

**Ques:** How shall we go about praying rightly?

**Ans:** Implore the Spirit of God: "praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20). The Holy Spirit both *authors* prayer and *inflames* it. God understands no other language, but that of his Spirit. Pray for the Holy Spirit that you may pray *in* the Holy Spirit.

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### Sec. 13. A godly man is a SINCERE man

"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whose spirit there is no guile" (John 1:47). The word for "sincere" signifies "without pleats and folds." A godly man is plain-hearted, having no subtle subterfuges. Religion is the uniform that a godly man wears, and this uniform is lined with sincerity.

**Ques:** In what does the godly man's sincerity appear?

**Ans. 1: The godly man is what he seems to be.** He is *a Jew inwardly* (Rom. 2:29). Grace runs through his heart, as silver runs through the veins of the earth — the hypocrite is *not* what he seems. A picture is like a man, but it lacks breath — the hypocrite is an effigy, a picture; he does not breathe out sanctity; he is only an angel on a sign-post.<sup>2</sup> A godly man corresponds to his profession, as a transcript corresponds to the original.

**Ans. 2: The godly man labors to approve himself to God in everything.** "We labor, so that whether present or absent, we may be accepted by him" (2Cor. 5:9). It is better to have *God* approve, than the *world* applaud. Those who ran in the Olympic race labored to have the approval of the judge and umpire of the race. There is a time coming shortly, when a smile from God's face will be infinitely better than all the applause of men. How sweet that word will be, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matt. 25:21). A godly man is ambitious for *God's* letters of recommendation, while the hypocrite desires to carry about *men's* fair opinion. Saul was for

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<sup>1</sup> An explosive device used to break down a gate or wall. A familiar image in the English Civil War of 1642-1651.

<sup>2</sup> Signposts of the day had a picture of an angel carved on them facing one way or another, to point the way.

the vogue<sup>1</sup> of the people (1Sam. 15:30) A godly man approves his heart to God, who is both the Spectator and the Judge.

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**Ans. 3: The godly man is transparent in laying open his sins.** “I acknowledged my sin to you, and I have not hidden my iniquity” (Psa. 32:5). The hypocrite veils and smothers his sin. He does not *abscindere peccatum*, but *abscondere*; he does not *cut off* his sin but *conceals* it. Like a patient who has some loathsome disease in his body, he would rather die than reveal his disease. But a godly man’s sincerity is seen in this: he will confess and shame himself for sin: “Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly” (2Sam. 24:17). Indeed, a child of God will confess sin *in particular*; an unsound Christian will confess sin *wholesale* — he will acknowledge he is a sinner only in general — whereas David, as it were, points with his finger to the sore: “I have done *this* evil” (Psa. 51:4). He does not say, “I have done evil” but “*this* evil.” He points at his blood-guiltiness.

**Ans. 4: The godly man has blessed designs in all he does.** He propounds this objective in every ordinance: that he may have more acquaintance with God, and bring more glory to God. As the herb *heliotropium* turns around according to the motion of the sun, so a godly man’s actions all move towards the glory of God. A godly man’s praying and worshipping is so that he may honor God. Though he shoots short, yet he aims correctly. The hypocrite thinks of nothing but self-interest; the sails of his mill move only when the *wind of self-promotion* blows. He never dives into the water of the sanctuary, except to fetch up a piece of gold from the bottom.

**Ans. 5: The godly man abhors deception towards men.** His *heart* goes along with his *tongue*; he cannot flatter and hate; commend and censure (Psa. 28:3). Let love be without hypocrisy” (Rom. 12:9). Pretended love is worse than hatred; counterfeiting friendship is no better than a lie (Psa. 78:36), for there is a pretense of that which is not.

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Many are like Joab: “He took Amasa by the beard to kiss him, and struck him with his sword in the fifth rib, and he died” (2Sam. 20:9, 10). [“Horrible poisons lie hidden under sweet honey.”]

There is a river in Spain where the fish seem to have a golden color. But take them out of the water, and they are like other fish. All is not gold that glitters; there are some who pretend much kindness, but they are like great veins which have little blood. If you lean on them, they are like a leg out of joint. For my part, I seriously question a man’s truth towards God, if he will flatter and lie to his friend. “The one that hides his hatred with lying lips is a fool” (Pro. 10:18).

By all that has been said, we may test whether we have this mark of a godly man: being sincere.

Sincerity (as I conceive it) is not strictly a grace, but rather *the ingredient in every grace*. Sincerity is what qualifies grace, and without which grace is not true: “Grace be with those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity” (Eph. 6:24). Sincerity qualifies our love; sincerity is to grace, what the blood and spirits are to the body: as there can be no life without the blood, so there can be no grace without sincerity.

**Use:** Because we would be reputed as godly, let us labor for this characteristic of sincerity.

**1. Sincerity renders us lovely in God’s eyes.** God says of the sincere soul, as he says of Zion, “This is my rest forever: here I will dwell; for I have desired it” (Psa. 132:14). A sincere heart is God’s paradise of delight. “Noah found grace in God’s eyes” (Gen. 6:8). Why, what did God see in Noah? He was girded with the belt of sincerity. Noah was “perfect in his generation” (Gen 6:9) Truth resembles God; and when God sees a sincere heart, he sees his

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<sup>1</sup> Seeking the current interest or acceptance of the people, implying it is fickle.

own image, and cannot help but fall in love with it: “He that is upright in his way, is God’s delight” (Pro. 11:20).

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**2. Sincerity makes our services find acceptance with God.** The church of Philadelphia had only “a little strength;” her grace was weak, her services slender; yet of all the churches Christ wrote to, he found the least fault with her. What was the reason? Because she was most sincere: “You have kept fast my word, and have not denied my name” (Rev. 3:8). Though we cannot pay God all we owe, yet a little in current coin is accepted. God takes *sincerity* for full payment. A little gold, though rusty, is better than tin, however bright it is. A little sincerity, though rusted over with many infirmities, has more value with God than all the glorious flourishes of hypocrites.

**3. Sincerity is our safety.** False hearts that will step out of God’s way and use carnal policy, when they think they are most safe, are least secure. “He that walks purely walks surely” (Pro. 10:9). A sincere Christian will do nothing but what the Word warrants, and that is safe for the conscience. Indeed, often those who are upright in their way, the Lord takes care of in their outward safety: “I laid down and slept” (Psa. 3:5). David was now surrounded with enemies — yet God so encamped around him by His providence, that David could sleep as securely as in a garrison. “The Lord sustained me.” The only way to be *safe* is to be *sincere*.

**4. Sincerity is gospel perfection.** “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man?” (Job 1:8). Though a Christian is full of infirmities, and like a nursing child, weak and feeble — God still looks on him as if he were completely righteous. Every true saint has the *Thummim of perfection* on his breastplate. <sup>Exo 28:30</sup>

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**5. Sincerity is what the devil strikes at most.** Satan’s spite was not so much at Job’s estate, as at his integrity; he would have wrested the shield of sincerity from him, but Job held that fast (Job 27:6). A thief does not fight for an empty purse, but for money. The devil would have robbed Job of the jewel of a good conscience, and then he would have been *poor Job* indeed. Satan does not oppose mere profession, but *sincerity*. Let men go to church and make glorious pretenses of holiness. Satan does not oppose this; this does him no hurt, nor them any good! But if men desire to be sincerely pious, then Satan musters up all his forces against them. Now what the devil most assaults, we must labor most to maintain. Sincerity is our fort-royal, where our chief treasure lies. This fort is most shot at; therefore let us be more careful to preserve it. While a man keeps his castle, his castle will keep him. While we keep sincerity, sincerity will keep us.

**6. Sincerity is the beauty of a Christian.** In what does the beauty of a diamond lie, if not in this: that it is a true diamond? If it is counterfeit, it is worth nothing. So in what does the beauty of a Christian lie, except in this: that he has truth in the inward parts (Psa. 51:6)? Sincerity is a Christian’s ensign of glory; it is both his breastplate to defend him, and his crown to adorn him.

**7. See the vileness of hypocrisy.** The Lord would have no *leaven* offered up in sacrifice; leaven typified *hypocrisy* (Luk. 12:1). The hypocrite does the devil double service; under the *mask of piety*, he can sin more, and be less suspected: “Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers” (Matt. 23:14). Who would think that those who pray for so many hours on end, would be guilty of extortion? Who would suspect someone of using false weights, who so often has the Bible in his hand?

Who would think a man would slander, if he seems to fear an oath? Hypocrites are the worst sort of sinners; they reflect infinite dishonor upon religion. Hypocrisy, for the most part, ends in scandal, and that brings an evil report on the ways of God. One man breaking the law makes suspects of those who are honest. One scandalous hypocrite makes the world suspect that all professing Christians are like him. The hypocrite was born to spite religion, and to bring it into a state of disgrace.

The hypocrite is a liar. He worships God with his knee, and worships his lusts with his heart — like those who “feared the Lord, and served their own gods” (2Kings 17:33).

The hypocrite is an impudent sinner. He *knows* his heart is false, yet he goes on. Judas knew he was a hypocrite; he asks, “Master, is it I?” Christ replies, “You have said it” (Matt. 26:25). Yet he was so shameless as to *persist* in his falseness and betray Christ. All the plagues and curses written in the Book of God are the hypocrite’s portion! Hell is his place of rendezvous (Matt. 24:51). Hypocrites are the chief guests whom the devil expects, and he will make them as welcome as fire and brimstone can do so!

**8. If the heart is sincere, God will wink at many failings.** “He has not seen iniquity in Jacob” (Num. 23:21). God’s love does not make him blind; he can see infirmities. But how does God look at a believer’s sins? Not with an eye of revenge, but of pity — just as a physician sees a disease in his patient, so as to heal him. God does not see iniquity in Jacob so as to destroy him, but to heal him! “He went on frowardly.<sup>1</sup> I have seen his ways, but I will heal him” (Isa. 57:17, 18). How much pride, vanity, passion, the Lord passes by in his sincere ones! He sees the *integrity* and pardons the *infirmity*. How much God overlooked in Asa! The “high places were not removed.” Yet it is said, “The heart of Asa was *perfect* all his days” (2Chr. 15:17).

We esteem a picture, even if it is not drawn *full length*. Just so, the graces of God’s people are not drawn to their full length! Indeed, they have many scars and spots. Yet having something of God in their sincerity, they shall find mercy. God loves the sincere, and it is the nature of love to cover infirmity (Prov. 10:12).

**9. Nothing but sincerity will give us comfort in an hour of trouble.** King Hezekiah thought he was dying — yet this revived him: that his conscience drew up a certificate for him: “Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you in truth...” (Isa. 38:3). Sincerity was the best flower in his crown. What a golden shield this will be against Satan when he roars at us by his temptations, and sets our sins before us on our death-bed! Then we shall answer, “It is true, Satan; these have been our misdeeds, but we have bewailed them; if we have sinned, it was against the bent and purpose of our heart.” This will shut the devil’s mouth and make him retreat; therefore labor for this jewel of sincerity. “If our heart does not condemn us, then we have confidence toward God” (1John 3:21). If we are cleared at the petty sessions in our conscience, then we may be confident we shall be acquitted in the great courts on the Day of Judgment.

[“Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you — in the holiness and **sincerity** that are from God” (2Cor. 1:12). “Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart” (Heb. 10:22).]

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<sup>1</sup> Habitually disposed to disobedience and opposition.

## Sec. 14. A godly man is a HEAVENLY man

Heaven is in him — before he is in heaven! The Greek word for saint, *hagios*, signifies a man taken away from the earth. A person may live in one place yet belong to another. He may live in Spain yet be a free citizen of England. Pomponius dwelt at Athens, yet was a citizen of Rome: so a godly man is a while in the world, but he belongs to the Jerusalem above. That is the place to which he aspires. Every day is *Ascension Day* with a believer.

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The saints are called “stars” for their sublimeness;<sup>1</sup> they have gotten above into the upper region: “The way of life is above, to the wise” (Pro. 15:24). A godly man is heavenly in six ways:

1. In his ELECTION.
2. In his DISPOSITION.
3. In his COMMUNICATION.
4. In his OPERATION.
5. In his EXPECTATION.
6. In his CONVERSATION.<sup>2</sup>

**1. A godly man is heavenly in what he ELECTS.** He *chooses* heavenly objects. David chose to be a resident in God’s house (Psa. 84:10). A godly person chooses Christ and grace, before the most illustrious things under the sun. What a man is, his choice is. This choosing of God is best seen in a critical hour. When Christ and the world come into competition, and we part with the world to keep Christ and a good conscience, it is a sign we have chosen “the better part” (Luk. 10:42). [Moses “*chose* to be mistreated along with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time” (Heb. 11:25).]

**2. A godly man is heavenly in his DISPOSITION.** He sets his affections on things above (Col. 3:2). He sends his heart to heaven before he gets there. He looks at the world as but a *beautiful prison*, and he cannot be much in love with his fetters, even if they were made of gold. A holy person contemplates glory and eternity; his desires have gotten wings and fled to heaven. Grace is in the heart like fire, which makes it spark upwards in divine breathings and exclamations.

**3. A godly man is heavenly in his COMMUNICATION.** His words are sprinkled with salt to season others (Col. 4:6). As soon as Christ had risen from the grave, he was “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). No sooner has a man risen from the grave of unregeneracy than he is speaking of heaven. “The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious” (Ecc. 4:12). He speaks so heavenly, as if he had already been in heaven. The love he bears to God, will not allow him to be silent.

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The spouse being sick with love, her tongue was like the pen of a ready writer: “My beloved is white and ruddy, his head is as the fine gold...” (Song 5:10, 11). If wine is in the house, the bush will be hung out.<sup>3</sup> Where there is a principle of godliness in the heart, it vents itself at the lips!

How can those be termed *godly*

- (1) Who are possessed with a speechless devil? They never have any good discussions. They are fluent and prattle enough in secular things — they can speak about their wares and drugs; they can tell you what a good crop they had — but in matters of religion, it is as if their

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<sup>1</sup> Here this means being other-worldly in their focus and interest.

<sup>2</sup> That is, in his interaction with others in society.

<sup>3</sup> It was customary to hang out ivy, boughs of trees, flowers, etc., at public houses to notify to travellers that “good cheer” might be had within.



tongue clung to the roof of their mouth! There are many people, if you come into their company, you cannot tell what to make of them — if they are Turks or atheists — for they never speak a word of Christ!

(2) Whose tongues are set on fire by hell? Their lips do not drip honey, but poison, to the defiling of others! Plutarch says that speech ought to be like *gold*, which is of most value when it has the least *dross* in it. Oh, the unclean, malicious words that some people utter! What an unsavory stench comes from these dunghills! Those lips that gallop so fast in sin, need David's muzzle (Psa. 39:1). Can the body be healthy when the tongue is black? Can the heart be holy when the devil is in the lips? A godly man speaks "the language of Canaan." (Isa 19.18); "Those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another" (Mal. 3:16).

**4. A godly man is heavenly in his OPERATION.** The motions of the planets are celestial. A godly man is sublime and sacred in his motions; he works out his salvation;<sup>Phi 2.12</sup> he puts forth all his strength, as they did in the Greek Olympics, so that he may obtain the garland made of the flowers of paradise. He prays, fasts, watches, and takes heaven by storm.<sup>Mat 11.12</sup> He is divinely actuated; he carries on God's interest in the world; he does angels' work; he is seraphic <sup>1</sup> in his operations.

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**5. A godly man is heavenly in his EXPECTATION.** His hopes are above the world (Psa. 39:7), and "in hope of eternal life" (Titus 1:2). A godly man casts anchor within the veil.<sup>Heb 6.19</sup> He hopes to have his fetters of sin filed off; he hopes for such things as no eye has seen;<sup>1Cor 2.9</sup> he hopes for a kingdom when he dies — a kingdom promised by the Father, purchased by the Son, assured by the Holy Spirit. As an heir lives in hope of the time when such a great estate shall fall to him, so a child of God, who is a co-heir with Christ,<sup>Rom 8.17</sup> hopes for glory. This hope comforts him in all varieties of condition: "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2).

**(1) This hope comforts a godly man in AFFLICTION.** Hope lightens and sweetens the most severe dispensations. A child of God can laugh with tears in his eyes; the time is shortly coming when the cross shall be taken off his shoulders and a crown set upon his head! A saint — at present miserable with a thousand troubles — will in an instant be clothed with robes of immortality, and advanced above the seraphim!

**(2) This hope comforts a godly man in DEATH.** "The righteous has hope in his death" (Pro. 14:32). If one were to ask a dying saint what he would have left when all his earthly comforts had gone, he would say, "the helmet of hope." I have read of a woman martyr who, when the persecutors commanded that her breasts be cut off, said, "Tyrant, do your worst; I have two breasts which you cannot touch, the one of faith and the other of hope." A soul that has this blessed hope is above the desire of life or the fear of death. Would anyone be troubled at exchanging a pitiful lease for an inheritance that will be for him and his heirs? Who would care to part with life, which is a lease that will soon run out, to be possessed of a glorious inheritance in light? (Col 1.12)

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**6. A godly man is heavenly in his CONVERSATION.** He casts such a luster of holiness, that it adorns his profession. He lives as if he had seen the Lord with bodily eyes. What zeal, sanctity, humility, shine forth in his life! A godly person emulates not only the angels, but imitates Christ himself (1John 2:6). The Macedonians celebrate the birthday of Alexander, on which day they wear his picture around their necks, set with pearl and rich jewels. So a godly man carries the

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<sup>1</sup> Angelic: relating to an angel of the first order (seraphs) – see Isa 6.2-6.



lively picture of Christ around him, in the heavenliness of his deportment: “Our conversation is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20).

**Use 1:** They must be disbarred as ungodly,<sup>1Cor 9.27</sup> who are eaten up with the world. “Godly and earthly” is a contradiction: “For many walk, of whom I now tell you, even weeping, as enemies of the cross of Christ: whose god is their belly, who mind earthly things” (Philippians 3:18-19). We read that the earth swallowed up Korah alive (Num. 16:32). This judgment is on many: the earth swallows up their time, thoughts, and discourse. They are buried *twice*; their hearts are buried in the earth before their bodies. How sad it is that the soul, that princely thing, which is made for communion with God and angels, should be put to the mill to grind, and made a slave to the earth! How the soul has become like the prodigal, choosing to converse with swine and feed on husks, rather than aspire after communion with the blessed Deity! Thus Satan fools men, and keeps them from heaven, by making them seek a heaven here.

**Use 2:** Because we would prove that we are “born of God,” let us be of a sublime, heavenly temper. We will never go to heaven *when we die*, unless we are in heaven *while we live*. So that we may be nobler, and raised in our affections, let us seriously weigh these four considerations:

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**1. God himself sounds a retreat, to call us off from the world.** “Do not love the world” (1John 2:15). Do not hunt after its honors and profits. As are God’s precepts, so are his providences: they are to beat us off the world. Why does he send war and pestilence? What does the heat of this great anger mean? Surely *dying times* are to make men die to the world.

**2. Consider how much below a Christian it is to be earthly-minded.** We sometimes laugh at children when we see them busying themselves with toys, blowing bubbles in the air out of a shell, kissing their babies, etc., when in the meantime, we do the same! At death, what will all the world be, which we hug and kiss, but like a rag doll? It will yield us no more comfort then. How far it is below a heaven-born soul to be taken up with these things! Indeed, for those who profess to be ennobled with a principle of piety, and to have their hopes above — for them to have their hearts below — how they disparage their heavenly calling, and spot their silver wings of grace, by smearing them with earth!

**3. Consider what a poor, contemptible thing the world is.** It is not worth setting the affections on; it cannot fill the heart. If Satan were to take a Christian up to *the mount of temptation* and show him all the kingdoms and glory of the world,<sup>Mat 4.8</sup> what could he show him but a deceitful dream? Nothing *here* can be proportionate to the immense soul of man. “In the fullness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits” (Job 20:22). Here is lack in plenty.

The creature will no more fill the soul than a drop will fill the bucket; and that little sweet we suck from the creature, is intermixed with bitterness, like that cup which the Jews gave Christ. “They gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh” (Mark 15:23). And this imperfect sweet will not last long: “the world passes away” (1John 2:17).

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The creature barely greets us, and is quickly on the wing. The world rings changes; it is never constant except in its disappointments. How quickly we may remove our lodgings and make our pillow in the dust! The world is but a great inn where we are to stay a night or two, and be gone. What madness it is to so set our heart upon our inn, as to forget our eternal home!

**4. Consider what a glorious place heaven is.** We read of an angel coming down from heaven who “set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the earth” (Rev. 10:2). If we had but once been in heaven, and viewed its superlative glory, how we might in holy scorn, trample with one foot on the earth, and with the other foot on the sea! Heaven is called a

better country: "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (Heb. 11:16). Heaven is said to be a better country in opposition to the country where we now sojourn. What should we seek if not that better country?

**Ques: In what sense is heaven a "better country?"**

**Ans. 1: In that country above there are better DELIGHTS.** There is the tree of life, the rivers of pleasure; there is amazing beauty, unsearchable riches; there are the delights of angels; there is the flower of joy full-blown; there is more than we can ask or think (Eph. 3:20). There is glory in its full dimensions, and beyond all hyperbole.

**Ans. 2: In that country there is a better DWELLING-HOUSE.**

(1) It is a house "not made with hands" (2Cor. 5:1). To denote its excellence, there was never any house that was not made with hands. But the house above surpasses the art of man or angel; none besides *God* could lay a stone in that building.

(2) It is "eternal in the heavens." It is not a *guest* house, but a *mansion* house. It is a house that will never be out of repair. "Wisdom has built this house, and hewn out her seven pillars" (Pro. 9:1), which can never rot.

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**Ans. 3: In that country there are better PROVISIONS.** In our Father's house, there is bread enough. Heaven was typified by Canaan, which flowed with milk and honey. *There* is the royal feast, the spiced wine; *there* is angels' food; *there* are those rare foods and delicacies served which exceed not only our expressions, but our belief.

**Ans. 4: In that country there is better SOCIETY.** There God is blessed forever. How infinitely sweet and ravishing a smile from his face will be! The king's presence makes the court. There are the glorious cherubim. In this terrestrial country where we now live, we are among wolves and serpents; in that country above, we shall be among angels! There "the spirits of just men are made perfect" (Heb. 12:23). Here on earth, the people of God are clouded with infirmities; we see them with *spots* on their faces; they are full of pride, passion, criticism. In that Jerusalem above, we shall see them in their royal attire, decked with unparalleled beauty, not having the least tincture or shadow of sin upon them!

**Ans. 5: In that country there is a better AIR to breathe.** We go *into the country* for air; the best air is only to be had in that better country:

(1) It is a more **temperate** air; the climate is calm and moderate; we will neither freeze with the cold, nor faint with the heat.

(2) It is a **brighter** air; there is a better light that shines there. The Sun of Righteousness enlightens that horizon with his glorious beams: "the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. 21:23).

(3) It is a **purser** air. The marshes, which are full of foul vapors, we consider bad air and unwholesome to live in. This world is a place of bogs and marshes, where the noxious vapors of sin arise, which make it diseased and unwholesome to live in. But in that country above, there are none of these vapors, but a sweet perfume of holiness.

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There is the smell of the orange-tree and the pomegranate. There is the myrrh and cassia coming from Christ, which send forth a most fragrant scent.

**Ans. 6: In that country there is a better SOIL.** The land or soil is better:

(1) For its **altitude**. The earth, lying low, is of a baser pedigree; the element which is nearest heaven is purer and more excellent, as the fire. That country above is the high country; it is seated far above all the visible orbs (Psa. 24:3).

(2) For its **fertility**; it bears a richer crop: the richest harvest on earth is the golden harvest, but the country above yields nobler commodities. There are celestial pearls; there is the spiritual vine; there is the honeycomb of God's love dripping; there is the water of life, the hidden manna. There is that which does not rot, flowers that never fade. There is a crop which cannot be fully reaped; it will always be reaping-time in heaven, and the land yields all this without the labor of ploughing or sowing.

(3) For its **inoffensiveness**. There are no briars there. The world is a wilderness where there are wicked men, and the "best of them is a briar" (Micah 7:4). They tear the people of God in their spiritual liberties — but in the country above, there is not one briar to be seen; all the briars are burned.

(4) For the **rareness** of the prospect: all that a man sees there is his own. I account that the best prospect, is where a man can see the furthest on his own ground.

**Ans. 7: In that country there is better UNION.** All the inhabitants are knit together in love. The poisonous weed of *malice* does not grow there. There is harmony without division, and charity without envy. In that country above, as in Solomon's temple, no noise of a hammer is to be heard.

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**Ans. 8: In that country there is better EMPLOYMENT.** While we are here, we are complaining about our needs, weeping over our sins — but there, we shall be praising God. How the *birds of paradise* will chirp when they are in that celestial country! There the morning stars will sing together, and all the saints of God will shout for joy.

Oh, what should we aspire after if not this country above? Those who have their eyes opened will see that it infinitely excels! An ignorant man looks at a star and it appears to him like a little silver spot — but the astronomer, who has his instrument to judge the dimension of a star, knows it to be many degrees larger than the earth. So a natural man hears of the heavenly country, that it is very glorious, but it is at a great distance; and because he does not have a spirit of discerning, the world looks bigger in his eye. But those who are spiritual artists, who have the instrument of faith to judge of heaven, will say it is by far the better country, and they will hasten there with the sails of desire.

### Sec. 15. A godly man is a ZEALOUS man

Grace turns a *saint* into a *seraph* — it makes him burn with holy zeal. Zeal is a mixed affection, a compound of love and anger. It carries forth our *love to God*, and *anger against sin*, in the most intense manner. Zeal is the flame of the affections; a godly man has a double baptism of water *and fire*. He is baptized with a spirit of *zeal*; he is zealous for God's honor, truth, worship: "My zeal has consumed me" (Psa. 119:139). It was a crown set on Phineas' head that he was zealous for his God (Num. 25:13). Moses being touched with a coal from God's altar, in his zeal he breaks the tablets (Exod. 32:19).

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Our blessed Savior in his zeal, whips the buyers and sellers out of the temple: "The zeal of your house has eaten me up." (John 2:17).

But there is a *preternatural heat* — something looking like zeal, which it is not. A comet looks like a star. I will therefore show some differences between a true and a false zeal:

**1. A false zeal is a BLIND zeal.** “They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2). This is not the fire of the spirit, but wildfire. The *Athenians* were very devout and zealous, but they did not know for what. “I found an altar with this inscription, “To the unknown God”” (Acts 17:23). Thus the *Papists* are zealous in their way, but they have taken away the key of knowledge.

**2. A false zeal is a SELF-SEEKING zeal.** Jehu cries, “Come, see my zeal for the Lord!” (2Kings 10:16). But it was not zeal, only ambition; he was fishing for a crown. Demetrius pleads for the goddess Diana, yet it was not her temple but her silver shrines that he was zealous for (Acts 19:25-27). Ignatius<sup>1</sup> complains of such zealots in his time, that they made a trade of Christ and religion, by which to enrich themselves. It is probable that many in King Henry VIII’s time were eager to pull down the abbeys, not out of any zeal against popery, but that they might build their own houses on the ruins of those abbeys — like vultures which fly aloft, but their eyes are down upon their prey. If blind zeal were punished sevenfold, hypocritical zeal would be punished seventy-sevenfold.

**3. A false *preposterous* zeal is a MISGUIDED zeal.** It occurs most in things which are not commanded. It is the sign of a hypocrite to be zealous for *traditions*, and careless about institutions. The Pharisees were more zealous about washing their cups, than their hearts.

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**4. A false zeal is fired with ANGER.** James and John, when they wanted to call down fire from heaven, were rebuked by our Savior: “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of” (Luk. 9:55). It was not zeal, but anger. Many have espoused the cause of religion, out of *faction* and *fancy*, rather than zeal for the truth.

But the **zeal of a godly man** is a true and holy zeal which evidences itself in its effects:

**1. True zeal cannot bear an injury done to God.** Zeal makes the blood rise when God’s honor is impeached. “I know your works, and labor, and patience, and how you cannot tolerate those who are evil” (Rev. 2:2). The one who zealously loves his friend, cannot hear him spoken against and be silent.

**2. True zeal will confront the greatest difficulties.** When the world holds out a gorgon’s head<sup>2</sup> of danger to discourage us, zeal casts out fear; it is quickened by opposition. Zeal does not say, “There is a lion in the way!” Zeal will charge through an *army of daggers*, it will march in the face of death. Let news be brought to Paul that he was waylaid: “In every city, bonds and afflictions” awaited him. This sets a keener edge on his zeal: “I am ready not only to be *bound*, but also to *die* for the name of the Lord Jesus!” (Acts 21:13). As sharp frosts by force of contrast make the fire burn hotter, so sharp oppositions only inflame zeal more.

**3. Just as true zeal has knowledge go before it, it also has sanctity follow after it.** *Wisdom* leads the van of zeal, and *holiness* brings up the rear. A hypocrite seems to be zealous, but he is vicious. The godly man is white and ruddy; *white* in purity, as well as *ruddy* in zeal. Christ’s zeal was hotter than the fire, and his holiness purer than the sun.

**4. Zeal that is genuine loves truth when it is despised and opposed.** “They have made void your law. Therefore I love your commandments above gold” (Psa. 119:126, 127).

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The more others *deride* holiness, the more we *love* it. What, is religion the worse for others disgracing it? Does a *diamond* sparkle less because a blind man disparages it? The more

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop of Antioch who was martyred under the Roman Emperor Trajan (died 110).

<sup>2</sup> Greek Myth. – e.g. Medusa who had live snakes for hair; a glance at Medusa turned the beholder to stone.

*outrageous* the wicked are against the truth, the more *courageous* the godly are for it. When Michal scoffed at David's religious dancing before the ark, he said, "If this is to be vile, I will be yet more vile" (2Sam. 6:22).

**5. True zeal causes fervency in duty.** "*Fervent in spirit*" (Rom. 12:11). Zeal makes us *hear* with reverence, *pray* with affection, *love* with ardency. God kindled Moses' sacrifice from heaven: "Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed on the altar the burnt offering" (Lev. 9:24). When we are zealous in devotion, and our heart waxes hot within us — here is a fire from heaven kindling our sacrifice. How odious it is for a man to be all fire when he is *sinning*, and all ice when he is *praying*! A pious heart, like water that is seething hot, boils over in holy affections!

**6. True zeal is never out of breath.** Though it is violent, it is perpetual. No waters can quench the flame of zeal; it is torrid in the frigid zone. The heat of zeal is like the natural heat coming from the heart, which lasts as long as life. That zeal which is not constant, was never true.

**Use 1:** How opposite to godliness are those who decry zeal, and consider it a religious frenzy! They are for the light of *knowledge*, but not for the heat of *zeal*. When Basil was earnest in preaching against the Arian heresy, it was interpreted as folly and dotage. Religion is a matter requiring zeal; the kingdom of heaven will not be taken except by violence (Matt. 11:12).

**Obj:** But why so much fervor in religion? What becomes of **prudence** then?

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**Ans:** Though prudence is to direct zeal, it is not to destroy it. Because sight is required, must the body therefore have no heat? If prudence is the *eye* in religion, zeal is the *heart*.

**Ques:** But where is **moderation**?

**Ans:** Though moderation in things of indifference is commendable — and doubtless it would greatly tend toward settling the peace of the church — yet in the main articles of faith, in which God's glory and our salvation lie at stake, here moderation is nothing but sinful neutrality. It was Calvin's advice to Melancthon that he should not so love the name of moderate that, at length, he would lose all his zeal.

**Obj:** But the apostle urges moderation: "Let your moderation be known to all" (Phil. 4:5).

**Ans. 1:** *The apostle speaks there of moderating our passion.* The Greek word for "moderation" signifies candor and meekness — the opposite of rash anger. And so the word is rendered in another place "patient" (1Tim. 3:3). By moderation, then, is meant meekness of spirit. That is made clear by the subsequent words, "The Lord is at hand" — as if the apostle had said, Do not avenge yourselves, for the Lord is at hand. He is ready to avenge your personal wrongs; but this in no way hinders a Christian from being zealous in matters of religion.

**Ans. 2:** What strangers they are to godliness, who have no zeal for the glory of God! They can see his ordinances despised, his worship adulterated, and yet their spirits are not at all stirred in them. How many are of a dull, lukewarm temper, zealous for their own secular interest, but with no zeal for the things of heaven! Hot in their own cause, but cool in God's cause. The Lord most abominates lukewarm professors. I almost said he is sick of them. "I would that you were cold or hot (anything but lukewarm); but because you are neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15, 16).

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A lukewarm Christian is only half-baked dough, just like Ephraim: "Ephraim is a cake not turned" (Hos. 7:8). To keep up a form of religion without zeal, is to be like those bodies the

angels assumed, which moved, but had no life in them. I would ask these tepid, neutral professors this question: “If religion is not a good cause, why did they undertake it at first? If it is a good cause, then why do they go about it so faintly? Why do they not have a more holy ardor of soul?” These people would gladly go to heaven in a soft bed, but they are loath to be carried there in a fiery chariot of zeal. *Remember, God will be zealous against those who are not zealous; he provides the fire of hell for those that lack the fire of zeal!*

**Use 2:** Because you would be found in the catalogue of the godly, labor for zeal. It is as good to be of no religion, as not to be zealous in religion. Beware of carnal policy. This is one of those three things which Luther feared would be the death of religion. Some men have been *too wise* to be saved. Their discretion has quenched their zeal. Beware of *sloth*, which is an enemy to zeal: “be zealous therefore, and repent” (Rev. 3:19). Christians, what do you reserve your zeal for? Is it for your gold which perishes; or for your sinful passions which will make you perish? Can you bestow your zeal better than upon God?

How zealous men have been in a false religion! “They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance” (Isa. 46:6). The Jews spared no cost in their idolatrous worship. No, they “cause their sons and daughters to pass through the fire to Molech” (Jer. 32:35). They were so zealous in their idol worship, that they would sacrifice their sons and daughters to their false gods. How far did the purblind<sup>1</sup> heathen go in their false zeal?

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When the tribunes of Rome complained that they lacked gold in their treasuries to offer to Apollo, the Roman matrons plucked off their chains of gold, and rings, and bracelets, and gave them to the priests to offer up in sacrifice. Were these so zealous in their *sinful* worship, and will you not be zealous in the worship of the *true* God?

Can you lose anything by your zeal? Shall it not be superabundantly recompensed? What is heaven worth? What is a sight of God worth? Was not Jesus Christ zealous for you? He sweat drops of blood, he conflicted with his Father’s wrath. How zealous he was for your redemption, and have you no zeal for him? Is there anything you yourselves hate more than dullness and slothfulness in your servants? You are weary of such servants. Do you dislike a dull spirit in others, but not in yourselves? What are all your duties without zeal but mere fancies and nullities?

Do you know what a glorious thing zeal is? It is the luster that sparkles from grace; it is the flame of love; it resembles the Holy Spirit: “There appeared cloven tongues like fire, which sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:3, 4). *Tongues of fire* were an emblem to represent that *fire of zeal* which the Spirit poured upon them.

Zeal makes all our pious performances prevail with God. When the iron is red hot, it enters best; and when our services are red hot with zeal, they pierce heaven soonest!

## Sec. 16. A godly man is a PATIENT man

“You have heard of the patience of Job” (Jas. 5:11). Patience is a star which shines in a dark night. There is a twofold patience:

1. Patience in *waiting*.
2. Patience in *bearing*.

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<sup>1</sup> Lacking in insight or discernment.



**1. Patience in waiting.** If a godly man does not obtain his desire immediately, he will wait until the mercy is ripe: “My soul waits for the Lord” (Psa. 130:6). There is good reason why God should have the timing of our mercies: “I, the Lord, will hasten it in its time” (Isa. 60:22). Deliverance may tarry beyond *our* time, but it will not tarry beyond *God’s* time.

Why should we not wait patiently for God? (1) We are servants; it becomes servants to be in a waiting posture. (2) We wait for everything else: we wait for the fire till it burns; we wait for the seed until it grows (Jas. 5:7); why can we not wait for God? (3) God has waited for us; [“The LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you”] (Isa. 30:18). Did he not wait for our repentance? How often did he come, year after year, before he found fruit? [Luk 13.7](#) If God waited for us, can we not wait for him? A godly man is content to await God’s leisure. “Though the vision tarry, wait for it” (Hab. 2:3).

**2. Patience in bearing.** This patience is twofold:

(1) Patience in regard to **man** — when we bear injuries without revenging.

(2) Patience in regard to **God** — when we bear his hand without expressing discontent. A good man will not only *do* God’s will, but *bear* his will: “I will bear the indignation of the Lord” (Mic. 7:9). This patient bearing of God’s will is not:

a. *A stoic apathy:* patience is not being *insensible* under God’s hand; we ought to be sensible.<sup>1</sup>

b. *Forced patience:* bearing a thing because we cannot help it, which (as Erasmus said) is necessity rather than patience. But *patience is a cheerful submission of our will to God.* “May the will of the Lord be done” (Acts 21:14). A godly man acquiesces in what God does, as being not only *good*, but *best* for himself. The great quarrel between God and us is, “Whose will shall stand?” Now, the regenerate will falls in with the will of God.

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**There are four things opposite to this patient frame of soul:**

**(1) Disquiet of spirit**, when the soul is discomposed and pulled off the hinges, such that it is unfit for holy duties. When the strings of a lute are snarled, the lute is not fit to make music. So when a Christian’s spirit is perplexed and disturbed, he cannot make melody in his heart to the Lord. [Eph 5.19](#)

**(2) Discontent**, which is a sullen, stubborn mood. When a man is not angry at his sins, but at his condition, this is different from patience. *Discontent is the daughter of pride.*

**(3) Prejudice**, which is a dislike of God and his ways, and a falling away from piety. Sinners have hard thoughts of God; and if he just touches them in a tender spot, they will at once go away from him and discard his uniform.

**(4) Self-vindication**, when instead of being humbled under God’s hand, a man justifies himself, as if he had not deserved what he suffers. A proud sinner stands on his own defense, and is ready to accuse God of unrighteousness. This is as if we were to accuse the sun of darkness. This is far from patience. *A godly man subscribes to God’s wisdom, and submits to his will.* He says not only, “Good is the *word* of the Lord” (Isa. 39:8), but “Good is the *rod* of the Lord!”

**Use:** Because we would demonstrate that we are godly, let us be eminent in this grace of patience: “the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit” (Ecc. 7:8). There are some graces which we will have no need of in heaven. We will have no need of faith when we have full

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<sup>1</sup> That is, we should not be oblivious to it, but aware that it comes by God’s hand — and respond appropriately.

vision, nor will we need patience when we have perfect joy; but on a dark sorrowful night there is need for these stars to shine (Heb. 6: 12). Let us show our patience in bearing God's will. Patience in bearing God's will is twofold:

1. When God removes any *comfort* from us.
2. When God imposes any *trouble* on us.

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**1. We must be patient when God removes any comfort from us.** Does God take away any of our relations? "I take away the desire of your eyes with a stroke" (Ezek. 24:16) Yet it is still our duty to patiently acquiesce in the will of God. The loss of a dear relation is like pulling off a limb from the body. But grace will make our hearts calm and sedate, and work in us a holy patience under such a severe dispensation.

I will lay down eight considerations which may act like *spiritual medicine to kill the worm of impatience* under the loss of relations:

**(1) The Lord never takes away any comfort from his people, without giving them what is better.** The disciples parted with Christ's bodily presence, and he sent them the Holy Spirit. God eclipses one joy, and augments another. He simply makes an exchange; he takes away a flower and gives a diamond.

**(2) When godly friends dying, are in a better condition, they are taken away** "from the evil to come" (Isa. 57:1). They are out of the *storm*, and have gotten to the *haven!* "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Rev. 14:13). The godly have a portion promised to them upon their marriage with Christ; but the portion is not paid till the day of their death. The saints at death are promoted to communion with God; they have what they so long hoped for, and prayed for. Why then should we be impatient at our friends' promotion?

**(3) You that are a saint, have a friend in heaven which you cannot lose.** The Jews have a saying at their funerals, "Let your consolation be in heaven." Are you mourning someone close? Look up to heaven and fetch comfort from there: your best kindred are above. "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up" (Psa. 27:10). God will be with you in the hour of death: "though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, you are with me" (Psa. 23:4).

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Other friends, you cannot keep; God is a friend you cannot lose. He will be your *guide* in life; your *hope* in death; your *reward* after death!

**(4) Perhaps God is correcting you for a fault, and if so, it becomes you to be patient.** It may be that your friend had more of your love than God did, and therefore God took away such a relation, so that the stream of your love might run back to him again. A gracious woman having been deprived first of her children, [then of her husband], she said, "Lord, you have a plot against me: you intend to have all my love." God does not like to have any creature set upon the throne of our affections; he will take away that comfort, and then he shall lie nearest our heart. If a husband bestows a jewel on his wife, and she so falls in love with that jewel as to forget her husband, he will take away the jewel so that her love may return to him again. A dear relation is this jewel. If we begin to idolize it, God will take away the jewel, so that our love may return to him again.

**(5) A godly relation is parted with, but not lost.** That is lost which we have no hope of ever seeing again. Pious friends have only gone a little before us. A time will shortly come

when there shall be a meeting without parting (1Thes. 5:10).<sup>1</sup> How glad one friend is to see another that has been long-absent! Oh, what glorious acclamations there will be when old relations meet together in heaven, and are in each other's embraces! When a great prince lands at the shore, the guns go off as a token of joy; when godly friends have all landed at the heavenly shore, and congratulate one another's happiness, what stupendous joy there will be! What music in the choir of angels! How heaven will ring with their praises! And that which is the crown of all, those who were joined in the flesh here, will be joined nearer than ever in the mystic body, and will lie together in Christ's bosom (1Thes. 4:17),<sup>2</sup> that bed of perfume.

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**(6) We have deserved worse at God's hand.** Has he taken away a child, a wife, a parent? He might have taken away his Spirit instead. Has he deprived us of a relation? He might have deprived us of salvation instead. Does he put wormwood in the cup? Ah, but we *deserved* poison. "You have punished us less than our iniquities deserve" (Ezra 9:13). We have a sea of sin, but only a drop of suffering.

**(7) The patient soul most sweetly enjoys itself.** An impatient man is like a troubled sea which cannot rest (Isa. 57:20). He tortures himself on the rack of his own griefs and passions — whereas patience calms the heart, as Christ calmed the sea when it was rough. Now there is a sabbath in the heart, yes, a heaven. "In your patience, possess your souls" (Luk. 21:19). By *faith* a man possesses God, and by *patience* he possesses himself.

**(8) How patient many of the saints have been,** when the Lord has broken the very staff of their comfort in bereaving them of relations. The Lord took away Job's children and he was so far from murmuring that he fell to blessing: "The Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21). God foretold the death of Eli's sons: "in one day they shall die, both of them," (1Sam. 2:34). But how patiently he took this sad news: "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him." (1Sam. 3:18). See the difference between Eli and Pharaoh! Pharaoh said, "*Who* is the Lord?" (Exod. 5:2). Eli said, "*It is* the Lord." When God struck two of Aaron's sons dead, "Aaron held his peace" (Lev. 10:2, 3). *Patience opens the ear, but shuts the mouth!* It opens the ear to hear the rod, but shuts the mouth so that it does not have a word to say against God. Behold here the patterns of patience; and shall we not copy them?

These are heart-quieting considerations when God sets a *death's-head* upon our comforts, and removes dear relations from us.

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**2. We must be patient when God inflicts any TROUBLE on us.** "Patient in tribulation" (Rom. 12:12).

**(1) The Lord sometimes lays heavy affliction on his people:** "Your arrows pierce me deeply, And Your hand presses upon me." (Psa. 38:2). The Hebrew word for "afflicted" signifies "to be melted." God seems to melt his people in a furnace.

**(2) God sometimes lays various afflictions on the saints:** "he multiplies my wounds" (Job 9:17). Just as we have various ways of *sinning*, so the Lord has various ways of *afflicting*. Some he melts away their *estates*; others he chains to a *sick-bed*; others he confines to a *prison*. God has various arrows in his quiver, which he shoots.

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<sup>1</sup> **1Thes 5:10** "who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him."

<sup>2</sup> **1Thes 4:17** Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

**(3) Sometimes God lets the affliction lie for a long time:** “There is no longer any prophet; Nor is there among us any that knows how long.” (Psa. 74:9). As it is with *diseases* — there are some chronic, that linger and hang about the body several years in a row — so it is with *afflictions*. The Lord is pleased to exercise many of his precious ones with chronic afflictions, which lie on them for a long time. Now in all cases, it suits the saints to rest patiently in the will of God. The Greek word for “patient” is a metaphor, alluding to someone who stands invincibly under a burden. This is the right notion of patience: when we bear affliction invincibly without fainting or fretting.

The test of a pilot<sup>1</sup> is seen in a storm; so the test of a Christian is seen in affliction. The one that has the right art of navigation, when the boisterous winds blow from heaven, will steer the ship of his soul wisely, and not dash it on the rock of impatience. A Christian should always maintain decorum, not behaving himself in an unseemly manner, or disguising himself with intemperate passion when the hand of God lies upon him.

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Patience adorns suffering. Affliction in Scripture is compared to a net: “You brought us into the net” (Psa. 66:11). Those who have escaped the *devil’s net*, the Lord may still allow to be taken in the *net of affliction*. But they must not be “like a wild bull in a net” (Isa. 51:20), kicking and flinging against their Maker; rather, they must lie patiently till God breaks the net, and makes a way for their escape.<sup>1Cor 10.13</sup>

I will propound *four potent arguments to encourage patience under those troubles which God inflicts on us:*

**1. Afflictions are for our benefit:** “Human fathers corrected *us*... but He for our profit” (Heb. 12:10). We pray that God would take such a course with us that it may do our souls good. When God is afflicting us, he is hearing our prayers; he does it “for our profit.” Not that afflictions in themselves profit us, but they profit us as God’s Spirit works with them. For just as the waters of Bethesda could not impart health by themselves unless the angel descended and stirred them (John 5:4), so the waters of affliction are not healing in themselves until God’s Spirit co-operates and sanctifies them to us. Afflictions are profitable in many ways:

**(1) They make men sober and wise.** Physicians have mental patients bound in chains, put on a frugal diet, and given hard fare, to bring them to the use of reason. Many run stark mad in prosperity; they know neither God nor themselves. The Lord therefore binds them with cords of affliction that he may bring them to their understanding. “If they are held in cords of affliction, then he shows them their transgressions. He also opens their ear to discipline” (Job 36:8-10).

**(2) Afflictions are a friend to grace:**

a. They **beget** grace. Beza acknowledged that God laid the foundation of his conversion during a violent sickness in Paris.

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b. They **augment** grace. The people of God are indebted to their troubles; they would never have had so much grace, if they had not met with such severe trials. Now the waters run, and the spices flow out. Saints thrive by afflictions, as the Lacedemonians<sup>2</sup> grew rich by war. God makes grace flourish most in the fall of the leaf.

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<sup>1</sup> A person qualified to guide ships through difficult waters going into or out of a harbor.

<sup>2</sup> Laconia; referring to the Spartans of Greece.

**(3) Afflictions quicken our pace on the way to heaven.** It is with us as it is with children sent on an errand. If they meet with apples or flowers on the way, they linger and are in no great hurry to get home. But if anything frightens them, then they run with all the speed they can to their father's house. So in prosperity, we gather the apples and flowers and do not give much thought to heaven. But if troubles begin to arise and the times grow frightful, then we make greater haste to heaven, and with David, we "run in the way of God's commandments" (Psa. 119:32).

**2. God intermixes mercy with affliction.** He steeps his *sword of justice* in the *oil of mercy*. There was no night so dark that Israel did not have a pillar of fire in it. There is no condition so dismal, that we may not see a pillar of fire to give us light. If the *body is in pain*, and *conscience is at peace*; *there is mercy*. Affliction is for the prevention of sin; *there is mercy*. In the ark there was "a rod and a pot of manna," the emblem of a Christian's condition: mercy interlined with judgment. "I will sing of mercy and justice" (Psa. 101:1). Here is the rod and the manna.

**3. Patience evidences much of God in the heart.** Patience is one of God's titles: "the God of patience" (Rom. 15:5). If you have your heart cast into this blessed mold, it is a sign that God has imparted much of his own nature to you; you shine with some of his beams.

*Impatience* evidences much unsoundness of heart. As it is with the body, if the body has that temper that every little scratch of a pin makes the flesh rankle, you would say, "Surely this man's flesh is very unsound."

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So too, it is the sign of a distempered Christian to fly off in impatience, and to quarrel with providence for every petty hindrance. If there is any grace in such a heart, those who can see it must have good eyes. But the one who has a patient spirit is a graduate in religion, and greatly participates in the divine nature.

**4. The end of affliction is glorious.** The Jews were *captive* in Babylon, but what was the end? They departed from Babylon with vessels of silver, gold, and precious things (Ezra 1:6). So what is the end of affliction? It ends in endless glory (Acts 14:22; 2Cor. 4:17). How this may rock our impatient hearts to sleep! Who would not willingly travel through a little dirty way and plowed lands, at the end of which is a fair meadow, and in that meadow a golden mine!

**Ques:** How shall I get my heart turned into a patient frame?

**Ans. 1:** GET FAITH; all our impatience proceeds from unbelief. Faith is the breeder of patience. When a storm of passion begins to arise, faith says to the heart, as Christ said to the sea, "Peace, be still," and there is at once a calm.

**Ques:** How does faith work patience?

**Ans: Faith** argues the soul into patience. Faith is like that town clerk in Ephesus who quieted the contentious crowd and argued them soberly into peace (Acts 19:35, 36). So when impatience begins to clamor and make a hubbub in the soul, faith appeases the tumult, and argues the soul into holy patience. Faith says, "Why are you disquieted, O my soul?" (Psa. 42:5). Are you afflicted? Is it not your *Father* that has done this? He is carving and polishing you, to make you fit for glory. He *strikes* that he may *save*. What is your trial? Is it sickness? God shakes the tree of your body so that some fruit may fall, even "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11).

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Are you driven from your home? God has prepared a city for you (Heb. 11:16). Do you suffer reproach for Christ's sake? "The spirit of God and glory rests upon you" (1Pet. 4:14). Thus faith argues and disputes the soul into patience.

**Answer 2:** PRAY TO GOD FOR PATIENCE. Patience is a flower of God's planting. Pray that it may grow in your heart, and send forth its sweet perfume. Prayer is a holy charm, to charm down the evil spirit of impatience. Prayer composes the heart and puts it in tune when impatience has broken the strings and put everything into confusion. *Oh, go to God!* Prayer delights God's ear; it melts his heart; it opens his hand. God cannot deny a praying soul: seek him with importunity and either he will remove the affliction, or (which is better) he will remove your impatience!

## Sec. 17. A godly man is a THANKFUL man

Praise and thanksgiving is the work of heaven; and the godly man begins that work here which he will always be doing in heaven. The Jews have a saying, "The world subsists by three things: the Law, the Worship of God, and Thankfulness — as if where thankfulness is lacking, one of the pillars of the world would be taken away, and it would be ready to fall. The Hebrew word for "praise" comes from a root that signifies "to shoot up." The godly man sends up his praises like a volley of shots towards heaven. David was modeled after God's heart, and how melodiously he warbled out God's praises! Therefore he was called "the sweet singer of Israel" (2Sam. 23:1). Take a Christian at his worst, and yet he is thankful.

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The prophet Jonah was a man of waspish<sup>1</sup> spirit. The sea was not so stirred with the tempest, as Jonah's heart was stirred with passion. Yet through this cloud you might see grace appear: he had a thankful heart: "I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that which I have vowed" (Jonah 2:9). To illustrate this more clearly, I will lay down these four particulars:

**1. Praise and thanksgiving is a saint-like work.** We find in Scripture that the godly are still called upon to praise God: "You that fear the Lord, bless the Lord" (Psa. 135:20). "Let the saints be joyful in glory... Let the high praises of God be in their mouth" (Psa. 149:5, 6). Praise is a work that is proper to a saint:

**(1) None but the godly can praise God aright.** Just as all do not have the skill to play the lute, so not everyone can sound out the harmonious praises of God. Wicked men are *bound* to praise God, but they are not *fit* to praise him. None but a living Christian can tune God's praise. Wicked men are dead in sin; how can those who are dead lift up God's praises? "The grave cannot praise you" (Isa. 38:18). A wicked man stains and eclipses God's praise. If a filthy hand works in damask or flowered satin, it will slur its beauty. God will say to the sinner, "What [right] have you to... take my covenant into your mouth?" (Psa. 50:16).

**(2) Praise is not lovely, for any but the godly:** "praise is lovely for the upright" (Psa. 33:1). A profane man covered with God's praises, is like a dunghill stuck over with flowers. Praise in the mouth of a sinner, is like an oracle in the mouth of a fool. How unfitting it is for someone to praise God, if his whole life is dishonoring to God! It is as indecent for a wicked man to praise God, as it is for a thief to talk about living by faith, or for the devil to quote Scripture. Only the godly are fit to be choristers in God's praises. It is called "the garment of praise" (Isa. 61:3). This garment sits handsomely only on a saint's back.

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**2. Thanksgiving is a more noble part of God's worship.** Our needs may send us to *prayer*, but it takes a heart that is highly ingenuous to *praise* God. The *raven* cries; the *lark* sings. In *petition* we act like men; in *thanksgiving* we act like angels.

**3. Thanksgiving is a God-exalting work.** "Whoever offers praise, glorifies me" (Psa. 50:23). Though nothing can add the least cubit to God's essential glory, yet praise exalts him in the eyes

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<sup>1</sup>Very irritable.



of others. Praise is setting forth God's honor, lifting up his name, displaying the trophy of his goodness, proclaiming his excellence, spreading his renown, breaking open the box of ointment by which the sweet savor and perfume of God's name is sent abroad into the world.

**4. Praise is a more distinguishing work.** By this work, a Christian excels all the infernal spirits. Do you talk of God? So can the devil; he brought Scripture to Christ. Do you profess religion? So can the devil; he transforms himself into an angel of light. Do you fast? He never eats. Do you believe? The devils have a faith of assent; they "believe, and tremble" (Jas. 2:19). But just as Moses worked such a miracle that none of the magicians could reproduce it, so here is a work that Christians may be doing, which none of the devils can do — and that is the work of thanksgiving. The devils *blaspheme*, but they do not *bless*. Satan has his fiery darts, but not his harp and viol.<sup>1</sup>

**Use 1:** See here the true genius and complexion of a godly man. He is much into doxologies<sup>2</sup> and praises. It is a saying of Lactantius<sup>3</sup> that, "A man who is unthankful to God cannot be a good man." A godly man is a God-exalter. The saints are "temples of the Holy Spirit" (1Cor. 3:16).

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Where should God's praises be sounded, if not in his temples? A good heart is never weary of praising God: "his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Psa. 34:1). Some will be thankful while the memory of the mercy is fresh; but afterwards they leave it behind. The Carthaginians at first sent a tenth of their yearly revenue to Hercules. But by degrees they grew weary and stopped sending it. David, as long as he drew his breath, would chirp forth God's praise: "I will sing praises to my God while I have any being" (Psa. 146:2). David would not now and then give God a bit of music, and then hang up his instrument; but he would be continually celebrating God's praise.

**1.** *A godly man will express his thankfulness in every duty.* He mingles thanksgiving with prayer: "In everything, by prayer with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). Thanksgiving is the more divine part of prayer. In our petitions we express our own necessities; in our thanksgivings we declare God's excellences. When prayer it is perfumed with thanksgiving, then it goes up as incense.

And just as a godly man expresses thankfulness in every *duty*, so he does in every **condition**. He will be thankful in adversity as well as prosperity: "In everything give thanks" (1Thes. 5:18). A gracious soul is thankful and rejoices that he is drawn nearer to God, even though it is by the cords of affliction. When it goes *well* with him, he praises God's mercy; when it goes *badly* with him, he magnifies God's justice. When God has a *rod* in his hand, a godly man will have a *psalm* in his mouth. The devil's striking of Job was like striking on a musical instrument; Job sounded forth praise: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). When God's spiritual plants are cut and bleed, they drip thankfulness; the saints' tears cannot drown their praises.

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**2.** *If this is the sign of a godly man, then the number of the godly will appear to be very small.* Few are in the work of praise. Sinners cut God short of his thank-offering: "Where are the *nine*?" (Luk. 17:17). Of ten lepers healed there was but *one* who returned to give praise. Most in the world are sepulchers to bury God's praise. You will hear some swearing and cursing, but few that bless God. Praise is the yearly rent that men owe; but most are behind with their rent. God gave

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<sup>1</sup> Any of a family of stringed instruments preceding the violin.

<sup>2</sup> A hymn or verse in Christian liturgy glorifying God.

<sup>3</sup> Christian teacher (c. 250 – c. 325); advisor to the Roman emperor Constantine I, and tutor to his son.

King Hezekiah a famous deliverance, “But Hezekiah did not repay according to the benefit done to him” (2Chr. 32:25). That “but” was a blot on his escutcheon.<sup>1</sup>

Some, instead of being thankful to God, “render evil for good.” They are the worse for mercy: “Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise people?” (Deut. 32:6). This is like the toad that converts the most wholesome herb to poison. Where shall we find a grateful Christian? We read of the saints “having harps in their hands” (Rev 5:8) — the emblem of praise. Many have *tears* in their eyes, and *complaints* in their mouths; but few have *harps* in their hand, who are blessing and praising the name of God.

**Use 2:** Let us scrutinize ourselves and examine by this characteristic whether we are godly: *Are we thankful for mercy?* It is a hard thing to be thankful.

**Ques:** How may we know whether we are rightly thankful?

**Ans. 1:** We are rightly thankful when we are careful to register God’s mercy: “David appointed certain of the Levites to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel” (1Chr. 16:4). Physicians say that the memory is the first thing which decays. It is true in spiritual matters: “They soon forgot his works” (Psa. 106:13).

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A godly man writes down his mercies, as a physician writes his remedies, in a book, so that they may not be lost. Mercies are jewels that should be locked up. A child of God keeps two books by him always: one to write his *sins* in so that he may be *humble*; the other to write his *mercies* in so that he may be *thankful*.

**Ans. 2:** We are rightly thankful when our *hearts* are the chief instrument in the music of praise: “I will praise the Lord with my *whole heart*” (Psa. 111:1). David would tune not only his viol, but also his heart. If the heart does not join with the tongue, there can be no concert. Where the heart is lacking, the parrot is as good a chorister as the Christian.

**Ans. 3:** We are rightly thankful when the favors which we receive, endear our love to God more. David’s miraculous preservation from death drew forth his love to God: “I love the Lord” (Psa. 116:1). It is one thing to love our *mercies*, and another thing to love the *Lord*. Many love their *deliverance*, but not their *deliverer*. God is to be loved more than his mercies.

**Ans. 4:** We are rightly thankful when, in giving our praise to God, we see no worthiness from ourselves: “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies you have shown your servant” (Gen. 32:10). It was as if Jacob had said, Lord, the worst bit you carve for me is better than I deserve. “Mephibosheth bowed himself and said, What is your servant, that you should look on such a dead dog as I am?” (2Sam. 9:8). So too, when a thankful Christian surveys his blessings, and sees how much he enjoys that others lack who are better than him, he says, “Lord, what am I but a dead dog, that free grace should look upon me, and that you should crown *me* with such lovingkindness!”

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**Ans. 5:** We are rightly thankful when we put God’s mercies out to good use. We turn our enjoyments into improvements. The Lord gives us *health*, and we spend and are spent for Christ (2Cor. 12:15). He gives us an *estate*, and we honor the Lord with our substance (Pro. 3:9). He gives us *children*, and we dedicate them to God and educate them for God. We do not bury our talents, but trade with them. *This* is to put our mercies to good use. A gracious heart is like a piece of good ground, that having received the seed of mercy, produces a crop of obedience.

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<sup>1</sup> A shield; especially one displaying a coat of arms; thus it was “a blot on his name.”

**Ans. 6:** We are rightly thankful when we can have our hearts more enlarged for *spiritual* mercies than for *temporal* mercies: “Blessed be God, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings” (Eph. 1:3). A godly man blesses God more for a fruitful heart than a full crop. He is more thankful for Christ than for a kingdom. Socrates was accustomed to say that he loved the king’s smile more than his gold. A pious soul is more thankful for a smile from God’s face than he would be for all the gold of the Indies.

**Ans. 7:** We are rightly thankful — when mercy is a spur to duty. It causes a spirit of activity for God. Mercy is not like the sun to the fire, to dull it; rather, it is like oil to the wheels, to make it run faster. David wisely argues from mercy to duty: “You have delivered my soul from death. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living” (Psa. 116:8, 9). It was a saying of Bernard, “Lord, I have two mites — a soul and a body — and I give them both to you.”

**Ans. 8:** We are rightly thankful when we excite others to this angelic work of praise. David not only wishes to bless God himself, but calls upon others to do so: “Praise the Lord” (Psa. 117:1). The sweetest music is that which is in concert. When many saints join together in concert, then they make heaven ring with their praises. As one drunkard will be calling on another, so in a holy sense, one Christian must be stirring up another to the work of thankfulness.

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**Ans. 9:** We are rightly thankful when we not only *speak* God’s praise, but *live* his praise. It is called *gratiarum actio*, an act of gratitude. We *give* thanks when we *live* thanks. Those who are *mirrors of mercy* should be *patterns of piety*. “Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and *there* shall be holiness” (Obad. 1.17). To give God praise orally, and yet dishonor him in our lives, is to commit a barbarism in religion; it is to be like those Jews who bowed the knee to Christ and then spit on him (Mark 15:19).

**Ans. 10:** We are rightly thankful when we propagate God’s praises to posterity. We tell our children what God has done for us: when in such a *need* he supplied us; from such a *sickness* he raised us up; in such a *temptation* he helped us. “O God, our fathers have told us what work you did in their days, in the times of old” (Psa. 44:1). By transmitting our experiences to our children, God’s name is eternalized, and his mercies will bring forth a plentiful crop of praise when we are gone. Heman asks the question, “Shall the dead praise you?” (Psa. 88:10). Yes, in the sense: that when we are dead, we praise God because, having left the chronicle of God’s mercies with our children, we start them on thankfulness; and in this way we make God’s praise live when we are dead.

**Use 3:** Let us evidence our godliness by gratefulness: “Give to the Lord the glory due to his name” (Psa. 29:2).

**1. It is a good thing to be thankful.** “It is good to sing praises to our God” (Psa. 147:1). It is bad when the tongue (that organ of praise) is out of tune, and jars by its murmuring and discontent. But it is a good thing to be thankful. It is good, because this is all the creature can do to lift up God’s name;

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and it is good because it tends to make us good. The more *thankful* we are, the more *holy*. While we pay this tribute of praise, our stock of grace increases. In other debts, the more we pay, the less we have; but the more we pay this debt of thankfulness, the more grace we have.

**2. Thankfulness is the quit-rent<sup>1</sup> we owe to God.** “Kings of the earth, and all people; let them praise the name of the Lord” (Psa. 148:11, 13), Praise is the tribute or custom to be

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<sup>1</sup> Under feudal law, the payment of quit-rent to the king freed the tenant from his obligation to allow the gentry to use his land for things like hunting. It was called quit-rent, but it was more of a land-use tax owed to the king.

paid into the King of heaven's treasury. Surely while God renews our lease, we must renew our rent.

**3. We have great cause to be thankful.** It is a principle grafted in nature to be thankful for benefits: the heathen praised Jupiter for their victories.

What full clusters of mercies hang on us? When we go to enumerate God's mercies, we must confess with David that we are bewildered: "Many, O Lord my God, are the wonderful works which you have done; they cannot be reckoned up in order" (Psa. 40:5). And just as God's mercies are past *numbering*, so they are past *measuring*. David takes the longest measuring line he could get. He measures from earth to the clouds, no, above the clouds — and yet this measure would not reach the height of God's mercies: "Your mercy is great *above the heavens*" (Psa. 108:4). Oh, how God has enriched us with his silver showers! A whole constellation of mercies has shone in our hemisphere.

(1) What **temporal** favors we have received! Every day we see a new tide of mercy coming in. The *wings of mercy* have covered us; the *breasts of mercy* have fed us: "the God who fed me all my life long unto this day" (Gen. 48:15). What snares laid for us have been broken? What fears have blown over? The Lord has made our *bed*, when he has made others' *graves*.

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He has taken such care of us, as if he had no one else to take care of. Never was the *cloud of providence* so black that we might not see a *rainbow of love* in the cloud. We have been made to swim in a sea of mercy! Does not all this call for thankfulness?

(2) What may put another string into the instrument of our praise, and make it sound louder, is to consider what **spiritual** blessings God has conferred on us. He has given us *water from the upper springs*; he has opened the *wardrobe of heaven* and fetched us a better garment than any of the angels wear! He has given us the *best robe*, and put the *ring of faith* on us, by which we are married to him. These are mercies of the first magnitude, which deserve to have a star put on them. And God keeps the best wine until last: here on earth, he gives us mercies only by retail, in small quantities; the greatest things are laid up for us! Here on earth, there are some honey *drips* and *foretastes* of God's love; the *rivers* of pleasure are reserved for paradise! Well may we take the harp and viol and triumph in God's praise: who can tread on these hot coals of God's love, and not have his heart burn in thankfulness?

**4. Thankfulness is the best policy.** There is nothing lost by it. To be thankful for one mercy is the way to have more. It is like pouring water into a pump which fetches out more.<sup>1</sup> Musicians love to sound their trumpets where there is the best echo, and God loves to bestow his mercies where there is the best echo of thankfulness.

**5. Thankfulness is a frame of heart that God delights in.** If repentance is the joy of heaven, praise is the music. Bernard calls thankfulness, "the sweet balm that drips from a Christian."

There are four sacrifices God is very pleased with: the sacrifice of Christ's blood; the sacrifice of a broken heart; the sacrifice of alms; and *the sacrifice of thanksgiving*.

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Praise and thanksgiving (says Mr. Greenham) is the most excellent part of God's worship, for this will continue in the heavenly choir when all other exercises of religion have ceased.

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<sup>1</sup> Referring to priming a pump, so that it may draw water out of the well.

**6. What a horrid thing ingratitude is!** It gives a dye and tincture to every other sin, and makes it crimson. Ingratitude is the spirit of baseness: “Those who eat your bread have laid a trap under you” (Obad. 1:7). Ingratitude is worse than being brutish (Isa. 1:3).<sup>1</sup> It is reported of Julius Caesar that he would never forgive an ungrateful person. Though God is a sin-pardoning God, he scarcely knows how to pardon for this. “How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken me when I had fed them to the full; then they committed adultery” (Jer. 5:7). Draco<sup>2</sup> (whose laws were written in blood) published an edict that if any man had received a benefit from another, and it could be proved against him that he had not been grateful for it, he would be put to death. An unthankful person is a monster in nature — a paradox in Christianity. He is the scorn of heaven and the plague of earth. An ungrateful man never does well, except in one thing, and that is when he dies.

**7. Not being thankful is the cause of all the judgments which have lain on us.** Our unthankfulness for health has been the cause of so much mortality. Our gospel unthankfulness and sermon-surfeiting<sup>3</sup> have been the reason why God has put so many lights under a bushel. Who will spend money on a piece of ground that produces nothing but briars? Unthankfulness stops up the golden vial of God’s bounty so that it will not drip.

**Ques:** What shall we do to be thankful?

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**Ans. 1: If you wish to be thankful, get a heart deeply humbled in the sense of your own vileness.** A broken heart is the best pipe to sound forth God’s praise. The one who studies his sins wonders that he has anything, and that God should shine on such a dunghill: “I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, but I was shown mercy” (1Tim. 1:13). How thankful Paul was! How he trumpeted forth free grace! A proud man will never be thankful. He looks at all his mercies as either of his own *procuring* or *deserving*. If he has an estate, he thinks it is by his wit and industry, without considering this scripture: “You shall remember the Lord your God, for it he that gives you power to become rich” (Deut. 8:18). Pride stops the current of gratitude. O Christian, think of your unworthiness; see yourself as the least of saints, and the chief of sinners — and then you will be thankful.

**Ans. 2: Labor for sound evidences of God’s love for you.** Read God’s love in the impress of holiness upon your hearts. God’s love poured in, will make the vessels of mercy run over with thankfulness: “To Him who loved us, be glory and dominion forever and ever!” (Rev. 1:5, 6). The deepest springs yield the sweetest water. Hearts deeply aware of God’s love, yield the sweetest praises.

## Sec. 18. A godly man LOVES THE SAINTS

The best way to discern grace in oneself is to love grace in others: “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren” (1John 3:14). What is religion but a knitting together of hearts? *Faith* knits us to God, and *love* knits us one to another. There is a twofold love toward others:

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**1. A civil love.** A godly man has a civil love toward all: “Abraham stood up, and bowed to the children of Heth” (Gen. 23:7). Though they were foreign, and not within the pale of the

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<sup>1</sup> **Isa 1:3** “The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master’s crib; *But Israel does not know....*”

<sup>2</sup> An Athenian lawmaker whose code of laws prescribed death for almost every offense (c. 7th century BC).

<sup>3</sup> That is, having had our fill of sermons, we want no more.



covenant, yet Abraham was affable to them. **Grace sweetens and refines nature.** “Be courteous” (1Pet. 3:8). We are to have a civil love toward all:

(1) Because they are of the same clay, of the same lump and mold with ourselves, and are a piece of God’s elaborate needlework.

(2) Because our sweet deportment towards them may be a means to win them over and make them in love with the ways of God. A morose, harsh bearing, often alienates the hearts of others, and hardens them more against holiness; whereas loving behavior is very obliging, and it may be like a loadstone to draw them to religion.

**2. A pious and a holy love.** This is what a godly man has chiefly toward those who are “of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). The first was a love flowing from courtesy; this is from delight. Our love to the saints (says Augustine) should be more than to our natural relations, because the bond of the Spirit is nearer than that of blood. This love to the saints which evidences that a man is godly, must have seven ingredients in it:

**(1) Love to the saints must be SINCERE.** “Let us not love in word, or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1John 3:18). The honey that drips from the comb is pure; so love must be pure, and without deceit. Many are like Naphtali: “He uses beautiful words” (Gen. 49:21). *Pretended love* is like a *painted fire*, which has no heat in it. Some hide malice under a false veil of love. I have read of Antoninus the Emperor, that where he made a show of friendship, he intended the most mischief.

**(2) Love to the saints must be SPIRITUAL.** We must love them because they are *saints*, and not out of selfish respects — not because they are affable or have been kind to us.

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Rather we must love them from spiritual considerations, because of the good that is in them. We are to reverence their holiness, or else it is a carnal love.

**(3) Love to the saints must be EXTENSIVE.** We must love all who bear God’s image:

a. We must love the saints, even though they have many infirmities. A Christian in this life is like a good face full of freckles. If you cannot love another saint because of his imperfections, you have not yet seen your own face in the mirror. Your brother’s infirmities may make you pity him, but his graces must make you love him.

b. We must love the saints, even though they do not agree with us in some things. Another Christian may differ from me in lesser matters, either because he has more light than I, or because he has less light. If he differs from me because he has more light, then I have no reason to censure him. If he differs from me because he has less light, then I ought to bear with him as the weaker vessel. In things of an indifferent nature, there ought to be Christian forbearance.<sup>1</sup>

c. We must love the saints, even though their graces outvie and surpass ours. We ought to bless God for the eminence of another’s grace, because religion is honored by this. Pride is not quite slain in a believer; saints themselves are apt to grudge and repine at each other’s excellences. Is it not strange that the same person should hate one man for his sin, and envy another for his virtue? Christians need to look to their hearts. Love is right and genuine, when we can rejoice in the graces of others even though they seem to eclipse ours.

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<sup>1</sup> “In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity.”



**(4) Love to the saints must be APPRECIATING.** We must esteem them above others: “He honors those who fear the Lord” (Psa. 15:4). We are to look upon the wicked as *chaff*, Psa 1.4 but upon the saints as *jewels*. Zec 9.16 These must be kept in high veneration.

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**(5) Love to the saints must be SOCIAL.** We should delight in their company: “I am a companion of all those who fear you” (Psa. 119:63). It is a kind of hell to be in the company of the wicked, where we cannot help but hear God’s name dishonored. It was a capital crime to carry the image of Tiberius, engraved on a ring or coin, into any sordid place. Those who have the image of God engraved on them should not go into any sinful, sordid company. I never read of any but two living people who desired to keep company with the dead, and they were possessed by the devil (Matt. 8:28). What comfort can a living Christian have from conversing with the dead (Jude 1.12, 13)? But the society of saints is desirable. This is not to walk “among the tombs”, but “among beds of spices.” Believers are Christ’s garden; their graces are the flowers; their savory discourse is the fragrant scent of these flowers.

**(6) Love to the saints must be DEMONSTRATIVE.** We should be ready to exercise all the offices of love to them, vindicate their names, contribute to their necessities, and like the good Samaritan, pour oil and wine into their wounds (Luk. 10:34, 35). Love cannot be concealed, but is active in its sphere, and it will lay itself out for the good of others.

**(7) Love to the saints must be CONSTANT.** “He that *dwells* in love” (1John 4:16). Our love must lodge not only for a night, but we must dwell in love: “Let brotherly love *continue*” (Heb. 13:1). As love must be sincere without hypocrisy; so it must be constant without deficiency. Love must be like the pulse, always beating — not like those Galatians who at one time were ready to pluck out *their* eyes for Paul (Gal. 4:15), and afterwards were ready to pluck out *his* eyes. Love should not expire except with our life. And surely, if our love to the saints is thus divinely qualified, we may hopefully conclude that we are enrolled among the godly. “By this all men will know that you are my disciples: if you have love one to another” (John 13:35).

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What induces a godly man to love the saints, is because he is closely related to them. There ought to be love among relations; there is a spiritual kinship among believers. They all have one *Head*; therefore they should all have one *heart*. They are living stones of the same building (1Pet. 2:5), and shall these stones not be cemented together with love?

**Use 1:** If it is the distinguishing mark of a godly man to be a lover of the saints, then how sad it is to see this grace of love in eclipse! This characteristic of godliness is almost blotted out among Christians. England was once a fair garden where the flower of love grew; but surely now this flower is either plucked or withered. Where is that amity and unity that should be among Christians? I appeal to you: would there be that censuring and despising, that reproaching and undermining of one another, if there were love? Instead of bitter *tears*, there are bitter *spirits* — a sign that iniquity abounds when the love of many grows cold. There is that distance among some professing Christians, as if they had not received the same Spirit, or as if they did not hope for the same heaven. In primitive times there was so much love among the godly that it set the heathen to wondering; and now there is so little love that it may set Christians to blushing.

**Use 2:** Because we would be written down as saints in God’s calendar, let us love the brotherhood (1Pet. 2:17). Those who will one day *live* together, should *love* together. What is it that makes a disciple, if not love (John 13:35)? The devil has knowledge, but what makes him a devil is that he lacks love. To persuade Christians to love, consider these:

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**(1) The saints have in them, that which may make us love them.** They are the elaborate embroidery and workmanship of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:10). They have those rare lineaments<sup>1</sup> of grace that none but a pencil from heaven could draw. Their eyes sparkle forth beauty, “their breasts are like clusters of grapes” (Song 7:7). This makes Christ himself delight in his spouse: “The king is held in the galleries” (Song 7:5). The church is the “daughter of a prince” (Song 7:1). She is waited on by angels (Heb 1:14). She has a palace of glory reserved for her (John 14:2) — And may not all this draw out our love?

**(2) Consider how evil it is for saints not to love:**

**a. It is UNNATURAL.** The saints are Christ’s lambs (John 21:15). For a *dog* to bite a lamb is usual — but for one *lamb* to bite another is unnatural. The saints are brethren (1Peter 3:8). How barbarous it is for brethren not to love!

**b. Not to love is a FOOLISH thing.** Do God’s people not have enemies enough, that they should fly in one another’s faces? The wicked unite against the godly: “They have taken crafty counsel against your people” (Psa. 83:3). Though a private grudge may fall out between those who are wicked, yet they will all agree and unite against the saints. If two greyhounds are snarling at a bone, just put a hare between them, they will leave the bone and chase after the hare. So too, if wicked men have private differences among themselves, and the godly are near them, they will stop snarling at one another and chase after the godly. Now, when God’s people have so many enemies abroad who watch for their stumbling, and are glad when they can do them a mischief, shall the saints fall out and divide into parties among themselves?

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**(3) Not to love is very UNSEASONABLE.<sup>2</sup>** God’s people are in a common calamity. They suffer in one cause; and so for them to disagree is altogether unseasonable. Why does the Lord bring his people together in *affliction*, unless it is to bring them together in *affection*? Metals will unite in a furnace. If Christians ever unite, it should be in *the furnace of affliction*. Chrysostom compares affliction to a shepherd’s dog, which makes all the sheep run together. God’s rod has this loud voice in it: “Love one another.” How unworthy it is when Christians are *suffering* with one another, to then be *striving against* one another.

**(4) Not to love is very SINFUL.**

a. For saints, not to love is to live in contradiction to Scripture. The apostle continually plucks on this string of love, as if it made the sweetest music in religion: “We have this commandment from him, that he who loves God, love his brother also” (1John 4:21; also Rom. 13:8; Col. 3:14; 1Pet. 1:22; 1John 3:11). Not to love is to walk contrary to the Word. Can someone be a good physician who goes against the rules of medicine? Can someone be a good Christian who goes against the rules of piety?

b. Lack of love among Christians greatly silences the spirit of prayer; hot passions make cold prayers. Where animosities and contentions prevail, instead of praying for one another, Christians will be ready to pray against one another — like the disciples who would pray for fire from heaven upon the Samaritans (Luk. 9:54). And do you think God will hear those prayers which come from a wrathful heart? Will he eat our *leavened* bread? Will he accept those duties which are soured with a bitterness of spirit? Shall that prayer which is offered with the strange fire of our sinful passions, ever go up as incense?

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<sup>1</sup> A characteristic property that defines the apparent individual nature of something.

<sup>2</sup> That is, it is always untimely and out of keeping with who they are as believers in Christ.

c. These heart-burnings hinder the progress of piety in our own souls. The *flower of grace* will not grow in a *wrathful heart*. The body may thrive as well while it has the plague, as a soul may thrive that is infected with malice.

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While Christians are *debating*, grace is *abating*. As the spleen<sup>1</sup> grows, health decays. As *hatred* increases, *holiness* declines.

**(5) Not to love is very FATAL.** The differences among God's people portend ruin. All mischiefs come in at this gap of sin and division (Matt. 12:25). Animosities among saints may make God leave his temple: "the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and stood upon the threshold" (Ezek. 10:4). Does God not seem to stand upon the threshold of his house, as if he were taking wings to fly? And woe to us if God departs from us (Hos. 9:12)! If the master leaves the ship, it is near to sinking indeed. If God leaves a land, it must sink in ruin.

**Ques:** How shall we attain this excellent grace of love?

**Ans. 1:** Beware of the devil's couriers — I mean those who run his errands, and make it their work to blow the coals of contention among Christians, and render one party odious to another.

**Ans. 2:** Keep up friendly meetings. Christians should not be shy of one another, as if they had the plague.

**Ans. 3:** Let us plead that promise: "I will give them one heart, and one way" (Jer. 32:39). Let us pray that there may be no contests among Christians, except as to who shall love most. Let us pray that God will *divide Babylon*, and *unite Zion*.

**Use 3:** Is it a mark of a godly man to love the saints? Then those who hate the saints must stand indicted as ungodly. The wicked have an implacable malice against God's people, and how can antipathies be reconciled? To hate the holy children of God is a brand of the reprobate. Those who malign the godly are the curse of creation. If all the scalding drops from God's vial will make them miserable, then they shall be so! Never did any who were the haters and persecutors of saints, thrive at that trade.

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What became of Julian, Diocletian, Maximinus, Valerian, Cardinal Crescentius<sup>2</sup> and others? For some of them, their bowels came out; others choked with their own blood, that they might be set up as standing monuments of God's vengeance! "Calamity will surely overtake the wicked, and those who hate the righteous shall be desolate." (Psa. 34:21).

## Sec. 19. A godly man does not indulge in any SIN

Though sin lives in him, yet he does not live in sin. Every man that has wine in him, is not in wine. A godly man may *step* into sin through infirmity, but he does not *keep* to that road. He prays, "See if there is any way of wickedness in me" (Psa. 139: 24).

**Ques:** What does it mean to indulge sin?

**Ans. 1:** It means to give the breast to it and feed it. As a fond parent humors his child and lets him have whatever he wants, so indulging sin is to humor it.

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<sup>1</sup> A tendency to become angry quickly.

<sup>2</sup> Cardinal Crescentius was the Pope's Legate at the Council of Trent in 1552.

**Ans. 2:** To indulge sin is to commit sin with delight. The ungodly “took pleasure in unrighteousness” (2Thes. 2:12).

In this sense, a godly man does not indulge sin. Though sin is in him, he is troubled at it and would gladly get rid of it. There is as much difference between sin in the wicked, and sin in the godly, as there is between poison being in a serpent, and poison being in a man. Poison in a serpent is in its natural place and is delightful to it; but poison in a man’s body is harmful and he uses antidotes to expel it. So sin in a wicked man is delightful to him, being in its natural place; but sin in a child of God is burdensome and he uses all means to expel it. This cuts off from the sin; the will is against it. A godly man enters his protest against sin: “What I do, I hate.” (Rom. 7:15). A child of God, while he commits sin, hates the sin he commits.

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**In particular there are four kinds of sin, which a godly man will not allow himself:**

**1. SECRET sins.** Some are more modest than to commit open gross sin. That would be a stain on their reputation. But they will sit brooding upon sin in a corner: “Saul secretly practiced mischief” (1Sam. 23:9). All will not sin on a balcony, but perhaps they will sin behind the curtain. Rachel did not carry her father’s images like a saddle cloth to be exposed to public view. Rather, she put them under her, and sat on them (Gen. 31:34). Many carry their sins secretly, like a candle in a dark lantern. But a godly man dares not sin secretly:

(1) He knows that God sees in secret, “for He knows the secrets of every heart.” (Psa. 44:21). As God cannot be deceived by our subtlety, so he cannot be excluded by our secrecy.

(2) A godly man knows that secret sins are in some sense worse than others. They reveal more guile and atheism. The curtain-sinner makes himself believe that God does not see: “Son of man, have you seen what the leaders of Israel are doing with their idols in *dark* rooms? For they say, the Lord does not see us!” (Ezek. 8:12). Those who have bad eyes think the sun is dim. How it provokes God, that men’s atheism should contradict his omniscience! “He who formed the eye, shall he not see?” (Psa. 94:9).

(3) A godly man knows that secret sins will not escape God’s justice. A judge on the bench can punish no offence except what is proved by witnesses; he cannot punish the treason of the heart. But the sins of the heart are as visible to God as if they were written on the forehead. Just as God will reward secret duties, so he will revenge secret sins.

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**2. GAINFUL sins.** Gain is the golden bait, with which Satan fishes for souls! This was the last temptation he used with Christ: “All this I will give you” (Matt. 4:9). But Christ saw the hook under the bait. Many who have escaped gross sins, are still caught in a *golden net*. To gain the world, they would use indirect routes. A godly man dare not travel for riches through the devil’s highway. Those are sad gains that make a man lose his peace of conscience, and at last heaven. The one who gets an estate by injustice stuffs his pillow with thorns, and his head will lie very uneasy when he comes to die. [“What profit is it for a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his soul?” (Mat. 16:26.)]

**3. BELOVED (besetting) sins.** [“Let us throw off everything that hinders and *the sin that so easily entangles*, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” (Heb. 12:1).] There is usually one sin that is the favorite — the sin which the heart is most fond of. A beloved sin lies in a man’s bosom as the disciple whom Jesus loved, leaned on his bosom (John 13:23). A godly man will not indulge a darling sin: “I kept myself from *my* iniquity” (Psa. 18:23) — the sin of my constitution, to which the bias of my heart more naturally inclines. “Fight neither with small nor great, but only with the king” (1Kings 22:31). A godly man fights this king sin. The oracle of Apollo answered the people of Cyrrha that if they would live in peace among

themselves, then they must make continual war with those strangers who were on their borders. If we would have peace in our souls, we must maintain a war against our favorite<sup>1</sup> sin, and never quit till it is subdued.

**Ques: How will we know the beloved sin?**

**Ans. 1:** The sin which a man does not love to have reproved is the *darling* sin. Herod could not endure having his incest spoken against. If the prophet meddles with that sin, it will cost him his head! ["Do not touch my Herodias!"] Men can be content to have other sins reproved. But if the minister puts his finger on the sore, and touches *this* sin, their hearts begin to burn in malice against him — a practical sign that it is their Herodias.

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**Ans. 2:** The sin to which the thoughts run most, is the *darling* sin. Whichever way the *thoughts* go, the *heart* goes. Someone that is in love with a person, cannot keep his thoughts off the object of his affections. Examine which sin runs most in your mind, which sin is first in your thoughts, which one greets you in the morning — *that is your predominant sin.*

**Ans. 3:** The sin which has most power over us, and most easily leads us captive, is the one beloved by the soul. There are some sins which a man can better resist. If they come to be entertained, he can more easily put them off. But there is one sin, that if it comes to be a suitor, he cannot deny it, but is overcome by it — this is the *bosom-sin*. The young man in the Gospel had repulsed many sins, but there was one sin which foiled him: that was covetousness. [Luk 18.22, 23](#) Christians, mark what sin you are most readily led captive by — that is *the harlot in your bosom!* It is a sad thing that a man should be so bewitched by lust, that if it asks him to part with not only half the kingdom (Esther 7:2), but the *whole* kingdom of heaven, he must part with it to gratify that lust!

**Ans. 4:** The sin which men use arguments to defend, is the beloved sin. The one who has a *jewel in his bosom*, will defend it to his death. So too, when there is any sin in the bosom, men will defend it. The sin we are advocates and disputants for, is the favorite<sup>2</sup> sin. If the sin is passion, we plead for it: "I do well to be angry" (Jonah 4:9). If the sin is *covetousness*, and we vindicate it, and perhaps twist Scripture to justify it, that is the sin which lies nearest the heart.

**Ans. 5:** That sin which most troubles us, and flies most in our face in an hour of sickness and distress, that is the *Delilah sin!* When Joseph's brethren were distressed, their sin in selling their brother came to their remembrance:

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"We are truly guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of our brother when he begged us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress has come upon us" (Gen. 42:21). So too, when a man is on a sickbed, and his conscience says, "You have been guilty of such a sin; you went with it, and rolled it like honey under your tongue!" — his conscience is reading him a sad lecture; surely *that* was the beloved sin.

**Ans. 6:** The sin which a man finds it hardest to let go of, is the endeared sin. Of all his sons, Jacob found it hardest to part with Benjamin. So too, the sinner says, "This and that sin I have parted with, but must Benjamin go? Must I part with this delightful sin? That pierces my heart!" As with a castle that has several forts around it, the first and second fort may be taken; but when it comes to the *castle*, the governor would rather fight and die than yield that. So a man may

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<sup>1</sup> Originally "complexion-sin." It is an *attractive* and *seductive* sin "on the face of it" — it is cosmetically beautiful — and so we will not let it go; thus it becomes a *besetting* sin that proliferates in our life.

<sup>2</sup> Originally "complexion-sin."

allow some of his sins to be demolished; but when it comes to that one sin, it is taking the castle; he will never agree to part with that one! Surely that is the master sin.

This favorite<sup>1</sup> sin is a God-provoking sin. The wise men of Troy counseled Priam to send Helena back to the Greeks, not permitting himself to be abused any longer by the charms of her beauty — because keeping her within the city would lay the foundation for a fatal war. So we should put away our *Delilah sin*, lest it incense the God of heaven, and make him commence a war against us.

The favorite<sup>2</sup> sin is, above all others, the most dangerous. As Samson's strength lay in his hair, so the strength of sin lies in this beloved sin. This is like a poison striking the heart, which brings death. A godly man will lay the *axe of repentance* to this sin and hew it down!

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He sets this sin, like Uriah, in the forefront of the battle so that it may be slain. He will sacrifice this Isaac, he will pluck out this right eye, so that he may see better to go to heaven.

**4. What the world considers LESSER sins.** There is no such thing as little sins, yet some may be deemed less comparatively. But a good man will not indulge himself in these. Such as:

(1) *Sins of omission.* Some think that it is no great matter to omit family or private prayer. They can go several months and God never hear from them. A godly man would as soon live without food, as without prayer. He knows that every creature of God is sanctified by prayer (1Tim. 4:5). The bird may shame many Christians — it never takes a drop without the eye being lifted up towards heaven.

(2) *Vain, frothy discourse*, much less what looks like an *oath*. If God will judge us for our idle *words* (Mat. 12.36), will He not judge much more for idle *oaths*?

(3) A godly man dare not allow himself rash censuring. Some think this a small matter. They will not *swear*, but they will *slander*. This is very evil. This is wounding a man in that which is dearest to him.<sup>3</sup> The one who is godly turns all his censures upon *himself*! He judges himself for his own sins, but is very watchful and concerned about the good name of another.

**Use:** Because you would be numbered among the genealogies of the saints, do not indulge yourselves in any sin. **Consider the mischief which one sin lived in will do:**

1. *One sin gives Satan as much advantage against you as more sins.* The fowler can hold a bird by one wing. Satan held Judas fast by one sin.

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2. *One sin lived in, argues that the heart is not sound.* The one who hides one rebel in his house is a traitor to the crown. The person who indulges one sin is a traitorous hypocrite.

3. *One sin will make way for more*, as a little thief can open the door for more: sins are linked and chained together; one sin will draw on more. David's adultery made way for murder. One sin never goes alone! If there is only one *nest egg*, the devil can brood upon it.

4. *One sin is as much a breach of God's law as more sins.* "Whoever stumbles in one point, is guilty of all" (Jas. 2:10). If the king makes a law against felony, treason and murder, and a man is guilty of only one of these, he is as much a transgressor of the law as if he were guilty of all of them.

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<sup>1</sup> Originally "complexion-sin."

<sup>2</sup> Originally "complexion-sin."

<sup>3</sup> His good name or reputation.



5. *One sin lived in, prevents Christ from entering.* One stone in the pipe keeps out the water. One sin indulged in, obstructs the soul and keeps the streams of Christ's blood from running into it.

6. *One sin lived in, will spoil all your good duties.* A drop of poison will spoil a glass of wine. Abimelech, a bastard-son, destroyed seventy of his brothers (Jdg. 9:5). One bastard-sin will destroy seventy prayers. One dead fly will spoil the whole box of ointment (Eccl. 10.1).

7. *One sin lived in, will be a cankerworm to eat out the peace of conscience.* It removes the *manna* from the ark, and leaves only a *rod*. One sin is a *pirate* that robs a Christian of his comfort. One jarring string makes all the music out of tune. One sin countenanced will spoil the music of the conscience.

8. *One sin allowed, will damn just as well as more sins.* One *disease* is enough to kill. However strong a *fence* is made, if only one gap is left open, the wild beast may enter and tread down the corn. If there is only one sin is allowed in the soul, you open a gap for the devil to enter!

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It is a simile of Chrysostom, that a *soldier* who has his head-piece and breast-plate on — if he lacks armor in just one place — the bullet may enter there; he may be shot as well as if he had no armor on at all. So if you favor only one sin, you leave a part of your soul unarmed; and the bullet of God's wrath may enter there, and shoot you! One sin may shut you out of heaven! As Jerome<sup>1</sup> says, what difference is there in being shut out for more sins, or for one? Therefore take heed of cherishing even one sin: one millstone will sink a man into the sea as well as a hundred!

9. *One sin harbored in the soul will make us unfit for suffering.* How soon an hour of trial may come! A man who has hurt his shoulder cannot carry a heavy burden; and a man who has any guilt in his conscience cannot carry the cross of Christ. Will someone deny his *life* for Christ, if he cannot deny his *lust* for Christ? *One unmortified sin in the soul* will bring forth the bitter fruit of apostasy.

If, then, you would show yourselves to be godly, give a certificate of divorce to every sin. Kill the Goliath sin! "Do not let sin reign" (Rom. 6:12). In the original it is, "Do not let sin *king* it over you." Grace and sin may be together, but grace and *the love* of sin cannot. Therefore parley with sin no longer; but with the *spear of mortification*, spill the heart-blood of every sin! "For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if through the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live" (Rom. 8:13).

## Sec. 20. A godly man is good in his RELATIONSHIPS

To be good in general is not enough; rather we must show piety in our relationships.

**1. The one who is a good MAGISTRATE is godly.** The magistrate is God's representative. A godly magistrate holds the balance of justice, and gives everyone his right: "You shall not respect persons, nor take a gift;<sup>2</sup> for a gift blinds the eyes" (Deut. 16:19).

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A magistrate must judge the *cause*, not the *person*. The one who allows himself to be corrupted by bribes, is not a *judge* but a *party*. A magistrate must do that which is "according to the law"

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<sup>1</sup> Orig. "Hierom," alternative for Jerome (347-420) translator of Latin Vulgate bible.

<sup>2</sup> That is, a bribe for favors.

(Acts 23:3). And that he may do justice, he must examine the cause; the archer who wishes to shoot right, must first see the mark.

## 2. The one who is a good MINISTER is godly. Ministers must be:

**(1) Painstaking.** “Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season” (2Tim. 4:2). The minister must not be idle. Sloth is as inexcusable in a minister, as sleep in a sentry. John the Baptist was a “voice crying” (Matt. 3:3). A *silent minister* is of no more use, than a *dead physician*. A man of God must *work* in the Lord’s vineyard. It was Augustine’s wish that Christ might find him at his coming, either praying or preaching.

**(2) Knowledgeable.** “For the priest’s lips should preserve knowledge, and men should seek the law from his mouth” (Mal. 2:7). It was said in honor of Gregory Nazianzen<sup>1</sup> that he was *an ocean of divinity*. The prophets of old were called “seers” (1Sam. 9:9). It is absurd to have *see-ers* be blind. Christ said to Peter, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:16). But how sad it is when the shepherds need to be fed! Ignorance in a minister is like blindness in an eye doctor. Under the law, the one who had the plague in his head was *unclean* (Lev. 13:44).

**(3) Plain preaching.** He must suit his matter and style to the capacity of his audience (1Cor. 14:19). Some ministers, like eagles, love to soar aloft in abstruse metaphysical notions, thinking they are most admired when they are least understood. Those who preach in the clouds, instead of hitting their people’s conscience, shoot over their heads.

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**(4) Zealous in reproving sin.** “Rebuke them sharply” (Titus 1:13). Epiphanius<sup>2</sup> said of Elijah, that he sucked fire out of his mother’s breasts. *A man of God must suck the fire of zeal out of the breasts of Scripture!* Zeal in a minister is as proper as fire on the altar. Some are afraid to reprove, like the swordfish which has a sword in his head, but is without a heart. So they carry the sword of the Spirit with them, but they have no heart to draw it out in reproof against sin. How many have sown pillows under their people (Ezek. 13:18), making them sleep so securely, that they never woke till they were in hell!

### (5) Holy in heart and life:

**a. In heart.** How sad it is for a minister to preach to others, what he never felt in his own soul; to exhort others to holiness, and be a stranger to it himself. Oh, that it were not this way too often! How many blow the Lord’s trumpet with a foul breath!

**b. In life.** Under the law, before the priests *served* at the altar, they *washed* in the laver. Those who serve in the Lord’s house must first be washed from gross sin in the laver of repentance. The life of a minister should be a walking Bible. Basil said of Gregory Nazianzen that he thundered in his doctrine, and lightened in his conduct. A minister must imitate John the Baptist, who was not only “a voice crying”, but “a light shining” (John 5:35). Those who live in contradiction to what they preach, disgrace this excellent calling. They turn their codices into calices (their books into cups); though they are angels by office, yet they are devils in their lives (Jer. 23:14).

**3. The one who is a good HUSBAND is godly.** He fills up that relationship with love: “Husbands, love your wives” (Eph. 5:25). The vine twisting its branches around the elm and embracing it, may be an emblem of that entire love which should be in the marital relationship. A married condition will be sad if it has only cares to embitter it, and not love to sweeten it.

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<sup>1</sup> (329-391) He was known for his constant fight against heresies.

<sup>2</sup> (d. 535) Patriarch of Constantinople from 520 to 535, succeeding John II Cappadocia.

*Love is the best diamond in the marriage ring!* “Isaac loved Rebekah” (Gen. 24:67). Unkindness in this close relationship makes it very unhappy. We read in heathen authors that Clytemnestra, the wife of Agamemnon,<sup>1</sup> in order to revenge an injury received from her husband, first tore the veil of her chastity, and afterwards consented to his death. The husband should show his love to his wife by covering her infirmities; by avoiding occasions for strife; by sweet, endearing expressions; by pious counsel; by love tokens; by encouraging what he sees amiable and virtuous in her; by mutual prayer; by being with her unless detained by urgent business. The pilot that leaves his ship and abandons it to the merciless waves, declares that he does not value it or think there is any treasure in it.

The apostle gives a good reason why there should be mutual love between husband and wife: “so that your prayers may not be hindered” (1Pet. 3:7). Where anger prevails, prayer is either intermitted or interrupted.

#### **4. The one who is a good FATHER is godly**

(1) A father must drip holy instructions into his children: “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). This is what Abraham did: “I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household, and they shall keep the way of the Lord” (Gen. 18:19). Children are young plants which must be watered with good education, so that they may, with Obadiah, fear the Lord “from their youth up” (1Kings 18:12). Plato says, “In vain he expects a harvest, who has been negligent in sowing.” Nor can a parent expect to reap any good from a child, where he has not sown the seed of wholesome instruction. And if the child should die in sin, notwithstanding all counsel and admonition, it is still a comfort to a godly parent to think that, before his child died, he gave it *spiritual medicine*.

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(2) A parent must pray for his children. Monica, the mother of Augustine, prayed for his conversion. Someone said “it was impossible that a son of so many prayers and tears should perish.” The soul of your child is in a snare, and will you not pray that it may be recovered “out of the snare of the Devil?” (2Tim. 2:26) Many parents are careful to lay up *portions* for their children, but they do not lay up *prayers* for them.

(3) A parent must give his children discipline: “Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with the rod, he will not die.” (Pro. 23:13). The rod beats out the *dust* and the *moth* of sin. A child indulged and humored in wickedness, will prove a *burden* instead of a *blessing*. David indulged Adonijah: “his father had not rebuked him at any time, saying ‘Why have you done so?’” (1Kings 1:6). And afterwards he grieved his father’s heart, and would have put him off his throne. Correction is a hedge of thorns to stop children in their headlong race to hell.

**5. The one who is a good MASTER<sup>2</sup> is godly.** A godly man promotes true religion in his family; he sets up piety in his house, as well as in his heart: “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart” (Psa. 101:2). “I and my household will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15). I find it written in honor of Cranmer, that his family was a *nursery of piety*. A godly man’s house is a *little church*: “the church which is in his house” (Col. 4:15).

(1) A good man makes known the oracles of God to those who are under his roof. He reads the Word, and perfumes his house with prayer. It is recorded of the Jews, that they had sacrifices in their family as well as in the tabernacle (Exod. 12:3).

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<sup>1</sup> (Greek mythology) The king who lead the Greeks against Troy in the Trojan War.

<sup>2</sup> This can be an employer, but it refers to the head of house and his relationship to his household servants.

(2) A godly man provides necessities. He relieves his servants in health and sickness. He is not like that Amalekite who abandoned his servant when he was sick (1Sam. 30:13). Rather, he is like the good centurion, who sought Christ for healing his sick servant (Matt. 8:5 f.).

(3) A godly man sets his servants a good example. He is sober and heavenly in his conduct; his virtuous life is a fair *mirror* for the servants of the family to dress themselves by.

**6. The one who is a good in the relationship of a CHILD is godly.** He honors his parents. Philo the Jew, placed the fifth commandment in the first tablet, as if children had not performed their whole devotion to God until they had given honor to their parents. This honoring of parents consists in two things:

(1) In *revering* them — this reverence is shown both by *humility* of speech and gesture. The opposite of this is when a child behaves itself in an unseemly and proud manner. Among the Lacedemonians, if a child behaved imperiously<sup>1</sup> towards its parent, it was lawful for the father to appoint whomever he wanted be his heir, and to disinherit that child.

(2) In *obeying* their commands: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord” (Eph. 6:1). Duty is the *interest-money* which children pay their parents, on the *principal* they received from them. Christ has set all children a pattern of obedience to their parents: “He was subject to them” (Luk. 2:51). The Rechabites were eminent for this: “I set before the Rechabites bowls full of wine, and said to them, Drink wine. But they said, We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us saying, You shall drink no wine, neither you, nor your sons forever” (Jer. 35:5, 6). Someone asked Solon<sup>2</sup> why, among the many laws he made, none was made against disobedient children. He answered that it was because he thought none would be so wicked.

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God has punished children who have refused to pay the tribute of obedience. Absalom, a disobedient son, was hanged in an oak between heaven and earth, as being worthy of neither. Manlius, an old man, being reduced to great poverty, and having a rich son, entreated him only for charity, but could not obtain it. The son disowned his father, using reproachful language. The poor old man let tears fall (as witnesses of his grief) and went away. To revenge the son’s disobedience, God soon after struck him with madness. The one in whose heart godliness lives, is as conscientious of the fifth commandment as the first.

**7. The one who is good as a SERVANT is godly.** “Servants, be subject to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling.” (Col. 3:22; Eph. 6:5). The goodness of servants lies in these:

(1) *Diligence*. Abraham’s servant quickly dispatched the business his master entrusted him with (Gen. 24:33).

(2) *Cheerfulness*. Servants must be free-willers, as with the centurion’s servants: “If I say to one, ‘Go,’ he goes” (Luk. 7:8).

(3) *Faithfulness*, which consists in two things:

a. In not defrauding. “Not pilfering” (Titus 2:10).

b. In keeping confidences. It argues for a bad stomach, when it cannot retain what is put into it, and for a bad servant when he cannot retain those secrets which his master has committed to him.

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<sup>1</sup> Haughty: displaying an arrogant attitude of superiority and disdain for others, as if unworthy of respect.

<sup>2</sup> King Solon of Athens (638-c.558 BC) He is remembered particularly for his efforts to legislate against moral decline.

(4) *Submissiveness*.<sup>1</sup> “Not answering back” (Titus 2:9). It is better to mend a fault than to mince it. And what may motivate a servant in his work is that encouraging scripture, “Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance, for you serve the Lord Christ.” (Col. 3:24).

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If Christ were to ask you to do a piece of work for him, would you not do it? While you serve your master, you serve the Lord Christ. If you ask what salary you will have, “You will receive the reward of the inheritance.”

**Use 1:** Is it the grand sign of a godly man, to be holy in his relationships? Then may the Lord be merciful to us, for how few godly ones are to be found! Many put on the *coat of profession*. They will pray and discourse about points of religion. But “What does this bleating of the sheep mean?” (1Sam. 15:14). It means they are not good in their relationships. How bad it sounds when Christians are defective in the piety of their relationships!

Can we call a **bad magistrate** godly? He perverts equity: “Do you judge uprightly, O you sons of men? You weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth” (Psa. 58:1, 2). Can we call a **bad parent**, godly? He never teaches his child the way to heaven. He is like the ostrich which is “cruel to her young” (Job 39:16). Can we call a **bad master**, godly? Many masters leave their religion at church (as the clerk leaves his book). They have nothing of God at home; their houses are not Bethels, but Bethavens<sup>2</sup> — not little *temples*, but little *hells*. How many masters at the last day must plead guilty at the bar! Though they have fed their servants’ bellies, they have starved their souls. Can we call a **bad child**, godly? He shuts his ear to his parents’ counsel. You may as well call someone who is disloyal, a good subject. Can we call a **bad servant**, godly? He is slothful and willful; he is more ready to spy a fault in another than to correct it in himself.

To call someone “godly” who is bad in his relationships is a contradiction; it is to call evil good (Isa. 5:20).

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**Use 2:** Because we desire to have God approve of us, let us show godliness in our relationships. Not to be good in our relationships spoils all our other good things. Naaman was an honorable man, but he was a leper (1Kings 5:1). That “but” spoiled everything. So is such a person that is a great hearer, but neglects his relational duties. This stains the beauty of all his other actions. As in printing, however well the letter is carved, if it is not set in the right place, it spoils the sense. So too, however many commendable things a man may have in him, if he is not good in his right place — being conscientious of how he walks in his relationships — he does harm to religion. There are many to whom Christ will say at last, as he said to the young man, “There is still one thing you lack” (Luk. 18:22). You have misbehaved in your relational capacity. Therefore, just as we cherish our salvation and the honor of true religion, let us shine in that orb of relationships where God has placed us.

## Sec. 21. A godly man does spiritual things in a SPIRITUAL MANNER

“We are the true circumcision, who worship God in the spirit” (Phil. 3:3). Spiritual worship is pure worship: “You are built up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices” (1Peter 2:5) —not only spiritual in the matter, but also in the quality. A *wicked* man either lives in the total neglect of duty, or else he discharges it in a dull, careless manner. Instead of “using the world as if he did not use it” (1Cor. 7:31 GNV), he serves God as if he did not serve

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<sup>1</sup> Originally “silentness” as in 1Cor 14:34.

<sup>2</sup> Beth-el is “House of God;” Beth-aven is “House of Vanity.”



him. A godly man spiritualizes duty: he is not only for doing holy things, but for the *holy doing* of things.

**Ques:** What does it mean to perform spiritual duties *spiritually*?

**Ans:** This consists in three things:

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**1. Doing duties from a spiritual principle, namely, a renewed principle of grace.** A man may have admirable gifts; he may have the most melting, ravishing expressions; he may speak like an angel come down from heaven; yet his duties may not be spiritual if he lacks the grace of the Spirit. Whatever a moral but unregenerate person does is only *nature refined*, even though he may do duties better than a godly man — and yet not so well: they are better as to the matter and elegance of them, yet not so well, because he lacks a renewed principle. A crab-tree may bear fruit as well as an apple tree; the fruit may be big and lovelier to the eye — and yet the fruit is not as the other, because it does not come from as good a stock. So an unregenerate person may perform as many duties as a child of God, and these may seem to be more glorious to the outward view — but they are harsh and sour, because they do not come from the sweet and pleasant root of *grace*. A true saint gives God that wine which comes from the pure grape of the Spirit.

**2. To perform duties spiritually is to do them with the utmost intention.** A Christian is very serious, and labors to keep his thoughts close to the work at hand: “that he may serve the Lord without distraction” (1Cor. 7:35).

**Ques:** But may not a godly man have roving thoughts in his duty?

**Ans:** Yes, sad experience proves it. The thoughts will be dancing up and down in prayer. The saints are called *stars*, and many times in their duty, they are *wandering* stars. The heart is like quicksilver which will not settle. It is hard to tie two good thoughts together. We cannot lock our hearts so close that distracting thoughts, like the wind, will not get in. Jerome complains about himself: “Sometimes,” he says, “when I am doing God’s service, I am walking in the galleries, or thinking about accounts.”

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But these wandering thoughts in the godly are not allowed: “I hate *vain* thoughts”<sup>1</sup> (Ps. 119:113). They come as unwelcome guests which are no sooner spied, than turned out of doors.

**Ques:** Where do these impertinent thoughts arise from in the godly?

**Ans. 1: From the depravity of nature.** They are the mud which the heart tosses up.

**Ans. 2: From Satan.** The devil, if he cannot hinder us *from* duty, will hinder us *in* duty. When we come before the Lord, he is at our right hand to oppose us (Zech. 3:1). As when a man is going to write, and another stands at his elbow and jostles him so he cannot write evenly, so Satan will set vain objects before the imagination, to cause a diversion. The devil does not oppose *formality*, but *fervency*. If he sees that we are setting ourselves in good earnest to seek God, then he will begin whispering things in our ears so we can scarcely pay attention to what we are doing.

**Ans. 3: These impertinent thoughts arise from the world.** These vermin are bred out of the earth. Worldly business often crowds into our duties; while our *mouhths* are speaking to God, our *hearts* are thinking of the world: “They sit before me as my people, but their *hearts* pursue their own gain” (Ezek. 33:31). While we are hearing the Word, or meditating, some worldly

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<sup>1</sup> Usually translated, “double-minded” or those with “divided thoughts.”



business or other commonly knocks at the door, and we are taken away from the duty, even while we are in the duty. It is the same with us as it was with Abraham when he was going to worship — the vultures came down on the sacrifices (Gen. 15:11).

**Ques:** How may we get rid of these wandering thoughts, so that we may be more spiritual in our duty?

**Ans. 1:** Eye God's purity. He is a holy God whom we serve, and cannot endure when we are worshipping him, that we should converse with vanity. Will a king like it, that while his subject is speaking to him, he should be playing with a feather? Will God endure light, feathery hearts? How devout and reverent the angels are! They cover their faces and cry, "Holy, holy."

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**Ans. 2:** Think of the grand importance of the duties we are engaged in. As David said concerning his building a house for God, "*The work is great*" (1Chr. 29:1). When we are hearing the Word, "*the work is great,*" for this is the Word by which we shall be judged! When we are at prayer, "*the work is great,*" for we are pleading for the life of our souls; and is this a time to trifle?

**Ans. 3:** Come with affection to duty. The nature of love is to fix the mind upon the object. For one who is in love, his thoughts are *still* upon the person he loves, and nothing can distract them. For the one who loves the world, his thoughts are ever intent upon it. If our hearts were more *fired* with love, they would be more *fixed* in duty. And O, what cause we have to love duty! Is this not the direct road to heaven? Do we not meet with God here? Can the spouse be better than in her husband's company? Where can the soul be better, than in drawing near to God?

**Ans. 4:** Consider the mischief that these vain distracting thoughts do. They blow away our duties; they hinder fervency; they show great irreverence; they tempt God to turn his ear from us. Why do we think *God* should heed our prayers, when *we* ourselves scarcely heed them?

**3. To do duties spiritually, is to do them in faith.** "By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. 11:4). The holy oil for the tabernacle had several spices put into it (Exod. 30:34). Faith is the sweet spice which must be put into duty. It is a wrong done to God, to *doubt* either his mercy or his truth. A Christian may venture his soul upon the public faith of heaven.<sup>1</sup>

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**Use 1:** How far out of the way of godliness, are those who are unspiritual in their worship, who do no duties from a renewed principle, nor with the utmost intention of soul, but merely to shut the mouth of conscience! Many people look no further than the bare doing of duties; they never mind *how* they are done. God does not judge our duties by the length, but by the love. When men try to put God off with the dregs of duty, may He not say, as in Isaiah, "Is it such a fast that I have chosen?" (Isa. 58:5). Are these the duties I required? I called for the *heart* and *spirit* and you bring nothing but the *carcass* of duty. Should I receive satisfaction in this?

**Use 2:** Let us show ourselves godly by being more spiritual in duty. It is not how *much* we do, but how *well*. A musician is commended not for playing *long*, but for playing *well*. We must not only do *what* God appoints, but *as* God appoints. Oh, how many are unspiritual in spiritual things! They bring their services but not their hearts. They give God the skin, but not the fat of the offering. "God is Spirit" (John 4:24) and it is the spirituality of duty he is best pleased with: "Spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God" (1Pet. 2:5). The *spirits* of the wine are best; so is the

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<sup>1</sup> In other words, full faith and credit is to be given to God's published promises, for they are absolutely trustworthy. This phrasing is later repeated by Thomas Boston (1676-1732) in his work, *Of God and his Perfections*. "The truth of God is an immovable rock upon which we may safely venture our salvation. The public faith of heaven is engaged for the happiness of believers; and can they ever have better security?"

spiritual part of duty. “Making melody in your *hearts* to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). It is the heart that makes the music; the spiritualizing of duty gives life to it. Without this, it is only dead praying, dead hearing — and dead things are not pleasing. A dead flower has no beauty; a dead breast has no sweetness.

**Ques:** What may we do, to perform duties in a spiritual manner?

**Ans. 1:** Let the soul be kept pure. Lust besots and dispirits a man.<sup>1</sup> Beware of any tincture of uncleanness (Jas. 1:21). Wood that is full of sap will not easily burn; and a heart steeped in sin is not fit to burn in holy devotion. Can the one who feeds carnal lust, be spiritual in worship?

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“Whoredom and wine, and new wine, takes away the heart” (Hos. 4:11). Any sin lived in, takes away the heart. Such a person has no heart to pray or meditate. The more alive the heart is in sin, the more it dies to duty.

**Ans. 2:** If we would be spiritual in duty, let us revolve these two things in our mind:

(1) The profit which comes from a duty performed in a spiritual manner: it enfeebles corruption; it increases grace; it defeats Satan; it strengthens our communion with God; it breeds peace of conscience; it procures answers of mercy; and it leaves the heart always in a better tune.

(2) The danger of doing duties in an unspiritual manner: they are as if they had not been done. For what the *heart* does not do, is not done. Duties carelessly performed, turn *ordinances* into *judgments*. Therefore many, though they are often in duty, go away worse from their duty! If medicine is not well-made, and the ingredients rightly tempered, it is as bad as poison for the body. So too, if duties are not well-performed, they leave the heart harder and more sinful than before.

Unspiritual duties often create temporal judgments: “the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for we did not seek him in the due order” (1Chr. 15:13). Therefore God makes breaches in families and relationships, because people do not worship him in that manner and due order which he requires.

**Ans. 3:** If we would have our *duties* be spiritual, we must get our *hearts* spiritual. An earthly heart cannot be spiritual in duty. Let us beg from God a *spiritual palate* to relish the sweetness in holy things. For lack of spiritual hearts, we come to duty without delight, and go away without profit! If a man would have the wheels of his watch move regularly, he must mend the spring. Christian, if you want to move more spiritually in duty, then get the *spring of your heart* mended.

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## Sec. 22. A godly man is thoroughly trained in PIETY

He obeys every command of God: “I have found David a man after my own heart, for he will carry out *all* My will” (Acts 13:22). In the Greek it is “all my wills.” A godly man labors to walk according to the full breadth and latitude of God’s law. Every command has the same stamp of divine authority on it, and the one who is godly will obey one command as well as another: “Then I will not be ashamed, when I regard *all* your commandments” (Psa. 119:6).

A godly man goes through the entire body of piety, as the sun goes through all the signs of the Zodiac. Whoever is to play a ten-stringed instrument must strike every string, or he spoils all the

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<sup>1</sup> That is, lust stupefies and disheartens us.

music. The Ten Commandments may be compared to a ten-stringed instrument. We must obey every commandment, strike every string, or we can make no sweet music in piety. True obedience is filial; it is fitting that the child should obey the parent in all just and sober commands. God's laws are like the curtains of the tabernacle which were looped together. They are like a chain of gold where all the links are coupled. A conscientious man will not willingly break one link of this chain. If one command is violated, the whole chain is broken: "whoever shall keep the whole law — yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Jas. 2:10). A voluntary breach of one of God's laws involves a man in the guilt, and exposes him to the curse of the whole law. True obedience is entire and uniform; a good heart, like the needle in a compass, points the way in which the loadstone draws it.

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This is a grand difference between a child of God and a hypocrite: the hypocrite picks and chooses in religion. He will perform some duties which are easier, and will gratify his pride or interest, but other duties he takes no account of: "Hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith" (Matt. 23:23). To sweat in some duties of religion, and freeze in others, is the symptom of an unsettled<sup>1</sup> Christian. Jehu was zealous in destroying the idolatry of Baal, but he left the golden calves of Jeroboam standing (1Kings 10:29). This shows that men are not good in truth, when they are only good by halves. If your servant were to do only some of the work you set him to do, and left the rest undone, how would you like that? The Lord says, "Walk before me, and be perfect" (Gen. 17:1). How are our hearts perfect with God when we prevaricate with him? Some things we will do, and other things we leave undone. He is good, who is good universally.

There are ten duties that God calls for, which a godly man will conscientiously perform; and indeed these duties may serve as so many other characteristics and touchstones by which to test our godliness:

**1. A godly man will call his heart to account often.** He takes the candle of the Word and searches his innermost being: "I commune with my own heart: and my spirit made a diligent search" (Psa. 77:6). A gracious soul searches whether there is any *duty* omitted or any *sin* cherished. He examines his evidences for heaven. As he will not take his *gold* on trust, so neither will he take his *grace*. He is a spiritual merchant; he counts up the estate of his soul to see what he is worth. He "sets his house in order." *Frequent reckonings keep God and conscience friends.* A carnal person cannot abide this heart-work; he is ignorant how the affairs of his soul go. He is like a man who is well acquainted with foreign countries, but a stranger in his own country.

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**2. A godly man is much in private prayer.** He keeps his hours for private devotion. Jacob, when he was left alone, wrestled with God (Gen. 32:24). So too, when a gracious heart is alone, it wrestles in prayer, and will not leave God until it has a blessing. A devout Christian *exercises* 'eyes of faith' and 'knees of prayer.'

Hypocrites, who have nothing of religion besides the facade, love to be *seen*. Christ characterized them thus: "they love to pray on the corners of the streets that they may be seen" (Matt. 6:5). The hypocrite is devout in the temple — there all will gaze at him — but he is a stranger to secret communion with God. He is a saint in the church, but an atheist in private. A good Christian holds a conversation with heaven. Private prayer keeps up the trade of godliness. When *private* holiness is laid aside, a stab is given to the heart of piety.

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<sup>1</sup> Originally "distempered" meaning "sick" or "erratic"; double-minded.

**3. A godly man is diligent in his calling.** He takes care to provide for his family; the *church* must not exclude the *shop*. Mr. Perkins<sup>1</sup> said: “Though a man is endued with excellent gifts, hears the Word with reverence, and receives the sacrament, yet if he does not practice the duties of his calling, all is sheer hypocrisy.” *Piety* never granted a patent for *idleness*: “There are some who walk among you disorderly, not working at all... Those who are such, we command and exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that they work quietly, and eat their own bread” (2Thes. 3:11, 12). That bread tastes *sweetest* which is gotten with the most *sweat*; a godly man would rather fast than eat the bread of idleness. Vain professors *talk* of living by faith, but do not *live* in a calling. They are like the lilies of the field: “they toil not, neither do they spin” (Matt. 6:28). *An idle person is the devil’s tennis-ball, which he bandies back and forth with temptation until at last the ball falls out of bounds.*

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**4. A godly man sets bounds for himself in lawful things.** He is moderate in matters of **recreation** and **diet**. He takes only so much as is needed for the supply of nature, and what may better dispose him for God’s service. Jerome lived sparingly; his diet was a few dried figs and cold water. And Augustine in his “Confessions” says: “Lord, you have taught me to go to my *food* as to a *medicine*.” If the *bridle of reason* checks the appetite, much more so should the *curbing-bit of grace*. The life of a sinner is brutish; the glutton feeds “without fear” (Jude 12), and the drunkard drinks without reason. Too much oil chokes the lamp, whereas a smaller quantity makes it burn more brightly. A godly man holds the *golden bridle of temperance*, and will not allow his table to be a snare.

**5. A godly man is careful about moral righteousness.** He is conscientious about *equity* as well as *piety*; the Scripture has linked both together: “that we might serve him in *holiness* and *righteousness*” (Luk. 1:74, 75). Holiness: there is the first tablet of the law. Righteousness: there is the second tablet of the law. Though a man may be morally righteous and not godly, no one can be godly unless he is morally righteous. This moral righteousness is seen in our dealings with men; a good man observes that golden maxim, “Whatever you would have men do to you, do also to them” (Matt. 7:12). There is a threefold injustice *in business matters*:

(1) *Using false weights*: “The balances of deceit are in his hands” (Hos. 12:7). By making their weights lighter, men make their sin heavier. “They make the ephah small” (Amos 8:5). The ephah was a measure they used in selling. They made the ephah small — they gave but scant measure. A godly man who takes the Bible in one hand, dare not use false weights in the other.

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(2) *Debasing a commodity*: “they sell the refuse of the wheat” (Amos 8:6). They would pick out the best grains of the wheat and sell the worst at the same price as they did the best. “Your wine is *mixed* with water” (Isa. 1:22). They adulterated their wine yet made their customers believe it came from the pure grape.

(3) Taking a great deal *more than the commodity is worth*. “If you sell anything to your neighbor... you shall not oppress one another” (Lev. 25:14). A godly man deals exactly but not exactingly. He will sell so as to help himself, but not to harm another. His motto is, “A conscience void of offence toward God, *and* toward men” (Acts 24:16).

The hypocrite separates these two which God has joined together: righteousness and holiness. He pretends to be pure, but he is not just. It brings piety into contempt when men hang out

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<sup>1</sup> William Perkins (1558–1602), *A Treatise of the Vocations or Callings of Men*.

Christ's colors, and yet will use fraudulent circumvention, and under a mask of piety, neglect morality. A godly man is conscientious of the second tablet of the law, as well as the first.

**6. A godly man will forgive those that have wronged him.** *Revenge is sweet to nature.* A gracious spirit passes by affronts, forgets injuries, and counts it a greater victory to conquer an enemy by *patience* than by *power*. It is truly heroic "to overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). Though I would not *trust* an enemy — yet I would endeavor to *love* him. I would exclude him from my creed, yet not from my prayer (Matt. 5:44).

**Ques:** But does every godly man succeed in forgiving, indeed, *loving* his enemies?

**Ans:** He does so in a gospel sense. That is:

(1) He subscribes to it in his JUDGMENT as a thing which ought to be done: "With my mind I serve the law of God" (Rom. 7:25).

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(2) A godly man MOURNS that he cannot love his enemies more: "O wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:24). O this base cankered heart of mine, that has received so much mercy, and can show so little! I have had talents forgiven me, <sup>Mat 18.24-27</sup> and yet I can hardly forgive a pence!"

(3) A godly man PRAYS that God will give him a heart to forgive his enemies. "Lord, pluck this root of bitterness out of me; perfume my soul with love; make me a dove without gall."

(d) A godly man RESOLVES and STRIVES in the strength of Christ against all rancor and virulence of spirit.

This, in a gospel sense, is to love our enemies. A wicked man cannot do this; his malice boils up to revenge.

**7. A godly man lays to heart the miseries of the church.** "We wept, when we remembered Zion" (Psa. 137:1). I have read of certain trees whose leaves, if cut or touched, the other leaves begin to contract and shrink, and for a time hang down their heads. Such a spiritual sympathy exists among Christians. When other parts of God's church suffer, they feel it themselves, as if touched personally. Ambrose reports that when Theodosius was terminally ill, he was more troubled about the church of God than about his own sickness.

When Aeneas would have saved Anchises' life,<sup>1</sup> he says, "Far be it from that I should desire to live when Troy is buried in its ruins;" there is music in two unisons: if you strike one, you will perceive the other stirs, as if it were affected.<sup>2</sup> When the Lord strikes others, a godly heart is deeply affected: "my affections shall resound like a harp" (Isa. 16:11). Though things go well with a child of God in his own private life, and he lives in a house of cedar, he still grieves to see things go badly with the public. Queen Esther enjoyed the king's favor and all the delights of the court. Yet when a warrant portending bloodshed was signed for the death of the Jews, she mourns and fasts, and risks her own life to save theirs.

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**8. A godly man is content with his present condition.** If provisions get low, his heart is tempered to his condition. "Many," says Cato, "blame me because I want; and I blame them because they *cannot* want." A godly man puts a kind interpretation upon providence. When God brews him a bitter cup, he says, "This is my *diet-drink*; it is to purge me and do my soul good." Therefore he is well-content (Phil. 4:11).

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<sup>1</sup> *Greek myth.* After the defeat of Troy, the elderly Anchises was carried from the burning city by his son Aeneas.

<sup>2</sup> That is, there is a "sympathetic vibration."



**9. A godly man is fruitful in good works** (Titus 2:7). The Hebrew word for godly (*chasid*) signifies “merciful,” implying that to be godly and charitable are one and the same. A good man feeds the hungry, clothes the naked. “He is ever merciful” (Psa. 37:26). The more devout sort of the Jews to this day distribute the tenth part of their estate to the poor; and they have a proverb among them: “Give the tenth, and you will grow rich.” The hypocrite is all for *faith*, nothing for *works*; he is like the laurel which makes a *flourish*, but bears no *fruit*.

**10. A godly man will suffer persecution.** He will be married to Christ, though he has no other dower than the *cross*. He suffers out of choice and with a spirit of gallantry (Heb. 11:35). Argerius wrote a letter to his friend, headed: “From the *pleasant gardens* of the Leonine prison.” The blessed martyrs who put on the whole armor of God, blunted the edge of persecution by their courage. The juniper tree makes the *coolest shadow* and the *hottest coal*. So too, persecution makes the coal of love hotter, and the shadow of death cooler.

Thus a godly man goes round the whole circle of pious duties, and obeys God in whatever he commands.

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**Obj:** But it is impossible for anyone to walk according to the *full* breadth of God’s law, and to follow God *fully*!

**Ans:** There is a twofold obeying of God’s law. The first is perfect, when *all* is done, which is what the law requires.<sup>1</sup> This we cannot arrive at in this life. Secondly, there is an incomplete obedience, which is accepted in Christ.<sup>2</sup> This consists in four things:

- (1) An approving of all God’s commands: “the commandment is holy and just and good... I consent to the law, that it is good” (Rom. 7:12, 16). There is both *assent* and *consent*.
- (2) A sweet satisfaction in God’s commands: “I will delight myself in your commandments, which I have loved” (Psa. 119:47).
- (3) A cordial desire to walk in all God’s commands: “O that my ways were directed to keep your statutes” (Psa. 119:5).
- (4) A real endeavor to tread in every path of the command: “I turned my feet to your testimonies” (Psa. 119:59). Zacharias had his failings; he hesitated through unbelief, for which he was struck dumb. Yet it is said that he “walked in all the commandments of the Lord blameless” (Luk. 1:6) — because he cordially endeavored to obey God in all things. *Evangelical obedience* is true in its essence, even though not perfect in its degree; and in what it comes short, Christ puts his merits into the scale, and then there is full weight.

### Sec. 23. A godly man WALKS WITH GOD

“Noah walked with God” (Gen. 6:9). The age in which Noah lived was very corrupt: “the wickedness of man was great in the earth” (v.5). But the iniquity of the times could not put Noah off his walk: “Noah walked with God.” Noah is called a “preacher of righteousness” (2Peter 2:5):

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**1. Noah preached by doctrine.** His preaching (say some of the rabbis) was in this vein: “Turn from your evil ways, so that the waters of the flood will not come upon you and cut off the whole seed of Adam’s race.”

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<sup>1</sup> This is the perfect obedience of Christ, accounted or imputed to us by faith.

<sup>2</sup> That is, our personal or “evangelical” obedience (our godliness), which is made acceptable to God in Christ.



**2. Noah preached by his life.** He preached by his humility, patience, sanctity. “Noah walked with God.” (Gen. 6:9)

**Ques:** What does it mean, to walk with God?

**Ans:** Walking with God imports five things:

**1. Walking with God is walking as under God’s eye.** Noah revered a Deity. A godly man sets himself as in God’s presence, knowing that his judge is looking on: “I have set the Lord always before me” (Psa. 16:8). Here was David’s eye.

**2. Walking with God implies the familiarity and intimacy which the soul has with God.** Friends walk together, and console one another. The godly make known their requests to God [Phil 4.6](#) — and He makes known his love to them. [1Joh 4.9](#) There is a sweet fellowship between God and his people: “Our fellowship (*koinonia*) is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1John 1:3).

**3. Walking with God is walking above the earth.** A godly man is elevated above all objects under the moon. The person who walks with God must ascend very high. A dwarf cannot walk among the stars, nor can a dwarfish earthly soul walk with God.

**4. Walking with God denotes visible piety.** Walking is a visible posture; grace must be conspicuous to the onlookers. Someone that reveals something of God in his carriage, walks with God: he shines out in biblical conduct towards others.

**5. Walking with God imports a continued progress in grace.** It is not only a *step*, but a *walk*. There is progress towards maturity. A godly man does not sit down in the middle of his journey, but goes on until he comes to the “end of his faith” (1Pet. 1:9).

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Though a good man may be *extra semitam*, out of the *path*, he is not *extra viam*, out of the way. He may through infirmity step aside, as Peter did; but he recovers by repentance, and he goes on in progressive holiness: “The righteous will hold to his way” (Job 17:9).

**Use 1:** See from this how improper it is to describe as godly, those who do not walk with God. They would have Noah’s *crown*, but they do not love Noah’s *walk*. Most are found in the *devil’s black walk!* “Many walk, of whom I tell you weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18).

**1. Some will commend walking with God, and say it is the rarest life in the world; but they will not set one foot on the way.** All who commend wine fall short of the price. Many a father *commends* virtue to his child, but he does not set him a *pattern*.

**2. Others walk a few steps in the good old way, but they retreat again** (Jer. 6:16).<sup>1</sup> If the ways of God were *not* good, why did they enter into them? If they *were* good, why did they forsake them? “For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment” (2Pet. 2:21).

**3. Others slander walking with God,** that it is a melancholy walk, and that those who are less zealous, are more prosperous. God considers this blasphemy, that “evil shall be spoken of the way of truth” (2Pet. 2:2). In the Greek it is, “it shall be blasphemed.”

**4. Others deride walking with God as if it were a way of foolish scrupulousness.**<sup>2</sup> “What, would you be of the ‘*holy* tribe’? Would you be wiser than others?” There are some

<sup>1</sup> **Jer 6:16** Thus says the LORD: “Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way *is*, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk *in it*.’”

<sup>2</sup> *Scrupulousness*: conformity to high standards of ethics or excellence.

people that if it was in their power, they would jeer holiness right out of the world. The chair of the scornful stands at the mouth of hell (Pro. 19:29).<sup>1</sup>

**5. Others, instead of walking with God, walk after the flesh (2Pet. 2:10).**

- (1) They walk by fleshly opinions.
- (2) They walk after fleshly lusts.

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**(1) They walk by fleshly OPINIONS.** There are six of these opinions:

1. That it is best to do what *most* do, to steer according to the course of the world; to be in the world's mode — not to get a new *heart*, but to get into a new *fashion*.
2. That *reason* is the highest judge and umpire in matters of piety — that we must believe no further than we can see. But for a man to become a fool so that he may be wise (1Cor. 3:18), to be saved purely by the righteousness of another (Phil. 3:9), to keep all by losing all (Mat. 10:39) — *these* things the natural man will by no means put in his creed.
3. That a little religion will serve as well: the *lifeless form of religion* may in be kept up in policy, but actual *zeal* is madness!" The world thinks *that* religion is best, which like gold-leaf, is spread very thin.
4. That any way which is must be exposed to affliction is not good. A stick, though it is straight, yet under water it seems crooked. So piety, if it is under affliction, appears crooked to a carnal eye.
5. That a man's entire concern should be for the present. As that profane cardinal<sup>2</sup> said, he would leave his part in paradise, to keep his cardinalship in Paris.
6. That sinning is better than suffering. It is greater concern to keep the skin whole than the conscience pure.

These are such rules as the crooked serpent has found out, and whoever walks by them, shall not know peace."

**(2) They walk after to fleshly LUSTS.** [*For those who are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but those who are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*" Romans 8:5. "For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if through the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live." Romans 8:13.] They make provision (turn into caterers) for the flesh (Rom. 13:14). Such a person was the Emperor Heliogabalus.<sup>3</sup> He so indulged the flesh that he never sat except among sweet flowers mixed with amber and musk. He attired himself in purple, set with precious stones.

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Instead of burning oil in his lamps, he used costly balsam brought from Arabia, very fragrant. He bathed himself in perfumed water; he put his body to no other use than to be a *strainer for fine food and drink to run through*.

Thus sinners walk after the flesh. If a drunken or unclean lust calls, they gratify it! They brand as cowards, all those who dare not sin at the same rate as they do. Instead of walking

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<sup>1</sup> **Pro 19:29** Judgments are prepared for scoffers.

<sup>2</sup> Cardinal de Bourbon: Watson, *Body of Practical Divinity*, "Of the Tenth Commandment" (Aberdeen, 1838), p. 445.

<sup>3</sup> Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus (c. 203-222), known as Elagabalus or Heliogabalus; Roman Emperor from 218 to 222. He was Syrian. In his early youth he served as a priest of the god Elagabal, hence his nickname.

with God, they walk contrary to him. Lust is the compass they sail by, Satan is their pilot, and hell is the port they are bound for.

**Use 2:** Let us test whether we have this characteristic of the godly: Do we walk with God? That may be known:

**1. By the way in which we walk.** It is a private, secluded way, in which only a few holy ones walk. Therefore it is called a “pathway” to distinguish it from the common road: “In its pathway there is no death” (Pro. 12:28). [“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” (Mat. 7:13-14 <sup>NIV</sup>).]

**2. By walking in the fear of God.** “Enoch walked with God” (Gen. 5:22). The Chaldean version renders it, “he walked in the fear of the Lord.” The godly are fearful of that which may displease God. “How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!” (Gen. 39:9). This is not a base, servile fear, but

(1) A fear springing from *affection* (Hos. 3:5).<sup>1</sup> A child fears to offend his father out of the tender affection he has for him. This made holy Anselm say, “If sin were on one side and hell on the other, I would rather leap into hell than willingly offend my God.”

(2) A fear joined with *faith*.<sup>2</sup> “By faith Noah, moved with fear” (Heb. 11:7). Faith and godly fear go hand in hand. When the soul looks at God’s *holiness*, he fears. When he looks at God’s *promises*, he believes.

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A godly man *trembles* yet *trusts*. Fear preserves reverence; faith preserves cheerfulness. Fear keeps the soul from lightness; faith keeps it from sadness. By this we may know whether we walk with God: if we walk in the fear of God, then we are fearful of infringing his laws, and forfeiting his love. It is a brand set upon sinners that “there is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:18). The godly fear and do not offend (Exo. 20:20). The wicked do not fear and offend (Jer. 5:22-25). Careless and dissolute walking will soon estrange God from us, and make him weary of our company: “What communion does light have with darkness?” (2Cor. 6:14).

**Use 3:** Let me persuade all who would be accounted godly, to get into Noah’s walk. **Though the truth of grace is in the heart, the beauty of grace is seen in the walk!**

1. *Walking with God is very pleasing to God.* The one who walks with God declares to the world which is the company he loves most: “His fellowship is with the Father” (1John 1:3). He counts those the sweetest hours which are spent with God. This is very pleasing and acceptable to God: “Enoch walked with God” (Gen. 5:24). And see how kindly God took this at Enoch’s hand: “He had this testimony, that *he pleased God*” (Heb. 11:5).

2. *Walking closely with God will be a good means to entice and allure others to walk with him.* The apostle exhorts wives so to walk this way, so that the husbands might be won by their conduct (1Pet. 3:1). Justin Martyr confessed that he became a Christian by observing the holy and innocent lives of the early saints.

3. *Walking closely with God would put to silence the adversaries of the truth* (1Pet. 2:15). Careless behavior puts a sword into wicked men’s hands to wound piety. What a sad thing it is

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<sup>1</sup> **Hos 3:5** Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.

<sup>2</sup> That is, a fear married or engaged to a virtue.

when it is said of professing Christians that they are as proud, as covetous, and as unjust as others!

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Will this not expose the ways of God to contempt? But holy and close walking would stop the mouths of sinners, so that they would not be able to speak against God's people without making themselves liars. Satan came to Christ and found nothing in him (John 14:30). What a confounding thing it will be to the wicked, when *holiness* is the only thing they have to fasten on the godly as a crime. "We will never find any basis against this Daniel unless it we find it against him concerning the law of his God" (Dan. 6:5).

4. *Walking with God is a pleasant walk.* The ways of wisdom are called pleasantness (Pro. 3:17). Is the *light* not pleasant? "They shall walk, O Lord, in the *light* of your countenance" (Psa. 89:15). Walking with God is like walking among beds of spices which send forth a fragrant perfume. This is what brings peace: "walking in the *fear* of the Lord, and in the *joy* of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:31).<sup>1</sup> While we walk with God, what sweet music the *bird of conscience* makes in our breast! "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord" (Psa. 138:5).

5. *Walking with God is honorable.* It is a credit for one of an inferior rank, to walk with a king. What greater dignity can be put upon a mortal man, than to converse with his Maker, and to take a walk with God every day?

6. *Walking with God leads to rest:* "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). The philosopher says "Motion leads to rest."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, there is a motion which does *not* tend to rest: those who walk with their sins shall never have rest: "They do not rest day or night" (Rev. 4:8). But those who walk with God shall "sit down in the kingdom of God" (Luk. 13:29), just as a weary traveler, when he comes home, sits down and rests.

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"To him that overcomes, I will grant to *sit* with me on my *throne*" (Rev. 3:21). A *throne* denotes honor, and *sitting* denotes rest.

7. *Walking with God is the safest walking.* Walking in the way of *sin* is like walking on the edge of a river; the sinner treads on the precipice of the bottomless pit, and if death gives him a jog, he tumbles in — but it is safe walking in God's way: "Then you shall walk in your way safely" (Pro. 3:23). The one who walks with a guard walks safely; the one who walks with God shall have God's Spirit to guard him from *sin*, and God's angels to guard him from *danger* (Psa. 91:11).

8. *Walking with God will make death sweet.* It was Augustus' wish that he might have a quiet, easy death without much pain. If anything makes our pillow easy at death it will be this: that we have walked with God in our generation. Do we think walking with God can do us any hurt? Did we ever hear anyone cry out on their deathbed that they have been too holy, that they have prayed too much, or walked with God too much? No! What has cut them to the heart has been this: that they have not walked more closely with God! They have wrung their hands and torn their hair to think that they have been so bewitched with the pleasures of the world. Walking closely with God will make our enemy, death, be at peace with us. When King Ahasuerus could not sleep, he called for the book of records and read it (Esther 6:1). So when the violence of sickness causes sleep to depart from our eyes, and we call for our conscience (that book of records) and find written in it that on such a day we humbled our souls by fasting; on such a day our hearts melted in prayer; on such a day we had sweet communion with God — what a

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<sup>1</sup> Instead of "joy" of the Holy Spirit, most translations have "comfort" or "encouragement."

<sup>2</sup> Zeno's paradox. In 1687 Newton postulated the tendency of a body in motion to remain in motion, and of a body at rest to remain at rest.

reviving this will be! How we may look death in the face with comfort and say, "Lord, now take us up to you in heaven. Where we have been so often by *affection*, let us now be by *fruition*."

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9. *Walking with God is the best way to know the mind of God.* Friends who walk together impart their secrets one to another: "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear him" (Psa. 25:14). Noah walked with God and the Lord revealed a great secret to him: destroying the old world and saving him in the ark (Gen. 6:17, 18). Abraham walked with God, and God made him one of his privy council: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (Gen. 18:17). God sometimes sweetly discloses himself to the soul in prayer and in the holy supper, as Christ made himself known to the disciples in the breaking of bread (Luk. 24:35).

10. *Those who walk with God will not be wholly left by God.* The Lord may withdraw for a time to make his people cry for him more, but he will not leave them altogether: "I hid my face from you for a *moment*; but with *everlasting* kindness I will have mercy on you" (Isa. 54:8). God will not cast off any of his old acquaintances; he will not part with one who has kept him company. "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Gen. 5:24). He took him up to heaven. As the Arabic renders it, "Enoch was lodged in the bosom of divine love."

**Ques: What may we do to walk with God?**

**Ans. 1: Get out of the old road of sin!** The one who would walk in a pleasant meadow must turn off the road. The way of sin is full of travelers. There are so many traveling on this road, that hell, though it has a great circumference, would gladly enlarge itself to make room for them (Isa. 5:14). **This way of sin seems pleasant, but the end is damnable.** "I have," says the harlot, "perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon" (Pro. 7:17).

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See how with *one sweet* (the cinnamon) there were *two bitters* (myrrh and aloes). For that little sweetness in sin at present, there will be a far greater proportion of bitterness afterwards. Therefore get out of these briars. You cannot walk with God and sin. "What fellowship does righteousness have with unrighteousness?" (2Cor. 6:14).

**Ans. 2: Get acquainted with him.** "Now acquaint yourself with him" (Job 22:21). Know God in his attributes and promises; strangers do not walk together.

**Ans. 3: Get all differences removed.** "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3). This agreement and reconciliation is made by faith: "Whom God set forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Rom. 3:25). Once we are friends, we shall be called up to the mount as Moses was, and have this dignity conferred on us: to be the favorites of heaven, and to forever walk with God.

**Ans. 4: Get a liking for the ways of God:** they are *adorned* with beauty (Pro. 4:18); they are *sweetened* with pleasure (Pro. 3:17); they are *fenced* with truth (Rev. 15:3); they are *accompanied* with life (Acts 2:28); they are *lengthened* with eternity (Hab. 3:6). Be enamored with the way of piety and you will soon walk in it.

**Ans. 5: Take hold of his arm.** Those who walk in their own strength will soon grow weary and tire. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God" (Psa. 71:16). We cannot walk with God without God. Let us press him with his promise: "I will cause you to walk in my statutes" (Ezek. 36:27). If God takes us by the hand, then we shall "walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31).

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## Sec. 24. A godly man labors to be an INSTRUMENT for making others godly

He is not content to go to heaven alone, but wants to take others there. *Spiders* work only for themselves, but *bees* work for others. A godly man is both a diamond and a loadstone — a diamond for the sparkling luster of grace, and a loadstone for his attractiveness. He is always drawing others to embrace piety. Living things have a propagating virtue: where religion lives in the heart, there will be an endeavor to propagate the life of grace in those we converse with: “My son, Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds” (Phm. 1:10). Though God is the *fountain of grace* — yet the saints are *pipes* to transmit the living streams to others.

**This thirsty endeavor for the conversion of souls proceeds:**

**1. From the nature of godliness.** Grace is like fire, which assimilates and turns everything into its own nature. Where there is the fire of grace in the heart, it will endeavor to inflame others. Grace is a holy leaven, which will be seasoning and leavening others with divine principles. Paul would gladly have converted Agrippa — how he courted him with rhetoric! “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe” (Acts 26:27). His zeal and eloquence had almost captivated the king (v. 28). Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can *persuade* me to be a Christian?”

**2. From a spirit of compassion.** Grace makes the heart tender. A godly man pities those who are in the gall of bitterness. He sees what a deadly cup is brewing for the wicked! They must, without repentance, be bound over to God’s wrath! The fire which rained on Sodom was only a *painted fire* in comparison with hell fire.

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This is a fire with a vengeance: “Suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 1:7). Now a godly man seeing captive sinners ready to be damned, labors to convert them from the error of their way: “Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2Cor. 5:11).

**3. From a holy zeal he bears for Christ’s glory.** The glory of Christ is as dear to him as his own salvation. Therefore, that this may be promoted, he labors to bring in souls to Christ.

It is a glory to Christ when multitudes are born to him. Every star adds a luster to the sky; every convert is a member added to Christ’s body, and a jewel adorning his crown. Though Christ’s glory cannot be increased, as he is God — yet, as he is Mediator, it may. The more that are saved, the more Christ is exalted. Why else would the angels rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, if it is not because Christ’s glory now shines all the more? (Luk. 15:10)

**Use 1:** What excludes those who are *spiritual eunuchs* from the number of the godly is that they do not labor to promote the salvation of others.

1. *If men loved Christ, they would try to draw as many as they could to him.* The one who loves his captain will persuade others to come under his banner. This unmasks the hypocrite. Though a hypocrite may make a show of grace himself, he never bothers to procure grace in others. He is without compassion. I may allude to the verse: “That which dies let it die, and that which is cut off, let it be cut off” (Zech. 11:9). And so, if souls go to the devil, he does not care.

2. *How far from being godly are those who, instead of endeavoring for grace in others, labor to destroy all hopeful beginnings of grace in them!* Instead of drawing them *to* Christ, they draw them *from* Christ.

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Their work is to poison and harm souls. This harming of souls occurs in three ways:



(1) *By bad edicts.* So Jeroboam made Israel sin (1Kings 16:26). He forced them to idolatry.

(2) *By bad examples.* Examples speak louder than precepts — but principally the examples of great men are influential. Men placed on high, are like the “pillar of cloud” — when that went, Israel went. If great men behave irregularly, others will follow them.

(3) *By bad company.* The breath of sinners is infectious. They are like the dragon which “cast a flood out of his mouth” (Rev. 12:15). They cast a flood of oaths out of their mouths. Wicked tongues are set on fire by hell (Jas. 3:6). The sinner finds match and gunpowder, and the devil finds the fire! The wicked are ever setting snares and temptations before others, as the prophet says in another sense: “I set bowls full of wine before them, and cups, and I said to them, Drink” (Jer. 35:5). So the wicked set bowls of wine before others and make them drink, until reason is stupefied and lust is inflamed. These who make men proselytes to the devil are prodigiously wicked. How sad will be the doom of those who, besides their own sins, have the blood of others to answer for!

3. *If it is the sign of a godly man to promote grace in others, then how much more should he promote it in his near relations?* A godly man will be careful that his children should know God. He would be very sorry if any of his family should burn in hell. He labors to see Christ formed in those who are *himself in another edition*. Augustine says that his mother Monica travailed with greater care and pain for his spiritual birth than for his natural birth.

The time of childhood is the fittest time to be sowing *seeds of religion* in our children. “Whom shall we make understand doctrine?”

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Those who are weaned from the milk, that are taken from the breasts” (Isa. 28:9). The *wax*, while it is soft and tender, will take any impression. Children, while they are young, will *fear* a reproof; when they are old, they will *hate* it.

(1) It is pleasing to God that our children should know him early in life. When you come into a garden, you love to pluck the young bud and smell it. God loves *a saint in the bud*. Of all the trees which the Lord could have chosen in a prophetic vision (Jer. 1:11), he chose the almond tree, which is one of the first of the trees to blossom. Such an almond tree is an early convert.

(2) By endeavoring to bring up our children in the fear of the Lord, we will provide for God’s glory when we are dead. A godly man should not only honor God while he lives, but do something that may promote God’s glory when he is dead. If our children are seasoned with gracious principles, they will stand up in our place when we have gone, and will glorify God in their generation. A good piece of ground bears not only a *fore-crop* but an *after-crop*. The one who is godly not only bears God a good crop of obedience himself while he lives, but by training his child in the principles of religion, he bears God an after-crop when he is dead.

**Use 2:** Let all who have God’s name placed on them, do what they can to advance piety in others. A knife touched with a loadstone will attract the compass needle. The one whose heart is divinely touched with the loadstone of God’s Spirit, will endeavor to attract those who are near him to Christ. The heathen could say, “We are not born for ourselves only.” The more *excellent* anything is, the more *diffusive* it is. In the body, every member is diffusive: the eye conveys light; the head conveys spirits; the heart conveys blood. A Christian must not move altogether within his own circle, but endeavor for the welfare of others. To be diffusively good makes us resemble God, whose sacred influence is universal.

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And surely it will not grieve the heart, when the conscience can witness for us that we have brought glory to God in this manner: by laboring to fill heaven.

Not that this is in any way *meritorious*, or has any *causal* influence on our salvation. Christ's blood is the cause, but our promoting God's glory in the conversion of others is a signal evidence of our salvation. Just as the rainbow is not a cause why God will not drown the world, it is yet a sign that he will not drown it. Or just as Rahab's scarlet thread hung out of the window (Joshua 2:18) was not the *cause* of her being exempted from destruction, but it was a *sign* of her being exempted. In the same way, our building others up in the faith is not a *cause* of why we are saved; but it is a *symbol* of our piety, and a presage of our eternal felicity!

And thus I have shown the marks and characteristics of a godly man. If a person thus described is reputed to be a fanatic, then Abraham and Moses and David and Paul were fanatics, which I think no one but atheists would dare to affirm!

## Chap. 5. Two CONCLUSIONS

Concerning the characteristic signs aforementioned, I will lay down two conclusions:

**1. These characteristics are a Christian's box of evidences.** For as an impenitent sinner has the signs of reprobation on him — by which, like so many spots and tokens, he may know he will die — so whoever can show these happy signs of a godly man, may see the symptoms of salvation in his soul; and he may know that he has “passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). He is as sure to go to heaven as if he were in heaven already. Such a person is undoubtedly a member of Christ; and if he should perish, then something of Christ might perish.

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These blessed characteristics may comfort a Christian under all worldly dejection and diabolical suggestions. Satan tempts a child of God with this: that he is a hypocrite and has no title to the land of promise. A Christian may pull out these evidences and challenge the devil to prove that any wicked man or hypocrite ever had such a good certificate to show for heaven. Satan may sooner prove himself a liar, than prove the saint a hypocrite.

**2. Whoever truly has even one of these characteristics, has the seed of all of them.** Whoever has one link of a chain has the whole chain.

*Obj:* But may a child of God say, “Either I do not have all these characteristics, or else they are so weakly worked in me that I cannot discern them”?

*Ans:* To satisfy this scruple you must diligently observe the distinctions which the Scripture makes between Christians. It puts them into several classes and orders. Some are *little children* who have only recently begun breast-feeding on the gospel; others are *young men* who have grown up to more maturity of grace; others are *fathers* who are ready to take their degree of glory (1John 2:12-14).<sup>1</sup> Now, you who are not in the first rank or class may still have the *vitals* of godliness, just as well as those who have arrived at a higher stature in Christ.

The Scripture speaks of the *cedar* and the *bruised reed*; the reed is just as true a plant of the heavenly paradise, as the cedar. So the weakest should not be discouraged. Not all have these characteristics of godliness written in capital letters. If they are only faintly stamped on their souls, God can read the work of his Spirit there. Though the seal is only faintly set on the wax, it ratifies the will, and gives a real conveyance of an estate. If there is found just some good thing towards the Lord, as Abijah said, God will accept it (1Kings 14:13).

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<sup>1</sup> Also 1Cor 3:2; Heb 5:12.

## Chap. 6. An EXHORTATION to Godliness

From all that has been said, I would draw three great uses.

1. Strive for godliness (chap. 6)
2. Persevere in godliness (chap. 8)
3. Take counsel in godliness (chap. 9)

**Use 1.** Those who are still in their natural condition, who have never yet relished any sweetness in the things of God, let me beseech them, for the love of Christ, to strive to get these characteristics of the godly engraved on their hearts. Though godliness is the object of the world's scorn and hatred (as in Tertullian's days, the name of a Christian was a crime), yet do not be ashamed to espouse godliness. Know that *persecuted godliness* is better than *prosperous wickedness*! What will all the world avail a man without godliness? To be *learned* and ungodly is like a devil transformed into an angel of light; to be *beautiful* and ungodly is like a lovely picture hung in an infected room; to be *honorable* in the world and ungodly is like an ape dressed in purple, or like that image which had a head of gold on feet of clay (Dan. 2:32, 33). It is godliness which ennobles and consecrates the heart, making God and angels fall in love with it.

Labor for the reality of godliness. Do not rest in the common workings of God's Spirit. Do not think it is enough to be intelligent and discursive. A man may discourse about piety to the admiration of others, and yet not feel the sweetness of those things in his own soul. The lute gives a melodious sound to others, but it is not at all sensible of the sound itself. Judas could make an elegant discourse about Christ, but did not feel virtue from him.

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Do not rest in having your affections a little stirred. A hypocrite may have affections of *sorrow* like Ahab, or affections of *desire* like Balaam. These are slight and flashy, and do not amount to real godliness. Oh! Labor to be like the king's daughter, "glorious within!" (Psa. 45:13)

That I may persuade the sons of men to become godly, I will lay down some forceful motives and arguments, and may the Lord make them like nails fastened by his Spirit. Let men seriously weigh,

**1. Their misery while they remain in a state of ungodliness.** That may make them hasten out of this Sodom. The misery of ungodly men appears in nine particulars:

**1. They are in a state of spiritual death.** "*Dead in trespasses*" (Eph. 2:1). Dead they must be, for they are cut off from Christ, the principle of life. For as the body without the soul is dead, so is the soul without Christ. This spiritual death is visible in the effect. It bereaves men of their senses. Sinners have no sense of God in them: "being without feeling" (Eph. 4:19). All their moral endowments are but strewing flowers on a dead corpse; and what is hell but a sepulcher in which to bury the dead?

**2. Their offerings are polluted.** Not only the *ploughing*, but the *praying* of the wicked is sin! "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord" (Pro. 21:4; 15:8). If the water is foul in the *well*, it cannot be clean in the *bucket*. If the *heart* is full of sin, the *duties* cannot be pure. What a strait every ungodly person is in! If he does not come to the ordinance, he *despises* it; if he does come, he *defiles* it.

**3. Those who live and die ungodly, have no right to the covenant of grace.** "At that time you were without Christ, strangers from the covenants of promise" (Eph. 2:12). And to be without the covenant, is to be like someone in the old world without an ark.

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The covenant is the charter of the gospel, which is enriched with many glorious privileges. But who may plead the benefit of this covenant? Surely only those whose hearts are inlaid with grace. Read the charter: “I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you... I will be your God” (Ezek. 36:26, 28). A person dying in his ungodliness has no more to do with the new covenant, than a ploughman has to do with the privileges of a corporation.

God’s writing always comes before his seal. “You are declared to be the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart” (2Cor. 3:3). Here is a golden epistle: the writing is the work of faith; the tablet it is written on is the heart; the finger that writes it is the Spirit. Now, after the Spirit’s writing, follows the Spirit’s sealing: “After you believed, you were sealed with the Spirit” (Eph. 1:13). That is, you were sealed with an assurance of glory. What do ungodly men have to do with the *seal* of the covenant, when they do not have the *writing* itself?

**4. The ungodly are spiritual fools.** I said to the fools, do not deal foolishly; and to the wicked, do not lift up the horn.” (Psa 75.4) If someone had a child that was very beautiful, yet if he were a fool, the parent would take little joy in him. The Scripture has dressed the sinner in a fool’s coat, and let me tell you it is better to be a fool void of *reason*, than a fool void of *grace* — that would be the devil’s fool, “Fools mock at sin” (Pro. 14:9). Is he not a fool who refuses a rich portion? God offers Christ and salvation, but the sinner refuses this portion: “Israel would have none of me” (Psa. 81:11). Is he not a fool who prefers an annuity to an inheritance? Is he not a fool who tends his *mortal* part and neglects his *angelic* part, as if a man were to paint the wall of his house, and let the timber rot?

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Is he not a fool who would feed the devil with his own soul — like that emperor who fed his lion with pheasant?<sup>1</sup> Is he not a fool who lays a snare for himself (Pro. 1:18) — who counsels shame for his house (Hab. 2:10); who loves death (Pro. 8:36)?

**5. The ungodly are vile people.** “I will dig your grave; for you are vile” (Nah. 1:14). Sin makes men base; it blots their name; it taints their blood. “They have all together become filthy” (Psa. 14:3). In the Hebrew it is, “they have become stinking.” However bad you call wicked men, you cannot call them worse than their name deserves: they are swine (Matt. 7:6); vipers (Matt. 3:7); devils (John 6:70). The wicked are dross and refuse (Psa. 119:119), and heaven is too pure to have any dross mingled with it.

**6. Their temporal mercies are stayed in judgment.** The wicked may have health and estate, yes, even more than the heart can wish (Psa. 73:7); but “their table is a snare” (Psa. 69:22). Sinners have their mercies with God’s *permission*, but not with his *love*. The people of Israel would have been better without their quails, than to have such sour sauce. The ungodly are usurpers; they lack a spiritual title to what they possess. Their good things are like cloth picked up at the draper’s which is not paid for. Death will bring a sad reckoning in the end.

**7. Their temporal judgments are not removed in mercy.** Pharaoh had ten arrows shot at him (ten plagues) and all those plagues were removed; but his heart remained hard, so those plagues were not removed in mercy. It was not a preservation, but a reservation. God reserved him as a signal monument of his justice when he was drowned in the depths of the sea. God may relieve men’s *lives*, when he does not remit their *sins*. The wicked may have *sparing* mercy, but not *saving* mercy.

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<sup>1</sup> The outrageous emperor Elagabalus fed pheasant to his lions – see note page 549.

**8. The ungodly, while they live, are exposed to the wrath of God.** “He that does not believe, the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36). Whoever lacks grace is like someone who lacks a pardon; every hour he is in fear of execution. How can a wicked man rejoice? Over his head hangs the sword of God’s justice; and under him hell-fire burns.

**9. The ungodly, at death, must undergo God’s fury and indignation.** “The wicked shall be turned to hell” (Psa. 9:17). I have read of a lodestone in Ethiopia which has two corners. With one it attracts iron and with the other it repels it. So God has two hands: one of mercy and one of justice. With the one he will draw the godly to heaven; with the other he will thrust the sinner to hell, and oh, how dreadful is that place! It is called a fiery lake (Rev. 20:15) — a *lake* to denote the many torments in hell; and a *fiery* lake to show the fierceness of the punishment. Strabo in his “Geography” mentions a lake in Galilee of such a corrosive nature that it scalds the skin off whatever is thrown into it. But alas, that lake is cool compared with this fiery lake into which the damned are thrown. To demonstrate that this fire is terrible, there are two most pernicious qualities in it:

**(1) It is SULPHUROUS;** it is mixed with brimstone (Rev. 21:8), which is unsavory and suffocating.

**(2) It is INEXTINGUISHABLE:** the wicked shall be choked in the flames, but shall not be consumed: “And the devil was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10). Behold the deplorable condition of all ungodly ones in the eternal world: they shall have a life which always dies, and a death which always lives. Would this not frighten men out of their sins, and make them become godly, unless they are *resolved* to test how hot hell-fire is?

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**2. What rare people the godly are.** “The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor” (Pro. 12:26). Like the flower of the sun, like the wine of Lebanon, like the sparkling on Aaron’s breastplate, such is the oriental splendor of a person embellished with godliness. The excellence of the godly appears in seven particulars:

**1. The godly are PRECIOUS.** Therefore they are set apart for God: “know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself” (Psa. 4:3). We set apart things that are precious. The godly are set apart as God’s peculiar treasure (Psa. 135:4); as his garden of delight (Song 4:12); as his royal diadem (Isa. 62:3). The godly are the excellent of the earth (Psa. 16:3), comparable to fine gold (Lam. 4:2); doubly refined (Zech. 13:9); the glory of creation (Isa. 46:13.) Origen compares the saints to sapphires and crystal. God calls them his jewels (Mal. 3:17). They are jewels:

**(1) For their value.** Diamonds (says Pliny) were not known for a long time except among princes, and were hung on their diadems. God so values his people that he will give kingdoms for their ransom (Isa. 43:3); He laid down his best Jewel (Christ) as security for them (John 3:16).

**(2) For their luster.** If one *pearl of grace* shines so brightly that it delights Christ’s heart — “You have ravished my heart with one of your eyes” (Song 4:9), that is, one of your graces — then how illustrious are all the graces together in a constellation!

**2. The godly are HONORABLE.** “You have been honorable” (Isa. 43:4). The godly are “a crown of glory in the hand of God” (Isa. 62:3). They are “plants of renown” (Ezek. 16:14). They are not only vessels of mercy, but vessels of honor (2Tim. 2:21). Aristotle calls honor the chief good thing. The godly are near akin to the blessed Trinity:

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they have the tutelage and guardianship of angels; they have “God’s name written upon them” (Rev. 3:12) and “the Holy Spirit dwelling in them” (2Tim. 1:14).

The godly are a sacred priesthood. The priesthood under the law was honorable. The king’s daughter was wife to Jehoiada the priest (2Chr. 22:11). It was a custom among the Egyptians to have their kings chosen from their priests. The saints are a divine priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices (1Pet 2:9). They are co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). They are kings (Rev. 1:6). Favorinus<sup>1</sup> tells of an ancient king who invited a company of poor Christians and made them a great feast. On being asked why he showed so much respect to people of such poor birth and extraction, he told them, “These I must honor as the children of the most high God. They will be kings and princes with me in the eternal world.”

The godly are in some sense higher than the angels. The angels are Christ’s *friends*; these are his *spouse*. The angels are called morning stars (Job 38:7), but the saints are clothed with the Sun of Righteousness (Rev. 12:1). All men, says Chrysostom, are ambitious for honor. Behold, then, the honor of the godly! “Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it costs all you have, get understanding. Esteem her, and she will promote you; embrace her, and she will bring you honor” (Pro. 4:7, 8). The trophies of the saints’ renown will be erected in another world.

**3. The godly are BELOVED by God.** “The excellence of Jacob, whom he loved” (Psa. 47:4). A holy heart is the garden where God plants the flower of his love. God’s love to his people is an ancient love; it dates from eternity (Eph. 1:4). He loves them with a choice, distinguishing love; they are the “dearly beloved of his soul” (Jer. 12:7). The men of the world have bounty dripping from God’s *fingers*, but the godly have love dripping from God’s *heart*.

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He gives to one, a golden *cup*; to the other, a golden *kiss*. He loves the godly as he loves Christ (John 17:26). It is the same love in kind, though not in degree. Here the saints but *sip* of God’s love; in heaven they shall drink of *rivers* of pleasure (Psa. 36:8). And this love of God is permanent. Death may take their life away from them, but not God’s love: “I have loved you with a love of perpetuity” (Jer. 31:3).

**4. The godly are PRUDENT people.** They have good insight and good foresight:

**(1) They have good INSIGHT.** “He who is spiritual judges all things” (1Cor. 2:15). The godly have insight into *people* and *things*.

They have insight into **people**, because they have the anointing of God, and by a spirit of discerning they can see some differences between the precious and the vile (Jer. 15:19). God’s people are not *ensorious*, but *judicious*. They can see a wanton heart through a naked breast and a painted face. They can see a revengeful spirit through a bitter tongue. They can guess at the *tree* by the *fruit* (Matt. 12:33). They can see the plague tokens of sin appearing in the wicked, which makes them leave the tents of those sinners (Num. 16:26).

The godly have insight into **things that are mysterious** —

*a. They can see much of the mystery of their own hearts.* Take the greatest politician who understands the mystery of state; yet he does not understand the mystery of his own heart. You will hear him swear that his heart is good; but a child of God sees much heart-corruption in himself (1Kings 8:38). Though some flowers of

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<sup>1</sup> Favorinus of Arelate (80-160) was a Roman sophist and philosopher who flourished during the reign of Hadrian.



grace grow there, he still sees how fast the weeds of sin grow, and therefore he is continually weeding his heart by repentance and mortification.

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*b. The godly can discern the mystery of the **times**:* “The children of Issachar were men that had understanding of the times” (1Chr. 12:32). The godly can see when an age runs to the dregs — when God’s name is dishonored, his messengers despised, his gospel eclipsed. The people of God labor to keep their garments pure (Rev. 16:15). Their care is that the times may not be the worse for them; nor they be the worse for the times.

*c. The godly understand the mystery of **living by faith**:* “The just shall live by faith” (Heb. 10:38). They can trust God where they cannot trace him.<sup>1</sup> They can get comfort out of a promise, just as Moses got water out of the rock (Exod. 17:6). “Though the fig tree does not blossom, yet I will rejoice in the Lord!” (Hab. 3:17).

## **(2) They have good FORESIGHT.**

*a. They foresee the evil of a **temptation**:* “We are not ignorant of his devices” (2Cor. 2:11). The wicked swallow temptations like pills, and when it is too late, they feel these pills grip their conscience. But the godly foresee a temptation, and will not come near. They see a snake under the green grass: they know that *Satan’s kindness* is craftiness! He does as Jephthah’s daughter: he brings out the timbrel, and dances before men with a temptation, and then brings them very low (Jdg. 11.34, 35).

*b. They foresee temporal **dangers**:* “A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself” (Pro. 22:3). The people of God see when the cloud of wrath is ready to drop on a nation, and they get into their *chambers* (Isa. 26:20) — which are the attributes and promises of God; and into the clefts of the rock — which are the bleeding wounds of Christ — and they hide themselves there. Therefore they may well be baptized with the name “wise virgins.” [Mat 25.2](#)

**5. The godly are the bulwark of a nation.** “O my father! The chariot of Israel, and its horsemen.” (2Kings 2:12) The godly are the pillars that keep a city and nation from falling; they stave off judgment from a land.

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It was said of old, that so long as Hector lived, Troy could not be demolished. God would do nothing to Sodom until Lot had gone out of it (Gen. 19:22). Golden Christians are bronze walls. The Lord would soon break up the house of the world if it were not for the sake of a few pious ones. Would God preserve the world only for drunkards and swearers? He would soon sink the ship of church and state, if not that some of his elect were in it. Yet such is the indiscretion of some men that they injure the saints, and consider them burdens, who are indeed the chief blessings (Isa. 19:24).

**6. The godly are of a BRAVE, heroic spirit.** “My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit, I will bring him into the land” (Num. 14:24). An excellent spirit was found in Daniel (Dan. 5:12). The godly hate what is base and sordid. They will not enrich their purses by enslaving their consciences. They are noble and courageous in God’s cause: “the righteous are bold as a lion” (Pro. 28.1). The saints live suitably to their high birth: they breathe after

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase, “they can trust God’s *heart*, where they cannot trace his *hand*” is not Watson’s. Though often attributed to Chas. Spurgeon, it is actually taken from “The Promised Land” by John MacDuff, 1859. Spurgeon’s sermon no. 736 “A Happy Christian” (1867) said the Christian “believes [God] to be too wise to err and too good to be unkind; he trusts him where he cannot trace him.” Like Watson, there is no “heart” and no “hand” in that text; only in MacDuff’s.

God's love; they aspire after glory; *they set their feet where worldly men set their heart*; they display the banner of the gospel, lifting up Christ's name and interest in the world.

**7. The godly are HAPPY<sup>1</sup> people.** King Balak sent to curse the people of God, but the Lord would not allow it. "God said to Balaam, You shall not curse the people: for they are blessed" (Num. 22:12). And Moses afterwards records it as a memorable thing that God turned the king's intended curse into a blessing: "the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you" (Deut. 23:5). They must be happy who are always on the strongest side: "The Lord is on my side" (Psa. 118:6). They are happy who have all conditions sanctified for them (Rom. 8:28),<sup>2</sup> who are crowned with *peace* while they live (Psa. 119:165)<sup>3</sup> and crowned with *glory* when they die (Psa. 73:24).<sup>4</sup>

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And may this not tempt everyone to become godly? "Happy are you, O Israel: a people saved by the Lord!" (Deut. 33:29).

### 3. To endeavor for godliness is most rational.

**1. It is the highest act of reason, to become another man.**<sup>5</sup> If, while he remains in nature's soil, he is poisoned with sin<sup>6</sup> — and no more actually fit for communion with God than a toad is fit to be made an angel — then it is very consonant with reason that he should endeavor for a change.

**2. It is rational because this change is for the better.** "Now are you light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). Would not anyone be willing to exchange a dark prison for a king's palace? Would he not exchange his brass for gold? You who become godly change for the better: you change your pride for humility; you change your uncleanness for holiness. You change a lust that will damn you for a Christ who will save you. If men were not besotted<sup>7</sup> — if their *fall* had not knocked their brains out — they would see it is the most rational thing in the world to become godly.

### 4. The excellence of godliness. The excellence of godliness appears in several ways:

**1. Godliness is our spiritual beauty.** "The beauties of holiness" (Psa. 110:3). Godliness is to the soul, what the light is to the world — to illustrate and adorn it. It is not *greatness* that sets us off in God's eye, but *goodness*. What is the beauty of the angels, if not their sanctity? Godliness is the elaborate embroidery and workmanship of the Holy Spirit. A soul furnished with godliness is damasked with beauty, it is enameled with purity. This is the "clothing of *wrought gold*"<sup>8</sup> which makes the King of heaven fall in love with us. If there were not an excellence in holiness, the hypocrite would never try to paint it. Godliness sheds

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<sup>1</sup> The Greek for "blessed" (*makarios*) means happy.

<sup>2</sup> **Rom 8:28** And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

<sup>3</sup> **Psa 119:165** Great peace have those who love Your law.

<sup>4</sup> **Psa 73:24** You will guide me with Your counsel, And afterward receive me *to glory*. **1Pet 5:4** and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

<sup>5</sup> **2Cor 5:17** Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation;

<sup>6</sup> **Rom 7:5** For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit unto death.

<sup>7</sup> In a drunken stupor; marked by foolish or unreasoning behavior.

<sup>8</sup> Psa 45.13.

a glory and luster upon the saints. What are the *graces*, but the golden feathers in which Christ's dove shines! (Psa. 68:13)<sup>1</sup>

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**2. Godliness is our defense.** Grace is called “the armor of light” (Rom. 13:12). It is *light* for beauty, and *armor* for defense. A Christian has armor of God's making which cannot be shot through. He has the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, the breastplate of righteousness — *this* armor defends against the assaults of temptation, and the terror of hell.

**3. Godliness breeds solid peace.** “Great peace have those who love your law” (Psa. 119:165). Godliness composes the heart, making it sedate and calm like the upper region, where there are no winds and tempests. How can that heart be unquiet where the *Prince of Peace* dwells? “Christ in you” (Col. 1:27). A holy heart may be compared to the doors of Solomon's temple, which were made of “olive tree, carved with open flowers” (1Kings 6:32) — the olive of peace and the open flowers of joy are in that heart.

*Godliness does not destroy a Christian's mirth, but refines it.* His rose is without prickles, his wine without froth. The one who is a favorite of heaven is necessarily full of joy and peace. He may truly sing a *requiem*<sup>2</sup> to his soul and say, “Soul, take your ease” (Luk. 12:19). King Ptolemy asked someone how he might be at rest when he dreamed. He replied, “Let piety be the scope of all your actions.” If anyone were to ask me how to be at rest when he is awake, I would reply with a similar answer: “Let his soul be inlaid with godliness.”

**4. Godliness is the best trade we can drive.** *It brings profit.* Wicked men say, “It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it?” (Mal. 3:14). To be sure, there is no profit in sin: “Treasures of wickedness profit nothing” (Pro. 10:2). But “godliness is profitable” (1Tim. 4:8). It is like digging in a gold mine, where there is gain, as well as toil.

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Godliness makes God himself our portion: “The Lord is the portion of my inheritance” (Psa. 16:5). If God is our portion, then our entire estate lies in jewels! Where God gives himself, he gives everything else. Whoever has the manor, has all the royalties belonging to it. God is a portion that can neither be spent nor lost (Psa. 73:26).<sup>3</sup> Thus we see that godliness is a thriving trade.

And just as godliness brings profit with it, so it is “profitable for all things” (1Tim. 4:8). What else is profitable besides godliness? Food will not give a man wisdom; gold will not give him health; honor will not give him beauty. But godliness is useful for all things: it fences off all troubles; it supplies all needs; it makes soul and body completely happy.

**5. Godliness is an enduring substance.** *It knows no falling leaf.*<sup>4</sup> All *worldly* delights have a death's-head<sup>5</sup> on them. They are only *shadows* and they are *fleeting*. Earthly comforts are like Paul's friends, who took him to the ship and left him there (Acts 20:38). So these will bring a man to his grave and then take their farewell. But godliness is a possession we cannot be robbed of. It runs parallel with eternity — force cannot weaken it; age cannot

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<sup>1</sup> **Psa 68:13** Though you lie down among the sheepfolds, *You will be like the wings of a dove covered with silver, And her feathers with yellow gold.*

<sup>2</sup> A song to impart peace and rest.

<sup>3</sup> **Psa 73:26** God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!

<sup>4</sup> **Psa 1:3** He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

<sup>5</sup> That is, a sign of deadly danger: skull and cross-bones.

wither it; it outbraves sufferings; it outlives death (Pro. 10:2). Death may pluck the *stalk of the body*, but the *flower of grace* is not hurt.

**6. Godliness is so excellent, that the worst men want it when they are going from here.** Though at present godliness is despised and under a cloud, yet at death all would like to be godly. A philosopher asked a young man whether he would like to be a *rich Croesus* or a *virtuous Socrates*. He answered that he would like to live with Croesus, and die with Socrates. So men would like to live with the wicked in pleasure, but die with the godly: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his!" (Num. 23:10). If then godliness is so desirable at death, why should we not pursue it now? Godliness is as needful now, and it would be more feasible.

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**5. There are but few that are godly.** They are like the gleanings after vintage; but most receive the "mark of the beast" (Rev. 13:17). The devil keeps open house for all comers, and he is never without guests. This may prevail with us to be godly. If the number of the saints is so small, how we should labor to be found among these pearls! "Only a *remnant* shall be saved" (Rom. 9:27). *It is better going to heaven with a few, than to hell in the crowd!* [Christ's flock is a little one. "Don't be afraid, *little* flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom!" Luke 12:32]

**6. Consider how vain and contemptible other things are, about which people that are void of godliness busy themselves.** Men are taken up about the things of this life, but "What profit does he have who has labored for the wind?" (Ecc. 5:16). Can the wind fill? What is gold but "the dust of the earth" (Amos 2:7), which will sooner choke than satisfy? *Pull off the mask* of the most beautiful thing under the sun and look what is inside. There is *anxiety* and *vexation!* And the greatest anxiety is still coming — and that is to give account: the things of the world are but a bubble in the water, or a meteor in the air.

But godliness has real worth in it. If you speak of *true honor*, it is to be "born of God;"<sup>1Joh 5.4</sup> if of *true valor*, it is to "fight the good fight of faith;"<sup>1Tim 6.12</sup> if of *true delight*, it is to have "joy in the Holy Spirit."<sup>Rom 14.17</sup> Oh, then espouse godliness! Here *reality* is to be had; of other things we may say, "They comfort in vain!" (Zech. 10:2)

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## Chap. 7. Prescribing some HELPS to godliness

**Ques:** But what shall we do that we may be godly?

**Ans:** I will briefly lay down some rules or helps to godliness.

**1. Be diligent in the use of all MEANS that may promote godliness.** "Strive to enter in at the narrow gate" (Luk. 13:24). What is *purpose*, without *pursuit*? When you have made your estimate of godliness, pursue those means which are most expedient to obtain it.

**2. Beware the WORLD.** It is hard for a *clod of dust* to become a *star*. "Do not love the world" (1John 2:15). Many would like to be godly, but the honors and profits of the world divert them. *Where the world fills both head and heart, there is no room for Christ.* The one whose mind is rooted in the *earth*, is likely enough to deride godliness. When our Savior was preaching against sin, "the Pharisees, who were covetous, derided him" (Luk. 16:14). The world eats out the heart of godliness, as the ivy eats out the heart of the oak. The world kills with her silver darts!

**3. Habituate yourselves to holy THOUGHTS.** *Serious meditation* represents everything in its true color. It shows the *evil of sin*, and the *luster of grace*. By holy thoughts, the head grows clearer and the heart better: "I *thought* on my ways, and *turned* my feet to your testimonies"

(Psa. 119:59). If men would step aside a little out of the noise and hurry of business, and spend but half-an-hour every day in thinking about their souls and eternity, it would tend very much toward a real and blessed conversion in them!

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**4. Watch your HEARTS.** This was Christ's watchword to his disciples: "Watch, therefore" (Matt. 24:42). The heart will precipitate us to sin before we are aware; a subtle heart<sup>1</sup> needs a watchful eye. Watch your thoughts, your affections. The heart has a thousand doors to run out of. Oh, keep close sentinel on your souls! Stand continually on your watch-towers (Hab. 2:1). When you have *prayed* against sin, *watch* against temptation. Most wickedness in the world is committed for lack of watchfulness; watchfulness maintains godliness. It is the *edging* which keeps piety from unraveling.

**5. Be conscientious how you spend your TIME.** "Redeeming the time" (Eph. 5:16). Many people fool away their time, some in idle visits, others in recreations and pleasures which secretly bewitch the heart, and take it away from better things. What are our golden hours for, but to mind our souls? Time misspent is not time *lived*, but time *lost*! Time is a precious commodity. A piece of wax in itself is not worth much; but when it is affixed to the *label of a will*, and it conveys an estate, it is of great value. Thus time is not so considerable, simply in itself. But because salvation is to be worked out in it, and the conveyance of heaven depends on using it well, it is of infinite concern!

**6. Think of your SHORT STAY in the world.** "Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is none abiding!" (1Chr. 29:15). There is only a span between the cradle and the grave. Solomon says there is a time to be *born*, and a time to *die* (Ecc. 3:2) — but he mentions no time of *living* — as if that were so short that it was not worth mentioning! Time, once it has gone, cannot be recalled. The Scripture compares time to a flying eagle, Job 9:26. Yet time differs from the eagle in this: the eagle flies forward and then back again — but time has wings only to fly forward; it never returns again.<sup>2</sup>

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The serious thoughts of our short stay here would be a great means to promote godliness. What if death were to come before we are ready? What if our life were to breathe out before God's Spirit has breathed in? Whoever considers how *flitting* and *winged* his life is, will hasten his repentance! When God is about to make a short work, he will not work long.

**7. Possess yourself<sup>3</sup> with this maxim — that godliness is the end<sup>4</sup> of your creation.** God never sent men into the world only to eat and drink and put on fine clothes — but that they might "Serve him in holiness and righteousness" (Luk. 1:74, 75). God made the world only as a *dressing room* in which to dress our souls. He sent us here on the grand errand of godliness: should nothing then but the body (the brutish part) be looked after? That would be to basely degenerate, yes, to invert and frustrate, the very end of our being!

**8. Be often among the godly.** They are the *salt* of the earth and will help to *season* you. Their *counsels* may direct you; their *prayers* may quicken you. Such *holy sparks* may be thrown into your breasts as to kindle devotion in you. It is good to be among the saints to learn the trade of godliness: "He who walks with wise men shall be wise" (Pro. 13:20).

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<sup>1</sup> A heart (a desire) working or spreading in a hidden and usually injurious way.

<sup>2</sup> Virgil, *tempus fugit, or fugit inreparabile tempus*: "Time flies irrevocably."

<sup>3</sup> **1Thes 4:4** each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor;

<sup>4</sup> The intended outcome or goal of adoption is godliness: "Be holy, for I am holy." Lev 11.44, 45.



## Chap. 8. An EXHORTATION to *Persevere* in Godliness

**Use 2.** My next use is to exhort those who wear the mantle of godliness — and in the judgment of others are looked upon as godly — that they would persevere:

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“Let us *hold fast* the profession of our faith” (Heb. 10:23). This is a seasonable exhortation in these times when the devil’s agents are abroad, whose whole work is to unsettle people and make them fall away from that former strictness in piety which they have professed. *It is much to be lamented to see Christians,*

**1. Wavering in religion.** How many we see unresolved and unsteady, like *Reuben*, “unstable as water” (Gen. 49:4). These the apostle rightly compares to “waves of the sea... and wandering stars” (Jude 1:13). They are not fixed in the principles of godliness. Beza writes of Bolsechus, that his religion changed like the moon. Such were the Ebionites, who kept *both* the Jewish and the Christian Sabbath. Many professors are like the river Euripus, *ebbing* and *flowing* in matters of piety. They are like reeds bending every way, either to the *Mass* or to the *Koran*. They are like the planet Mercury, which varies, and is seldom constant in its motion. When men think of heaven and the recompense of reward, *then* they want to be godly. But when they think of persecution, then they are like the Jews who deserted Christ and “walked with him no more” (John 6:66). *If men’s faces altered as fast as their opinions, we would not know them!* To be so vacillating and wavering in religion, argues for taking it lightly. *Feathers* are blown in every direction, and so are *feathery professors*.

**2. Falling from that godliness which they once seemed to have.** They have turned to *worldliness* and *wantonness*. The very mantle of their profession has fallen off; and indeed, if they were not *fixed* stars, it would be no wonder to see them *falling* stars. This spiritual epilepsy, or falling sickness, was never more rife; this is a dreadful sin for men to fall from that godliness they once seemed to have. Chrysostom says that apostates are worse than those who are openly heinous. They give godliness a bad report.

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“The apostate,” says Tertullian, “seems to put God and Satan in the balance; and having weighed both their services, prefers the devil’s service, and proclaims him to be the best master!” In that respect, the apostate is said to “put Christ to open shame” (Heb. 6:6).

This will be bitter in the end (Heb. 10:38). What a worm Spira<sup>1</sup> felt in his conscience! How Stephen Gardiner<sup>2</sup> cried out in horror on his death-bed that, like Peter, he had denied his Master — but unlike Peter, he had not repented!

That we may be steadfast in godliness and persevere, let us do *two things*:

**1. BEWARE** of those things which, by degrees, will make us fall away from our profession.

**(1) Beware of COVETOUSNESS.** “Men will be covetous... having a *form* of godliness, but denying the power” (2Tim. 3:2, 5). One of Christ’s own apostles was caught with this *silver bait!* Covetousness will make a man betray a good *cause*, and make shipwreck of a good *conscience*. I have read of some in the time of the Emperor Valens, who denied the Christian faith to prevent the confiscation of their goods.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1548 Francis Spira converted to Lutheranism and spread the Lutheran message to others. Under pressure from the Catholic Church, he renounced his Protestant faith, and became convinced he was a reprobate, destined for hell.

<sup>2</sup> (c.1482-1555), English bishop and statesman. He initially supported King Henry VIII against the Pope, but Henry favored Thomas Cranmer over him. So Gardiner later joined Queen Mary I (“Bloody Mary”) against the Reformers.



**(2) Beware of UNBELIEF.** “Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). There is no evil like an *evil* heart; and no evil heart like an *unbelieving* heart. Why so? It makes men depart from the blessed God. The one who does not believe God’s *mercy*, will not dread his *justice*. Unbelief is the nurse of apostasy; therefore *unbelieving* and *unstable* go together: “they did not believe in God... they turned back and tempted God” (Psa. 78:22, 41).

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**(3) Beware of COWARDICE.** The one who is afraid to be godly, must surely be evil: “The fear of man brings a snare” (Pro. 29:25). Those who fear *danger* more than *sin*, will commit sin to avoid danger! Origen, out of a spirit of fear, offered incense to the idol. Aristotle says, “The reason why the chameleon turns so many colors, is through excessive fear.” Fear will make men change their religion as often as the chameleon changes her color! Christian, you who have made a profession of godliness so long, and others have noted you as a saint in their calendar, why do you fear and begin to shrink back? The cause which you have embarked on is good; you fight against sin; you have a good Captain who marches before you: Christ, “the captain of your salvation” (Heb. 2:10).

What is it that you fear? Is it loss of liberty? What is *liberty* worth when *conscience* is in bonds? It is better to lose your liberty and keep your peace, than to lose your peace and keep your liberty. Is it loss of estate? Do you say, as Amaziah did, “What should I do about the hundred talents I paid?” (2Chr. 25:9) I would answer with the prophet, “The Lord can give you much more than this.” He has promised you “a hundredfold” in this life; and if that is not enough, he will give you life everlasting (Matt. 19:29).

*If you would hold fast to your profession of godliness, then*

## **2. Use all MEANS for perseverance**

**(1) Labor for a real work of grace in your soul.** Grace is the best fortification: “it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace” (Heb. 13:9).

**Ques:** What is this real work of grace?

**Ans:** It consists in two things:

**1. Grace lies in a heart-humbling work.** The thorn of sin pricked Paul’s conscience: “Sin revived, and I died” (Rom. 7:9). Though some are less humbled than others — just as some bear children with less pangs — *all* have pangs.

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**2. Grace lies in a heart-changing work.** “But you are washed; but you are sanctified” (1Cor. 6:11). A man is so changed, it is as if another soul lived in the same body! If ever you would hold out in the ways of God, get this vital principle of grace. Why do men change their religion if it is not because their hearts were never changed? They do not fall away *from grace*, but for *lack of grace*.

**(2) Be deliberate and judicious.** Weigh things well in the balance: “Which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?” (Luk. 14:28). Think to yourselves, what it will cost you to be godly: you must expect the hatred of the world (John 15:19). The wicked hate the godly for their piety. It is strange that they should do so. Do we hate a flower because it is sweet? Yet the godly are hated for the perfume of their graces. Is a virgin hated for her beauty? Yet the wicked hate the godly for the beauty of holiness which shines in them; and secret hatred will break out into open violence (2Tim. 3:12). Christians must count the cost before they build. Why are people so hasty in *laying down* religion, if not because they were so hasty in *taking it up*?

**(3) Get a clear, distinct knowledge of God.** Know the love of the *Father*, the merit of the *Son*, and the efficacy of the *Holy Spirit*. Those who do not know God correctly will by degrees renounce their profession. The Samaritans sometimes sided with the Jews when they were in favor. Afterwards they disclaimed all kindred with the Jews when they were persecuted by Antiochus. And no wonder they shuffled so in their religion, if you consider what Christ said about the Samaritans, “You Samaritans worship what you do not know!” (John 4:22). They were enveloped by ignorance. Blind men are apt to fall, and so are those who are blinded in their minds.

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**(4) Enter into it purely, out of choice.** “I have chosen the way of truth” (Psa. 119:30). Espouse godliness for its own worth. Whoever wishes to persevere must choose *godliness* with reproach, rather than *sin* with all its worldly pomp. Whoever takes up religion out of fear, will lay it down again out of fear. Whoever embraces godliness for gain, will desert it when the jewels of promotion are pulled off. Do not be godly out of a worldly intent, but out of a pious choice.

**(5) Labor after integrity.** This will be a golden pillar to support you. A tree that is *hollow* must of necessity be blown down. The hypocrite sets up in the trade of religion, but he will soon go broke: “Their heart was not right with him, nor were they steadfast” (Psa. 78:37). Judas was first a sly hypocrite, and then a traitor. If a piece of copper is gilded, the gilding will wash off. Nothing will hold on but sincerity: “Let integrity preserve me” (Psa. 25:21). How many *storms* Job was in! Not only Satan, but God himself set upon him (Job 7:20), which was enough to have made him desist from being godly. Yet Job stood *fast* because he stood *upright*: “My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live” (Job 27:6). Those colors hold best, which are laid in oil; if we would have our profession hold its color, it must be laid in the oil of sincerity.

**(6) Keep up the life and fervor of duty.** “Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord” (Rom. 12:11). We put coals on the fire to keep it from going out. When Christians grow into a *dull formality*, they begin to be dispirited, and by degrees they abate in their godliness. No one is so fit to make an apostate as a lukewarm professor.

**(7) Greatly exercise self-denial.** “Let him deny himself (Mat. 16:24): self-ease, self-ends, whatever comes in competition with, or stands in opposition to, Christ’s glory and interest, must be denied!

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Self is the great snare; self-love undermines the power of godliness. The young man in the Gospel might have followed Christ, but something of *self* hindered him (Matt. 19:20-22). Self-love is self-hatred. The one who cannot get beyond himself will never get to heaven.

**(8) Preserve a holy jealousy over your hearts.** “Do not be haughty, but fear” (Rom. 11.20). The man who has gunpowder in his house, fears lest it should catch fire. Sin in the heart is like gunpowder; it may make us fear lest a *spark of temptation* falling on us would blow us up. There are two things that may make us always jealous of our hearts: the *deceits* of our hearts and the *lusts* of our hearts. When Peter was afraid that he would sink, and cried to Christ, “Lord, save me,” then Christ took him by the hand and helped him (Matt. 14:30, 31); but when Peter grew confident and thought he could stand alone, then Christ allowed him to fall. Oh, let us be suspicious of ourselves, and in a holy sense “clothe ourselves with trembling” (Ezek. 26:16).

**(9) Labor for assurance.** “Be diligent to make your calling and election sure” (2Pet. 1:10). The one who is sure that God is *his* God, is like a castle built on a rock — all the powers of

hell cannot shake him. How can that man be *constant in piety* who is at a loss about his spiritual estate, and does not know whether he has grace or not? It will be a difficult matter for a man to die for Christ, if he does not know that Christ has died for him. Assurance establishes a Christian in shaky times. The one who has the Spirit of God bearing witness to his heart is the most likely to bear witness to the truth (Rom. 8:16). Oh, be diligent! Be much in prayer, reading, and holy conference. These things are the oil, without which the *lamp of assurance* will not shine.

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**(10) Lay hold of God's strength.** God is called the Strength of Israel (1Sam. 15:29). It is in *his* strength that we stand, more than in our own. The child is safest in the nurse's hands. It is not our holding God, but his holding us, that preserves us. A little dinghy tied fast to a rock is safe; and so are we, when we are tied to the "Rock of ages" (Eph 6.10).<sup>1</sup>

## Chap. 9. MOTIVES to Persevere in Godliness

That I may excite Christians to persevere in the profession of godliness, I will propose these four considerations:

**1. It is the glory and crown of a Christian to be grey-headed in godliness.** "Mnason of Cyprus, an *old* disciple" (Acts 21:16). What an honor it is to see a Christian's *garments* red with blood, yet his *conscience* pure white and his graces green and flourishing!

**2. How do sinners persevere in their sins?** They are settled on their lees (Zeph. 1:12). The judgments of God will not deter or remove them. They say to their sin, as Ruth said to Naomi, "Where you go, I will go... the Lord do so to me, and more, if anything but death parts you and me" (Ruth 1:16, 17). So nothing shall part men from their sins. Oh, what a shame it is that the wicked should be fixed in *evil*, and we be unfixed in *good*; that they should be more constant in the *devil's* service than we are in *Christ's*!

**3. Our perseverance in godliness may be a means to confirm others.** Cyprian's hearers followed him to the place of his suffering, and seeing his steadfastness in the faith, they cried out, "Let us also die with our holy pastor!"

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"Many of the brethren, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word" (Phil. 1:14). Paul's zeal and constancy animated the beholders; his prison-chain made converts in Nero's court; and two of those converts were afterwards martyrs, as history relates.

**4. We shall lose nothing by our perseverance in godliness.** There are eight glorious promises which God has entailed on the persevering saints:

The **FIRST** is Rev. 2:10: "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the **crown of life**." Christian, you may lose the *breath* of life, but not the *crown* of life.

The **SECOND** promise is Rev. 2:7: "To him that overcomes, I will give the right to eat from **the tree of life**." This tree of life is the Lord Jesus. This tree infuses life and prevents death. The day we eat of this tree our eyes shall indeed be opened to see God!

The **THIRD** promise is Rev. 2:17: "To him that overcomes, I will give to eat of the hidden manna and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows except him that receives it." This promise consists of three branches:

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<sup>1</sup> **Eph 6:10** Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. **Psa 61:2** From the end of the earth I will cry to You, When my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

(1) “I will give to eat of the **hidden manna**,” this is *mysterious* — it signifies *the love of God* which is manna for its sweetness, and hidden for its rarity.

(2) “I will give him a **white stone**,” this is *absolution* — “It may be called a precious stone,” says Jerome.

(3) “And in the stone a **new name**,” that is *adoption* — he shall be reputed an heir of heaven, and no one can know it, except the one who has the privy seal of the Spirit to assure him of it.

The FOURTH promise is Rev. 3:5: “He who overcomes shall be **clothed in white raiment**. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”

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The persevering saint shall be clothed in white; this is an emblem of joy (Ecc. 9:8). He shall put off his mourning clothes, and be clothed in the white robe of glory. “I will not blot out his name from the book of life;” God will blot out a believer’s *sins*, but he will not blot out his *name*. The book of God’s decree has no errata in it. “But I will confess his name;” the one who has owned Christ on earth, and worn his colors when it was death to wear them, Christ will not be ashamed of, but will acknowledge his name before his Father and the holy angels. Oh, what a comfort and honor it will be to have a good look from Christ, at the last day! No, to have Christ own us by name and say, “These were the ones who stood up for my truth and kept their garments pure in a defiling age. These shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.”

The FIFTH promise is Rev. 3:12: “Him that overcomes I will make a **pillar in the temple of my God**, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God.” There are many excellent things couched in this promise: “I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.” The hypocrite is a reed shaken by the wind; but the conquering saint shall be a glorious pillar, a pillar for strength, and a pillar in the temple for sanctity; and he shall go out no more.” I understand this to mean a glorified state. “Never again will he leave it;” that is, *after he has overcome* he shall no more go out to the wars; he shall never more have sin or temptation to conflict with; no more shall the noise of drum or cannon be heard — but having won the field, the believer shall now stay at home and divide the spoil. “And I will write on him the name of my God;” that is, he shall be openly acknowledged as my child, just as the Son bears his Father’s name.

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How honorable that saint must be, who has God’s name written on him! “And I will write on him the name of the city of my God;” that is, he shall be enrolled as a citizen of the New Jerusalem above; he shall be made free in the angelic society.

The SIXTH promise is Rev. 2:26: “He that overcomes and keeps my works to the end, to him I will give **power over the nations**.” This may have a double mystery. Either it may be understood of the *saints dwelling on earth*: they shall have power over the nations; their zeal and patience shall overpower the adversaries of truth (Acts 6:10). Or principally, it may be understood of the *saints triumphing in heaven*: they shall have power over the nations: they shall share with Christ in some of his power; they shall join with him in judging the world at the last day: “The saints shall judge the world” (1Cor. 6:2).

The SEVENTH promise is Rev. 3:21: “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to **sit with me on my throne**.” Here is,

(1) First, the saints’ *dignity*: they shall sit upon the throne.

(2) Secondly, their *safety*: they shall sit with Christ. Christ holds them fast and no one shall pluck them out of his throne. The saints may be turned out of their houses, but they cannot be turned out of Christ's throne! Men may as well pluck a star out of the sky as to pluck a saint out of the throne!

The EIGHTH promise is Rev. 2:28: "I will give him the **morning star**." The saints may be sullied with reproach in this life; they may be termed factious and disloyal — Paul himself suffered trouble, in the opinion of some, as an evildoer (2Tim. 2:9) — yet God will bring forth the saints' righteousness as the light, and they shall shine like the morning star, which is brighter than the rest. "I will give him the morning star." This morning star is meant of Christ (Rev 22.16);<sup>1</sup> it is as if Christ had said, "I will give the persevering saint some of my beauty; I will put some of my splendid rays on him; he shall have the nearest degree of glory to me, just as the morning star is nearest the sun!"

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Oh, what soul-ravishing promises there are here! Who would not persevere in godliness? Whoever is not affected by these promises is either a stone or a brute.

### Chap. 10. COUNSEL for the Godly

**Use 3.** Let me, in the next place, direct myself to those who have a real work of godliness in their hearts, and I would speak to them by way of 1. Caution. 2. Counsel. 3. Comfort.

**1. By way of CAUTION.** That they do not blur these characteristics of grace in their souls. Though God's children cannot quite *deface* their graces yet they may *disfigure* them. Too much *carnal liberty* may weaken their evidences, and so dim their luster that they cannot be read. These characteristics of the godly are precious things; gold and crystal cannot be compared with them. Oh, keep them fair written in your hearts, and they will be so many living comforts in a dying hour. It will not frighten a Christian to have all the signs of *death* in his body, when he can see all the signs of *grace* in his soul. He will say with Simeon, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace" (Luk. 2:29).

**2. By way of COUNSEL.** You who are enriched with the treasures of godliness, bless God for it! *This flower does not grow in nature's garden!* You had enlisted yourselves under the devil and taken pay on his side, fighting against your own happiness — and then that God should come with converting grace, and put forth a loving and gentle force, causing you to espouse his quarrel against Satan!

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When you had lain many years soaking in wickedness, as if you had been *parboiled for hell* — that then God should lay you *steeping in Christ's blood*, and breathe holiness into your heart! Oh, what cause you have to write yourselves down as eternal debtors to free grace! He that does not give God the praise for his grace, denies that God is the author of it. Oh, acknowledge the love of God! Admire distinguishing mercy, and set the crown of your praise on the head of free grace! If we are to be thankful for the fruits of the *earth*, then much more for the fruits of the *Spirit*. It is good that there is an eternity coming when the saints shall triumph in God, and make his praise glorious!

**3. By way of COMFORT.** You that have only the least dram of godliness in sincerity, let me give you two rich consolations:

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<sup>1</sup> Rev 22:16 I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.

1. Jesus Christ will not discourage the weakest grace, but will cherish and preserve it to eternity.
2. Grace which is but *newly budded* shall, by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, be prepared and ripened into glory: this I will speak about more fully in the next chapter.

## Chap. 11. COMFORT to the Godly.

### *The least degree of godliness shall be preserved.*

*“A bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench, till he sends forth judgment unto victory.” Matthew 12:20*

This text is spoken prophetically of Christ. He will not insult his people concerning their infirmities; he will not crush grace in its infancy. “A bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench” (Isa 42:3). I begin with the first, “**the bruised reed.**”

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**Ques:** What is to be understood here by a **reed**?

**Ans:** It is not to be taken literally, but figuratively. It is a *rational* reed, the *spiritual* part of man, the *soul*, which may well be compared to a reed, because it is subject to imbecility and shaking in this life,<sup>1</sup> until it grows up unto a firm cedar in heaven.

**Ques:** What is meant by a **bruised reed**?

**Ans:** It is a soul that is humbled and bruised by the sense of its sin. It weeps, but it does not despair; it is tossed upon the *waves of fear*, yet not without the *anchor of hope*.

**Ques:** What is meant by Christ’s **not breaking** this reed?

**Ans:** The sense is that Christ will not discourage any mournful spirit who is in the pangs of the new birth. If the *bruise of sin* is felt, it shall not be mortal: “A bruised reed shall he not break.” In the words there is a *meiosis*, an *understatement*: he will not *break* it, that is, he will bind up the bruised reed — he will comfort it.

The result of the whole is to show Christ’s compassion to a poor dejected sinner, who beats upon his breast and hardly dares to lift up his eye for mercy.<sup>Luk 18.13</sup> The heart of the Lord Jesus yearns for him; *this* bruised reed, he will not break.

In the text there are two parts:

(1) A **supposition**: a soul who is penitentially bruised.<sup>2</sup>

(2) A **proposition**: it shall not be broken.

*Doctrine:* The bruised soul shall not be broken: “He binds up their wounds” (Psa. 147:3). For this purpose Christ received both his mission and his unction,<sup>3</sup> that he might bind up the bruised soul: “the Lord has anointed me to bind up the broken-hearted” (Isa. 61:1). But why will Christ not break a bruised reed?

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1. *Out of the sweetness of his nature.* “The Lord is compassionate and merciful” (James 5:11). He begets compassion in other creatures and is therefore called “the Father of mercies” (2Cor. 1:3).

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<sup>1</sup> That is, mental, moral, and physical weakness.

<sup>2</sup> A believer that is so hurt and distraught by his sin that he repents of it.

<sup>3</sup> His *anointing* with the Holy Spirit (Exo 29.7; Joh 1.32, 33). Christ (*Messiah*) means “Anointed One.”



And surely he himself is not without compassion. When a poor soul is afflicted in spirit, God will not exercise harshness towards it, lest he be thought to lay aside his own tender disposition. Hence it is that the Lord has been ever solicitous for his bruised ones. As the mother is most careful of her children who are weak and sickly, “He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom” (Isa. 40:11). Those who have been spiritually bruised, who like lambs are weakly and tender, Christ will carry in the arms of free grace.

2. *Because a contrite heart is his sacrifice* (Psa. 51:17). A bruised spirit sends forth tears which are like precious wine (Psa. 56:8). A bruised soul is big with holy desires, yes, it is love-sick. Therefore, if a bruised reed has such virtue in it, Christ will not break it. No spices, when they are bruised, are as fragrant to us as a contrite spirit is to God.

3. *Because it so closely resembles Christ*. Jesus Christ was once bruised on the cross: “It pleased the Lord to bruise him” (Isa. 53:10). His hands and feet were bruised with the nails; his side was bruised with the spear. A bruised reed resembles a bruised Savior. Indeed, a bruised reed is a *member* of Christ; and though it is weak, Christ will not cut it off, but will cherish it all the more.

**(1) Will Christ not break the bruised reed? This tacitly implies that he will break unbruised reeds** — those who were never touched with a troubled spirit, but live and die in impenitence; these are hard reeds, or rather, rocks. Christ will not break a *bruised* reed, but he will break a *hard* reed. Many do not know what it is to be bruised reeds.

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They are bruised outwardly by affliction, but they are not bruised by their sin. They never knew what the pangs of the new birth meant. You will hear some thank God that they were always at peace, that they never had any anxiety of spirit. These bless God for the greatest curse! Those who are not *bruised penitentially*, shall be *broken judicially*. Those whose hearts would not break for *sin*, shall break with *despair*. In hell there is nothing to be seen but a heap of stones and a hammer. A heap of stones — these are hard hearts; and a hammer — this is God’s power and justice, breaking them in pieces.

**(2) Will Christ not break a bruised reed? See, then, the gracious disposition of Jesus Christ — he is full of mercy and sympathy.** Though he may *bruise* the soul for sin, he will not *break* it. The surgeon may *lance* the body and make it bleed, but he will *bind* up the wound. Just as Christ has *beams of majesty*, so he has a *heart of mercy*. Christ has both the *lion* and the *lamb* on his coat of arms:<sup>1</sup> the **lion**, in respect to his fierceness toward the wicked (Psa. 50:22), and the **lamb**, in respect to his mildness toward his people. His name is Jesus, a Savior, and his office is a healer (Mal. 4:2). *Christ made a bandage of his own blood to heal a broken heart!* Christ is the quintessence of love. Someone said, “If the sweetness of all flowers were in one flower, how sweet that flower would be!” Christ is that flower. How full of mercy is Christ, in whom all mercy meets! Christ has a *skillful hand* and a *tender heart*. “He will not break a bruised reed.”

Some are so full of ostracism and cruelty, as to add affliction to affliction, which is to lay more weight on a dying man. But our Lord Jesus is a compassionate High Priest (Heb. 2:17). He is touched with the feeling of our infirmity. Every bruise of the soul goes to his heart! None refuse Christ except those who do not know him. He is nothing but *love incarnated!* He himself was bruised, to heal those who are bruised.

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**(3) Will Christ not break a bruised reed? See, then, what encouragement there is here for faith!** If Christ had said he would break the bruised reed, then indeed there would

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<sup>1</sup> Originally “*eschutcheon*”, which is a shield, typically with a coat of arms on it.

be ground for despair. But when Christ says he will *not* break a bruised reed, this opens a door of hope for humble bruised souls! If we can say that we have been bruised for sin, why do we not believe? Why do we go drooping under our fears and discouragements, as if there were no mercy for us? Christ says, “He will heal the broken in heart” (Psa. 147:3). Unbelief says, “No, he will not heal *me*.” *Christ* says he will *cure* the bruised soul. Unbelief says, “No, he will *kill* it.” Just as unbelief makes our *comforts* void, so it tries to make the *Word* void, as if all God’s promises were but forgeries, or like blanks in a lottery. Has the Lord not said he will *not* break a bruised reed, and can truth lie? Oh, what a sin unbelief is! Some think it is dreadful to be among the number of drunkards, swearers, and whoremongers. Let me tell you, it is no less dreadful to be among the number of unbelievers (Rev. 21:8).<sup>1</sup> Unbelief is worse than any other sin, because it brings God, his Word, and his promises into suspicion with the creature. It robs him of the richest jewel in his crown, which is his truth: “He that does not believe God, has made him a liar” (1John 5:10).

**Use 1:** Oh then, let all humbled sinners go to Jesus Christ: Christ was bruised with *desertion*, to heal those who are bruised with *sin*. If you can show Christ your sores, and touch him by faith, then you shall be healed of all your soul-bruises! *If Christ will not break you, then do not undo yourself by despair.*

**Use 2:** Will Jesus Christ not break a bruised reed? Then this is a reproof those who do what they can to break the bruised reed; and those who go about hindering the work of conversion in others. When they see them wounded and troubled for sin, they dishearten them, telling them that piety is a sour melancholy thing, and that they had better return to their former pleasures.

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When an *arrow of conviction* is shot into their conscience, these pull it out again, and will not allow the work of conviction to go forward. Thus when the soul is almost bruised, they hinder it from a thorough bruise. This is being *devils* to others. If shedding the *blood* of another makes a man guilty, then what is it to *damn another’s soul*?

**Use 3:** *This text is a spiritual honeycomb, dripping consolation into all bruised hearts.* As in the body, when there is a swoon or a fainting of the vital spirits, we apply cordials,<sup>2</sup> so when sinners are bruised for their sins, I will give them some cordials to revive them. This text is comforting to a poor soul, who sits with Job among the ashes, and is dejected at the sense of its unworthiness. “Ah!” says the soul, “I am unworthy of mercy; what am I, that God should ever look upon me? Those who have greater gifts and graces may perhaps obtain a look from God, but alas! *I am unworthy.*” Does your unworthiness trouble you? What is more unworthy than a bruised reed? Yet there is a promise made as to that condition: “a bruised reed he will not break.” The promise is not made to the fig or olive *tree* — which are fertile plants — but to the bruised *reed*. Though you are despicable in your own eyes — a poor shattered reed — yet you may be glorious in the eyes of the Lord. Do not let your unworthiness discourage you. *If you see yourself as vile and Christ as precious, this promise is yours!* Christ will not break you, but will bind up your wounds.

**Ques:** But how shall I know that I am *savingly bruised*?

**Ans:** Did God ever bring you to your knees? Has your proud heart been humbled? Did you ever see yourself as a sinner, and nothing but a sinner?

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<sup>1</sup> **Rev 21:8** “But the cowardly, **unbelieving**, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

<sup>2</sup> A warming liqueur or stimulant.

Did you ever, with a weeping eye, look upon Christ? <sup>1</sup> And did those tears drip from the eye of faith? <sup>2</sup> *This* is gospel bruising. Can you say, "Lord, though I do not see you, yet I love you;<sup>3</sup> though I am in the dark, yet I cast anchor on you"? *This* is to be a bruised reed.

**Objection 1:** But I fear I am not bruised enough.

**Ans:** It is hard to prescribe the right measure of humiliation. It is the same in the new birth as in the natural birth. Some give birth with more pangs, and some with fewer. But would you like to know when you are bruised enough? It is when your spirit is so troubled that you are willing to let go of those lusts which brought you the greatest pleasure and delight. When sin is not only *discarded* but you are *disgusted* with it, then you have been bruised enough. The medicine is strong enough when it has purged out the disease. The soul is bruised enough when the love of sin is purged out.

**Objection 2:** But I fear I am not bruised as I should be. I find my heart is so hard.

**Ans. 1:** We must distinguish between *hardness of heart* and a *hard heart*. The best heart may have some hardness in it; but though there is some hardness in it, it is not a hard heart. Names are given according to the better part of something. If we come into a field that has tares and wheat in it, we do not call it a field of tares, but a wheat field. So even though there is hardness in the heart as well as softness, God who judges by that part which is more excellent, looks on it as a soft heart.

**Ans. 2:** There is a great difference between the hardness in the wicked, and the hardness in the godly. The one is natural, the other is only accidental. The hardness in a wicked man is like the hardness of a stone, which is an innate and continued hardness. The hardness in a child of God is like the hardness of ice, which is soon melted by the sunbeams.

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Perhaps God has withdrawn his Spirit at present, so that the heart is congealed like ice. But let God's Spirit, like the sun, return and shine on the heart, and now it has a gracious thaw on it, and it melts in love.

**Ans. 3:** Do you not grieve under your hardness? You sigh for lack of groans, you weep for lack of tears. The hard reed cannot weep. If you were not a bruised reed, all this weeping could not come from you.

**Objection 3:** But I am a *barren* reed; I bear no fruit; therefore I fear I will be broken.

**Ans:** Gracious hearts are apt to overlook the good that is in them. They can spy the *worm* in the leaf, but not the *fruit*. Why do you say you are barren? If you are a bruised reed, you are not barren. The spiritual reed engrafted into the true vine is fruitful. There is so much sap in Christ that it makes all who are engrafted into him bear fruit. Christ distills grace like drops of dew on the soul: "I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall grow as the lily; his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be like the olive tree" (Hos. 14:5, 6). The God who made the dry *rod* blossom,<sup>4</sup> will make the dry *reed* flourish.

So much for the first expression in the text. I proceed to the second: "**the smoking flax he shall not quench.**"

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<sup>1</sup> **Zec 12:10** "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

<sup>2</sup> **Mar 9:24** Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

<sup>3</sup> **1Pet 1:7-8** Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love.

<sup>4</sup> Num 17.5, 8.

**Ques:** What is meant by **smoking**?

**Ans:** By smoke is meant corruption. Smoke is offensive to the eye; so sin offends the pure eye of God.

**Ques:** What is meant by **smoking flax**?

**Ans:** It means grace mingled with corruption. As with a little fire there may be much smoke, so with a little grace there may be much corruption.

**Ques:** What is meant by Christ's not **quenching** the smoking flax?

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**Ans:** The meaning is that, even though there is only a spark of grace, with much sin, Christ will not put out this spark. There is a figure in the words "he will not quench" that implies he will *increase* it. Nothing is easier than to quench smoking flax; the least touch does it. But Christ will not quench it; he will not blow out the spark of grace — rather, he will blow it into a flame; he will turn this smoking flax into a burning candle.

**Doctrine:** That **a little grace mixed with much corruption shall not be quenched.** For illustrating this, I will show you:

1. That a little grace is often mixed with much corruption.
2. That this little grace interlined with corruption shall not be quenched.
3. The reasons for the proposition.

**1. Often in the godly, a little grace is mingled with much corruption.** "Lord, I believe" — there was *some* faith; "help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24) — there was corruption mixed with it. There are, in the best saints, interweavings of sin and grace: a dark side with the light; much pride mixed with humility; much earthliness with heavenliness. Grace in the godly may often smack of an old crabtree stock.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, in many of the regenerate there is *more* corruption than grace: so much smoke that you can scarcely discern any fire; so much distrust that you can hardly see any faith (1Sam. 27:1); so much passion that you can hardly see any meekness. Jonah, a peevish prophet, quarrels with God, no, he *justifies* his passion: "I do *well* to be angry, even unto death!" (Jonah 4:9). Here there was so much passion that it was hard to see any grace. A Christian in this life is like a glass that has more froth than wine, or like a diseased body that has more illness than vigor. This may humble the best, to consider how much corruption is interspersed with their grace.

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**2. This little grace, though mixed with much corruption, shall not be quenched.** "The smoking flax he will not quench." The disciples' faith was at first only small: "they forsook Christ, and fled" (Matt. 26:56). Here there was smoking flax, but Christ did not quench that little grace; he nourished and animated it. Their faith afterwards grew stronger, and they openly confessed Christ (Acts 4:29, 30). Here the flax was flaming.

**3. The reasons why Christ will not quench the smoking flax:**

**(1) Because this little light which is in the smoking flax, is of divine production.** It comes from the Father of lights, and the Lord will not quench the work of his own grace. Everything by the instinct of nature will preserve its own. The hen that hatches her young will preserve and nourish them; she will not destroy them as soon as they are hatched. God, who has put this tenderness into the creature to preserve its young, will much more nourish

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<sup>1</sup> Though the fruit looks like an apple, instead of being large and sweet, it is small and sour: a crab-apple.

the work of his own Spirit in the heart. Will he light up the lamp of grace in the soul, and then put it out? This would be neither for his interest nor for his honor.

**(2) Christ will not quench the beginnings of grace, because a *little* grace is as precious as *much* grace.** A small pearl is still of value. Though the pearl of faith is little, yet if it is a true pearl, it shines gloriously in God's eyes. A goldsmith takes account of the least *filings* of gold, and will not throw them away. The pupil of the eye is only little, yet it is of great use; it can at once view a huge part of the heavens. A little faith can justify. A weak hand can tie the nuptial knot. A weak faith can unite to Christ, just as well as a strong faith. A little grace makes us like God. A silver penny bears the king's image on it, as well as a larger coin does. The least bit of grace bears God's image on it; would God destroy his own image?

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When the temples in Greece were demolished, Xerxes caused the temple of Diana to be preserved for the beauty of its structure. When God will destroy all the glory of the world and set it on fire, he will not destroy the least grace, because it bears an imprint of his own likeness on it. That little spark in the smoking flax is a ray and beam of God's own glory.

**(3) Christ will not quench the smoking flax, because this little light in the flax may grow into a flame.** Grace is compared to a grain of mustard seed; of all seeds, it is the least. But when it has grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree (Matt. 13:31, 32). The greatest grace was once little; the oak was once an acorn; the most renowned faith in the world, was once in its spiritual infancy; the greatest flame of zeal was once only smoking flax. Grace, like the waters of the sanctuary, rises higher (Ezek. 47:1-5). If, then, the smallest embryo and seed of holiness has a ripening and growing nature, the Lord will not allow it to be aborted.

**(4) Christ will not quench the smoking flax, because when he preserves a little light in a great deal of smoke, here the glory of his power shines forth.** The trembling soul thinks it will be swallowed up by sin. But God preserves a little quantity of grace in the heart — no, no, he makes that spark *prevail* over corruption, as the fire from heaven "licked up the water in the trench" (1Kings 18:38). So God gets himself a glorious name and carries away the trophies of honor: "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2Cor. 12:9).

**1. See the different dealings of God and men.** Men, because of a little smoke, will quench a great deal of light; God, for a great deal of smoke, will *not* quench a little light. It is the way of the world that if they see a little failing in another, they will pass by and quench a great deal of worth because of it. This is our nature: to aggravate a little fault, and diminish a great deal of virtue; to see the infirmities and darken the excellences of others;

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just as we take more notice of the *twinkling* of a star, than the *shining* of a star. We censure others for their passion, but we do not admire them for their piety. Thus, for a little smoke that we see in others, we quench much light.

God does not act like that. For a great deal of smoke, he will not quench a little light. He sees the sincerity and overlooks many infirmities. The least sparks of grace he nourishes, and blows on them gently with the breath of his Spirit, until they break forth into a flame!

**2. If *Christ* will not quench the smoking flax, then we must not quench the smoking flax in ourselves.** If grace does not increase into as great a flame as we see in others, and we therefore conclude that we have no fire of the Spirit in us — that would be to quench the smoking flax, and to bear false witness against ourselves. Just as we must not credit false evidence, neither may we deny true evidences. Just as fire may be hidden in the embers, so

grace may be hidden under many disorders of the soul. Some Christians are so skillful at this — in accusing themselves for lack of grace — it is as if they received a fee from Satan to plead for him against themselves.

This is a great mistake: to argue from the *weakness* of grace, to its *absence*. It is one thing to be *weak* in faith, and another to *lack* faith. The one whose eyesight is dim is lacking in his sight, but he is not lacking sight. **A little grace is still grace, even though it is smothered under much corruption.**

**3. If the least spark of grace shall not be quenched, then it follows as a great truth, that there is no falling from grace.** If the least bit of grace were to perish, then the smoking flax would be quenched. Grace may be *shaken* by fears and doubts, but it is not torn up by the roots. I grant that *seeming* grace may be lost, that this *wild*-fire may be blown out; but not the fire of the Spirit's kindling.

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Grace may be *dormant* in the soul, but it is not *dead*. Just as a man in a coma does not exert vital energy, grace may be *eclipsed*, but not *extinguished*. A Christian may lose his *comfort*, like a tree in autumn which has shed its fruit, but there is still sap in the vine, and “the seed of God remains” (1John 3:9). Grace is a flower of eternity.

This smoking flax cannot be quenched by affliction. Rather, it is like those trees of which Pliny writes, growing in the Red Sea. Though beaten upon by the waves, they stand immovable; and though sometimes covered with water, they flourish all the more. Grace is like a true oriental diamond that sparkles, and cannot be broken.

I confess that it is a matter of wonder that grace should not be wholly annihilated, especially if we consider two things:

**(1) The malice of Satan.** He is a malignant spirit and lays barriers in our way to heaven. The devil, with the *wind of temptation*, labors to blow out the spark of grace in our hearts. If this will not do, he stirs up wicked men and raises the militia of hell against us. What a wonder it is that this bright star of grace should not be swept down by the tail of the dragon!

**(2) The world of corruption in our hearts.** Sin makes up the major part in a Christian; there is in the best heart, more dregs than spirits. The heart swarms with sin. What a great deal of pride and atheism there is in the soul! Now, is it not astonishing that this *lily of grace* should be able to grow among so many *thorns*? It is as great a wonder that a little grace should be preserved in the midst of so much corruption, as to see a candle burning in the sea, that is not extinguished.

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But though grace lives with so much difficulty — like the infant that struggles for breath — yet being born of God, grace is immortal. Grace conflicting with corruption is like a ship tossed and beaten by the waves — it weathers the storm and at last gets to the desired haven. If grace were to expire, how could this text be verified: “The smoking flax he will not quench”?

**Ques:** But why is it that grace, even the least degree of it, should not be quenched?

**Ans:** It is from the mighty operation of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God, who is *origo originans*, the origin of origins, continually excites and enlivens grace in the heart. He is at work in a believer every day. He pours in oil, and keeps the lamp of grace burning. Grace is compared to a river of life (John 7:38). The river of grace can never be dried up, for the Spirit of God is the spring which feeds it.



Now it is evident from the covenant of grace, that the smoking flax cannot be quenched. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but the covenant of my peace shall not be removed, says the Lord" (Isa. 54:10). If there is a falling from grace, how is it an immovable covenant? If grace dies and the smoking flax is quenched, how is our state in Christ better than it was in Adam? The covenant of grace is called "a better covenant" (Heb. 7:22). How is it a better covenant than what was made with Adam? It is better not only because it has a better Surety, and it contains better privileges; but because it has better conditions annexed to it: "It is ordered in all things, and *sure*" (2Sam. 23:5). Those who are taken into the covenant shall be like stars fixed in their orbit, and shall never fall away. If grace might die and be quenched, then it would not be a better covenant.

**Obj:** But we are asked not to quench the Spirit (1Thes. 5:19); this implies that the grace of the Spirit may be lost, and the smoking flax quenched.

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**Ans:** We must distinguish between the *common* work of the Spirit and his *sanctifying* work. The one may be quenched, but not the other. The *common* work of the Spirit is like a picture drawn on the ice, which is soon defaced; the *sanctifying* work is like a statue carved in gold, which endures. The *gifts* of the Spirit may be quenched, but not the *grace*. There is the *enlightening* of the Spirit, and the *anointing*; the *enlightening* of the Spirit may fail, but the *anointing* of the Spirit abides: "The anointing which you have received from him abides in you" (1John 2:27). The hypocrite's blaze goes out; the true believer's spark lives and flourishes. The one is the light of a comet which wastes and evaporates (Matt. 25:8); the other is the light of a star which retains its luster.

From all that has been said, let a saint of the Lord be persuaded to do these two things:

1. To believe his privilege.
2. To pursue his duty.

**1. Be persuaded to believe your privilege.** This is the incomparable and unparalleled happiness of a saint: that his coal of grace shall not be quenched (2Sam. 14:7). The grace in his soul which is weak and languid, will not give up the ghost, but will recover its strength, and increase with the increase of God: the Lord will make the smoking flax a burning lamp. It would be very sad for a Christian to be continually on the cusp: one day a member of Christ and the next day a limb of Satan; one day to have grace shine in his soul and the next day his light be put out in obscurity. This would spoil a Christian's comfort and break apart the golden chain of salvation. But be assured, O Christian, that He who has begun a good work, will ripen it to perfection (Phil. 1:6). Christ will send forth judgment unto victory. He will make grace victorious over all opposing corruption. If grace were to finally perish, what would become of the smoking flax? And how would that title properly be given to Christ, "Finisher of the faith" (Heb. 12:2)?

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**Obj:** There is no question that this is an undoubted privilege to those who are smoking flax, and have the least beginnings of grace. But I fear that I am not smoking flax; I cannot see the light of grace in myself.

**Ans:** So that I may comfort the smoking flax, why do you dispute against yourself this way? What makes you think you have no grace? I believe you have more than you would be willing to part with. You value grace above the gold of Ophir. How could you see the worth and luster of this jewel if God's Spirit had not opened your eyes? You would be glad to believe and mourn that you *cannot* believe. Are these tears not the beginnings of faith? You desire Christ and cannot be satisfied without him: this *beating of the pulse* evidences life; the iron could not move upwards if the loadstone did not draw it; the heart could not ascend in holy breathings after God, if some

heavenly loadstone had not been drawing it. Christian, can you say that sin is your burden, that Christ is your delight, and as Peter once said, "Lord, you know that I love you!" (John 21:17) *This* is smoking flax, and the Lord will not quench it. Your *grace* shall flourish into *glory*. God would sooner extinguish the light of the sun, than extinguish the dawning light of his Spirit in your heart.

**2. Be persuaded to pursue your duty.** There are two duties required of believers:

**(1) Love.** The Lord will not quench the smoking flax, but will make it at last victorious over all opposition! How the smoking flax should flame in love to God! "Oh, love the Lord, all his saints" (Psa. 31:23). The saints owe much to God, and when they have nothing to *pay*, it is hard for them not to *love* him.

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O you saints, it is God who carries on grace progressively in your souls. He is like a father who gives his son a small stock of money to begin with, and when he has traded with it a little, he adds more to the stock. So God adds continually to your stock. He drips oil into *the lamp of your grace* every day, and so he keeps the lamp burning. This may inflame your love to God, who will not let the work of grace fail, but will bring it to perfection: "the smoking flax he will not quench." How God's people should long for heaven, when it will be their constant work to breathe out love, and sound out praise!

**(2) Labor.** Some may think that if Christ will not quench the smoking flax, but will make it burn brighter to the meridian of glory, then we do not need to take any pains ourselves, but may leave it to God to do his own work. Beware of drawing so bad a conclusion from such good premises. What I have spoken is to *encourage faith*, not to *indulge sloth*! Do not think that God will do our work for us while we sit still. Just as *God* will blow on the spark of grace by his Spirit, so *we* must blow on it by holy efforts. God will not bring us to heaven *sleeping*, but *praying*. The Lord told Paul that all in the ship would come safely to shore, but it must be by the use of means: "Unless these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved" (Acts 27:31). So the saints shall certainly arrive at salvation; they shall come to the shore at last. But they must stay in the ship in the use of ordinances; otherwise they cannot be saved. Christ assures his disciples: "None shall pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). Yet he gives this counsel, "Watch and pray, that you do not enter into temptation" (Matt. 26:41). The seed of God shall not die, but we must water it with our tears. The smoking flax shall not be quenched, but we must blow on it with the breath of our effort.

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The second comfort to the godly is that godliness advances them to a near and glorious union with Jesus Christ. But more of this in our next chapter.

## Chap. 12. MYSTICAL UNION between Christ and His People

*"My beloved is mine, and I am His." Song 2:16*

In this *Song of Songs* we see the love of Christ and his church running towards each other in a full torrent. The text contains three general parts:

1. A symbol of AFFECTION: "My beloved."
2. A term of APPROPRIATION: "is mine."
3. A holy RESIGNATION: "I am his."

**Doctrine: There is a marital union between Christ and believers.** The apostle, having addressed marriage at large, winds up the whole chapter thus: "This is a great mystery, but I

speaking concerning *Christ* and the *church*" (Eph. 5:32). What is nearer than this union? What is sweeter? There is a **twofold union** with Christ:

**1. A NATURAL union.** All men have this, Christ having taken their nature upon himself, and not that of the angels (Heb. 2:16).<sup>1</sup> But if there is no more than this natural union, it will give little comfort. Thousands are damned even though Christ is united to their nature.

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**2. A SACRED union.** By this we are mystically united to Christ. The union with Christ is not personal. If Christ's essence were transfused into the person of a believer, then it would follow that everything a believer does would be meritorious.

But the union between Christ and a saint is:

**(1) Federal:** "My beloved is mine." God the Father gives the bride; God the Son receives the bride; God the Holy Spirit ties the knot in marriage: he knits our wills to Christ, and Christ's love to us.

**(2) Virtual:** Christ unites himself to his spouse *by his graces and influences*: "Of his fullness we have all received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16). Christ makes himself one with the spouse by *conveying his image and stamping the impress of his own holiness upon her!*

This union with Christ may well be called *mystical*. It is hard to describe the manner of it, as it is hard to show how the soul is united to the body, and how Christ is united to the soul. But though this union is *spiritual*, it is *real*. Things in nature often work insensibly, yet really (Ecc. 11:5). We do not see the hand move on the sun-dial, and yet it moves. The sun exhales and draws up the vapors of the earth insensibly yet really. So the union between Christ and the soul — though it is *imperceptible* to the eye of reason — is still *real* (1Cor. 6:17).

*Before this union with Christ there must be a separation.* The heart must be *separated from all other lovers*. In marriage there is a leaving of father and mother: "Forget all your own people, and your father's house." (Psa. 45:10). So there must be *a leaving of our former sins, a breaking off of the old league with hell, before we can be united to Christ*. "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more *with idols?*" (Hos. 14:8), or as it is in the Hebrew, "with sorrows." *Those sins which were looked at before as lovers, are now sorrows.* There must be a *divorce* before there can be a *union*.

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**The end<sup>2</sup> of our marital union with Christ** is twofold:

**1. Co-habitation.** This is one end of marriage, *to live together*: "that Christ may  **dwell** in your hearts" (Eph. 2:17). It is not enough to pay Christ a few complimentary visits in his ordinances — hypocrites may do so — but there must be a mutual association. We must dwell on thoughts of Christ: "he that  **dwells** in God" (1Joh. 3:24). Married people should not live apart.

**2. Fruitfulness:** "That you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we *should bear fruit to God.*" (Rom. 7:4). The spouse brings forth the fruits of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness" (Gal. 5:22). *Barrenness* is a shame in Christ's spouse!

This marriage union with Christ is **the most noble and excellent union**:

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<sup>1</sup> KJV **Heb 2:16** For verily he took not on *him* the nature of angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham.

<sup>2</sup> The intended outcome or product; the desired result or effect.

**(1) Christ unites himself to many.** In other marriages only *one* person is taken — but here *millions* are taken! Otherwise, poor souls might cry out, “Christ has married so-and-so, but what is that to me? I am left out.” No, *Christ marries thousands*. It is a holy and chaste polygamy. Multitudes of people do not defile this marriage bed. *Any poor sinner who brings a humble believing heart may be married to Christ.*

**(2) There is a closer conjugation** in this holy marriage than there can be in any other. In other marriages, two make *one flesh* — but Christ and the believer make *one spirit*: “But he who is joined to the Lord is *one spirit* with Him.” (1Cor. 6:17).

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Now as the soul is more excellent than the body, and allows a far greater joy, so *this spiritual union brings in more astonishing delights and ravishments* than any other marriage relation is capable of. The joy that flows from the mystical union is “unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pet. 1:8).

**(3) This union with Christ never ceases.** Other marriages are soon at an end. *Death* cuts asunder the marriage knot; but *this marital union is eternal*. Once you are Christ’s spouse, you will never again be a widow: “I will betroth you to me *forever*” (Hos. 2:19). Properly speaking, our marriage with Christ begins where other marriages end: at death.

**In this life there is only *the contract*.** The Jews had a time set between their engagement and marriage, sometimes a year or more. In this life there is only the engagement and contract; promises are made on both sides, and love passes secretly between Christ and the soul. He gives some smiles of his face, and the soul sends up her sighs, and drops tears of love. But all this is only a *preliminary* work, and something tending to the marriage. The glorious completing and solemnizing of the nuptials<sup>1</sup> is reserved for heaven. There in heaven is the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9), and the bed of glory perfumed with love, where the souls of the elect shall perpetually console themselves. “Then we shall ever be with the Lord” (I Thess. 4:17). So *death merely begins our marriage with Christ*.

**Use 1:** If Christ is the *head* of the mystical body (Eph. 1:22), then this doctrine *beheads the Pope*, that man of sin who usurps this prerogative of being the head of the church, and so he would defile Christ’s marriage bed. What blasphemy this is! Two heads are monstrous. Christ is Head, as he is Husband. There is no vice-husband, no deputy in his place.

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The Pope is the beast in Revelation (Rev. 13:11). To make him head of the church, what would this be if not to set the head of a beast on the body of a man?

**Use 2:** If there is such a marital union, let us *test whether we are united to Christ*:

**1. Have we *chosen* Christ** to set our love upon, and is this choice founded on knowledge?

**2. Have we *consented* to the match?** It is not enough that Christ is willing to have us, but are we willing to have him? God does not force salvation on us in such a way that we shall have Christ whether we want to or not. We must *consent* to have him. Many *approve* of Christ, but they do not give their consent. And this consent must be:

**(1) Pure and genuine.** We consent to have him for his own worth and excellence: “You are fairer than the sons of men” (Psalm. 45:2).

**(2) A present consent:** “now is the acceptable time” (2Cor. 6:2). If we put Christ off with delays and excuses, perhaps he will come no more; he will leave off wooing; his spirit will no

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<sup>1</sup> The social event at which the ceremony of marriage is performed.

longer strive, and then, poor sinner, what will you do? *When God's wooing ends, your woes begin.*

**3. Have we *taken Christ*?** *Faith is the bond of the union.* Christ is joined to us by his Spirit, and we are joined to him by faith. Faith ties the marriage knot.

**4. Have we *surrendered ourselves* to Christ?** Thus the spouse in the text says, "I am his," as if she had said, "All I have is for the use and service of Christ." *Have we made a surrender?* Have we given up our name and will to Christ? When the devil solicits by a temptation, do we say, "We are not our own, we are Christ's; our tongues are his, we must not defile them with oaths; our bodies are his temple, we must not pollute them with sin?" If it is so, it is a sign that the Holy Spirit has worked this blessed union between Christ and us.

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**Use 3:** If there is this mystical union, then from this we may draw **many inferences:**

**1. See the DIGNITY of all true believers:** they are joined in marriage with Christ! There is not only assimilation, but union; they are not only *like* Christ but *one* with Christ. All the saints have this honor. When a king marries a beggar, by virtue of the union she is ennobled and made of royal blood. Just as wicked men are united to the prince of darkness, and he conveys hell upon them as their inheritance, so the godly are divinely united to Christ, who is King of kings, and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16). By virtue of this sacred union, the saints are *dignified above the angels*. Christ is the Lord of the angels, but not their husband.

**2. See how HAPPILY all the saints are married.** They are united to Christ, who is *the best Husband*, "the Chief among ten thousand" (Song 5:10). Christ is a Husband who cannot be paralleled, 1. For tender care. 2. For ardent affection.

**(1) For tender care.** The spouse cannot be as considerate of her own soul and credit as Christ is considerate of her: "He cares for you" (1Pet. 5:7). Christ debates with himself, consulting and projecting how to carry on the work of our salvation. He transacts all our affairs; he attends to our business as his own. Indeed, he himself is concerned in it. He brings fresh supplies to his spouse. If she *wanders* out of the way, he guides her. If she *stumbles*, he holds her by the hand. If she *falls*, he raises her. If she is *dull*, he quickens her by his Spirit. If she is *headstrong*, he draws her with cords of love. If she is *sad*, he comforts her with promises.

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**(2) For ardent affection.** There is no husband like Christ for love. The Lord says to the people, "I have loved you;" and they say, "In what way have you loved us?" (Mal. 1:2). But we cannot say to Christ, "In what way have you loved us?" Christ has given *real demonstrations of his love* to his spouse. He has sent her his *Word*, which is a love-letter, and he has given her his *Spirit*, which is a love-token. Christ loves more than any other husband:

***Christ puts a richer robe on his bride:*** "For He has clothed me with the *garments of salvation*, He has covered me with the *robe of righteousness*." (Isa. 61:10). In this robe, God looks on us as if we had not sinned! This robe is as truly ours to justify us, as it is Christ's to bestow on us. This robe not only *covers* but *adorns*. Having on this robe, we are reputed righteous — not only as righteous as angels, but *as righteous as Christ*: "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2Cor.5:21).

***Christ gives his bride not only his golden garments but his image!*** *He loves her into his own likeness.* A husband may have a dear affection for his wife, but he cannot stamp his own image on her. If she is deformed, he may give her a veil to hide it, but he cannot put his beauty on her. But Christ imparts "the beauty of holiness" <sup>Psa 29.2</sup> to



his spouse: “Your beauty was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you” (Ezek. 16:14). When Christ marries a soul, he makes it beautiful: “You are *altogether beautiful*, my love” (Song 4:7). *Christ never thinks he has loved his spouse enough until he can see his own face in her.*

**Christ discharges those debts** which no other husband can. Our sins are the worst debts we owe. If all the angels were to gather up a purse, they could not pay one of these debts — but Christ frees us from these. He is both a Husband and a Surety. He says to justice what Paul said concerning Onesimus, “If he owes you anything, put it on my account;” I will repay it. (Philem. 1:18).

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**Christ has suffered more for his spouse** than any husband ever did for a wife: he suffered *poverty* and *ignominy*; he who crowned the heavens with stars was himself crowned with thorns. He was called a companion of sinners, so that we might be made companions of angels. He had no regard for his life; *he leaped into the sea of his Father’s wrath to save his spouse from drowning!*

**Christ’s love does not end with his life.** He loves his spouse *forever*: “I will betroth you to me *forever*” (Hos. 2:19). Well may the apostle call it “a love which surpasses knowledge” (Eph. 3:19).

**3. See how RICH believers are.** They have married into the crown of heaven, and by virtue of the marital union, *all Christ’s riches go to believers*: communion is founded in union. Christ communicates his graces (John 1:16). As long as Christ has it, believers shall not want.<sup>Psa 23.1</sup> And he communicates his privileges, justification, glorification: *He conveys a kingdom upon his spouse as her inheritance* (Heb. 12:28). This is a key to the apostle’s riddle, “as having nothing, and yet *possessing all things*” (2Cor. 6:10). By virtue of the marriage union, *the saints have an interest in all Christ’s riches!*

**4. See how fearful a sin it is to abuse the saints.** It is an injury done to Christ, for believers are mystically one with him: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *me*?” (Acts 9:4). When the body was wounded, the Head, being in heaven, cried out. In this sense, men crucify Christ anew (Heb. 6:6), because what is done to his members is done to him. If Gideon was avenged on those who slew his brothers, will not Christ be much more avenged on those who wrong his spouse (Jdg. 8:21)? Will a king tolerate having his treasure rifled, his crown thrown in the dust, and his queen beheaded?

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Will Christ bear with the affronts and injuries done to his bride? The saints are the apple of his eye (Zech. 2:8), and those who strike at his eye will answer for it. “I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh, and they will be as drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine” (Isa.49:26).

**5. See the reason why the saints so rejoice in the Word and sacrament:** because here they meet with their Husband, Christ! The wife desires to be in the presence of her husband. The *ordinances* are the chariot in which Christ rides, *the lattice through which he looks out and shows his smiling face.* (Song 2:9) *Here Christ displays the banner of his love* (Song 2:4). The Lord’s Supper is nothing else than a pledge and earnest of that eternal communion which the saints will have with Christ in heaven. *Then he will take the spouse into his bosom.* If Christ is so sweet in an ordinance,<sup>1</sup> when we have only *short glances* and *dark glimpses* of him by faith, O

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<sup>1</sup> That is, in the Lord’s Supper and baptism, variously called a sacrament, ordinance, and communion.



then, *how delightful and ravishing his presence will be in heaven when we see him face to face, and are forever in his loving embraces!*

**Use 4: This mystical union affords much comfort to believers** in several cases:

**1. In the case of the disrespect and unkindness of the world:** “In wrath they hate me” (Psalm. 55:3). But *though we live in an unkind world, we have a kind Husband:* “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you” (John 15:9). What angel can tell how God the Father loves Christ? Yet the *Father’s love to Christ is made the copy and pattern of Christ’s love to his spouse!* This love of Christ as far exceeds all created love, as the sun outshines the light of a torch. And is this not a matter of comfort? Though the world hates me, yet Christ loves me.

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**2. In the case of weakness of grace.** The believer cannot lay hold on Christ, except with a *trembling hand*. There is a “spirit of infirmity” on him. But O weak Christian, here is strong consolation: there is a marital union — you are the spouse of Christ, and he will bear with you as the weaker vessel. Will a husband divorce his wife because she is weak and sickly? No! He will be more tender with her. Christ *hates* treachery, but he will *pity* infirmity. When the spouse is faint and ready to be discouraged, Christ puts his left hand under her head (Song 2:6). This is the spouse’s comfort when she is weak: her Husband can infuse strength into her: “My God shall be my strength” (Isa. 49:5).

**3. In the case of death.** When believers die, they go to their Husband! Who would not be willing to cross the gulf of death so that they might meet with their Husband, Christ? “I desire to loosen anchor”<sup>1</sup> (Phil. 1:23), and be with Christ. So what if the way is dirty; we are going to our friend. When a woman is engaged, she longs for the day of marriage. *After the saints’ funeral, their marriage begins.* The *body* is a *prison* to the soul. Who would not desire to exchange a prison for a marriage bed? How glad Joseph was to go out of prison to the king’s court! God is wise; *he lets us meet with changes and troubles here, so that he may wean us from the world and make us long for death.* When the soul is divorced from the body, it is married to Christ.

**4. In the case of passing sentence at the Day of Judgment.** There is a marriage-union and, O Christian, *your Husband shall be your judge!* A wife would not fear appearing at the bar if her husband sits as judge. Even if the devil should bring in many indictments against you, *Christ will expunge your sins in his blood.* He will say, “How can I condemn my spouse”? Oh, what a comfort this is! *The Husband is the judge!* Christ cannot pass sentence against his spouse without passing it against himself, for Christ and believers are one.

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**5. In the case of the saints’ suffering.** The church of God is exposed in this life to many injuries. But she has a Husband in heaven who is mindful of her, and will turn her water into wine. Now is a time of mourning for the spouse, because the Bridegroom is absent (Matt. 9:15). But shortly she will put off her mourning clothes. Christ will wipe away the tears of blood from the cheeks of his spouse: “The Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces” (Isa. 25:8). Christ will comfort his spouse for as much time as she has been afflicted. He will comfort her with his love; he will take away the cup of trembling, [Isa 51.22](#) and give her the cup of consolation. And now she will forget all her sorrows, being called into the banqueting house of heaven, and having the banner of Christ’s love displayed over her.

**Use 5: Let me press several duties** upon those who have this marriage-union with Christ:

**1. Make use of this relationship in two cases:**

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<sup>1</sup> “I desire to depart” – the image here is of setting sail for “a better country, a heavenly one.” (Heb 11.16)

**(1) When the law brings in its indictments against you.** “Here,” says the Law, “are so many debts to be paid!” And it demands satisfaction. Acknowledge the debt, but turn it all over to your Husband, Christ. It is a maxim in law that the suit must not go against the wife as long as the husband is living. Tell Satan when he accuses you, “It is true that the debt is mine, but go to my Husband, Christ. He will discharge it.” If we would take this course, we might relieve ourselves of much trouble. By faith we turn over the debt to our Husband. Believers are not in a state of widowhood, but of marriage. Satan will never go to Christ; he knows that justice is satisfied, and that the debt book cancelled. But he comes to us for the debt so that he may perplex us.

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We should send him to Christ and then all lawsuits would cease. This is a believer’s triumph: *when he is guilty in himself, he is worthy in Christ; and when he is spotted in himself, he is pure in his Head.*

**(2) In the case of desertion.** Christ may (for reasons best known to himself) step aside for a time: “My beloved had withdrawn himself” (Song 5:6). Do not say because of this, that Christ has gone for good. It is a fruit of jealousy in a wife, when her husband has left her for a while, to think that he has gone from her for good. Every time Christ removes himself from sight, it is wrong for us to say, “The Lord has forsaken me” (Isa. 49:14). This is jealousy, and it is a wrong done to the love of Christ, and to the sweetness of this marriage relationship. Christ may forsake his spouse in regard to *comfort*, but he will not forsake her in regard to *union*. A husband may be a thousand miles distant from his wife, but he is still a husband. Christ may leave his spouse, but the marriage knot still holds.

**2. Love your Husband, Christ** (Song 2:5). Love him, even though he is reproached and persecuted. A wife loves her husband when in prison. To inflame your love towards Christ, consider these:

**(1) Nothing else is fit for you to love.** If Christ is your Husband, it is not fitting to have other lovers who would make Christ grow jealous.

**(2) He is worthy of your love.** He is of unparalleled beauty: he is “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16).

**(3) How pregnant is Christ’s love towards you!** He loves you in your worst condition; he loves you in affliction. The goldsmith loves his gold in the *furnace*. Just so, Christ loves you notwithstanding your scars and blemishes. The *saints’ infirmities* cannot wholly remove Christ’s love from them (Jer. 3:1).<sup>1</sup> Oh then, how the spouse should be endeared in her love to Christ! This will be the excellence of heaven: that our love will then be like the sun in its full strength!

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**3. Rejoice in your Husband, Christ.** Has Christ honored you by taking you into a marriage-relation and making you one with himself? This calls for joy. By virtue of the union, believers are sharers with Christ in his riches. It was a custom among the Romans, when the wife was brought home, that she received the keys of her husband’s house, intimating that the treasure and custody of the house was now committed to her. When Christ brings his bride home to those glorious mansions which he has gone ahead to prepare for her (John 14:2), *he will hand over the keys of his treasure to her, and she will be as rich as heaven can make her!* And shall the spouse not rejoice and sing aloud upon her bed (Psalm. 149:5)? Christians, however sad the

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<sup>1</sup> Jer 3:1 “You have played the harlot with many lovers; Yet return to Me,” says the LORD.

times are, you may rejoice in your spiritual espousals (Hab. 3:17, 18). Let me tell you, it is a sin *not* to rejoice — for you disparage your Husband, Christ.

When a wife is always sighing and weeping, what will others say? “This woman has a bad husband!” Is this the fruit of Christ’s love to you, to reflect dishonor upon him? *A melancholy spouse saddens Christ’s heart.* I do not deny that Christians should grieve for sins of daily incursion — but to *always* be weeping (as if they mourned without hope) is dishonorable to the marriage relation. “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil. 4:4). Rejoicing credits your husband. Christ loves a cheerful bride, and indeed the very purpose of God’s making us sad is to make us rejoice. We sow in tears, that we may reap in joy. The excessive sadness and contrition of the godly will make others afraid to embrace Christ. They will begin to question whether there is that satisfactory joy in religion which is claimed. Oh, you saints of God, do not forget your consolation; let others see that you do not regret your choice. It is joy that puts liveliness and activity into a Christian: “the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh. 8:10). *Then the soul is swiftest in duty, when it is carried on the wings of joy.*

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**4. Adorn this marriage-relation,** so that you may be a crown to your husband.

**(1) Wear a veil.** We read of the spouse’s veil in Song 5:7. *This veil is humility.*

**(2) Put on your jewels.** These are the **graces** which, for their luster, are compared to rows of pearl, and chains of gold (Song 1:10). These precious jewels distinguish Christ’s bride from strangers.

**(3) Conduct yourselves as becomes Christ’s spouse:**

**1. In chastity.** Be chaste in your judgments; do not defile yourselves with error. Error adulterates the mind (1Tim. 6:5). It is one of Satan’s ploys — first to defile the judgment, and then the conscience.

**2. In sanctity.** It is not for Christ’s spouse to behave like harlots. A half-naked breast and a wanton tongue do not befit a saint. Christ’s bride must shine forth in gospel purity, so that she may make her husband fall in love with her. A woman was asked what dowry she brought her husband. She answered that she had no dowry, but she promised to keep herself chaste. So though we can bring Christ no dowry, yet he expects us to keep ourselves pure, not spotting the breasts of our virginity by contagious and scandalous sins (James 1.27).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **Jas 1:27** Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.