00 The Christian in Complete Armor

by William Gurnall

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00p ***PREFACE**

The extracts that form this little volume are gleaned from a well-known Puritan work, written by William Gurnall and published in 1665, entitled, "The Christian in Complete Armor."

Among all the Puritan writings that have come down to us, none, perhaps, are more practical and conscience-reaching, than this notable work. The perusal of the following pages will prove it still to be a ministry, rich with glowing thoughts to warm the heart — a quiver well stocked with arrows to reach the conscience.
Hamilton Smith, 1914

00q A BASKET OF FRAGMENTS

"The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails — given by one Shepherd." Ecc 12:11

The believer is to persevere in his Christian course to the end of his life; his work and his life must go off the stage together.

The fearful are in the forlorn of those who march to Hell (Rev 21:8).

O how unfitting a sight is it — a bold sinner, and a fearful saint!

Christ never lost a battle — even when He lost His life.

He who has God's heart — cannot lack His arm!

This goodly fabric of Heaven and earth has not been built — but as a stage whereon God would in time act what He decreed in Heaven of old.

One Almighty, is more than many mighties. All these mighty sins and devils make not any almighty sin, or an almighty devil.

A proud heart, and a lofty mountain, are never fruitful.

"Pray." But how? "Without ceasing."

"Rejoice." But when? "Evermore."

"Give thanks." For what? "In everything."

God will not have His kingdom, either in the heart or in the world, maintained by carnal policy.

When afflicted, love can allow you to *groan* — but not to *grumble*.

Mercy should make us *ashamed* to sin.
Wrath should make us *afraid* to sin.

Whoever you are, you are base-born until born again.

Sin alone, sets Satan in the throne of your heart.

Sinners dying in their sins, cannot hope to have a better resurrection than they have a death.

Since man was turned out of paradise, he can do nothing without labor, except sin.

We must either lay self aside — or God will lay us aside.

Bernard used to say, when he heard any scandalous sin of a professor, "He fell today — I may stumble tomorrow!"

A soul in meditation, is on his way to prayer.

It is impossible for an evil heart, to think well of an afflicting God.

The great talkers of religion — are oft the least doers.

Does your heavenly Father keep so starved a house — that the devil's scraps will go down with you?

No truth, but has some error next door.

No action so little — but we may in it do God or the devil some service. Therefore none too little for our care to be bestowed on.

It is not enough to have truth on our side, if we have not truth in our hearts.

Hypocrisy is a lie — with a fair cover over it!

None sooner topple over into error, than such who have a dishonest heart with a nimble head. The richest soil, without culture, is most tainted with *weeds*.

You must live by your faith, not another's. Labor to see truth with your own eyes.

He who maintains any error from the Bible, bears false witness against God.

He who abandons the truth of God, renounces the God of truth.

Error is short lived; "a lying tongue is but for a moment"; but truth's age runs parallel with God's eternity.

It is no matter what the external profession is — if the devil and sin dwell within.

Heaven is worth the having, though you go poor and ragged, yes, naked, there!

The gospel — what is it, but God's heart in print!

The Christian's love to Christ — takes fire at Christ's love to him. No such *picklock* to open the heart, as love.

You never knew a man full of self-confidence and self-abasement together. The conscience cannot abound with a sense of sin — and the heart with self-conceit at the same time.

A temptation comes very forcibly, when it runs with the tide of our own hearts.

"So you see a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him" (Pro 26:12). That is, of all fools, the conceited fool is the worst. *Pride makes a man incapable of receiving counsel.*

Exercise your faith, if you mean to *preserve* your faith. We live by faith, and faith lives by exercise.

The devil is *wily* — so you had need be *wary*.

None long for Heaven, more than those that enjoy most of Heaven.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend — but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Pro 27:6). God's wounds cure — sin's kisses kill.

Never think to find honey in the pot — when God writes *poison* on the cover.

Sin disturbs the inward peace of the soul — and the outward peace of the world.

You know, sinner, already, the best of your sinful pleasure — but not the worst of your punishment!

If you will play the charlatan — choose not the pulpit for your stage.

The less conscience barks at present — the more it will bite when it shall be unmuzzled.

Either use the world as if you used it not — or you will pray as if you prayed not.

The faster a man rides if he is in a wrong road — the farther he goes out of his way!

He who is impatient, and cannot wait on God for a mercy — will not easily submit to Him in a denial.

Man's words will not break your bones.

Cease to pray — and you will begin to sin. Prayer is not only a means to prevail for mercy — but also to prevent sin.

Where God is on one side — you may be sure to find the devil on the other.

He who shows any kindness to a saint — is sure to have God for his paymaster.

The work of salvation cannot be done by the candle-light of a natural understanding — but by the sunlight of a gospel revelation.

Christ passes oft by palaces — to visit the poor cottages. Pilate missed Christ on the bench — while the poor thief finds Him, and Heaven with Him, on the cross.

Ignorance is the mother of persecution.

That book must be worth reading — that has God for the author!

We must come to good works by faith — and not to faith by good works.

It was a charge long ago laid upon Christianity, that it was better known in leaves of books, than in the lives of Christians.

It is better to die honorably — than live shamefully.

It is easier to bow at the name of Jesus — than to stoop to the cross of Jesus.

The head may be ripe — and the heart rotten!

Prayer is a great heart-easer.

The sins of teachers — are the teachers of sins!

01. SIN AND GUILT

"The way of transgressors is hard!" Pro 13:15.

The **terror** of sin. A soul in a state of sin may *possess* much — but *enjoys* nothing. One thought of its state of enmity to God, would drop bitterness into every cup. All he has, smells of hell-fire; and a man at a rich feast would enjoy it but little if he smelt fire, ready to burn his house and himself!

The **love** of sin. Sin is as truly the offspring of the soul, as children are of our bodies, and it finds as much favor in our eyes.

The **pleasures** of sin. The pleasures of sin must needs be short, because life cannot be long, and they both end together. Indeed, many times the pleasure of sin dies before the man dies: sinners live to bury their joy in this world. The worm breeds in their conscience, before it breeds in their flesh by death. But be sure the pleasure of sin never survives this world. The word is gone out of God's mouth, every sinner "shall lie down in sorrow" and wake in sorrow.

The carnal heart is all for the present; his snout is in the trough, and while his draught lasts, he thinks it will never end. Who would envy the condemned man his feast, which he has in his way to the gallows?

Where guilt is contracted in the *getting* of an enjoyment, there can be little sweetness tasted when it comes to be *used*. There is a great difference between the joy of the gardener, at the getting in of his corn at the harvest — and the thief's joy, who has stolen some sheaves out of another's field, and is making merry with his booty.

No sin goes single. It is impossible to embrace or allow one sin — and be free of others. Allow one sin, and God will give you over to others. When Judas began to play the thief, I question whether he meant to turn *traitor*. No, his treason was a punishment for his thievery.

Secret sins. God is privy to your most secret sin, "You have set our iniquities before You, our *secret sins* in the light of Your countenance" (Psa 90:8). As He sees when you shut your closet to pray, and will reward your sincerity — so when you do it to sin in secret, He will reward your hypocrisy. The word tells you of an *informer* which you have in your own bosom — conscience, which goes along with you, and is witness to all your fine-laid plots, and what it sees, it writes down, for it is a court of record. You cannot sin so fast, but it can write after you; and the pen with which conscience writes down our sins has a sharp point, it cuts deep into the very heart and soul of the sinner.

Consult the word, and you will find that God usually has put them to shame in this world, those who have promised themselves most secrecy in their sinning. So Gehazi played his part cunningly enough, which made him so bold to come before his master, and impudently lie to his face, not dreaming the least that he was aware of his sin! Yet this man is found out, and for the garments he got of Naaman by a lie, he had another given of the Lord, which he was to wear as a punishment for his sin, for he was clothed with a *leprosy!* This garment more lasting than the two changes of clothes he had from the Syrian; for this lasted him all his life; neither was it then worn out — but to be put on by his children after him! (2Ki 5:27).

Yes, be he a saint — yet if he goes about to save himself from the shame of a sin, by any secret plot of wickedness — he takes the direct way to bring that upon him which he contrives to keep off.

Uriah's blood was shed only as a sinful expedient to save David's credit. Ah, poor man! all comes out to his greater shame. David shall know that God will be as tender of His own honor — as he is of his credit; "For you did it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun!" (2Sa 12:12).

Bosom sins. Satan labors to provoke the Christian to heart sins, to stir up and foment these inward motions of sins in the Christian's bosom. He knows his credit now is not so great with the soul as when it was his slave; he must not think to command another's servant as his own; no, all he can do, is to watch the fittest season, when the Christian least suspects, and then to present some sinful motion handsomely dressed up to the eye of the soul, that the Christian may, before he is aware, take this brat up, and handle it in his thoughts, until at last he makes it his own by embracing it; and maybe, this *boy*, sent in at the window, may open the door to let in a greater thief.

There may be more wickedness in a sin of the heart, than of the hand. The more of the heart and spirit is let out, the more malignity is let in to any sinful act.

To backslide in *heart*, is more than to backslide. It is the comfort of a poor soul when tempted and troubled for his relapses, that though his foot slides back — yet his heart turns not back — but faces Heaven and Christ at the same time. So to err in the heart, is worse than to have an error in the head. Therefore God aggravates Israel's sin with this, "They always err in their heart" (Heb 3:10). Their hearts run them upon the error; they liked idolatry, and so were made to believe what pleased them best. Peter lays the stress of Simon Magus' sin on the wicked thought, which his words betrayed to be in his heart: "Pray God, if perhaps the *thought of your heart* may be forgiven" (Act 8:22).

Do not say that you love Christ, so long as you can lay those sins in your bosom — which plucked His heart out of His bosom! It were strange if a child should keep, and delight to use, no other knife but that with which his mother was stabbed to death!

Deliberate sins. Take heed of deliberate sin; like a stone thrown into a clear stream, it will so disturb your soul, and muddy it, that you, who even now could see your interest in Christ, will now be at a loss, and know not what to think of yourself. Like a fire on the top of the house, it will be no easy matter to quench it. If you have been so unhappy as to fall into such a slough, take heed of lying in it by impenitence. *The sheep may fall into a ditch — but it is the swine that wallows in it!*

Presumptuous sins. Presumptuous sins are the thieves that break through and steal the saint's comfort away. When the Christian comes to look into his soul after such a bold act, and thinks to entertain himself, as formerly, with the comforts of his pardoned state, interest in Christ, and hopes of Heaven through Him — alas! he finds a sad change; no promise that will give out its consolations to him. The door is locked, Christ withdrawn, and the keys carried away with Him.

Have you fallen into the hands of any such presumptuous sins; that have stolen your peace from you? Send speedily your moans and cry after them, renew your repentance, and raise Heaven upon them by a spirit of prayer. This is no time to delay; the further you let these sins go without repentance, the harder you will find it to recover your lost peace and joy out of their hands.

As presumptuous sins are the *thieves*, that with a high hand rob the Christian of his comfort. So sloth and negligence are as the rust, that in time will fret into his comfort, and eat out the heart and strength of it.

A thorn in the foot will make any way uneasy to the traveler, and guilt in the conscience will make any condition uncomfortable to the Christian — but most of all a suffering one. Oh it is sad, to go with sore and smarting consciences into a suffering condition.

Forsaking sin. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:7). Some men's sins forsake them; "the unclean spirit *goes out*," and is not *driven* out; occasions to sin cease, or bodily ability to execute the commands of sin is wanting.

To *forsake* sin, is to leave it without any thought reserved of returning to it again. It were strange to find a drunkard so constant in the exercise of that sin, but some time you may find him sober; and yet a drunkard he is, as well as if he was then drunk. A man forsakes his sin, when he throws it from him, and bolts the door upon it, with a purpose never to open more to it: "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" (Hos 14:8).

Forsake all or none. Save one lust, and you lose your soul. What will you get, poor sinner, if you go to Hell, though you go there by your ignorance, unbelief, or spiritual pride — yet escape the plague of open profaneness? This is as ridiculous as it was with him, who about to be hanged, desired that he might by no means go through such a street to the gallows, for fear of the plague that was there.

Soul, take your lust, your only lust, which is as the child of your dearest love, your Isaac, the sin which has caused most joy and laughter, from which you have promised yourself the greatest return of pleasure or profit — and offer it up! Run the sacrificing knife of mortification into the very heart of it — and all this now, before you have one embrace more from it.

02. PROFESSION AND HYPOCRISY

"The hypocrite's hope shall perish!" Job 8:13

Such a generation there ever shall be, that mingle themselves with the saints of God; who pretend Heaven, with heavenly speeches — while their hearts are lined with hypocrisy, whereby they deceive others, and most of all themselves. Such may be the world's saints — but are devil's in Christ's account. "Have not I chosen you twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" And truly, of all devils, none so bad as the *professing* devil, the *preaching*, *praying* devil.

Satan can live very peaceably, as a quiet neighbor, by the door of such as will content themselves with an empty name of profession; this alters not his property. Judas' profession did not put him a step out of his way to Hell. Just so, the devil can show a man a way to damnation through duties and ordinances of God's worship. That covetous, traitorous heart which Judas carried with him to hear Christ's sermon, and preach his own, held him fast enough to the devil; and therefore he gives him line enough, liberty enough to keep his credit a while with his fellow apostles. The devil cares not though others think him a disciple of Christ, so he knows him to be his own slave.

The hypocrite at first blush may be taken for a saint, by such as see only his outside, as he passes by in his holiday dress, and therefore is fitly by one called *the stranger's saint* — but a *devil* to those who know him better.

The hypocrite can show a pious tongue — and yet have a foul heart.

He who has a false end in his profession, will soon come to the end of his profession, when he is pinched on that toe where his corn is; I mean, called to deny that which his naughty heart aimed at.

Many there are that have nothing to prove themselves Christians but a naked profession, of whom we may say as they do of the cinnamon tree, that the bark is more worth than all they have besides.

Many take up their saintship upon trust, and trade in religion with the credit they have gained from others' opinion of them. They believe themselves to be Christians, because others hope them to be such; and so their great business is, by a zeal in those exercises of religion that lie *outermost*, to keep up the credit they have abroad — but do not look to get a stock of solid grace within; and this proves their undoing at last.

They say trees grow as much in the root underground as in the branches above, and so does true grace. Remember what was the perishing of the seed in stony ground — it lacked root; and why so, but because it was stony? Be willing the plough should go deep enough to humble you for sin, and rend your heart from sin.

A hypocrite never got pardon in the *disguise* of a saint. He will call you by your own name, though you come to Him in the semblance of a penitent: "Come in, O wife of Jeroboam," said the prophet. *Hypocrisy is too thin a veil, to blind the eyes of the Almighty.* You may put your own eyes out, so as not to see Him — but you cannot blind *His* eyes so that He should not see you.

Speak, O you hypocrites! can you show one tear that ever you shed in earnest for a wrong done to God? It is a good gloss Augustine has upon Esau's tears (Hebrews 12): "He wept that he *lost* the blessing, not that he sold it."

Time-serving. The hypocrite sets his watch, not by the sun, the Word I mean — but by the town clock; what most do, that he will do.

Self-righteousness. Take heed uprightness proves not a snare to you. The young man in the gospel might have been better, had he not been so good. His honesty and moral uprightness was his undoing, or rather his conceit of them. Better he had been a publican, driven to Christ in the sense of his sin — than a Pharisee, kept from Him with an opinion of his integrity. Maybe you are honest and upright in your course. Bless God for it — but take heed of blessing yourself in it: there is the danger; this is one way of being "righteous over much." There is undoing in this over-doing, as well as in any under-doing.

What men do by themselves, they do *for* themselves; they devour the praise of what they do. The Christian only that does all *by* Christ, does all *for* Christ. Many souls do not only perish, praying, repenting, and believing after a sort — but they perish by their praying and repenting, while they carnally *trust* in these.

Few are so bad indeed, but seem to like religion in the notion; but living and walking holiness bites; the pharisees can lavish out their money on the prophets' tombs — but Christ is scorned and hated. What is the mystery of this? The reason was, these prophets are off the stage — and Christ is on.

False zeal. Zeal without uprightness is of no service, nay, no one will go to Hell with more shame than the false-hearted zealot, who mounts up towards Heaven in his fiery chariot. Be not reluctant to be searched; there will need then no further search to prove you unsound; if God's officers are denied entrance, all is not right within. If your heart is sincere, it will delight in privacy. A false heart calls others to witness his zeal for God. It is the trick of the hypocrite, to strain himself to the utmost in *duty*, when he has spectators — and to be careless alone.

A false heart may seem very hot in praying against one sin — but can skip over another. A hypocrite will be favorable to one lust, and violent against another; whereas a sincere Christian abhors *all* sin: "Order my steps in your word: and let not *any* iniquity have dominion over me" (Psa 119:133).

The hypocrite seems hot in *prayer* — but you will find him cold enough at *work*; he prays very fiercely against his sins, as if he desired them to be all slain upon the place; but does he set himself upon the work of mortification? Does he withdraw the fuel that feeds them?

Hypocrisy in religion springs from the bitter fruit of some carnal affection unmortified. So long as your prey lies below, your eye will be on the earth — when you seem, like an eagle, to mount in your prayers to Heaven. *God is in the hypocrite's mouth — but the world is in his heart*, which he expects to gain through his good reputation.

No man can say that Jesus is the Lord — but by the Holy Spirit (1Co 12:3). A man may say the words, without any special work of the Spirit — and so may a parrot. But to say Christ is Lord believingly, with thoughts and affections comporting with the greatness and sweetness thereof, requires the Spirit of God to be in his heart.

Knowledge without grace. An orthodox creed with an unholy heart and ungodly life — is like a man's head on a beast's shoulders! That man has little cause to boast that what he holds is truth, if what he does be wicked.

Knowledge may make you a scholar — but not a saint; orthodox — but not gracious. He who increases in knowledge, and does not get grace with his knowledge, increases sorrow to himself, yes, eternal sorrow! It would be an ease to gospel sinners in Hell, if they could erase the remembrance of the gospel out of their memories.

He who can venture on the appearance of evil under pretense of liberty, may, for anything I know, commit that which is more grossly evil, under some appearance of good. It is not hard, if a man will be at the cost, to put a good paint on rotten stuff and practice also.

It is possible that a man may have a rotten body under a gaudy suit! And also possible under fine language, to have a poor ragged conscience. Who had not rather be sincere with small abilities, than rotten-hearted with great abilities?

Hypocrisy exposed. The Christian, like a star in the heavens, wades through the cloud, that for a time hides his comfort; but the hypocrite, like a meteor in the air, blazes a little, and then drops into some ditch or other, where it is quenched. "The light of the righteous rejoices: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out" (Pro 13:9).

Sincerity enables the Christian to do two things in affliction which the hypocrite cannot — to speak good of God, and to expect good from God.

"Will he always call upon God?" (Job 27:10). The hypocrite is often exposed here. An unsound heart will be meddling with prayer now and then — but grows weary of the work at last, especially if he is made to wait long for an answer. Saul prays to God, and because he hears not from Him — goes at last to seek the devil in a *medium*.

One spot occasions, the whole garment to be washed. David overcome with one sin — renews his repentance for all (Psalms 51). A good husband, when he sees it raining at one place, sends for the workmen to look over *all* the roof. This indeed, differences a sincere heart from an *hypocrite* — whose repentance is partial, soft in one place and hard in another. Judas cries out of his *treason* — but not a word of his *thievery* and *hypocrisy*. The hole was no wider in his conscience, than where the bullet went in; whereas true sorrow for one, breaks the heart into shivers for others also.

If *profession* would serve the turn, and flocking after sermons with some seeming joy at the word, were enough to save — then Heaven would soon be full. But as you love your souls, do not try yourselves by this coarse sieve; that is, seek by an easy profession, and cheap religion, such as is hearing the word, performance of duties and the like. Of this kind there are many who will come and walk about Heaven's door, willing enough to enter, if they may do it without ruffling their pride in a crowd, or hazarding their present carnal interest by any contest and scuffle.

Take Christians under the notion of "seekers," and, by Christ's own words, there are many; but consider them under the notion of "strivers," such as stand ready shod with a holy resolution, to strive even to blood, if such trials meet them in the way to Heaven, rather than not enter, and then the number of Christian soldiers will shrink, like Gideon's goodly host, to a little troop.

In this old age of England's withered profession, how great a rarity is a sincere convert! When we see a tree that used to stand thick with fruit, now bring forth but little, maybe an apple on this bough, and another on that, we look upon it as a *dying tree*. Those golden days of the gospel are over, when converts came flying as a cloud, as the doves to the window in flocks. Now gospel news grows stale, few are taken with it. Our old store of saints, the treasure of their times, wears away apace; what will become of us, if no new ones come in their room? Alas! when our burials are more than our births — we must needs be on the losing hand. There is a sad list of holy names taken away from us; but where are those who are born to God? If the good go, and those which are left continue bad, yes, become worse and worse — we have reason to fear that God is clearing the ground, and making way for a judgment.

None sink so far into Hell as those that come nearest Heaven, because they fall from the greatest height. None will have such a sad parting from Christ as those who went half way with Him, and then left Him.

03. PRIDE AND WORLDLINESS

"A man's pride shall bring him low." Pro 29:23

Religious Pride. Some are as blind as Laodicea, and know it not (Rev 3:17). As ignorance blinds the mind, so pride is a blind before their ignorance, that they know it not. These have such a high opinion of themselves, that they take it ill that any should suspect them as such. These of all men, are most out of the way to knowledge; they are too good to learn from others, as they think, and too bad to be taught of God. The gate into Christ's school is low, and these cannot stoop. The Master Himself is so humble and lowly that He will not teach a *proud scholar*.

Ah, poor creatures, what a sad change have they made, to leave the word, which can no more deceive them than God Himself to trust the guidance of themselves to themselves. *"He who is his own teacher," says Bernard, "is sure to have a fool for a master."*

Never are you less holy, than when puffed up with the conceit of it. "Behold, his soul which is *lifted up* is not upright" (Hab 2:4). A sign is set up at the proud man's door, that all passengers may know that a wicked man dwells there.

When men stand high, their heads do not grow dizzy until they look down. When men look down upon those that are worse than themselves, or less holy than themselves — then their heads turn round; looking up would cure this disease.

The most holy men, when once they have fixed their eyes awhile upon God's holiness, and then looked upon themselves — have been quite out of love with themselves. After the vision the prophet had of God sitting upon the throne, and the seraphim about Him, covering their faces, and crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord Almighty" — how was this gracious man smitten with the sense of his own vileness! They did no more cry up God as holy — than he did cry out upon himself as unclean (Isa 6:5). So Job, "Now my eye sees You! Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" (Job 42:5-6).

Compare not yourself, with those that have less than yourself — but look on those that have far exceeded you. To look on our inferiors occasions pride. "I am not as this publican," says the Pharisee. *Looking on others more eminent than ourselves, will both preserve humility, and be a spur to diligence.*

A man may be very zealous in prayer and painstaking in preaching — and all the while pride is the master whom he serves, though in God's livery. It is hard starving this sin of pride — it can live on almost anything! Nothing so *base*, that a proud heart will not be lifted up with — and nothing so *sacred*, but pride will profane it. So far as pride prevails, the man prays and preaches rather to be thought good by others — rather to enthrone himself than Christ, in the opinion and hearts of his hearers.

Remember, Christian, when you have your best suit on, who made it, who paid for it. Your grace, your comfort, is neither the work of your own hands, nor the price of your own desert; be not for shame, proud of another's cost.

Pride of gifts. If once (like Hezekiah) we call in *spectators* to see our treasure and applaud us for our gifts and blessings — then it is high time for God to send some messengers to carry these away from us, which carry our hearts from Him. Pride of gifts hinders the receiving of good from others. Pride fills the soul, and a full soul will take nothing from God, much less from man.

Joseph's coat made him finer than his brethren — but caused all his trouble; thus *great gifts* lift a saint up a little higher in the eyes of men — but it occasions many temptations which you meet not with that are kept low. What with envy from their brethren, malice from Satan, and pride in their own hearts — I dare say none find so hard a work to bear up against those waves and winds.

While you are priding in your gifts — you are dwindling and withering in your grace. Such are like corn that runs up much into straw, whose ear commonly is light and thin. Grace is too much neglected, where gifts are too highly prized; we are commanded to be clothed with humility. Pride kills the spirit of praise: when you should bless God — you are really applauding yourself. Pride destroys Christian love, and stabs our fellowship with the saints to the heart. A proud man has not room enough to walk in company, because of the gifts of others he thinks stand in his way. Pride so distempers the palate, that it can relish nothing that is drawn from another's vessel. *Pride loves to climb up, not as Zaccheus, to see Christ — but so that others may see himself!*

"God resists the proud" (Jam 4:6). The humble man may have Satan at his right hand to oppose him; but be sure the proud man shall find God Himself there to resist him. We must either lay self aside — or God will lay us aside. *A proud sinner and a humble Savior will never agree!* Christ is humble and lowly, and so resists the proud — but gives grace to the humble.

Love of the WORLD. Tell some of adding faith to faith, one degree of grace to another — and you shall find they have more mind to join house to house, and lay field to field. Their souls are athirst — but not for Christ or Heaven — it is earth, earth, they never think they have enough of, until death comes and stops their mouth with a shovelful dug out of their own grave!

The canker and rust of our gold and silver, which is gotten with harder labor than is required here, will rise up in judgment against many, and say, "You could drudge and trudge for us that are now turned to rust and dust — but could walk over the field of the Word, where an incorruptible treasure lay, and would lose it rather than your sloth!"

Your time is short, and your way long. Is it wisdom to lay out so much on your tenement which you are leaving, and forget what you must carry with you? Before the fruit of these are ripe which you are now planting, you yourself may be rotting in the grave: "Time is short," says the apostle (1Co 7:29).

Men are very kind to themselves: first they wish it may be long before death comes; and then because they would have it so, they are bold to promise themselves it shall be so. Who makes the lease? the tenant or the landlord?

You are young, you cannot therefore say, you shall not die as yet: alas! measure the coffins in the churchyard, and you will find some of your length — young and old are within the reach of death's scythe; old men, indeed, go to death, their age calls for it; but young men cannot hinder death's coming to them.

It is an ill time to caulk the ship when at sea, tumbling up and down in a storm: this should have been looked to when on her seat in the harbor. Just so, it is as bad it is to begin to trim a soul for Heaven, when tossing on a sick-bed. Things that are done in a hurry, are seldom done well. These poor creatures, I am afraid, go in an ill dress to another world who begin to provide for it when on a dying bed.

There is but one Heaven — miss that, and where can you take up your lodging but in Hell? One Christ that can lead you there — reject Him, "and there remains no more sacrifice for sin."

O, how many part with Christ at the crossway! like Orpah, that go a furlong or two with Christ, until He goes to take them off from their worldly hopes, and bids them prepare for hardship, and then they fairly kiss and leave Him; loath indeed to lose Heaven — but more loath to buy it at such a rate.

Of all men out of Hell, none more to be pitied than he who hangs over the mouth of it, and yet is fearless of his danger.

It requires courage to despise the shame which the Christian must expect to meet for his singularity, to avoid which many dared not confess Christ openly (Joh 7:13). Many lose Heaven because they are ashamed to go in a *fool's coat* there.

04. GLAD TIDINGS AND JOY

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Luk 2:10-11.

Incarnation. There is in Christ a foundation laid for greater familiarity with God, than Adam was at first capable of. He, indeed, was the son of God — yet he was kept at a further distance, and treated with more state and majesty from God, than now the reconciled soul is; for though he was the son of God by creation — yet the Son of God was not then the Son of man by incarnation; and at this door comes in the believer's sweetest familiarity with God. God does descend His throne, exchange His majestic robes of glory for man's frail flesh; *He leaves His palace to live for a time in His creature's humble cottage*, and there not only familiarly converses with him, but, which is stranger, ministers to him. Yes, which is more than all these, He surrenders Himself up to endure all manner of indignities from His sorry creature's hand. And when this coarse entertainment is done, back He posts to Heaven, not to complain to His Father, how He has been abused here below, and raise Heaven's power against those who had so ill-treated Him — but to make ready Heaven's palace for the reception of those who had thus abused Him, and now will accept of His grace. And lest these — yet left on earth, should fear His resumed royalty and majesty, in Heaven's glory, would make some alteration with their affairs in His heart; to give them therefore a constant demonstration that He would be the same in the height of His honor that He was in the depth of His abasement — He goes back in the same clothes, to wear them on the throne, in all His glory, only some princely cost bestowed, to put them into the fashion of that heavenly kingdom, and make them suit with His glorified state; giving them a pattern by this, what their own vile bodies, now so dishonorable, shall be made another day.

Redemption. Conscience requires as much to satisfy it as it does to satisfy the justice of God Himself. But in the gospel, joyful news is brought to the sinner's care of a fountain of blood there opened, which for its preciousness is as far above the price that divine justice demands for man's sin, as the blood of bulls and beasts was beneath it; and that is, the blood of Jesus Christ, who freely poured it upon the cross, and by it "obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9). This is the door by which all true peace and joy comes into the conscience.

The simplicity of the gospel. If bread were as hard to come by as sweetmeats, or water as scarce as wine — the greatest part of men must famish. Just so, if truths necessary to salvation were as hard to be understood, as some others, many poor weak-hearted Christians would certainly perish without a miracle to help them. But the saving truths of the gospel lie plain, and run clear to all but those who muddy the streams with their own corrupt minds.

The abiding truth of the gospel. Consider God's especial care to preserve His truth; whatever is lost, God looks to His truth. In all the great revolutions, changes, and overturning of kingdoms, and churches also, God has still preserved His truth. In a word, in that great and dismal conflagration of Heaven and earth, when the elements shall melt for heat, and the world come to its fatal period, then truth shall not suffer the least loss — but "the word of the Lord endures forever" (1Pe 1:25).

The peace of the gospel. "Let him take hold of My strength, that He may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me" (Isa 27:5). And where lies God's saving strength — but in Christ? He has laid strength upon this mighty One, able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him. Take hold of Christ, and you have hold of God's arm; He cannot strike the soul that holds thereby.

Where there is peace, such peace as peace with God and conscience, there can want no pleasure. David goes merry to bed, when he had nothing to supper but the gladness that God by this puts into his heart, and promises himself a better night's rest than any of them all, that are feasted with the world's cheer: "You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep" (Psa 4:7-8). This same peace with God, enjoyed in the conscience, redounds to the comfort of the body. Now David can sleep sweetly, when he lies on a hard bed; what here he says he would do, in Psa 3:5, he says he has done, "I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me." The title of the psalm tells us when David had this sweet night's rest; not when he lay on his bed of down in his stately palace at Jerusalem — but when he fled for his life from his unnatural son Absalom, and possibly was forced to lie in the open field, under the canopy of Heaven.

The great care which Christ took for His disciples, when He left the world, was not to leave them a quiet world to live in — but to arm them against a troublesome world: He bequeaths unto them His peace.

The rejection of the gospel. "Not one of those invited shall taste of my supper." God can least bear any contempt cast upon His grace. They would not come when the supper was on the table; and therefore the cloth was drawn, and they go supperless to bed, and die in their sins. Christ you will not, Christ therefore you shall not, have. None sink so deep in Hell as those that fall into it with stumbling at Christ.

The joy of the gospel. Your embracing Christ preached to you in the gospel, will be as welcome news to Heaven, I can tell you, as the tidings of Christ and salvation through Him can be to you. There is joy in Heaven at the conversion of a sinner. Those angels that sang Christ into the world, will not lack a song when He is received into your heart, for He came into the world for this end.

Rejoice at the news: glad tidings, and sad hearts, do not go well together. When we see one heavy and sorrowful, we ask him what ill news he has heard. Christian, what ill news has Christ brought from Heaven with Him that makes you walk with your folded arms and pensive countenance? "Saints shall shout aloud for joy" (Psa 132:16).

To see a wicked man merry and jocund, or a Christian sad and dumpish, is alike unlovely. Truly, the saint's heaviness reflects unkindly upon God Himself: we do not commend His cheer, if it does not cheer us.

O Christians, let the world see you are not losers in your joy, since you have been acquainted with the gospel; give them not cause to think by your uncomfortable walking, that when they turn Christians, they must bid all joy farewell, and resolve to spend their days in a house of mourning.

Do not for shame, Christian, run on the world's score by taking up any of its carnal joy; you need not go out of God's house to be merry. A Christian should deny himself of the world's joy and delights, lest they say, "These Christians draw their joy out of our cistern!"

The saint's joy and peace is not such a light, frothy joy as the world's. The parlor wherein the Spirit of Christ entertains the Christian is an inner room, not next the street, for every one that goes by to smell the feast. "A stranger does not intermeddle with his joy" (Pro 14:10). Christ and the soul may be at supper within, and you not so much as see one dish go in, or hear the music that sounds so sweetly in the Christian's ears. Perhaps you think he lacks peace, because he does not hang out a sign in his countenance of the joy and peace he has within. Alas, poor wretch! may not the saint have a peaceful conscience, with a solemn, yes, sad countenance, as well as you and your companions have a sorrowful heart, when there is nothing but fair weather in your faces? "In laughter the heart is sorrowful" (Pro 14:13).

The mystery of the gospel. As the gospel is a mystery of faith, it enables the godly to believe strange mysteries; to believe that which they understand not, and hope for that which they do not see. It teaches them to believe that Christ was born in time, and that He was from everlasting; that He was comprehended in the Virgin's womb, and yet the Heaven of heavens not able to contain Him: to be the Son of Mary, and yet her Maker; to be born without sin, and yet justly to have died for sin.

They believe that God was just in punishing Christ, though innocent; and in justifying penitent believers, who are sinners; they believe themselves to be great sinners, and yet that God sees them in Christ without spot or wrinkle.

Again, as the gospel is a mystery of godliness, it enables the godly to do as strange things as they believe; to live by Another's spirit, to act from Another's strength, to live to Another's will, and aim at Another's glory; they live by the Spirit of Christ, act with His strength, are determined by His will, and aim at His glory: it makes them so gentle, that a child may lead them to anything that is good; yet so stout, that fire shall not frighten them into sin: they can love their enemies, and yet, for Christ's sake, can hate father and mother: it makes them diligent in their worldly calling — yet enables them to condemn the riches they have obtained by God's blessing on their labor; they are taught by it that all things are theirs — yet they dare not take a pin from the wicked by force or fraud: it makes them so humble as to prefer every one above themselves; yet so to value their own condition, that the poorest among them would not change his estate with the greatest monarch of the world: it makes them thank God for health, and for sickness also; to rejoice when exalted, and not to repine when made low; they can pray for life, and at the same time desire to die!

The gospel opens a mine of unsearchable riches — but in a mystery; it shows men a way how to be rich in faith, rich in God, rich for another world, while poor in this.

Again the professors of the gospel are hated, because they partake of its mysterious nature. They are high-born — but in a mystery; you cannot see their birth by their outward breeding; arms they bear, and revenues they have to live on — but not such as the world judges the greatness of persons and families by: no, their outside is mean, while their inside is glorious; and the world values them by what they know and see of their external part, and not by their inward graces; they pass as princes in the disguise of some poor man's clothes through the world, and their entertainment is accordingly.

Had Christ put on His robes of glory and majesty when He came into the world, surely He had not gone out of it with so shameful and cruel a death. The world would have trembled at His footstool, which some of them did, when but a beam of His deity looked forth upon them.

Did saints walk on earth in those robes which they shall wear in Heaven, then they would be feared and admired by those who now scorn and despise them. But as God's design in Christ's first coming would not have been fulfilled, had He so appeared; neither would His design in His saints, did the world know them as one day they shall; therefore He is pleased to let them lie hid under the mean coverings of poverty and infirmities, that so He may exercise their suffering graces, and also accomplish His wrath upon the wicked for theirs against them.

Is the gospel a mystery? then, Christian, long for Heaven, and only there shall this mystery be fully known. Here we learn our knowledge of it by little and little, like one that reads a book as it comes from the press, sheet by sheet — there we shall see it altogether: here we learn with much pain and difficulty, there without travail and trouble: glorified saints, though they cease not from work — yet rest from labor: here passion blinds our minds, that we mistake error for truth, and truth for error; but these clouds shall be scattered and gone: here the weakness of natural parts keeps many in the dark, and renders them incapable of apprehending some truths, which others are led into; but there the strong shall not prevent the weak, the scholar shall know as much as his master.

When that blessed hour comes, then lift up your heads with joy, for it will lead you into that blissful place where you will see Christ, not a great way off, not with the eye of faith — but with a glorified eye behold His very Person, never more to lose the sight of Him! You shall no more hear what a glorious place Heaven is, as you were accustomed to have it set forth by the poor rhetoric of mortal man, preaching to you of that with which he himself was little acquainted; but shall walk yourself in the streets of that glorious city, and bless yourself, to think what poor, low thoughts you had thereof, when on earth you meditated on this subject. One moment's sight of that glory, will inform you more than all the books written of it were ever able to do!

05. FAITH AND HOLINESS

"Without *faith* it is impossible to please Him." Heb 11:6.

"Follow after *holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord." Heb 12:14.

FAITH in Christ. Faith is that act of the soul whereby it rests on Christ crucified for pardon and life, and that upon the warrant of the word. The person of Christ is the object of faith as justifying: secondly, Christ as crucified. First, the person of Christ, not any axiom or proposition in the word — this is the object of assurance, not of faith. Assurance says, I believe my sins are pardoned through Christ: faith's language is, I believe on Christ for the pardon of them.

Not every one who *assents* to the truth of what Scripture says of Christ, truly believes on Christ. This believing on Christ implies trusting recumbency on Christ. It is not the *sight* of a man's arm stretched out to a man in the water will save him from drowning — but the *taking hold* of it. "Let him take hold of my strength" (Isa 27:5).

"I know whom I have believed" (2Ti 1:12). None will readily trust a stranger that he is wholly unacquainted with. Abraham went indeed he knew not where — but he did not go with he knew not whom.

Faith and repentance. Repentance, this is a sweet grace — but set on work by faith. Nineveh's repentance is attributed unto their faith (Jon 3:5): "The people of Nineveh *believed* God — and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth." All is silence and quiet in an unbelieving soul: no news of repentance, no noise of any complaint made against sin, until faith begins to stir.

Faith and love. Love is another heavenly grace; but faith gathers the fuel that makes this fire. Speak, Christian, whose soul now flames with love to God, was it *always* thus? No, there was a time when your hearth was cold, not a spark of this fire to be found on the altar of your heart. How is it, then, Christian, that now your soul loves God, whom before you did scorn and hate? Surely you have heard some good news from Heaven, that has changed your thoughts of God, and turned the stream of your love into this happy channel. And who can be the messenger besides faith, that brings any good news from Heaven to your soul? It is faith that proclaims the word, opens Christ's excellencies, pours out His name, for which the virgins love Him. When faith has drawn a character of Christ out of the word, and presented Him in His love and loveliness to the soul, the Christian has a copious theme to enlarge upon in his thoughts, whereby to endear Christ more and more to him. "Unto you therefore who believe He is precious" (1Pe 2:7); and the more faith, the more precious.

Faith and a good conscience. "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck" (1Ti 1:19). Would you preserve your faith, look to your conscience. A good conscience is the bottom faith sails in; if the conscience be wrecked, how can it be thought that faith should be safe? If faith be the jewel, a good conscience is the cabinet in which it is kept; and if the cabinet be broken, the jewel must needs be in danger of losing.

The Christian's care should be to keep, as his conscience pure, so his *name* pure, which is done by avoiding all appearance of evil. Bernard's three questions are worth the asking ourselves in any enterprise:

"Is it lawful?" May I do it and not sin?

"Is it befitting me, a Christian?" May I do it and not wrong my profession?

"Is it expedient?" May I do it and not offend my weak brother?

Faith and prayer. True faith is prayerful; *prayer is the child of faith*. As the creature cannot pray without faith, so with faith he cannot but pray. The new creature (like our infants in their natural birth) comes crying into the world: and therefore Christ tells it for great news to Ananias of *Saul*, a new-born believer, "Behold, he prays!"

Faith enables the soul to persevere in prayer. "Will the hypocrite always call upon God?" (Job 27:10). No, he prays himself weary of praying; something or other will in time make him quarrel with that which he never inwardly liked; whereas the sincere believer has that in him which makes it impossible that he should quite give over praying, except he should also cease believing. Prayer is the very breath of faith; stop a man's breath — and where is he then?

Faith may live in a storm — but it will not allow a storm to live in it. As faith rises, so the blustering wind of the discontented troublesome thoughts go down. Faith relieves the soul in prayer, of that which oppresses it; whereas the unbelieving soul still carries about it the cause of its troubles, because it had not strength to cast forth its sorrows and roll its cares upon God.

Weak faith. Weak faith will as surely land the Christian in Heaven, as strong faith; but the weak, doubting Christian is not likely to have so pleasant a voyage there, as another with strong faith. Though all in the ship come safely to shore — yet he who is all the way seasick has not so comfortable a voyage as he who is strong and healthful.

As melancholy men delight in melancholy walks, so doubting souls most frequent such places of Scripture in their musing thoughts as increase their doubts.

"Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" (Mat 8:26). You see the leak at which the water came in to sink their spirits: they had "little faith." It is not what God is in Himself — but what our apprehensions at present are of God, that pacifies and comforts a soul in great straits. If a man fears the house will fall on his head in a storm, though it be as immovable as a rock — yet that will not ease his mind until he thinks it so.

Bold faith. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you" (Heb 13:5) — there is the promise; and the inference, which he teaches us to draw by faith from this, follows (verse 6), "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper." We may boldly assert it in the face of men and devils, because He who is almighty has said it.

Faith is a *pilgrim-grace*; it travels with us to Heaven, and when it sees us safe got within our Father's doors, it takes leave of us.

Holiness and happiness. "He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy" (Eph 1:4). Mark, not because He foresaw that they would be of themselves holy — but that they *should* be holy; this was that which God resolved He would make them to be. Consider, it is not necessary that you should be rich; but it is necessary you should be *holy*, if you mean to be eternally happy. You may travel to Heaven with never a *penny* in your purse — but not without *holiness* in your heart and life also.

Holiness and contentment. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." The holy person is the only contented man in the world. Paul tells us "he had learned in whatever state he was to be content."

Holiness in the home. It is in vain to talk of holiness — if we can bring no letters testimonial from our holy walking with our family. O, it is sad when those who have reason to know us best, by their daily converse with us — speak *least* for our godliness! Few so impudent as to come naked into the streets — if men have anything to cover their naughtiness, they will put it on when they come abroad. But what are you within doors? Pray not only against the power of sin — but *for the power of holiness*. His zeal is false, that seems hot against sin — but is cold to holiness.

06. TEMPTATIONS

"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." 1Co 10:13

The Devil's dupes. Many have yielded to go a mile with Satan, who never intended to go two. Thus Satan leads poor creatures down into the depths of sin by winding stairs, that let them not see the bottom where they are going.

First, he presents an object that occasions some thoughts, these set the *affections* on fire, and these fume up into the brain and cloud the understanding, which, being thus disabled, now Satan dares a little more declare himself, and boldly solicit the creature to that it would otherwise have defied. *Give no place to Satan!* no, not an inch in his first motions! He who is a beggar, and a modest one without doors, will command the house if let in.

The devil teaches sinners to *cover foul practices with fair names*:
superstition, must be called devotion;
covetousness, must be called thrift;
pride in apparel, must be called keeping up with the times;
looseness, must be called liberty;
and foolishness, must be called mirth.

The Devil's wiles. Satan makes choice of such as have a great name for holiness. None like a live bird, to draw other birds into the net. Abraham tempts his wife to lie: "Say you are my sister." The *old prophet* leads the man of God out of his way (1 Kings 13).

Under the skirt of Christian liberty, Satan conveys in libertinism; by crying up the Spirit — he decries and vilifies the Scripture; by magnifying faith — he labors to undermine repentance and blow up good works.

If Satan gets into your spirit and defiles it, O, how hard will you find it to stay there? You have already sipped of his broth, and now are more likely to sit down and make your full meal of that, which by tasting has vitiated your palate already!

When you hear one commend another for a wise or good man, and at last come in with a "but" that dashes all, you will easily think he is no friend to the man — but some sly enemy, that by seeming to commend, desires to disgrace the more.

Thus, when you find God represented to you as merciful and gracious — but not to such a great sinner as you; to have power and strength — but not able to save you; you may say, *Avaunt, Satan, your speech betrays you.*

When the flesh or Satan beg time of you, it is to *steal* time from you. They put you off prayer at *one* time, to shut you out at last from prayer at any time.

What *day* in all the year is inconvenient to Satan? What *place* or *company* are you in — that he cannot make a snare for your soul?

Satan knows what order you keep in your house and closet; and though he has not a key to your heart — yet he can stand in the next room to it, and lightly hear what is whispered there. If once he does but smell which way your heart inclines, he knows how to take the hint; if but one door is unbolted, here is advantage enough.

The occasion of temptation. The least passage of your life may prove an occasion of sin to you — at what a little wicket many times a great sin enters! *David's eye did but casually alight on Bathsheba, and the good man's foot was presently in the devil's trap!* Have you not then need to pray that God would set a guard about your senses wherever you go, and to cry with him, "Keep back my eyes from beholding vanity!"

It should be our care, if we would not yield to the sin — not to walk by, or sit at the door of the occasion — parley not with that in your thoughts, which you mean not to let into your heart. If we mean not to be burnt, let us not walk upon the coals of temptation. You tempt God to allow your locks to be cut, when you are so bold as to *lay your head in the lap of a temptation.*

Set a strong guard about your outward senses: these are Satan's landing-places, especially the *eye* and the *ear*. Take heed what you import at these. Vain discourse seldom passes without leaving some tincture of vanity upon the heart. And for your eye, let it not wander; wanton objects cause wanton thoughts. Job knew his eye and his thoughts were likely to go together, and therefore to secure one — he covenants with the other (Job 31:1).

The handle of Satan's hatchet, with which he lies chopping at the root of the Christian's comfort, is commonly made of the Christian's wood. Satan is but a creature, and cannot work without tools; he can indeed make much of little — but not anything of nothing, as we see in his assaulting of Christ, where he troubled himself to little purpose, because he came and found nothing in Him (Joh 14:30).

Be sure you are watchful more than ordinary over yourself, in those things where you find yourself *weakest* and have been oftenest foiled. The weakest part of a city, needs the strongest guard.

The devil would tempt Christ, when he "showed Him all the kingdoms of the world," and promised them all unto Him, if He would "fall down and worship Him." Everyone that by unrighteousness seeks the world's pelf, goes to the devil for it, and worships him in effect. *How much better it is to have poverty from God — than riches from the devil!* A temptation comes strong, when the way to relief seems to lie through the sin that Satan is wooing to. When one is poor, and Satan comes, "What, will starve rather than step over the hedge, and steal for your supply?" This is enough to put flesh and blood to the stand.

Deliverance from temptation. What says your soul, when God hedges up your way, and keeps you from that sin which Satan has been soliciting for? If on Christ's side, you will rejoice when you are delivered out of a temptation, though it is by falling into an affliction.

Christian, it is all done of you to make a breach in your holy course, by *tampering with any sin*; but you will commit a greater offense, if you turn your back on God also when you should humble yourself for your former sin. You have fallen into sin in the day, will you not, therefore, pray at night? Take heed you run not

farther into temptation. Now is the time for the devil to set upon you — when the *weapon of prayer* is out of your hand. The best you can look for, is a *storm from God* to bring you back again, and the sooner it comes the more merciful He is to you.

"Watch and pray," says our Savior, "that you enter not into temptation" (Mat 26:41). They, not keeping this pass, gave the enemy, Satan, a fair occasion to come in upon them; and as they were led into temptation by neglect of prayer — so they were rescued and led out of it again by Christ's prayer, which He mercifully laid in beforehand for them: "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not."

Let this encourage you, O Christian, in your conflict with Satan; the skirmish may be *sharp* — but it cannot be *long*. The cloud, while it drops, is rolling over your head, and then comes fair weather, and eternal sunshine of glory!

You cannot be long off your watch — but the devil will hear on it. The devil knew the apostle's sleeping time, and then he desires permission to *winnow* them (Luke 22). The thief rises — when honest men go to bed. The devil begins to tempt — when saints cease to watch.

The saint's sleeping time — is Satan's tempting time. Every fly dares venture to creep on a *sleeping* lion. No temptation so weak, but is strong enough to foil a Christian that is napping in carnal security. *Samson sleeps — and Delilah cut his locks. Saul* sleeps — and the spear is taken away from his very side, and he never the wiser. *Noah* sleeps — and his graceless son has a fit time to discover his father's nakedness. Eutychus sleeps — nods, and falls from the third loft, and is taken up for dead. The Christian asleep, may soon — lose his spiritual strength, be robbed of his spear, and his nakedness discovered by graceless men, to the shame of his profession. Yes, he may fall from a high loft of profession, so low, into scandalous practices — that others may question whether there is any life of grace in him.

The Christian's safety lies in *resisting*. All the armor provided is to defend the Christian *fighting* — none to secure him *flying*. Stand — and the day is ours; fly, or yield — and all is lost.

07. SUFFERING AND SHAME

"The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us!" Rom 8:18.

Suffering for Christ. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him — but also to *suffer* for His sake" (Php 1:29). All the abilities and common gifts that a man has, will never enable him to drink deep of this *bitter cup* for Christ; such is the pride of man's heart, he had rather suffer any way than this; rather from himself, and for himself, than from Christ, or for Christ.

You would wonder to see sometimes how much a child will endure at his play, and never cry for it: this fall, and that knock, and no great matter is made of it by him, because got in a way that is pleasing to him; but let his father whip him, though it put him not to half the smart — yet he so roars and carries on, that there is no quieting of him.

Most men are more tender of their skin, than of their conscience; and had rather the gospel had provided armor to defend their *bodies* from death and danger, than their *souls* from sin and Satan.

All the pieces of *armor* are to defend the Christian from sin: none are to secure him from suffering. Here is the true reason why so few come at the beat of Christ's drum to His standard, and so many of those few that have enlisted themselves by an external profession under Him, within a while drop away, and leave His colors — it is *suffering work* they are sick of.

Sufferings for the gospel are no matter of shame. Paul does not blush to tell, that it is for the gospel he is in bonds. The shame belonged to those who put on the chain — not to him that wore it. "If any man suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed — but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1Pe 4:16). The apostles rejoiced that "they were counted *worthy* to suffer shame for His name" (Act 5:41). Shall the wicked glory in their shame — and you be ashamed of your glory?

Heaven is but little worth, if you have not a heart to despise a little shame, and bear a few taunts from *profane Ishmaels* for your hopes of it. Let them spit on your face — Christ will wipe it off; let them laugh — you will win glory in the end.

Fear not *what* you can suffer, only be careful *for what* you suffer. Christ's cross is made of *sweet wood*; there are *comforts* peculiar to those who suffer for righteousness. The true cause of Paul's sufferings was his zeal for God and His truth; "For which I am in bonds." That is, for the gospel which I profess and preach: as that martyr, who being asked how he came to prison, showed his Bible, and said, "This brought me hither." Persecutors may pretend what they please — but it is the saint's religion and piety that their spite is at.

Blessing through suffering. Persecution does but *mow* the church, which afterward comes up the thicker for it; it is unholiness which ruins the church. Persecutors do but *plough* God's field for Him, while He is sowing it with the blood that they let out. Few are made better by prosperity, whom afflictions make worse. He who will sin, though he goes in pain, will much more if the pain is gone.

Prepared for suffering. The proverb is, He who would learn to pray — let him go to sea; but I think it were better thus, He who would go to sea (this I mean of suffering) let him learn to pray *before* he comes there.

Christian, suffering may overtake you suddenly; therefore be ready shod. Sometimes orders come to soldiers for a sudden march; they must be gone as soon as the drum beats. And so may you be called out, before you are aware, to suffer *for* God or *from* God.

Abraham had little time given him to deal with his heart, and persuade it into a compliance with God, for offering his son Isaac; a great trial and short warning: "Take *now* your son, your only son Isaac" (Gen 22:2). Not a year, a month, a week hence — but *now!* This was in the night, and Abraham is gone early in the morning. How could you, in your perfect strength and health, endure to hear the message of death, if God should, before any lingering sickness has brought you into some acquaintance with death, say no more, but, "Up and die!" as once to Moses? Are you shod for such a journey? Could you say, "Good is the word of the Lord"?

"The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle" (Psa 78:9). Why? What is the matter? So well armed, and yet so cowardly? This seems strange: read the preceding verse, and you will cease wondering; they are called there, "a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God."

Be sure you give up your *lust* to the sword of the Spirit — before your *life* is in danger from the sword of the persecutor. Can you be willing to lay down your life for Christ — and yet keep an enemy in your bosom out of the hand of justice, that seeks to take away the life of Christ? Persecutors tempt — as well as torture. It is possible for one to die in the cause of Christ, and not be His martyr. Your *heart* must be holy which you suffer with, as well as the *cause* you suffer for. He alone is Christ's martyr, who suffers for Christ. "If, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God; for even hereunto were you called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps. Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not" (1Pe 2:20-23).

This is hard work indeed, in the very fire to keep the spirits cool, and clear of anger and revenge. But it makes him who by grace can do it, a glorious conqueror. Flesh and blood would bid a man call *fire* from Heaven, rather than *mercy* to fall upon those who so cruelly handle him. He who can forgive his enemy, is too hard for him, and has the better of him; because his enemy's blows do not bruise his flesh — but the wounds that love gives, pierce the conscience.

Many who never could be beaten from the truth by dint of argument, have been forced from it by fire of persecution. It is not an orthodox judgment which will enable a man to suffer for the truth at the stake.

Fellowship in sufferings. This would speak grace high in its exercise, when a person is himself swimming in the abundance of all enjoyments — and can then lay aside his own joy to weep and mourn for and with any afflicted saints. It is not usual for any but those of great grace to feel the *cords of the church's afflictions through a bed of down*; it must be a David who can prefer Jerusalem above his chief joy. On the other hand, when in the depths of our own personal troubles, we can yet reserve a large space in our prayers for other saints — bespeaks a great measure of grace. When in our distresses we can entertain the tidings of any other saint's mercies with joy and thankfulness; this requires great grace. The *prosperity of others* too often breeds *envy* in those who are poor; if, therefore, you can praise God for mercies granted to others, while the tears stand in your eyes for your own miseries — this is what flesh and blood never taught you.

"Fear not those who kill the body — but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell" (Mat 10:28). Children are afraid of *bugbears* which cannot hurt them — but they can play with fire that will burn them. It is no less childish is it to be frightened into a sin at the frown of a man, who has no power to hurt us more than our own fear gives him; and to play with hell-fire into which God is able to cast us forever.

What was John Huss the worse for his fool's cap that his enemies put on his head — so long as under it he had a helmet of salvation, which they could not take off? Or how much the nearer Hell was the same blessed martyr, for their committing his soul to the devil? No nearer than some of their own are to Heaven, for being sainted in the Pope's Calendar.

Sustained in suffering. None find such quick despatch at the throne of grace, as suffering saints. "In the day when I cried," says David, "you answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul" (Psa 138:3). Peter knocked at the door of those who were assembled to seek God for him — almost as soon as their prayer knocked at Heaven's gate in his behalf. There is ever a door more than the Christian sees in his prison, by which Christ can with a turn of His hand open a way for His saint's escape.

Man may, the devil to be sure will, leave all in the lurch that do his work. But if God sets you on, He will bring you off; never fear a "what are you doing?" from His lips, when your faithfulness to Him has brought you into the briers. Only be not troubled if you are cast overboard, like Jonah, before you see the provision which God makes for your safety: it is ever at hand — but sometimes out of sight, like Jonah's whale, sent of God to ferry him ashore under water, and the prophet in his belly, before he knew where he was. *That which you think comes to devour you — may be the messenger that God sends to bring you safe to land.*

The Egyptians thought they had Israel in a trap, when they saw them by the seaside. When they are out of danger, behold they are in a wilderness, where nothing is to be had for back or belly — and yet here they shall live forty years, without trade or tillage, without begging or robbing of any of the neighbor nations; they shall not be indebted to them for a penny in their way. *What cannot almighty power do to provide for His people.*

"The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore I will hope in Him" (Lam 3:24). Have you not chosen Him for your portion? Do you not look for a Heaven to enjoy Him in forever? And can any *dungeon of outward affliction* be so dark, that this hope will not enlighten? He who has laid up a portion in Heaven for you, will lay out surely all the expenses you need in your way there.

Remember how often God has confuted your fears, and proved your unbelief to be a false prophet. Has He not knocked at your door with inward comfort and outward deliverance, when you had *put out the candle of hope*, given over looking for Him, and been ready to lay yourself down on the *bed of despair*? Were you never at so sad a pass, the *storm of your fears* so great that the anchor of hope even came home, and left you to feed with misgiving and despairing thoughts, as if now your everlasting night were come, and no morning supply expected by you? Yet even then, your God proved them all liars, by an unlooked-for surprise of mercy, with which He stole sweetly in upon you.

Suffering and glory. There are few who are greedy hunters after the world's enjoyments, that do drive their worldly trade without running in debt to their *consciences*. And I am sure he buys gold too dear, who *pays the peace of his conscience* for the purchase. But Heaven is had cheap, though it be with the loss of all our carnal interests, even life itself.

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" (Luk 24:26). And truly the saints' way to salvation lies in the same road (Rom 8:17): "If so be that we suffer with Him — that we may be also glorified together," only with this advantage, that His going before has beaten it plain, so that now it may be forded, which but for Him had been utterly impassable to us.

O comfort one another, Christians, with this: though your life is filled with troubles — yet it is *short*; a few steps — and you are out of the rain. There is a great difference between a saint, in regard of the evils he meets with, and the wicked; as two travelers riding contrary ways, both taken in the rain and wet — but one rides from the rain, and so is soon out of the shower; but the other rides into the rainy corner, the further he goes the worse he is. The saint meets with trouble as well as the wicked — but he is soon out of the shower; but as for the wicked, the further he goes, the worse: what he meets with here is but a few drops — the great storm of God's wrath is to come!

When the Christian's affairs are most disconsolate, he may soon meet with a happy change. The joy of that blessed day comes "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye . . . we shall be changed" (1Co 15:52). In one moment sick and sad — in the next well and glad, never to know more what groans and tears mean. Now clad with the rags of mortal flesh, made miserable with a thousand troubles that attend it — in the twinkling of an eye arrayed with the robes of immortality, enriched with a thousand times more glory than the sun itself wears in that garment of light which now dazzles our eyes. Who can wonder to see a saint cheerful in his afflictions — who knows what good news he expects to hear from Heaven, and how soon he knows not?

The saints' hope is laid up in Heaven — and yet it heals all the *wounds* which they receive on earth. If Christ sends his disciples to sea, He means to be with them when they most need His company. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you!" (Isa 43:2).

08. STRIFE AND CONTENTION

"Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds!" Hab 1:3

Contention is uncomfortable, with whoever we fall out: neighbors or friends, wife or husband, children or servants; but worst of all with *God*.

Consider the unhappy contentions and divisions that are found among the people of God. Contentions ever portend ill. Christ sets up the light of His gospel to walk and work by — not to fight and wrangle. And therefore, it were no wonder at all, if He should put it out, and so end the dispute. If these *storms* which have been of late years upon us, and are not yet off, had made Christians, as that did the disciples (Mar 6:48), ply their oars, and lovingly row all one way — it would have been happy. We might then have expected Christ to come walking toward us in mercy, and help us safely to land; but when we throw away the oar, and fall to strife in the ship, while the wind continues loud about us — truly we are more likely to drive Christ from us, than to invite Him to us; we are in a more probable way of sinking than saving of the ship and ourselves in it.

There is nothing (next to Christ and Heaven) that the devil grudges believers more, than their unity and mutual love. If he cannot rend them from Christ, stop them from getting Heaven — yet he takes some pleasure to see them go there in a storm, like a shattered fleet severed from one another, that they may have no assistance from, nor comfort of each other's company all the way. One ship is easier taken, than a squadron.

If the gospel will not allow us to pay our *enemies* in their own coin, and give them wrath for wrath — much less will it allow *brethren* to spit fire at one another's face.

When children fight and wrangle, now is the time they may expect their father to come and part them with his rod! "He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal 4:6). Strife and contention set a people next door to a curse. God brings a heavy judgment upon a people, when He Himself leaves them. "Be of one mind," says the apostle, "live in peace — and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2Co 13:11), implying that if they did not live in peace, they must not look to have His company long with them.

In our divided times, wherein there is so much difference of judgment, had there been less wrangling among ourselves and more wrestling with God — we would have been in a fairer way to find the *door of truth*, which so many are yet groping for. The way of controversy is dusty, and contentious disputes raise this dust, and blows it most into their eyes who gallop fastest in it, so that they miss the truth, which humble souls find upon their knees at the throne of grace.

Sinning times have ever been the saint's *praying* times: this sent Ezra with a heavy heart to confess the sin of his people (Ezra 9). And Jeremiah tells the wicked of his degenerate age, that his "soul should weep in secret places for their pride" (Jer 13:17).

"The love of many shall wax cold," and no wonder when *self-love* waxes so hot. It was foretold also by the apostle (2Ti 3:1-2), "In the last days . . . men shall be lovers of their own selves"; and what a black regiment follows this captain, sin! If once a man makes self the whole of his aim, farewell loving of, or praying for others. Charity cannot dwell in so narrow a house as the self-lover's heart; yes, it is opposed to it: "Love seeks not her own" (1Co 13:5).

They were none of the best Christians of whom Paul gives this character, "They sought their own." As the heart advances in grace, so it grows more public-spirited. The higher a man ascends a hill, the larger will be his prospect: his eye is not confined within the compass of his own wall. The carnal spirit thinks of none but himself; whereas grace elevates the soul, and the more grace a man has, the more it will enable him to look from himself into the condition of his brethren.

I have known one who when he had some envious unkind thoughts stirring in him against anyone (and who so holy as may not find such *vermin* sometimes creeping in his mind), he would go to the throne of grace where he would most earnestly pray for the increase of those good things in them which he before had seemed to grudge.

When love has once calmed the dust which passion and prejudice have blown in our eyes, we shall then stand at greater advantage for finding out truth. Pity your weak brother, and take him by the hand to help him — but despise him not; God can make him to stand — and allow you to fall. Christ does not quench the smoking flax — why should we?

The persecutor's sword is not at the church's throat among us — but Christians falling out among themselves! The question has often been asked, why the word preached has been no more effectual to convert the wicked, or to edify the saints? One of the chief causes, is the divisions among those who have made the greatest profession of the truth. The body of Christ is edified by love (Eph 4:16). The apostles themselves, when wrangling got little good by Christ's sermon, or the supper itself, administered by Christ unto them. One would have thought that was such a meal, in the strength whereof (as so many Elijahs) they might have gone a long journey; but, alas! we see how weak they arise from it; one denies his Master, and the rest in alarm forsake Him.

Christ prays for His people's *unity*, "That the world may believe that you have sent me" (Joh 17:21). This should stir up all that wish well to the gospel, to pray for the *reunion of divided hearts*. Hot disputes will not do it; prayer will, or nothing will. The God of peace can only set us at peace: if ever we are wise to agree, we must obtain our wisdom from above; this alone is pure and peaceable.

The unreasonableness of the strife between Abraham's herdsmen and Lot's, is aggravated by the near neighborhood of the heathens to them, "And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and Perizzite dwelled then in the land" (Gen 13:7).

O Christians, shall Herod and Pilate put you to shame? They clapped up a peace to strengthen their hands against Christ; and will you not unite against your common enemy?

Contentions put a stop to the growth of grace. The body may as well thrive in a fever — as the soul prosper when on a flame with strife and contention. Observe Eph 4:15 : "But speaking the truth in love," or being sincere in love, "may *grow up* into Him in all things." The apostle is upon a cure, showing how souls may come to thrive and flourish; and the *formula* he gives is a composition of these two rare drugs, sincerity and love; preserve these and all will go well.

There may be preaching — but no edifying, without love. You cut off your trade with Heaven, at the throne of grace; you will be little in prayer to God — if much in squabbling with your brethren. It is impossible to go from wrangling to praying, with a free spirit. And if you would be so bold as to knock at God's door, you are sure to have cold welcome, "Leave your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and *then* come and offer your gift."

As we cut off our trade with Heaven, so with one another; when two countries fall out, they must needs both pinch by the war. No Christian could well live without borrowing from his brethren. There is that "which every joint supplies according to the effectual working in the measure of every part" (Eph 4:16). Contentions and divisions, spoil all *fellowship* among believers. *Communication* flows from communion, and *communion* is founded upon *union*. The church grows under persecution; that sheds the seed all over the field, and brings the gospel where else it had not been heard of. But divisions and contentions, like a furious storm, washes the seed out of the land, with its heart, fatness, and all.

Contentions not only hazard the *decay of grace* — but *growth of sin*. "If you have bitter envying, and strife in your hearts, glory not; . . . for where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." Contention is the devil's forge, in which if he can but give a Christian a heat or two — he will soften him for his hammer of temptation. Moses himself, when his spirit was a little hot, "spoke unadvisedly with his lips."

We are prone to mistake our *heat* for *zeal*, whereas commonly in strife between saints it is a fire-ship sent in by Satan to break their unity and order; wherein while they stand they are an invincible armada: and Satan knows he has no other way but this to shatter them. When the Christians' language, which should be one, begins to be confounded, they are then near scattering.

Was there ever *less* love, charity, self-denial, heavenly mindedness, or the power of holiness — than in this sad age of ours? Alas! these are in great danger of perishing in the fire of contention and division, which a perverse zeal in less things has kindled among us.

Lay this deep in your heart, that God, who gives an *eye* to see truth — must give a *hand* to hold it fast when we have it. What we have from God, we cannot keep without God; keep therefore your acquaintance with God, or else truth will not keep her acquaintance long with you. God is light: you are going into the dark, as soon as you turn your back upon Him. We stand it better advantage to find truth, and keep it also, when devoutly *praying* for it — than fiercely wrangling and contending about it. Disputes soil the soul and raise the dust of passion; prayer sweetly composes the mind, and lays the passions which disputes draw forth; and I am sure a man may see further in a still, clear day, than in a windy and cloudy day. When a person talks much and rests little, we have great cause to fear his brain will not hold out; and truly, *when a person shall be much in talking and disputing about truth, without a humble spirit in prayer to be led into it, God may justly punish that man's pride with a spiritual frenzy in his mind, that he shall not know error from truth.*

A truth under dispute is stopped in the head — it cannot commence in the heart, or become practical in the life.

Many a sharp conflict there has been between saint and saint, scuffling in the dark through misunderstanding of the truth and each other.

There is a day coming, and it cannot be far from us, in which we shall meet lovingly in Heaven, and sit at one feast — full fruition of God shall be the feast, and peace and love the sweet music that shall sound to it; and what folly it is for us to fight here who shall feast there

09. PREACHING

"He who has My word, let him speak My word *faithfully*. What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord." Jer 23:28.

Preach the truth. Take heed of giving your own dreams and fancies in God's name. All is chaff, except the pure word of God. Oh stamp not God's image on your own coin! We live in high-flown times: many people are not content with truths which lie plainly in the Scriptures; and some, to please their wanton palates, have sublimated their notions so high, that they have flown out of the sight of the Scripture — and unawares run themselves, with others, into dangerous errors! Make not experiments upon the souls of people, by delivering what is *doubtful*. Better feed people with sound doctrine, though it be a plain meal — than that you should, with an outlandish dish, light on a wild gourd, that brings death into their pot.

Preach with the fear of God. A little bread, with God's blessing, may make a meal for a multitude. A great provision may soon shrink to nothing — if God helps not in the breaking of it. It is not your sermon in your head, or notes in your book, which will enable you to preach, except God opens your mouth. Acknowledge, therefore, God in all your ways, and lean not to your own understanding. The swelling of the heart, as well as of the wall, goes before a fall. How much may it provoke God, when you go to the pulpit, and pass by His door in the way, without calling for His assistance?

Not only the preparation of the heart — but the answer of the tongue, both are from the Lord (Pro 16:1). God keeps the key of the mouth — as well of the heart; not a word can be uttered, until God opens *the door of the lips* to give it a free egress. He opened the mouth of the donkey, and stopped the mouth of that wicked prophet, its master (Num 22:28-31): hear him confess as much to Balak: "Lo, I am come unto you: have I now any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that shall I speak" (verse 38).

Preach without fear of man. *There is nothing more unworthy than to see a people bold to sin — and the preacher afraid to reprove them.* It is said of Tacitus, that he took the same liberty to write the emperors' lives, that they took in leading them.

Man-pleasing is both endless and needless. If you *would*, you could not please all; and if you *could*, there is no need, if you please Him who can turn all their hearts and bind their hands. They speed best, that dare be faithful.

Jonah was afraid of his preaching work: O, he dared not go to such a great city with such a sad message: to tell them that they would be destroyed, was to set them at work to destroy him that brought the news; but how near was he to losing his life, by running away to save it?

Jeremiah seemed the only man likely to lose his life by his bold preaching; yet he had fairer quarter at last, than the smooth preachers of his time.

Just so, if you are free and bold, you may, indeed, be mocked by some — but you will be reverenced by more. Yes, even those who wag their heads at you — carry that in their conscience that which will make them fear you. They are the flattering preachers, who become base among the people (Mal 2:9). *It is not wisdom to provoke the judge, by flattering the prisoner.*

Where *one* says, How shall I do this and sin against *God?* — Many in their hearts say, How shall I do this and anger *man?* Herod feared *John* — and did many things; had he feared *God* — he would have labored to have done everything.

Fall to the work God which sets you about, and you engage His strength for you. "The way of the Lord is strength." Run from your work — and you engage God's strength against you; He will send some storm or other after you to bring home His runaway servant. How often has the coward soldier been killed in a ditch, or under some hedge — when the valiant soldier who stood his ground and kept his place, got off with safety and honors?

Preach with a good conscience. Keep a clear conscience: he cannot be a *bold reprover* — who is not a *conscientious liver*. Such a one must speak softly, for fear of waking his own guilty conscience. *Unholiness in the preacher's life, either will stop his mouth from reproving, or the people's ears from receiving.* Oh how harsh a sound does such a *cracked bell* make in the ears of his auditors!

Preach definitely. He is the better workman, who drives *one* nail home with reiterated blows — than he who tries to drive *many* nails — but fastens none. Such preachers are not likely to reach the conscience, who hop from one truth to another — but dwell on none. Were I to buy a garment in a shop, I would like him better that lays one good piece or two before me which suits me, which I may fully examine, than him who takes down all his shop, and heaps piece upon piece, merely to show his store, until at last I can look attentively on none, they lie so one upon another.

Preach faithfully. The preacher must read and study people as diligently as any book in his study — and as he finds them, dispense like a faithful steward unto them. People complain that we are so oft reproving the same error or sin — but the fault is their own, because they will not leave it, and this is the way the thief may be driven from the yard. Alas, alas, it is not once or twice rousing against sin, which will do it!

"It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1Co 4:2). The preacher's faithfulness stands in relation to him who entrusts him. It is very unlikely that a steward, in giving out provision, should please all the servants in the house. Such stewards have least thanks, when they do their work best. We are stewards of Christ's household, and Christ has set us our work: it is not every one's tongue in the house that shall be the test. *A wise physician seeks to cure, not to please his patient!* He who chides when he is sick, for the bitterness of the medicines — will give you thanks for it when he is recovered.

Preach simply. The Word of God is too sacred a thing, and preaching too solemn a work, to be toyed and played with — as is the usage of some, who make a sermon but matter of wit and fine oratory. Their sermon is like a child's doll, from which if you take its dress, the rest is worth nothing. It is well indeed when the people can keep pace with the preacher. To preach truths and notions above the hearers' capacity, is like a nurse that should go to feed a child with a spoon too big to go into its mouth!

Preach wisely. "Because the preacher was wise, he . . . sought to find out acceptable words" (Ecc 12:9-10). Not crude, loose, and undigested stuff, in a slovenly manner brought forth, lest the slop of the cook should turn the stomach of the guests.

Preach gently. [illegible]

The oil makes the nail drive without splitting the board. The Word enters the heart more kindly, than when it falls most gently: "Ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness" (Psa 45:4). Be as rough to your people's sins as you can — so long as you are gentle to their souls. Do you take the rod of reproof into your hand? Let them see that love, not anger, gives the blow. The word preached comes, indeed, best from a warm heart.

"The words of wise men are heard in quiet" (Ecc 9:17). Let the reproof be as sharp as you will; but the spirit must be meek. *Passion* raises the blood of him that is reproved; but *compassion* turns his affections. We must not denounce wrath, in wrath.

Preach diligently. The bee will not sit on a flower where no honey can be sucked, neither should the Christian. "Why do you sit here idle?" — you should say to your soul, when you have so much to do for God and your soul, and so little time to dispatch it in?

10. READING AND MEDITATION

"Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine . . . Meditate upon these things." 1Ti 4:13-15.

Meditation is to the sermon, what the harrow is to the seed — it covers those truths which else might have been picked or washed away.

An affectionate hearer will not be a forgetful hearer. Love helps the memory: Can a woman forget her child, or a maid her ornaments, or a bride her attire? No, they love them too well. Were the truths of God thus precious to you, you would with David think of them day and night. Even when the Christian, through weakness of memory, cannot remember the very words he hears, to repeat them; yet, then he keeps the power and savor of them in his spirit, as when sugar is dissolved in wine you cannot see it — but you may taste it. When meat is eaten and digested, it is not to be found as it was received — but the man is cheered and strengthened by it, more able to walk and work than before, by which you may know it is not lost. Just so, you may taste the truths the Christian heard, in his spirit, see them in his life.

Until the *heart* is touched — the *mind* will not be fixed. Therefore you may observe, it is said, God opened the heart of Lydia "that she attended" (Act 16:14). The mind goes of the will's errand; we spend our *thoughts*, on what our *hearts* propose. If the heart has no sense of its ignorance, or no desires after God — no wonder such a one listens not what the preacher says, his heart sends his mind another way. "They sit before you as my people," says God, "but their heart goes after their covetousness."

When the soul stands upon this *Pisgah of meditation*, looking by an eye of faith, upon all the great and precious things laid up by a faithful God for him — it is easy to despise the world's love and wrath. But, alas! it is hard for us to go up there who are so short-winded, and soon tired with a few steps up this mount of God. Would we but frequently retire from the world, and bestow some of that time in secret waiting upon God, which we lavish out upon inferior pleasures, and entertainments of the creature — we would invite God's Holy Spirit to us.

Let a wicked man set up a lust for his thoughts to dally with, and the devil will soon be at his elbow to assist him. And shall we not believe the Holy Spirit as ready to lend His helping hand to a holy meditation? Doubtless He is. Spread you your sails, and the Spirit will fill them with His heavenly breath. Be careful to provide fuel, gather matter for meditation, set your thoughts at work upon it — and the Spirit of God will kindle your affections. "While I was musing," says David, "the fire burned" (Psa 39:3).

Meditation fills the heart with heavenly matter — but prayer gives the discharge and pours it forth upon God. Meditation is prayer's handmaid, to wait on it before and after the performance. It is as the plough before the sower, to prepare the heart for the duty of prayer, and as the harrow to cover the seed when it is sown.

Deadness in the heart of a saint will damp his zeal, if not cleared by daily watchfulness. Look, therefore, narrowly whence your cooling comes; perhaps your heart is too much let out upon the *world* in the day, and at night your spirits are spent, when you should be in prayer. *If you will be hotter in duty — you must be colder towards the world.*

Now, there is no better way for this, than to set your soul under the *frequent meditation of Christ's love to you*, your relation to Him, with the great and glorious things you expect from Him. But if you let your heart continue soaking in the thoughts of an inordinate love to the world — you will find when you come to pray, that your hearts will be as a wet log at the back of a fire, long in kindling, and soon out again.

Perhaps the deadness of your heart in prayer arises from not having a deep sense of your needs, and the mercies you are in need of. Could you but pray *feelingly* — you would pray *fervently*. The hungry man needs no help to teach him how to *beg*.

Prize the word, feed on the word, whether it be in public, or in a conference with some Christian friend, or in secret reading and meditation by your solitary self. Let none of these be disused, or *carnally* used by you. When your stomach fails to the word, your faith must needs begin to fail on the word.

But you will say, If we had so much time to spare as others, we would not be so unacquainted with the Scriptures. *Could God find heart and time to pen and send this love-letter to you — and you find none to read and peruse it!* Would the sick man take no time to look on his physician's prescription! Would the condemned malefactor fail to look on his prince's letter of grace, wherein a pardon is signed!

Must the world have all your time and swallow you up alive! Are you such a slave to your pelf, as to tie your soul to your purse strings; and take no more time for the saving of it, than this cruel master will afford you! Who gave you permission thus to overload yourself with the incumbrance of the world? Is not God the *Lord of your time?* "Why did you not read My word, and meditate thereon?" will Christ say at that day. Dare you, then, be so impudent as to say, Lord, I was overcharged with the cares, and drunk with the love of the world — and, therefore, I could not read it! Well, if this be the thief that robs you of your *time*, get out of his hands, lest it also rob you of your *soul!*

What calling is more encumbering than a soldier's, and of all the soldiers, the general's? Such a one was Joshua — yet he had a strict command given him to study the Scriptures: (Jos 1:8) "This book shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein *day and night*." Must Joshua, in the midst of drums and trumpets, and distractions of war, find time to meditate on the law of God — and shall a few trivial occasions in your private calling discharge you from the same duty?

Take heed that you come not to the Scriptures with an unholy heart. If ever you know the mind of God in His word — the Spirit must impart it to you. And will He who is so holy, take you by your foul hand, to lead you into truth? No, your doom is set, "None of the wicked shall understand" (Dan 12:10). If we have the truth for our guest, and are acquainted with the mind and will of God — we must have a *holy heart for its lodging!*

Go to God by prayer for a *key* to unlock the mysteries of His word. It is not the plodding, but the praying soul — that will get this treasure of scripture knowledge. God often brings a truth to the Christian's hand as a return of prayer, which he had long hunted for in vain with much labor and study: "There is a God in Heaven who reveals secrets" (Dan 2:28); and where does He reveal the secrets of His word — but at the throne of grace? "From the first day," says the angel, "that you set your heart to understand, and to chasten yourself before your God, your words were heard"; that is for your prayer (Dan 10:12). And what was this heavenly messenger's errand to Daniel, but to open more fully the Scripture to him? as appears by verse 14 compared with verse 21. This holy man had got some knowledge by his study in the word — and this sets him a-praying — and prayer fetched an angel from Heaven to give him more light.

"Your word have I hid in my *heart*, that I might not sin against you" (Psa 119:11). It was not the Bible in his *hand* to read it, not the word on his *tongue* to speak of it; but the hiding it in his *heart*, that he found effectual against sin.

"Quench not the Spirit, despise not prophesyings" (1Th 5:19-20). They are coupled together; he who despises one, loses both. If the scholar is too proud to learn from the guide — he is unworthy to be taught by the master.

"They shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2Ti 4:3-4). Satan commonly stops the ear from hearing sound doctrine, before he opens it to embrace corrupt doctrine.

11. PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING

"Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Php 4:6.

Prayer **the sign of** *life.* What is prayer — but the breathing forth of that grace which is breathed into the soul by the Holy Spirit? When God breathed into man the breath of life, he became a living soul. Just so, when God breathes into the creature the breath of spiritual life — he becomes a praying soul: "Behold, he prays," says God of Paul to Ananias (Act 9:11). Praying is the same to the new creature, as crying to the natural babe. The child is not learned by art to cry — but by nature — it comes into the world crying. Praying is not a lesson got by forms and rules — but flowing from principles of new life.

Prayer and reality. Prayer is an act in which we have immediately to do with the great God, to whom we approach in prayer. It is too sacred a duty to be performed between sleeping and waking, with a heavy eye or a drowsy heart — this God complained of: "There is none that calls upon Your name, that stirs up himself to take hold of You" (Isa 64:7). He counts it no prayer, where the heart is not stirred up and awake. Our behavior in prayer has an universal influence upon all the passages of our whole life. As a man is in prayer — so he is likely to be in all the rest; if he is careless in *praying* — then he is negligent in hearing, and loose in his *walking*. Prayer is the channel, in which the stream of divine grace, blessing, and comfort — runs from God into the heart; dam up the channel — and the stream is stopped.

Prayer and integrity. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa 66:18). Now, when God refuses to hear, we may be sure the Spirit refuses to assist; for God never rejects a prayer which His Spirit indites. Have you defiled yourself with any *known* sin? Think not to have Him help you in prayer, until He has helped you to repent. He will carry you to the *laver* — before He goes with you to the *altar*.

Take heed that you pray not with a reservation. Be sure you renounce, what you would have God remit. He desires not to be purged from the *filth* of sin — prays in vain to be eased of the guilt. If we love the *work* of sin — we must take the wages. A false heart could be willing to have his sin *covered* — but the sincere desires his heart may be *cleansed*. David begged a clean heart, as well as a quiet conscience: "Blot out all my iniquities; create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psa 51:9-10).

In nothing do our hearts more cheat us than in our prayers, and in no requests more than those which are leveled against our *lusts*. That is oftentimes least *intended* — which is most *pretended*. The saint's prayer may miscarry from some secret grudge which is lodged in his heart against his brother.

Prayer and diligence. God has appointed prayer as a help to our diligence — not as a cloak for our sloth. Idle beggars are welcome neither to God's door nor man's. What! Will you lift up your hands to God in prayer — and then put them in your pocket? Is it a lust you are praying against? And do you sit down idle to see whether it will now die alone? Will that prayer slay one lust — which lets another (your sloth I mean) live under its nose? Do you think to walk loosely all day, yielding yourself, and betraying the glory of God into the hands of your lust — and then mend all with a prayer at night?

O Christian, should it not make you blush much more, to see the whole town up, and as busy as bees in a garden, one flying this way, and another that way, and all to bring a little more of this *world's perishing pelf* into their hive — out of which death before long will drive them, and force them to leave what with so much pains they have gathered for others — while you sleep away your precious time, though you are sure to carry your gettings into the eternal world with you, and there enjoy the fruit of your short labor here, with everlasting glory!

Prayer and watching. He who prays and watches not, is like him that sows a field with precious seed — but leaves the gate open for hogs to come and rout it up!

"Watch and pray," says Christ to His disciples; He knew they could not do that work *sleeping*. But it is not enough to keep the eye awake, if you wander it to wander: "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in your way" (Psa 119:37). To pray, and not watch what becomes of our prayer, is a great folly, and no little sin. What is this but to take the name of God in vain? Yet thus do *many knock at God's door, and then run away to the world and think no more of their prayers.*

Prayer and perseverance. By "praying always" we are exhorted to the daily, constant exercise of prayer; by "praying with perseverance," we are pressed to bear up against discouragements, as to any particular request we may make at the throne of grace, and not to give over, though we have not a speedy answer to it. So that the former is opposed to a neglect of the duty in its stated seasons, and the latter to a fainting in our spirits, as to any particular suit we put up.

Prayer and supplication. "Praying with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." In praying for saints, you must pray for all: I do not mean for both living and dead; prayer is a means to wait upon them in their way; at death, when they are at their journey's end, prayers are useless, and the wicked in that estate are beneath, the saints above, our prayers. We cannot help the wicked, the tree is fallen — and so it must lie. We read of a change the *body* shall have after death. Vile bodies may change — but *filthy souls* cannot after death be made glorious. If they leave the body filthy, so shall they meet it at the resurrection. As the wicked are *beyond* our help — so the saints are *above* all need of our help.

We are to love all saints, therefore to pray for all. The new creature never lacks its new nature; if God loves all His children, then will you love all your brethren. When Paul commends Christians for this grace of love, he does it thus: (Eph 1:15) "After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints." Now, if we *love* all, we cannot but *pray* for all.

Though we are to pray for all saints — yet some call for a more special remembrance at our hands: for instance, those that are near to us by bond of *nature* as well as of grace. "A brother beloved, specially to me — but how much more unto you, both in the flesh, and in the Lord" (Phm 1:16). You are to pray particularly for those that are in distress: whoever you forget, remember these — this is a fit season for love. A friend for adversity is as proper as fire for a winter's day.

Job's friends chose the right time to visit him — but took not the right course of improving their visit: had they spent the time in praying for him which they did in hot disputes with him — they would have profited him, and pleased God more.

Prayer and thanksgiving. Prayer is a means to dispose the heart to praise. When David begins a psalm with prayer — he commonly ends it with praise. That Spirit which leads a soul out of itself to God for supply — will direct it to the same God with His praise. We do not borrow money of one man — and return it to another. If God has been your strength, surely you will make Him your song. The thief comes not to thank a man for what he steals out of his yard. Mercies ill gotten, are commonly as ill spent, because they are not sanctified, and so become fuel to feed lusts.

As a necessary ingredient in all our prayers: Let your requests be made known with *thanksgiving* (Php 4:6). This *spice* must be in all our *offerings*. He who prays for a mercy he wants, and is not thankful for mercies received, may seem mindful of himself — but is forgetful of God. God will not put His mercies into a rent purse; and such is an unthankful heart.

Daniel, when in the very shadow of death, the plot being laid to take away his life, prayed three times a day, and gave thanks before his God (Dan 6:10). To have heard him *pray* in that great strait would not have afforded so much matter for wonder; but to have his *heart in tune* for giving thanks in such a sad hour, was admirable.

Prayer and trial. When prayer cannot prevail to keep a temporal mercy alive — yet it will have a powerful influence to keep your *heart* alive when that dies. O, it is sad, when a man's estate and comfort are buried in the same grave together. None will bear the loss of an enjoyment so patiently — as he who was exercised in prayer while he had it. The more David prayed for his child while alive — the fewer tears he shed for it when dead.

Prayer and prosperity. Prayer is not a *winter* garment: it is then to be worn indeed — but not to be left off in the *summer of prosperity*. If you would find some at prayer, you must stay until it thunders and lightenings; and not go to them except it be in a *storm*. Pray in prosperity, that you may speed when you pray in adversity. Own God now — that He may acknowledge you then. Shall that friend be welcome to us — who never gives us a visit but when he comes to borrow?

Pray in prosperity — that you may not be ensnared by it. Prosperity is no friend to the *memory*, therefore we are cautioned so much to beware when we are full, lest we forget God. You shall find, in Scripture, that the saints have had their saddest falls — on the most even ground. Noah, who had seen the whole world drowned in water, no sooner was safe on shore — but himself is drowned in wine! David's heart was fixed when in the

wilderness; but his wanton eye rolled and wandered — when he walked upon the *terrace of his palace*.

Morning and evening prayer. Prayer must be the key of the morning — and lock of the night. We do not show ourselves Christians, if we do not open our eyes with prayer when we rise, and shut them again with the same *key* we lie down at night. Pray as often as you please *besides*.

If you will have fire for your evening sacrifice, labor to keep what is already on your altar from going out. What you fill the vessel with — you must expect to draw thence. If water is put in — we cannot, without a miracle, think to draw out wine. What! are you all day filling your heart with earth (God being not in all your thoughts) — and do you look to draw Heaven from thence at night? He who is heavenly in his earthly employments — will be the less worldly in his heavenly employments. It was a sweet speech of a *dying* saint, that he was going to change his place — but not his company.

Broken prayer. Sometimes you hear one pray with a moving expression, while you can hardly get out a few broken words in duty, and you are ready to accuse yourself and to admire him; as if the *brightness* of the key made it open the door better. "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed" (Jam 5:17). *A weak hand with a sincere heart — is able to turn the key in prayer!*

Ejaculatory prayer. Ejaculatory prayer *(a short utterance that expresses a strong feeling)* to God, is the short dagger you are to use for your defense against temptation — when you have no time to draw the long sword of solemn prayer. Thus you may pray in any place, company, or employment.

Public prayer. When you pray before others, observe on what you bestow your chief care and zeal, whether on the externals or internals of prayer: that which is exposed to the eye and ear of men — or that for the eye and ear of God; the devout posture of your body — or the inward devotion of your soul; the pomp of your words — or the power of your faith; the agitation of your bodily spirits in the vehemency of your voice — or the fervency of your spirit in heart-breaking affections.

These inward workings, are the very soul of prayer. The sincere soul dares not be crude in his outward posture; he is careful of his words, that they may be grave and pertinent, neither would he pray them asleep who join with him, by a cold manner of delivering his prayer. But still, it is the inward disposition of his heart which he principally looks to, knowing well, that it is possible to be warm in prayer, thereby benefitting others — and at the same time have his own heart cold and idle. Therefore he does not count that he prays well, except he finds his own affections drawn out. The hypocrite, if he comes off the duty with the applause of others in the external performance, is well pleased.

Formal prayer. Take heed of formal praying, this is as baneful to grace as not praying. A plaster, though proper, and of sovereign virtue — yet if it be laid on cold, may do more hurt than good.

Do you think that God will welcome that prayer to Heaven — which has not your heart to bear it company? And how can your heart go with it, when you have sent it another way? Will God hear you — when you mock Him? And if this be not to mock Him — then what is? Like children that give a knock at a door, and then run away to their play again; thus you raise your voice to God, and then are gone in your roving thought to hold converse with the world, or worse. Is not this trifling with God?

Satan disturbs you in praying, that he may make you *weary* of praying. Indeed he is not likely to miss his mark, if you let these *vermin* go on to breed in your heart. For these will rob you of the sweetness of prayer; and when the *marrow* is once out, you will easily be persuaded to throw the *bone* away. He is in danger to forsake his meat, who has lost his relish for it. Prayer is a tedious work for him who has no pleasure in it: and weariness *in* it stands next door to weariness *of* it.

The best way to keep vessels from leaking, is to let them stand full. A vain heart out of prayer, will be little better in prayer. Walk in the company of sinful thoughts all the day — and you will hardly shut the door upon them, when you go into your prayer closet. You have taught them to be bold; they will now plead acquaintance with you, and crowd in after you, like little children, who if you play with them, will cry after you when you would be rid of their company.

Beware that your prayers do not degenerate into a lifeless formality. What we do *commonly* — we are prone to do *slightly*. He is a rare Christian that keeps his course in prayer, and yet grows not to pray of *mere course*. He who watches his heart all day, is most likely to find it in tune for prayer at night; whereas *loose walking breeds lazy praying.*

Never was any formal prayer of the Holy Spirit's making; when He comes, it is a time of life.

Lengthy prayer. Pray *often*, rather than very *long*. It is difficult to remain long in prayer, and not slacken in our affections. Especially observe this in social prayers; for when we pray in company, we must consider those who travel with us: as Jacob said: "I will lead on softly, as the children are able to endure."

Hindrances to prayer. There is an antipathy between sinning and praying. The child that has misspent the day in play abroad, steals to bed at night, for fear of a chiding from his father. *Sin and prayer are such contraries, that it is impossible at one stride to step from one to another.*

Another method Satan has to make the Christian put off prayer, is some worldly business that is to be dispatched. Take heed of overcharging yourself with worldly business, which is done when you grasp more thereof than will consist with your Christian calling. God allows you to give to the world that which is the world's — but He will not allow you to pay the *world*, that which is due to *Him*.

We could not easily lack time to pray, if our hearts would but persuade our heads to devise and study how our other affairs might be disposed of, without harm to our devotions. That cloth which a bungler thinks too little for a garment, a good workman can make one of it, and leave some for another use also. O, there is a great deal of art in cutting out time, with little loss. Some look upon every minute of time spent in the *closet* — as lost in the *shop*. Does the gardener mow the less, for sharpening his scythe? Does giving thanks to God before a meal, spoil the dinner? No: nor does prayer hinder the Christian either in his employments or enjoyments — but expedites the one, and sanctifies the other. "Acknowledge God in all your ways, and lean not to your own understanding."

Godliness has the "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1Ti 4:8). This earth below, to a saint, is a land of promise, though not the land that is chiefly promised. God has not promised him *Heaven*, and left him to the wide world to shift for his outward subsistence; He has not bid them live by faith, for their souls, and live by their wits, for their bodies. No; He who has promised to give him both "grace and glory," has also said, "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Psa 84:11). Their bill of fare here, is provided as well as their inheritance hereafter.

Neglect of prayer. When Saul had given over inquiring after *God* — we hear him knocking at the *devil's* door, and asking counsel of a witch. Take heed of living near the tempter! If Satan might have his wish, surely it would be this — that the creature might live prayerless.

Satan cannot but deny but great wonders have been wrought by prayer. As the spirit of prayer goes up — so his kingdom goes down. *Satan's stratagems against prayer* are three: First, If he can, he will keep you from prayer. If that is not feasible, secondly, he will strive to interrupt you in prayer. And, thirdly, if that plot takes not, he will labor to hinder the success of your prayer.

"You cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God" (Job 15:4). Eliphaz' doctrine was true, though his application was false. Sins of *commission* — are the usual punishments that God inflicts on people for sins of *omission*. He who leaves a duty, may fear to be left to commit a crime. He who turns his ear from the *truth* — takes the ready course to be given over to believe *fables* (2Ti 4:4). *He who casts off prayer, it is a wonder if you find him not, before long, cast into some foul sin!*

Answers to prayer. God has engaged to answer the prayers of His people, and fulfill the desires of those who fear Him (Psa 145:19). But it proves a long voyage sometimes, before the praying saint has the return of his prayers. There comes often a long and sharp winter — between the *sowing* time of prayer, and the *reaping*. He hears us, indeed, as soon as we pray — but we often do not hear of Him as soon. Prayers are not long on their journey to Heaven — but long coming thence in a full answer. Never was faithful prayer lost at sea. No merchant trades with such certainty, as the praying saint. Some prayers, indeed, have a longer voyage than others — but then they come with the richer lading at last!

Sometimes we have *speedy* return of prayers — "In the day that I cried — you answered me." While the church were at God's door praying for Peter's deliverance — Peter is knocking at theirs, to tell them their prayer is heard.

12. PATIENCE AND HOPE

"Whatever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Rom 15:4.

Hope has an *eye* that can see Heaven in a cloudy day, and an *anchor* that can find firm land under a weight of waters to hold by; it can expect good out of evil.

True hope is a jewel that no one wears but Christ's bride; a grace with which no one is graced, but the believer's soul. *Christless* and *hopeless* are joined together (Eph 2:12).

We are directed to "take the helmet the hope of salvation"; and this not for some particular occasion, and then hang it up until another extraordinary strait calls us to take it down, and use it again; but we must take it so as never to lay it aside, until God shall take off this helmet, to put on a crown of glory in place of it. "Be sober, and hope to the end," is the apostle Peter's counsel (1Pe 1:13).

The hope of Heaven, leaves a blot upon the world in the Christian's thoughts. He who looks *on Heaven*, must needs look *off earth*. The soul's eye can as little as the body's — be above and below at the same time. *Here* is not my hope, says the soul, and therefore not my haunt — my hope is in Heaven, from whence I look for my Savior, and my salvation to come with Him.

Have you *Heaven* in hope? It is more than if you had the whole world in hand! The greatest monarch the earth has, will be glad, in a dying hour, to change his crown for your helmet; his crown will not procure him this helmet — but your helmet will bring you to a crown; a crown not of gold — but of glory, which, once on, shall never be taken off.

Why are men dull and heavy in the service of God? Truly because their hopes are so dull. *Hopeless* and *lifeless* go together. No wonder the work goes hard — when men have no hope to be well paid for their labor. He who thinks he works for a song, will not sing at his work. The best customer is sure to be served best and first; and him we count the best customer, whom we hope will be the best paymaster. If God is thought so, we will leave all to do His business. Nothing better to clear the soul of sloth and listlessness of spirit in the service of God — than hope well improved and strengthened. It is the very remedy which the apostles prescribe for this disease: "We desire that every one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that you be not slothful" (Heb 6:11-12).

"What kind of people ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God?" (2Pe 3:11-12). Live up to your hopes, Christian; let there be a decorum kept between your *principles* and your *practices* — your hope of Heaven, and walk on earth. The *eye* should direct the *foot*. You look for salvation — walk the same way your eye looks. There is a decorum, which if a Christian does not observe in his walking, he betrays his high calling and hopes unto scorn. To *look* high, and *live* low — how ridiculous it appears!

Let your hope of Heaven moderate your affections to earth. "Be sober, and hope," says the apostle (1Pe 1:13). You that look for so much in another world, may be very well content with a little in this poor world. Nothing is more unfitting to a heavenly hope, than an earthly heart.

I doubt not but every gracious person finds the nearer to Heaven he gets in his hopes — the farther he goes from earth in his desires. When he stands upon these battlements of Heaven — he can look down upon *this dung-hill world* as a little dust-heap, next to nothing.

Let your *hope of Heaven*, conquer your *fear of death*. Why should you be afraid to die — who hope to live by dying? Is the apprentice afraid of the day when his time will be out? Is he who runs a race — afraid of coming too soon to his goal? Is the pilot troubled — when he sees his harbor? Death is all this to you! Your indenture expires, and your Jubilee is come! Your race is run, and the crown won, and is sure to drop on your head when your soul goes out of your body. Your *voyage*, how troublesome soever it was in its sailing, is now happily *finished* — and death does but land your soul on the *shore of eternity* at your heavenly Father's door, never to be put to sea more.

The Turks say, they do not think we Christians believe Heaven to be such a glorious place as we profess and talk of; for, if we did, we would not be so afraid to go there! Christian, understand aright what *message* death brings to you — and the fear of it will be over! Death snatches you, indeed, from this world's enjoyments — but it leads you to the felicities of another, incomparably better world. And who, at a feast, will chide the servant that takes away the first course to make room for the second to be set on — which consists of far greater delicacies!

A *sad heart* does not befit a *living hope*. Christ takes no more delight to dwell in a sad heart, than we in a dark house. Therefore, let in the light which sheds its beams upon you from the promise — or else your sweet Savior will be gone. We do not entertain our friends in a *dark room*, or sit by those who visit us mopish, lest they should think we are weary of their company. Christ brings such good news with Him, as may bespeak better welcome with you, than a disconsolate spirit.

Would you have your hope strong? Then keep your conscience pure. You cannot defile your conscience, without weakening your hope. Living *godly* in this present world, and looking for the *blessed hope* laid up for us in the other, are both conjoined (Tit 2:13). A soul wholly void of godliness, must needs be as destitute of all true hope. And the godly person who is loose and careless in his holy walking — will soon find his hope languishing. All sin disposes the soul that tampers with it, to trembling fears, and shakings of heart.

God forbid, Christian, that death should find you wanton and negligent in your walking, that he should surprise you *lying in the puddle of some sin!*

Can a bird fly, when one of its wings is broken? Faith and a good conscience are hope's two wings. If, therefore, you have wounded your *conscience* by any sin, renew your *repentance* — so that you may exercise faith for the pardon of it, and redeem your hope, when the mortgage that is now upon it shall be taken off. If a Jew had pawned his bedclothes, God provided mercifully, that it should be restored before night; "For," says he, "that is his covering; wherein shall he sleep." (Exo 22:27). Truly, hope is the saint's covering, wherein he wraps himself, when he lays his body down to sleep in the grave: "My flesh," says David, "shall rest in hope" (Psa 16:9). A sad going to the *bed of grave* he has, who has no hope of a resurrection to life.

Hope is the *handkerchief* that God puts into His people's hands, to wipe the tears from their eyes, which their present troubles, and long stay of expected mercies, draw from them (Jer 31:16-17): "Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded, says the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in your end."

"May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ" (2Th 3:5). It is a *way* you will never find, a *work* you will never be able to do of yourselves, thus to wait patiently until Christ comes. "May the Lord," therefore, "direct your hearts" into it. *Love* Him, and you will *wait* for Him. So Jud 1:21 : "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."