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Φρόνημα τοῦ Πνεύματος;

OR,

THE GRACE AND DUTY

OF BEING

SPIRITUALLY MINDED,

DECLARED AND PRACTICALLY IMPROVED.

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ABRIDGED

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"To be spiritually minded is life and peace."—Rom. viii. 6.
"Set your affection on things above."—Col. iii. 2.

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PREFACE TO THE ABRIDGEMENT.

The reader is entitled to some brief account of the manner in which I was led to undertake this abridgement. In giving this, I must advert very concisely to a part of my own personal history. In the family of my Father, under whose Christian influence it was the merciful allotment of Providence, that my childhood should be spent, there was a small library, consisting mostly of religious books. Those not strictly religious, were yet of useful tendency; so that, until the age of 12 years, when my academical education began, I had never seen a single *bad* book. In this little paternal library, was Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, the reading of which, on account of its simplicity, its rhetorical vivacity, its Christian fervor and pungency, made an indelible impression on my mind. This impression probably had more efficacy in the formation of my subsequent intellectual and moral habits, than any other means, except parental influence. It is doubtless owing to these circumstances, in part, that I have always felt so high a regard for Baxter and his writings; and also that the period when he lived, especially as it is described in his auto-biography, has been more interesting to me than any other in the whole compass of history. But valuable as the *Saints' Rest* has been to me and to multitudes of others, its influence must have been very limited, had it remained in its original form, a quarto volume of more than 800 pages. For all the benefit of this work, readers in general have been indebted to Mr. Fawcit's abridgement.

The esteem which I cherished for Baxter led me to a

gradual acquaintance with his distinguished cotemporaries, Jer. Taylor, Howe, Flavel, Owen, &c. Early in my ministry, it became my settled purpose to read a passage daily, if it were but a single page, in some spiritual writer of the above class. My object was, to promote the spirituality of my own heart, and keep in lively exercise its Christian sensibilities, in connexion with my private devotions and my preparations for the pulpit. I always have found, what I presume is common in the experience of my brethren, that no intellectual process, no degree of labor at the study table, would enable me to prepare a profitable sermon, unless my heart was kept near to God, during its preparation. And amid the crowd of various avocations to which every minister is, more or less, unavoidably exposed, his heart cannot be thus kept, without means specially adapted, and systematically employed for this purpose.

With such views, resulting from experience, and from the nature of the case, I many years ago formed the design of selecting a set of *Spiritual Classics*, for the special benefit of young preachers, adapted also, as works on spiritual and experimental piety must be, to general usefulness. This design was postponed from an understanding that a similar selection was contemplated by men very competent to its execution, in Great Britain. Such a selection has since been made, to some extent; and several most excellent works have been published, in pursuance of the plan; but still, something more complete is needed, in this department of our Christian literature. Whether I shall hereafter contribute any aid in acccomplishing an object, which it is my earnest wish to see accomplished, must depend on the degree of health, which it may please God to grant me.

As to the work which is now offered to the public, it is proper to say, that, in common with others who have read his writings, I have long entertained a high veneration for Dr. Owen, as conspicuous among the Christian luminaries of his age. His *work on the Hebrews* I have always es-

teemed as of great value for the justness of its doctrinal views, and its decided spirit of evangelical piety, though the thoughts are too much sub-divided and amplified for the profitable perusal of most readers. When I took up his work on *Spiritual Mindedness*, it was in pursuance of the plan above mentioned, of reading some part of such a book daily, for my own benefit. I had proceeded but a few pages, when I found it rich in matter, discriminating, instructive and weighty in sentiment; but so pleonastic in phraseology, that it was impossible to read it with the interest which I had anticipated. As an experiment, however, I pursued the reading, a few pages at a time, blotting out with my pen words and clauses which obscured the sense, or rendered the expression of it more feeble. In this way I soon became satisfied, that without the alteration of a single sentiment, and with scarcely any change of words, except by omission, the book might be rendered far more useful to all descriptions of readers. To illustrate this remark, I subjoin here a specimen of the process adopted as to abridgement. The sentences below are given as in the original work, the brackets denoting the parts omitted by erasure.

"I shall first show what the spiritual mind is, [and wherein it doth consist,] and then how [it doth evidence itself, so that] we may form a right judgment whether it be in us or not.

"This is the best [and most sure] indication of the inward [frame and] state of the mind. For if it be so, [on the one side] as [un]to the carnal mind, it is so, [on the other] as [un]to the spiritual. Wherefore to be spiritually minded, is to have the course [and stream] of [those thoughts which we ordinarily retreat unto, which we approve of as suited unto] our affections [to be] about spiritual things.

"When any efficacious conviction passes on the mind, it forces [the egress of] its thoughts up[wards] towards heavenly things, [it will think much and frequently of them,] as if that were their proper motion and course; but so soon as the power of the conviction [decays or] wears off, and

the mind is no more sensible of its [force and] impression, the thoughts return [again un]to their old course [and track] as the water tends downwards."

From this specimen the reader will see that I undertook no small task, to reduce the accumulated tautologies and pleonasms of Owen to the standard of good modern English, and that with so few alterations of his words, as to leave the style his own. The work of abbreviation, however, has sometimes been extended to the omission of whole sentences, and even paragraphs.

Among his cotemporaries, Baxter, Jer. Taylor, Bates, and several others were much superior to Owen in point of style. But in profound thought, consistent piety, and extent of theological learning, scarcely had he any superior, even amid the constellation of great minds, which clustered together in the 17th century. That he was a great man is evident from the fact, that other men, and even great men, have imitated his faults. It was not till I began to analyse his sentences, that I was satisfied to what extent his influence had injured the style of the great theologian of the last century, the elder Edwards, and of other distinguished writers of the same school.

The increased regard which has been manifested of late for the writings of the English Puritan fathers, ought to be hailed as a token for good to our Zion. Should the present volume be found, as I trust it will, to promote this favorable tendency in the public taste, it may be followed by a similar abridgement of the same author on the 130th Psalm.

E. PORTER.

Theol. Sem. Andover, Oct. 1832.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

I think it necessary to give the *reader* a brief account of the nature and design of the ensuing discourse, which may both direct him in the reading, and be some kind of *apology* for myself in the publishing of it. He may therefore know, that the thoughts here communicated, were originally private meditations for my own use, in a season wherein I was cut off from ability to do any thing for the edification of others, and from expectation, that ever I should be able any more in this world. Receiving, as I thought, some satisfaction in the exercise of my own meditations therein, when God was graciously pleased to restore a little strength to me, I insisted on the same subject, in the instruction of a private *congregation;* and this I did partly out of a sense of the *advantage* I had received myself by being conversant in them, and partly from an apprehension, that the duties *directed* to in the whole *discourse;* were seasonable to be urged on the *consciences* of *professors.* For leaving others to the choice of their own *methods,* I acknowledge, that these are the two things whereby I regulate my work in the whole course of my *ministry;*—to impart those truths, of whose power I hope I have had, in some measure, a real *experience;* and to press those duties, which *present circumstances,* render necessary to be attended to in a peculiar manner. For, as in the work of the *ministry* generally, the *whole counsel of God,* concerning the salvation of the *church by Jesus Christ,* is to be declared—so, in particular, we are not to *fight uncertainly, as men beating the air, nor shoot our arrows at random, without a certain scope and design.* Knowledge of the flock whereof we are *overseers,* with a due *consideration* of their *wants,* their *graces,* their *tempta-*

tions, their *light*, their *strength*, and *weakness*, are required herein. And when, in pursuance of that design, the preparation of the word to be dispensed proceeds from zeal for the glory of God, and compassion to the souls of men; when it is delivered with the demonstration of a due reverence to God, whose word it is, and of authority towards them to whom it is dispensed, with a deep sense of that great account, which both they that preach, and they that hear the word preached, must shortly give, before *the judgment-seat of Christ*, there may be a comfortable expectation of a blessed issue of the whole work. But my design is, only to declare the reasons why I judged the preaching and publishing of this discourse concerning the *grace and duty of being spiritually minded* not to be altogether unseasonable, in the present circumstances of most Christians. And the first thing which I would observe to this end is, the present importunity of the world to impose itself on the minds of men, aud the various ways of insinuation, whereby it possesseth and filleth them. If it can fill the thoughts and affections of men with itself, it will fortify the soul against faith and obedience, and endanger eternal ruin.

For if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us; and when the world fills our thoughts, it will entangle our affections. And first, the present state of public affairs, with an apprehended concern of private persons therein, continually exercise the thoughts of many, and is almost the only subject of their mutual converse. For the world is at present in a mighty hurry, and being in many places cast off from all foundations of steadfastness, it makes the minds of men giddy with its revolutions, or disorderly in the expectations of them.

Thoughts about these things, are both allowable and unavoidable, if they take not the mind out of its own power, by their multiplicity, vehemency, and urgency, until it be unframed as to spiritual things, retaining neither room nor time for their entertainment.

Hence men walk and talk, as if the world were all, when comparatively it is nothing.

And when they come with their warmed affections reeking with the thoughts of these things, to the performance of any spiritual duty, it is very difficult for them, if not impossible, to stir up any grace to a vigorous exercise. Unless this plausible advantage, which the world hath obtained of insinuating itself into the minds of men, so as to fill them and possess them, be watched against, so far, at least, as that it may not transform the mind into its own likeness, this grace of being *spiritually minded*, which is *life and peace*, cannot be attained nor kept to its due exercise.

Nor can we be, any of us, delivered from this snare at this season, proceeding from the prevalent abhorrence of our affections to things *spiritual* and *heavenly*, without a watchful endeavor to keep our minds in the constant contemplation of them; as will appear in the ensuing discourse.

Again, there are so great evidences of an earthly spirit, in many who make profession of religion, that it is high time they were called to a due consideration of the power and spirituality of that religion which they profess. In their habits, attires, and vestments, in their usual converse, in their over liberal entertainment of themselves and others, to the borders of excess, and things of a like nature, there is in many such a conformity to the world, that it is hard to make a distinction between them. And these things manifest such a predominancy of carnal affections in the minds of men, that, whatever may be pretended to the contrary, it is inconsistent with spiritual peace. To call men off from this evil frame of heart, to discover the sin and danger of it, to direct them to the means whereby it may be effected, to supply their thoughts with better objects, to press that exercise of them which is indispensably required of all believers, is the work of the ensuing discourse. It may be, it will be judged but a weak attempt as to the attaining of that end: but it cannot be denied to have these

two advantages—first, that it is seasonable—and secondly, that it is sincerely intended. And if it have this only success, that it may occasion others, who have more ability and opportunity than I have, to bring in their assistance for an opposition to the vehement insinuations of the world to have entertainment in the minds of professors, this labor will not be lost. But things are come to that pass amongst us, that unless a more than ordinary vigorous exercise of the ministry of the word, with other means appointed to the same end, be engaged in, to recall professors to that strict mortification, that separation from the world, that heavenly mindedness, that delight in the contemplation of spiritual things, which the gospel requires, we shall lose the glory of our profession, and leave it very uncertain what will be our eternal condition. The same may be spoken concerning *love of the world*, as to its advantages and emoluments. This is that which renders men earthly minded, and most remote from having their *conversation above*. In the pursuit of this corrupt affection, many professors of religion grow useless, giving no evidence that the love of God abideth in them. On these, and many other accounts, many Christians evidence themselves to be strangers to *spiritual mindedness*, from a life of meditation and holy contemplation on things above: yet unless we are found in these things in some good measure, no grace will flourish in us; no duty will be rightly performed by us; no condition sanctified or improved: nor are we prepared in a due manner, *for the inheritance of the saints in light*. Wherefore, as was said, to direct men to that which is the only remedy of all these evils, which alone is the means of giving them a foretaste of eternal glory: especially such who are in my own condition, namely, in a very near approach to a departure out of this world; is the design of the ensuing discourse, which is recommended to the grace of God, for the benefit of the reader.

ROMANS VIII. 6.

BUT TO BE SPIRITUALLY MINDED IS LIFE AND PEACE.

CHAPTER I.

The words of the Text Explained.

The expression in our *translation* sounds differently from that in the *original.* All our *English translations,* from *Tindal's* the first of them, have constantly used, to be *spiritually minded.* Neither do I know any words whereby the *emphasis* of the original, considering the design of the apostle in the place, can be better expressed. But the meaning of the Holy Ghost in them must be inquired into.

In the whole verse there are two entire *propositions,* containing a double *antithesis, the one in their subjects, the other in their predicates.* And this opposition is the highest and greatest, that is, between eternal blessedness, and eternal ruin.

The opposite *subjects,* are the *minding of the flesh, and the minding of the spirit;* or the being *carnally minded,* and *spiritually minded.* And these constitute two states of mankind. As to the qualities expressed by the flesh and the spirit, there may be a *mixture of them* in the same persons at the same time; there is so in all that are regenerate. For in them *the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit lusteth against the flesh, and these are contrary.* Thus different actings in the *same subject* consti-

tute not distinct states. But where either of them is predominant, in the soul, there it makes a different state. This distinction of states, the apostle expresseth, v. 9. *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit.* Some are *in the flesh*, and cannot please God, *v.* 8. *They are after the flesh*, *v.* 5. they *walk* after the flesh, *v.* 1. they *live* after the flesh, *v.* 13.—This is one state. Others *are in the spirit*, *v.* 9. *after* the spirit, *v.* 5. *walk* after the spirit, *v.* 1. This is the other state. The first sort are *carnally minded*, the other are *spiritually minded.* Unto one of these, doth every living man belong; he is under the ruling conduct of the flesh, or of the spirit; there is no middle state; though there are different degrees in each of these as to good and evil.

The difference between these two states is great, because an eternity in blessedness or misery depends upon it.—And this is evidenced by the different fruits of the principles and their operations, which constitute these different states; which is expressed in the opposition that is between the *predicates* of the proposition; for the *minding of the flesh is death;* but the *minding of the spirit is life and peace.*

To be *carnally minded is death.* Death, as it is absolutely *penal*, is either spiritual, or eternal. It is formally death spiritual; *for they that are carnally minded, are dead in trespasses and sins. For those who fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind, are by nature children of wrath;* are penally under the power of spiritual death. And *it is death eternal, meritoriously. For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die;* as the *wages of sin is death.*

The reason why the apostle denounces so woful a doom, on the *carnal mind*, he declares in the two next verses: *for the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be; so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.* If it be thus with the *carnal mind*, it is no wonder that to be carnally minded is death; it is not meet it should be any thing else. That which is enmity against God, is under the curse of God.

In opposition to this it is affirmed, that to be *spiritually minded*, is *life and peace.* And these are the things which we are particularly to inquire into; namely, What

is this *minding of the spirit;* and then, How it is *life and peace.*

The *spirit*, in this context, is evidently used in a double sense, as is usual where both the Holy Spirit himself, and his work on the souls of men, are included. The *person of the spirit of God* himself, or the Holy Ghost, is intended by it, *v.* 9. *If so be that the spirit of God dwelleth in you.* And so *v.* 11. *The spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead.* He is spoken of as the principal efficient cause of all the spiritual benefits here and afterwards insisted on. It is also used for the *principle of spiritual life* wrought in all that are regenerate by the Holy Ghost. *For that which is born of the spirit is spirit.*

It is most probable that the *name spirit* is here used in the *latter sense*, not for the *spirit himself*, but for that which is *born of the spirit*, the *principle* of spiritual life in them that are born of God. For it is in its nature, and operations, opposed to the *flesh*; but the flesh here intended is that inherent corrupt principle of depraved nature, whence all evil actions proceed, and wherewith the actions of all evil men are vitiated.

But it is not amiss, to remark upon those important truths, which are directly contained in the words proposed as the foundation of the present discourse. As,

1. *To be spiritually minded is the character distinguishing true believers from all unregenerate persons.* As such is it here asserted by the Apostle. All those who are *carnally minded*, are unregenerate, they are not born of God, they please him not, but must perish for ever. But those who are *spiritually minded, are born of God*, live unto him, and shall come to the enjoyment of him.

2. *Where any are spiritually minded, there, and there alone, is life and peace.*

It will therefore be no small *advantage* to have our consciences always affected with the power of this truth; whence, it will follow, that, if we are not so, we have neither life nor peace. Many greatly deceive themselves in hearing the word. They admit of sacred truths in their understanding, and assent to them; but feel not the power of them on their consciences, nor strictly judge of their condition by them. For hereby they seem to themselves

to believe that, whereof in truth they believe not one *syllable* as they ought. They hear it, they assent to it, at least they do not contradict it; yea, they commend it often, and approve of it; but yet they *believe* it not; for if they did, they would judge themselves by it.

Or such persons are, as the apostle *James* declares, *like a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.* There is a *representation* made of their state and condition in the word; they behold it, and conclude that it is even so with them, as the word declares. But immediately their minds are filled with other thoughts, and they forget in a moment the *representation* made of themselves.

These things being premised, I shall more practically open the nature of this duty. To be spiritually minded may be considered either as to the *nature and essence* of it, or as to its *degrees;* for one may be so more than another, or the same person may be more so at one time than another. In the first way it is opposed to being *carnally* minded; in the other, to being *earthly* minded.

To be *carnally minded* is, as the Apostle speaks, *death;* and they who are so, are dead in trespasses and sins; that is, under the power of death, spiritual, and obnoxious to death eternal.

There are two ways wherein men are *earthly minded.* The one is absolute, when the love of earthly things is wholly predominant in the mind. This is opposed to the *being* of spiritual mindedness, no less than to be carnally minded, is.

Again; there is a being *earthly minded*, which consists in an inordinate affection to the things of this world.—It is that which is sinful, which ought to be mortified, yet is it not absolutely inconsistent with the *substance* of the grace inquired after. Some who are really *spiritually minded*, may yet, for a time at least, be under such an *inordinate affection* to earthly things, that if not absolutely, yet comparatively, they may be said to be *earthly minded.* They are so in respect of those degrees in being spiritually minded, which they ought to aim at.

This is the *Zoar* of many professors; that *little one*

wherein they would be spared. Such an *earthly mindedness* as is wholly inconsistent with being spiritually minded, they would avoid. For this they know would be as inconsistent with salvation, as living in the vilest sin. There are more ways of spiritual and eternal death than one, as well as of natural. All that die, have not the plague; and all that perish eternally, are not guilty of the same profligate sins. The *covetous* are excluded from the kingdom of God, no less severely than *fornicators*, *idolaters adulterers*, and *thieves*. But there is a *degree* in being earthly minded, which they suppose their interest, advantages, relations, and occasions of life, call for, which they would be a little indulged in: they may abide in such a frame without a disparagement of their profession; and the truth is, they have too many companions to fear an especial reflection on themselves. The multitude of the guilty takes away the sense and shame of the guilt. But besides, they hope that it is not inconsistent absolutely with being *spiritually minded*. They think well of others who are spiritually minded in an eminent degree. At least they do so as to the thing in general; for when they come to particular instances of this or that man, for the most part, they esteem what is beyond their own measure to be little better than pretence. But in general, to be spiritually minded in an *eminent degree*, they cannot but esteem a thing excellent and desirable. But their circumstances and occasions require them to satisfy themselves with an inferior measure.

To obviate such pretences, I shall insist on nothing but what is incumbent on all that believe. And at present in general I shall say, "Whoever he be, who doth not sincerely aim at the highest degree of being spiritually minded, which the means he enjoyeth and which the light he hath received doth call for; hath no unfailing grounds, whereon to believe that he hath any thing at all of the reality of this grace in him." Such a person possibly may have *life* which accompanies the essence of this grace, but he cannot have *peace*, which follows on its degree in a due improvement. And it is to be feared, that, far the greatest number of such are indeed *carnally minded*, and every way obnoxious unto death.

CHAPTER II.

A particular account of this spiritual mind. How it is evidenced by our thoughts.

Having stated the *general* frame of mind which is here recommended to us, we may proceed to inquire more particularly into the nature of it, according to the description before given, in distinct propositions. We shall carry on *both these intentions* together; first, to show *what it is*, and then how we may form a right judgment whether it be in us or not. And we shall have no regard to them, who either neglect or despise these things, on any pretence whatever. For this is the word according to which we shall all shortly be judged: *To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace.*

Thoughts and meditations, as proceeding from spiritual affections, are the first things wherein this spiritual mind consists, and whereby it evidences itself. Our thoughts are like the *blossoms* on a tree in the spring. You may see a tree so covered with *blossoms*, that nothing else of it appears. Multitudes of them fall off and come to nothing. Oftimes where there are *most blossoms*, there is *least* fruit. But yet there is no fruit, good or bad, but it comes from some of those *blossoms*. The mind of man is covered with *thoughts*, as a tree with blossoms. Most of them vanish, and come to nothing; and sometimes where the mind most abounds with them, there is the least fruit. Still there is no fruit which actually we bring forth, good or bad, but it proceeds from some of these *thoughts*.—Wherefore ordinarily these give the best and surest *measure* of the frame of men's minds. As a man *thinketh in his heart, so is he*. In case of violent *temptations* the real frame of a man's heart is not to be judged by the multiplicity of thoughts about any object. For whether they are from Satan's suggestions, or from inward darkness,

and horror, they will impose such a continual sense of themselves on the mind, as shall engage all its thoughts about them.—As when a man is in a storm at sea, the current of his thoughts runs quite another way, from what they do when he is in safety about his business. But ordinarily, *voluntary thoughts* are the best indication of the frame of our minds. As the nature of the soil is judged by the grass which it brings forth, so may the disposition of the heart by the predominancy of voluntary thoughts. They are the original acting of the soul; the way whereby the heart puts forth the treasure that is in it; the waters that first rise and flow from that fountain. Every man's heart is his treasury; and the treasure that is in it, is either good or evil; as our Saviour tells us. There is a good and bad treasure of the heart; but whatever a man hath, be it good or evil, there it is. This treasure is opening, emptying, and spending itself continually; though it can never be exhausted. For it hath a fountain in nature or grace, which no expense can diminish; yea, it increaseth and getteth strength by it. The more you spend of the treasure of your hearts in any kind, the more will you abound in treasure of the same kind. Whether it be good or evil, it grows by expense and exercise; and the principal way whereby it puts forth itself, is by the thoughts of the mind. If the heart be evil, they are for the most part vain, wicked, foolish; if it be under the power of grace, and have a *good treasure* in it, it puts forth itself by thoughts suitable to its nature, and compliant with its inclinations.

Wherefore, these *thoughts* give the best measure of the frame of our minds and hearts. I mean such as are *voluntary*, such as the mind of its own accord inclines, and ordinarily betakes itself to. Men may have a multitude of thoughts about the affairs of their callings, which yet may give no due measure of the inward frame of their hearts. So men whose calling and work it is to *study the scriptures*, and to preach to others; cannot but have many thoughts about spiritual things; and yet may be, and often are, most remote from being spiritually minded. They may be *forced by their work* and calling, to think of them early and late, evening and morning; and yet their minds be no way rendered or proved spiritual thereby. It were well if

all of us who are preachers, would diligently examine ourselves herein. So is it with them who oblige themselves to read the scripture, it may be so many chapters every day; notwithstanding the diligent performance of their task, they may be most remote from being spiritually minded. But there is a certain *track* and *course* of thoughts, that men ordinarily betake themselves to, when not affected with present occasions. If these be *vain*, ambitious, sensual; such is the mind and its frame. If they be holy, spiritual, and heavenly, such may the frame of the mind be judged to be. But these things must be more fully explained.

It is the great *character* and description of the frame of men's minds before the renovation of their natures, *that every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually.* They are continually coining figments and imaginations in their hearts, stamping them into thoughts that are vain, and wicked. All other *thoughts* in them are occasional; these are the natural, genuine product of their hearts. Hence the clearest, and sometimes first, discovery of the bottomless evil treasure of filth, folly, and wickedness, that is in the heart of man by nature, is from the innumerable multitude of evil imaginations, which are there coined and thrust forth every day. So the wicked are said to be *like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.* There is a fulness of evil in their hearts, like that of water in the sea. This fullness is troubled, or put into continual motion, by their lusts, and impetuous desires. Hence the mire and dirt of evil thoughts are continually cast up in them.

It is therefore evident, that the predominance of *voluntary thoughts*, is the best indication of the inward state of the mind. For if it be so as to the *carnal mind*, it is so as to the spiritual. Wherefore, to be spiritually minded in the first place is, to have the course of our affections about spiritual things. Therein consists the minding of the spirit.

But, because all men, unless horribly profligate, have *thoughts* about spiritual things, yet we know that all men are not *spiritually minded*, to render them a certain indication of the state of our minds, they must be *natural*, arising from ourselves, and not from outward occasions.

The Psalmist mentions the *inward thoughts of men*. But, as all thoughts are inward acts of the mind, it should seem that this expression makes no *distinction* of the special kind of thoughts intended, from those of another sort. But the difference is in the causes, and occasions. *Inward thoughts* are such as arise solely from men's inward principles, and inclinations; that are not suggested or excited by any outward objects. Such, in wicked men, are those actings of their lusts, leading and encouraging them to make provision for the flesh. These are their *inward thoughts*. Of the same nature are those thoughts which are the minding of the spirit. They are the natural egress of the habitual disposition of the mind.

Thus in *covetous* men there are thoughts, occasioned by *outward objects* and opportunities. So it was with *Achan*. *When*, saith he, *I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, then I coveted them*. His sight of them, with an opportunity of possessing himself of them, excited covetous thoughts and desires in him. So is it with others every day, whose occasions call them to converse with the objects of their desires. And some by such objects may be surprised into thoughts, that their minds are not habitually inclined to. But the same sort of persons have thoughts of this nature arising from *themselves* only, their own dispositions and inclinations, without any outward provocations. *The vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity*. And this he doth as the *liberal deviseth liberal things;* from his own disposition and inclination, he is contriving in his thoughts how to act according to them. So the *unclean person* hath two sorts of thoughts with respect to the satisfaction of his lusts. First, such as are occasioned in his mind by external objects. Hereunto *stage-plays*, revellings, dancings, with the society of persons of corrupt communication, contribute their wicked service. For the avoidance of this snare, *Job* made a covenant with his eyes. But he has an *habitual spring* of these thoughts in himself constantly inclining him thereto. So is it with them who are given to excess in strong drink. They have pleasing *thoughts* raised in them from the object of their lust represented to them. But it is their own

habitual disposition which carries them to pleasing thoughts of the satisfaction of their lusts. The thoughts of this latter sort, are men's inward thoughts.

Saith the Psalmist, *My heart is inditing a good matter; I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.* He was meditating on the person and kingdom of Christ. Hence his heart *bubbled up* (as it is in the original) a good matter. It is an allusion taken from a quick spring of living waters; from its own life and fulness it *bubbles* up the water that flows from it. So is it with these thoughts, in them that are spiritually minded. There is a living fulness of spiritual things in their affections, that springs up into holy thoughts about them.

From hence our Saviour gives us the great description of spiritual life. It is *a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life.* The spirit, with his graces, residing in the heart of a believer, is a *well of living water.* Nor is it such a well as, content with its own fulness, doth not of its own accord, without any instrument or pains in drawing, send out its refreshing waters, as it is with most *wells,* though of living water. For this is spoken by our Saviour in answer to that objection of the woman, upon this mention of giving living water. *Sir,* saith she, *thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep, whence wilt thou have this water?* True, saith he, such is the nature of this *well* and water—dead earthly things. They are of no use, unless we have instruments, lines, and buckets. But the living water which I shall give is of another nature. It is not water to be kept in a pit or cistern without us, whence it must be drawn; but it is within us; and that not dead and useless, but continually springing up to the use and refreshment of them that have it. For so is it with the principle of the new nature, the spirit and his graces in the hearts of them that believe. It doth, from itself, without any external influence incline the whole soul to spiritual actings that tend to eternal life. Such are the thoughts of them that are spiritually minded; they arise from the *inward* disposition of the soul.

So our Saviour describes them. *A good man out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things.* First, the *man* is good; as he said before, make the *tree*

good, or the fruit cannot be good. He is made so by grace in the renovation of his nature; for in ourselves we are every way evil. This good man hath a *treasure in his heart.* So all men have, as the next words are, *the evil man out of the evil treasure of the heart.* And this is the great difference that is between men in this world. Every man hath a *treasure* in his heart; that is, a prevailing principle of all his actions: but in some this treasure is *good;* in others it is *evil.* The *thoughts* that arise out of the heart, are of the same nature with the treasure that is in it. If the *thoughts* that spring up in us, are for the most part sensual, earthly, selfish, such is the *treasure* that is in our hearts, and such are we. But where the thoughts that thus spontaneously proceed from the treasure that is in the heart, are spiritual and holy, it is an argument that we are *spiritually minded.*

Where it is not thus with our thoughts, they give no such evidence as that inquired after. Men may have *thoughts* of spiritual things, which do not arise from this principle, but may be resolved into two other causes:—*inward* force and *outward* occasions.

1. *Inward force*, as it may be called. Convictions put a kind of force upon the mind; or an impression, that causes it to act contrary to its own habitual inclination. It is in the nature of water to descend: but apply an instrument to it, that shall make a compression of it, and force it to a vent, it will fly *upwards vehemently*, as if that were its natural motion; but so soon as the force of the impression ceaseth, it returns immediately to its own proper tendency, descending towards its centre. So is it with men's thoughts. They are *earthly;* their natural course and motion is *downwards* to the earth, and the things thereof: but when any efficacious *conviction* presses on the mind, it forces its thoughts up towards heavenly things; as if that were their proper motion and course; but so soon as the power of the *conviction* wears off, and the mind is no more sensible of its impression, the thoughts return to their old course, as the water tends downwards.

This state and frame is graphically described, Psal. lxxviii. "When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned, and inquired early after God. And

they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless, they did but flatter him with their mouths, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." Men in sickness, fears of death, or effectual conviction of sin, from the preaching of the word, will endeavor to think and meditate on spiritual things: yea, they will be greatly troubled that they cannot think of them more than they do, and esteem it their folly that they think of any thing else. But as deliverance approaches, so these thoughts decay and disappear; the mind will not be compelled to give place to them any more. The Prophet gives the reason of it: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." They have been *taught* another course; the habit of the mind lies another way; and they will no longer tend towards spiritual things, than an impression is on them from their convictions.

And it is an argument of very low attainments in grace, when our thoughts of spiritual things rise or fall, according to *occasional convictions*. If when we are under *rebukes* from God in our persons or relations, in fears of death, and the like, and withal, have some renewed *convictions of sin*, and endeavor to be more constant in the exercise of our thoughts on spiritual things; and yet these thoughts decay, as our convictions, with the causes of them, wear off, yet we have attained a very low degree in this grace, if we have any interest in it at all.

Water that flows from a living spring, runs equally and constantly, unless it be obstructed by some violent opposition; but that which is from *thunder-showers* runs furiously for a season, but is quickly dried up. So are those spiritual thoughts which arise from a prevalent internal principle of grace in the heart; they are even and constant, unless an interruption be put upon them for a season by temptations: but those which are excited by *convictions*, however their streams may be filled for a season, quickly dry up, and utterly decay.

2. Such thoughts may arise in the minds of men not spiritually minded, from *outward means and occasions*.

Such I intend as are indeed useful; yea, appointed of God for this end among others, that they may stir up holy affections in us; but there is a difference in their use and operation. In some, they excite the inward principle of the mind to act in holy thoughts, according to its own sanctified disposition and prevalent affections: this is their proper use. In others they *occasionally* suggest such thoughts to the minds of men, which spring only from the notions of the things proposed to them. With respect to this end also, they are of singular use to the souls of men; howbeit such *thoughts* do not prove men to be spiritually minded. Where you *till* and *manure* your land, if it brings forth plentiful crops of corn, it is an evidence that the *soil* itself is fertile; the dressing of it only gives advantage to put forth its own fruit-bearing virtue: but if in the tilling of land, you lay much manure upon it, and it brings forth here and there a handful where the manure lay, you will say the soil itself is barren; it brings forth nothing of itself. These means that we shall treat of, are as the *tilling* of a *fruitful soil*, which help it in bringing forth its fruit, by exciting its own virtue and power. They stir up holy thoughts and desires; but in others, whose hearts are barren, they only serve, some of them here and there, to stir up spiritual thoughts, which gives no evidence of a gracious spirit.—But because this is a matter of great importance, it shall be handled distinctly by itself.

CHAPTER III.

Outward means of thoughts concerning spiritual things, which do not prove men to be spiritually minded. Preaching of the word. Exercise of gifts. Prayer. How we may know whether our thoughts of spiritual things in Prayer, proves us to be spiritually minded.

I. Such a means is the *preaching of the word* itself. It is observed concerning many in the Gospel, that they *heard it willingly, received it with joy*, and *did many things gladly*, upon the preaching of it; and we see the same things exemplified in multitudes every day. But none of these things can be without *many thoughts* about spiritual things, for they are the effects of such thoughts; yet were they all *hypocrites* concerning whom these things were spoken, and were never *spiritually minded.*

The cause of this miscarriage is given us by our Saviour; *He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon receiveth it with joy; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while.* The good thoughts they have, proceed not from any principle in themselves. Neither their affections nor their thoughts of these things, have any *internal root*, whereon they should grow. So it is with many who live under the present dispensation of the Gospel. They have thoughts of spiritual things continually suggested to them, which abide with them more or less, according as they are affected: for I speak not of them who are either despisers of what they hear, or *way-side hearers*, who understand nothing of what they hear, and immediately lose all sense of it; but I speak of them who attend with some diligence, and receive the word with some *joy*. These insensibly grow in knowledge, and therefore cannot be without some thoughts of spiritual things: still for the most part, they are, as was said, but like waters that run after a

shower of rain. They pour out themselves as if they proceeded from some strong *living spring*, whereas indeed they have none at all. When once the waters of the shower are spent, their channel is dry; there is nothing in it but stones and dirt. When the doctrine of the word falls on such persons as showers of rain, it gives a course sometimes greater, sometimes less, to their thoughts towards spiritual things: but they have not a *well of water* springing up into everlasting life. Wherefore after a while their minds are dried up from such thoughts.

It must be observed, that the best of men, the most holy and spiritually minded, ought to have their thoughts of spiritual things excited, and confirmed by the preaching of the word. *It is one end of its Dispensation*, one principal use of it in them by whom it is received. Yet where men have no other thoughts of this sort but what are occasioned by the outward dispensation of the word, such thoughts do not prove them to be spiritually minded. Their endeavors in them are like those of men in *a dream*. Under some oppression of their spirits, their imaginations fix on something or other, that is most earnestly to be desired or avoided. They seem to themselves to strive with all their might, to endeavor to go, run, or contend, but all in vain; every thing fails them, and they are not relieved until they are awaked. So such persons, in impressions they receive from the word, seem to strive and contend in their resolutions to comply with what is proposed to them; but their strength fails; they find no success, and after a time give over their endeavors, until they are occasionally renewed again.

II. The *duty of prayer* is another means of the like nature. One principal end of it is to excite and draw forth, the principle of grace in the heart, to a due exercise in holy thoughts of God and spiritual things. Those who design not this end in prayer, know not at all what it is to pray. Now all sorts of persons have frequent occasion to join with others in prayer, and many are under the conviction that it is their own duty to pray every day, it may be, in their families and otherwise. And it is hard to conceive how men can constantly join with others in prayer, much more how they can pray themselves, but that they

must have thoughts of spiritual things every day; but *it is possible* that they may have no root in themselves, but only occasional impressions on their minds from the outward performance of the duty. I shall give some instances, which, for many reasons, require our diligent consideration.

Spiritual thoughts may be raised in a person in his own duty, by the *exercise of his gifts*, when there is no acting of grace in them at all; for they lead the mind to such things as are the matter of prayer; that is, spiritual things. *Gifts* are nothing but a spiritual improvement of our natural abilities. And a man cannot utter any thing but what proceeds from his rational faculties by invention or memory, or both, managed by his thoughts, unless he speak by rote, and that which is not rational. What therefore proceeds from a man's rational faculty, by the *exercise* of *his gifts*, that his thoughts must be exercised about.

A man may *read a long prayer* that expresseth spiritual things, and yet never have one spiritual thought arise in his mind about them. For there is no exercise of any faculty of his mind required to such *reading*, but only to attend to the words that are to be read. This I say may be so; I do not say that it is so, or that it must be so. But, as was said in the *exercise of gifts*, it is impossible but there must be an *exercise of reason*, by invention, judgment, and memory; and consequently, thoughts of spiritual things. Yet may they all be merely *occasional*, from the present external performance of the duty, without any living spring of grace. In such a course, may men of *tolerable gifts* continue all their days, to the satisfaction of themselves and others, deceiving both them and their own souls.

This being evident from the scripture and experience, an inquiry may be made how we shall know whether the thoughts which we have of spiritual things in prayer, arise from *gifts only*, or are influenced from a living principle of grace in our hearts? A case this is of *great importance*, and which would require much time fully to resolve. For there is nothing whereby the refined sort of *hypocrites* more deceive themselves and others, than by the *form of godliness*, when they deny the *power* thereof,

And besides, the best of believers ought in every particular instance of the performance of this duty, to *watch unto prayer*. I shall therefore, with what brevity I can, answer this inquiry. And to this end observe,

1. It is an ancient complaint, that *spiritual things are filled with great obscurity and difficulty;* and it is true. Not in themselves, for they all come forth from the *Father of lights*, and are full of light, order, beauty, and wisdom; and light and order are the only means whereby any thing makes a discovery of itself. But the ground of all darkness and difficulty in these things lies in ourselves. We can more clearly and steadily behold the *moon* and the *stars*, than we can the *sun*, when it shines in its greatest lustre. It is not because there is more light in the moon and stars than in the sun, but because the light of the sun is greater than our eyes can directly bear. So we can more clearly discover the truth and distinct nature of things *moral*, and *natural*, than we can of things heavenly and spiritual. Not that there is more substance or reality in them, but because the ability of our understanding is more suited to the comprehension of them. The other are above us. We know but in part, and our minds are liable to be hindered in their apprehension of things heavenly and spiritual, by ignorance, temptations, and prejudices of all sorts. Fear, self-love, temptations and corruptions, do all engage their powers to darken the light of the mind, and to pervert its judgment. In no case doth the deceitfulness of the heart, more show itself. Hence the multitudes say *peace* to themselves, to whom *God doth not speak peace;* and some who are children of light, yet walk in darkness. There is also a great similitude between *temporary faith*, and that which is *saving* and durable; and between gifts and grace, in their operations. It is acknowledged, therefore, that without the especial light and conduct of the spirit of God, no man can make such a judgment of his state as shall be a stable foundation of giving glory to God, and of obtaining peace to his own soul; and therefore the greatest part of mankind do constantly deceive themselves in these things.

But ordinarily, under *this blessed conduct* in the search of ourselves, we may come to a satisfaction whether our

spiritual thoughts spring from a vital principle of grace, or whether they come from occasional impressions on the mind, by the performance of duty itself.

If men are willing to *deceive themselves*, or to hide themselves from themselves, to leave all things at hazard, to put off all trials to the last day, and so never call themselves to an account, as to the nature of their duties in any particular instance; it is no wonder, if they neither do, nor can, make any distinction in this matter; as to the true nature of their thoughts in spiritual duties. Two things are required hereunto.

That we impartially and severely *examine* the frames of our minds in holy duties, by the word of truth; and not be afraid to speak that plainly to our souls, which the word speaks to us. This diligent search ought to respect our principles, and ends, with the whole deportment of our souls in every duty. If a man receive much money, and look only on the outward *form* and *superscription*, when he supposes that he has great store of current coin in gold and silver, he may have only heaps of lead or copper by him. But he that trades in it, as the support of life, will *try* what he receives, both by the balance and the touch-stone, as occasion requires; especially if it be in a time when much *adulterated* coin is passing in the world. And if a man reckons on his duties by *tale* and *number*, he may be utterly deceived, and be spiritually a bankrupt, when he esteems himself rich, increased in goods, and wanting nothing.—Some duties may seemingly hold in the balance as to *weight*, which will not hold it at the touch-stone, as to *worth*. Both means are to be used, if we would not be mistaken in our accounts. Thus God himself, in the midst of a multitude of duties, calls the people to try and examine themselves, whether or not they are such as have faith and grace in them, and so like to have acceptance with him.

We must add to our own diligent inquiry, *fervent prayers* to God, that he would discover to us the true frame, of our hearts. Hereof we have an express example, Psalm cxxxix. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

This is the only way whereby we may have the spirit of God witnessing to our sincerity, with our own spirits. There is need of calling in divine assistance in this matter, both from the importance of it, and from its difficulty; God alone knowing fully and perfectly what is in the hearts of men.

No persons are in greater danger of *walking at hazard* with God, than those who live in the exercise of spiritual gifts, to their own satisfaction and that of others. For they may countenance themselves with an appearance of every thing that should be in them in reality, when there is nothing of it in them. We have seen many earnest in the exercise of gifts, who have turned vile apostates. Some have been known to live in indulgence of their lusts, and yet to abide constant in their duties. And we may hear prayers sometimes that openly discover themselves to spiritual sense, to be the *labor of the brain*, by the help of gifts in memory and invention, without an evidence of any mixture of humility, reverence, or godly fear. They flow as wine, yet smell and taste of the unsavory cask from whence they proceed. It is necessary, therefore, that we should put ourselves on the *severest trial*, lest we should be found not to be spiritually minded in spiritual duties.

Gifts make *grace* useful unto ourselves; yea, they may be made useful to the *grace* of others, who have no *grace* in themselves. But to our own souls, they are of no other benefit, but to *stir up grace* to its proper exercise; and to be a vehicle to carry it on, in its proper use. If we do not always regard this in their exercise, we had better be without them. If they once begin to impose themselves *practically* upon us, so that we rest in spiritual light, influencing our inventions, memories, and judgments with a ready utterance, there is no *form of prayer* can be more prejudicial unto our souls. Whilst *spiritual gifts* are employed only to excite and *assist grace* in its operations, they are unutterably useful: but if they put themselves in its room, to do all that grace should do; they are pernicious. We have need, therefore, to be very diligent in this inquiry, whether our spiritual thoughts, even in our prayers, be not rather *occasioned* from the duty, than springing from a *gracious principle* in our hearts.

2. Where thoughts of spiritual things in *prayer* are *occasional only*, in the way before described, such prayers will not be a means of spiritual growth to the soul. They will not make the soul humble, holy, watchful, and diligent in universal obedience. Grace will not thrive under the greatest constancy in such duties. It is an astonishing thing to see how, under frequency of prayer, and a seeming fervency therein, many of us are at a stand as to visible thriving in the *fruits of grace*; and it is to be feared, without any increase of strength in the *root* of it. God's hand is not shortened that he cannot save, nor his ear deafened that he cannot hear. He is the same as in the days of old, when our fathers cried unto him and were delivered, when they trusted in him, and were not confounded. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and forever;* prayer is the same that it was, and shall lose nothing of its prevalency whilst this world endureth. Whence is it then, that there is so much prayer amongst us, and so little success? I speak not with respect to the *outward dispensations* of divine providence in afflictions or persecutions, wherein God always acts in a *way of sovereignty*, and oft-times gives the most useful answer to our prayers by denying our requests: I intend that only whereof the Psalmist giveth us his experience: *In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me*, and *strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.* Where prayers are effectual, they will bring in spiritual strength. But the prayers of many seem to be very spiritual, and to express all conceivable supplies of grace; and they are persisted in with constancy; and God forbid we should judge them to be hypocritical and wholly insincere. Yet is there a defect somewhere, which should be inquired after: for they are not so answered, as that they who pray, are *strengthened with strength in their souls:* there is not that spiritual thriving, that growth in grace, which might be expected to accompany such supplications.

I know that a man may pray sincerely and frequently for an *especial mercy* or deliverance from a particular temptation; and yet no spiritual supply of strength to his own experience come in thereby. So *Paul prayed thrice* for the removal of his temptation, and yet had the exercise of it continued. In such a case there may be no de-

fect in prayer, and yet the grace in particular aimed at not be attained. For God hath other holy ends to accomplish on the soul. But how persons should continue in prayer, according to the mind of God, so far as can be outwardly discovered, and yet thrive not at all, as to spiritual strength in their souls, is hard to be understood.

And which is yet more astonishing, men abide in the duty of prayer, and that in constancy, in their families, and yet live in known sins. Whatever spiritual thoughts such men have, in their prayers, they are not spiritually minded. Shall we now say, that all such persons are gross hypocrites; such as know they do but mock God and man; know that they have not desires nor aims after the things which they mention in their own prayers; but do these things either for some corrupt end, or at best to satisfy their convictions? Could we thus resolve, the whole difficulty of the case were taken off. For such *double-minded men* have no reason to think *that they shall receive any thing of the Lord*, as *James* speaks. But it is not so with all of this sort; some judge themselves sincere, and in good earnest in their prayers, not without some hopes and expectations of success. I will not say of all such persons, that they are among the number of them concerning whom the wisdom of God says, "Because I called unto them, and they refused; they shall call on me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, and shall not find me." And although we may say unto such persons in general, *either leave your sinning, or leave your praying*, and that with respect to present scandal, and certain miscarriage in the end, if both be continued in; yet in particular I would not advise any such person to *leave off his praying*, until he had left his sin. This were to advise a sick man to use no remedies until he were well cured. Who knows but that the Holy Spirit, who works when and how he pleaseth, may take a time to animate these lifeless prayers, and make them a means of deliverance from the power of this sin. In the mean time, the fault and guilt is wholly their own, who have effected a consistency between a way of sinning and a course in praying; and it ariseth from hence, that they have never labored to fill up their *requests* with grace. What there hath been of earnestness or diligence

in them, hath been from a *force* put upon them by their convictions and fears. For no man was ever absolutely prevailed on by sin, who prayed for deliverance, according to the mind of God. Every praying man that perisheth, was a hypocrite. The faithfulness of God in his promises will not allow us to judge otherwise.

3. *Earnestness and apparent fervency* in prayer, will not of themselves prove, that the thoughts arise from an internal spring of grace. There is a *fervency of spirit* in prayer, that is one of the best properties of it, being an earnest acting of love, faith, and desire: But there is a fervency that may arise from other causes.

It may do so from the engagement of *natural affections* to the things prayed for. Men may be earnest and intent in their minds, in praying for a *dear relation*, or for *deliverance* from imminent troubles, or dangers; and yet all this fervor arise from the vehemence of natural affections about the things prayed for, excited in an especial manner by the present duty. Hence God calls the earnest cries of some for *temporal things* not a *crying unto him*, but *an howling;* that is, the cry of hungry beasts, that would be satisfied.

Sometimes it ariseth from the *sharpness of convictions*, where there is no true grace. For the perplexing work of conviction goes before real conversion; and as it produceth many other effects and changes in the mind, so it may do this of great fervency in *vocal prayers*, especially if it be accompanied with outward troubles.

Oft-times in the exercise of gifts, and through their own utterance, men put their natural affections into such an agitation, as shall carry them out into a great *vehemency* in their expressions. It hath been so with persons who have been discovered to be vile hypocrites, and have afterwards turned cursed apostates. All these things may be, where there is no gracious spring, or vital principle, of spiritual thoughts.

Some, it may be, will say if there be these evils under the exercise of the *gift of prayer*, if there may be a total want of the exercise of all true grace with it; then it may be, all that is pretended of this gift, and its use, is but hypocrisy and talk. But, it may be as well pretended, tha

because the sun shining on a dunghill doth occasion offensive exhalations; therefore all that is pretended of its influence on spices and flowers, causing them to give out their fragrancy, is utterly false. No man ever thought that *spiritual gifts* did change, or renew the minds of men; where they are alone, they only assist to the useful exercise of natural faculties: and, therefore, where the heart is not savingly renewed, no gifts can stir up a saving exercise of faith; but, where it is so, they are a means to *cause the savor of it to flow forth.* Be it so, that there may be some evils found under the gift of prayer, what remedy for them may be proposed? Is it that men should renounce their use of it, and betake themselves to the reading of prayers only? The same may be said of all *spiritual gifts* whatever; for they are all liable to abuse. And shall we reject all the powers of the world to come, for the communication whereof Christ hath promised to continue his spirit with his church unto the end of the world, because by some they are abused? Not only the same, but far greater evils may be found in the *reading* of prayers, which needs no further demonstration than what it gives of itself every day.

Wherefore the inquiry remains, "how we may know to our own satisfaction, that the thoughts we have of spiritual things in the duty of prayer, are from an internal fountain of grace," and so are an evidence that we are spiritually minded?

I take it for granted on the evidence before given, that persons who have any *spiritual light*, and will diligently examine their own hearts will be able to discern what is the spring of their spiritual thoughts. In general we are assured, that *he that believeth, hath the witness in himself.* Sincere faith will be its own evidence, if we try all things impartially by the word. But if men do, as for the most part they do, content themselves with the performance of any duty, without an examination of their principles, it is no wonder if they walk in all uncertainty.

A soul that hath had real communion with God in the duty of prayer, finds itself both in it, and afterwards, spiritually refreshed.

This *holy complacency*, this rest and sweet repose of mind, is the foundation of the delight of believers in this duty. They do not pray only because it is their *duty* so to do, nor yet because they stand in need of it so that they cannot live without it, but they have delight in it; and to keep them from it, is to keep them from their *daily food* and refreshment. Now we can have no delight in any thing but what we have found some complacency in. Without any such experience, we may do any thing, but cannot do it with delight.

But yet here, as in most other spiritual things, one of the worst of vices is ready to impose itself in the room of the *best of our graces:* and this is, *self-pleasing* in the performance of duty. This, instead of a grace steeped in *humility*, is a vile effect of *spiritual pride;* it is a glorying in the flesh; for whatever of *self* any doth glory in, it is but flesh. When men have had enlargements in their expressions, and especially when they apprehend that others are satisfied or affected therewith, they are apt to have a secret *self-pleasing* in what they have done, which, before they are aware, turns into *pride*. The same may befall men in their most secret duties, performed outwardly by the aid of spiritual gifts; but this is most remote from, that *spiritual complacency* in duty, which we speak of, which yet it will pretend to, until it be diligently examined. The language of this spiritual complacency is, *I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.* That of spiritual pride is, *God I thank thee that I have done thus and thus*, as it was expressed by the *Pharisee*. That is in *God alone;* this is in *self:* that draws forth *the savor of all graces;* this immediately covers and buries them all, if there be any in the soul: that fills the soul eminently with *self-abasement;* this with self-conceit: that casts out all remembrance of what we have *done ourselves*, retaining only a sense of what we have *received from God;* this blots out all remembrance of what we have *freely received from God*, and retains only what we have *done ourselves*. Wherever it is, there is no due sense either of the greatness or goodness of God.

Some, it may be, will say, that if it be so, they are cut

off. They have no experience of any such *spiritual complacency* in God; at the best, they begin their prayers with tears, and end them in sorrow; and sometimes they fear that God is not glorified by them, nor their own souls bettered.

I answer, there is great *spiritual refreshment* in that godly sorrow which is at work in our prayers.—Where the Holy Ghost is a spirit of grace and supplication, he causeth mourning, and in that mourning there is joy. The secret encouragement which we receive by praying, to adhere unto God constantly in prayer, arises from some experience of this *holy complacency*, though we have not a sensible evidence of it. Perhaps some of them who make this complaint, if they would consider, would find that their souls, at least sometimes, had been thus refreshed, and brought to an holy rest in God. Then shall you know the Lord, if you follow on to know him. Abide in seeking after this satisfaction in God, and you shall attain it. Again,

It is a sure evidence that our supplications are from an internal spring of grace, when we find the *daily fruit and advantage of them;* especially in the preservation of our souls in an holy, humble, watchful frame.

Where there is continuance in prayer, there will be *spiritual growth* in some proportion. For men to be earnest in prayer, and thriftless in grace, is a certain indication of prevalent corruptions, and want of being *spiritually minded* in prayer itself. If a man eats his daily food, let him eat never so much, or so often, if he be not *nourished* by it, his body is under the power of prevalent distempers: and so is his spiritual constitution, who thriveth not in the use of spiritual food. He who prays as he ought, will endeavor to live as he prays. This none can do who does not with diligence keep his heart as to the things he hath prayed about. To pray *earnestly* and live *carelessly*, is to proclaim that a man is not spiritually minded in his prayer. Hereby then, we shall know what is the *spring of those spiritual thoughts*, which our minds are exercised with in our supplications. If they are influenced unto a constant watch for the preservation of those dispositions to spiritual things which we pray for, they are from an inter-

nal spring of grace. If there be generally an *unsuitableness* in our minds unto what we seem to contend for in our prayers, the *gift* may be in exercise, but the *grace* is wanting. If a man be every day on the Exchange, and there talk diligently and earnestly about the affairs of trade; but when he comes home thinks no more of them, because indeed he hath no interest in them, he may be a very poor man, notwithstanding his pretences: and he may be spiritually very poor, who is on occasions fervent in prayer, if, when he retires into himself, he is not careful and diligent about the matter of it. Again,

When *spiritual affections*, excite the *gift of prayer*, and not the gift make impressions on the affections; then are we spiritually minded in it. *Gifts* are *servants*, not *rulers*, in the mind; are bestowed on us to be *serviceable to grace;* not to lead it, but to follow it. This is the natural order of these things. *Grace* habitually inclines and disposes the heart to this duty. *Providence* gives the occasions for its exercise; *sense of duty* calls for preparation; *grace* coming into actual exercise, gifts come in with their assistance; if they lead all, all is out of order. It may be otherwise sometimes: a person *indisposed* and *lifeless*, engaging in prayer upon conviction of duty, may, by the gift, have his affections excited, and graces engaged to its proper work. It *may* be so, but let men take heed how they trust to this *method:* for where it is so, there may be little or nothing of true grace in all their *fervor* of affections; but when genuine faith, love, reverence, and gracious desires, stir up the gift to its exercise, calling in its assistance to the expression of themselves, then are the heart and mind in their proper order. Finally,

He, all whose religion lies in prayer and hearing, has none at all. God has an equal respect to all other duties, and so must we have also. I shall not value his prayers at all, be he never so earnest and frequent in them, who gives not *alms* according to his ability: and this in an especial manner is required of us who are *ministers;* that we be not like an hand set up in cross ways, directing others which way to go, but staying behind itself.

This digression about the *rise and spring of spiritual*

thoughts in prayer, I judged not unnecessary, in such a season, wherein we ought to be very jealous, lest gifts impose themselves in the room of grace.

III. There is another *occasion of thoughts of spiritual things*, when they do not spring from a living principle within, and so are no evidence of being spiritually minded; and this is the discourse of others. *They that fear the Lord will be speaking one to another*, of the things wherein his glory is concerned. "I will speak of the glorious honor of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts; and I will declare thy greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and of great mercy." All the flagitious sins that the world is filled with are not a greater evidence of the degeneracy of religion, than this, that it is grown unusual, yea, a shame for men to speak together of the things of God. It was not so when religion was in its primitive glory; nor is it so with them who really fear God, and are sensible of their duty. Some there are, who embrace all occasions of spiritual communication. Those with whom they converse, if they have any spiritual light, cannot but so far comply with what they say, as to think of the things spoken. Oft-times the *track of men's thoughts* is so contrary to such things, that they seem strange to them; they give them no entertainment. You do but cross their way with such discourses, whereon they stand still a little, and pass on. Even the *countenances of some men will change*, and they betake themselves to silence, or to such replies of *empty words*, as shall evidence their hearts to be far enough estranged from the things proposed to them. But with others, such *occasional discourses* will stir up present thoughts of spiritual things; yet will such thoughts give no evidence that any man is spiritually minded. For they are not genuine, from an internal spring of grace.

From these causes it is, that the thoughts of *spiritual things* are with many, as *guests* that come into an *inn*, and not like children that dwell in the house. They enter oc-

casionally, and then there is a great stir about them, to provide entertainment for them. In a while they depart, being neither looked nor inquired after any more. Things of another nature are attended to; new occasions bring in *new guests*, for a season. *Children* are owned in the house, are missed if they are out of the way, and have their daily provision constantly made for them. So while occasional thoughts about spiritual things enter into the mind, and are entertained for a season but on a sudden depart, and men hear no more of them; those that are *natural and genuine*, arising from a living spring of grace in the heart, are as the children of the house; they are expected in their places, and at their seasons. If they are missing, they are inquired after. The heart calls itself to an account, whence it hath been so long without them, and calls them over in its wonted converse with them.

CHAPTER VI.

Other evidences of our being spiritually minded, arising from the course of our thoughts.

It is the character of all men in the state of depraved nature and apostacy from God, "that every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts, is only evil continually." All persons in that condition are not *swearers*, *blasphemers*, drunkards, adulterers, idolaters, or the like. These are the vices of particular persons, the effects of particular constitutions and temptations. But thus it is with all and every one of them, "all the imaginations of the thought of their hearts are evil, and that continually." Some as to the *matter* of them, some as to their *end*, all as to their

principle; for out of the evil treasure of the heart can proceed nothing but what is evil. That infinite multitude of open sins which is in the world, gives a clear representation of the nature and effects of our apostacy from God. But he that can consider the *numberless* thoughts which pass through the mind of every individual person every day, *all evil and that continually*, will have a further comprehension of it.

We can therefore have no greater evidence of a change in us from this state, than a change wrought in the *course of our thoughts*. A relinquishment of this or that *particular sin*, is not an evidence of a translation from this state. For as was said, such particular sins proceed from particular lusts and temptations, and are not the immediate, universal consequence of that depravation of nature which is equal in all. A change herein is a blessed evidence of a change of state. He who is cured of a *dropsy*, is not of course immediately healthy; he may have the prevailing seeds of other diseases in him, and the next day die of a *lethargy*: but he who, from a state of sickness, is restored in all the principles of life and health, to a good *temperature*, his state of body is changed. The cure of a particular sin may leave behind it the seeds of eternal death, which they may quickly effect; but he who has obtained a change in character, from the *state of depraved nature*, is spiritually recovered. And the more the stream of our thoughts is turned, the greater is our evidence of a translation out of that depraved state and condition.

The *multiplicity of thoughts* in the minds of men is like the leaves of trees, when they are shaken with the wind in *autumn*. To have all these thoughts, all the conceptions that are framed and agitated in the mind, *to be evil and that continually*, what a hell of horror and confusion must it needs be! A deliverance from this hateful state, is more to be valued than the whole world. Without it neither life, nor peace, nor immortality, nor glory, can ever be attained.

The design of *conviction* is to put a stop to these thoughts, to take off from their number, and thereby to lessen their guilt. It deserves not the name of *conviction*

of sin, which respects only outward actions, and regards not the inward actings of the mind. Yet this alone will for a season make a great change in the thoughts, especially when assisted by *superstition*. These two in conjunction are the rise of all that *devotional religion* which is in the papacy. *Conviction* labors to put some stop to thoughts absolutely evil: and *superstition* suggests other objects for them, which they readily embrace; but it is a vain attempt. The minds of men are continually coining new thoughts and imaginations. As the streams of a mighty river running into the ocean, so are the thoughts of a natural man. It is a vain thing to set a *dam* before such a river, to curb its streams. For a little space there may be a stop made, but it will quickly break down all obstacles, or overflow all its bounds. There is no way to divert its course, but only by providing other *channels* for its waters; the mighty stream of the evil thoughts of men will admit of no dams to put a stop to them. There are but two ways of relief from them; the one, respecting their *moral evil*, the other their *natural abundance*. The first, by throwing *salt into the spring*, as *Elisha* cured the waters of *Jericho;* that is, to get the heart seasoned with grace. The other is, to turn their streams into new channels, putting new aims and ends upon them, fixing them on new objects; so shall we abound in spiritual thoughts; for abound in *thoughts* we shall, whether we will or not.

To this purpose is the advice of the Apostle: *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs.* When men are *drunk with wine*, they make it quickly evident, what vain, ridiculous imaginations fill their minds. In opposition to this, the Apostle adviseth believers to be *filled with the Spirit*, to labor for such a participation of him as may fill their minds, as others fill themselves with wine. To what end should they desire such a participation of him, to be so *filled with him?* It is, that he by his grace may *fill them with holy spiritual thoughts*, as on the contrary men drunk to an excess, are filled with those that are foolish and wicked.

This leads us to the principal inquiry on this head;

namely, how we may know when we *abound in spiritual thoughts*, so that they may be an evidence of our being spiritually minded.

I answer in general, among other scriptures, read over Psalm cxix. with understanding. Consider what *David* expresses of himself, as to his constant delight in the law of God, which was the only means of divine revelation at that season. Try yourselves by that pattern; examine yourselves whether you can truly speak the same words with him; at least, if not in the same degree of zeal, yet with the same sincerity of grace. You will say, that was *David*. It is not for us to be *like* him, at least not to be *equal* with him. But we must be like him, if ever we intend to come to the place where he is. It will ruin our souls, if, when we read in the scripture how the saints of God express their *experience* in faith, love, delight in God and constant meditations on him, we grant that it was so with them; that they were good and holy men, but it is not necessary that it should be so with us. These things are not written in the scripture to show what *they were*, but what *we ought to be*. All things concerning them *were written for our admonition*. And if we have not the same delight in God as they had, the same spiritual thoughts of heavenly things, we can have no evidence that we please God as they did, or shall go to that place whither they are gone. Profession of the life of God passeth with many at a *very low and easy rate*. Their thoughts are for the most part vain and earthly, and sometimes corrupt, their lives at best uneven and uncertain, as to the rule of obedience; yet all is well. The holy men of old, *who obtained this testimony that they pleased God*, did not so walk before him. They meditated continually in the law; thought of God in the night seasons; spake of his ways, his works, his praise; their whole delight was in him, and in all things they followed hard after him. It is the example of *David* in particular, that I have proposed. And it is a promise of the grace to be administered by the Gospel, that he *who is feeble shall be as David*. And if we are not so, it is to be feared we are not partakers of the promise. But that we may the better judge of ourselves therein, I shall add some few rules to this direction by example.

1. Consider, *what proportion your thoughts of spiritual things bear, with those about other things.* Our principal *interest* and concern, as we profess, lie in things spiritual and eternal. Our thoughts when about these things should hold *some proportion* with those about other things; nay, should exceed them. No man in earthly things, pretends that his principal concern lies in that whereof he thinks very seldom in comparison of other things. It is not so with men, in reference to their *families*, their *trades*, their occasions of life. It is a truth, not only consecrated by the testimony of Him who is truth, but evident also in the light of reason, *that where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also.* And the affections of our hearts show themselves by the thoughts of our minds. Wherefore, if our *principal treasure* be as we profess, in things spiritual and heavenly, and wo unto us if it be not so; on them will our affections, and consequently our desires and thoughts, be principally fixed.

That we may the better examine ourselves by this rule, we must consider of *what sort* men's *other thoughts* are; and as to our present purpose, they may be reduced to these heads.

(1.) There are such as are exercised about *their lawful callings.* These are numberless and endless; especially among a sort of men who rise early and go to bed late, and eat the bread of carefulness, or are particularly industrious and diligent in their ways. These thoughts men approve in themselves, and judge them their duty, as they are, in their proper place and measure. But no heart can conceive the *multitudes of thoughts*, which, partly in contrivances, partly in converse, are spent about these things. And the more men are immersed in them, the more do themselves and others esteem them diligent and praiseworthy. And there are some who have no necessity to be engaged much in the duties of any *special calling*, who yet by their words and actions declare themselves to be confined almost in their thoughts to *themselves*, their *relations*, their *children*, and their self-concerns. All sorts may do well to examine *what proportion* their thoughts of spiritual things bear to those of other things. I fear with most, it will be found to be very small, with many, next to

nothing. What evidence then can they have, that their principal interest lies in things above? Perhaps, it will be asked, whether it be necessary that men should think *as much and as often* about things spiritual and heavenly, as they do about the lawful affairs of their callings. I say *more*, and *more often*, if we are what we profess to be. Generally, it is the best sort of men, as to the things of God and man, who are busied in their callings, some of one sort, some of another. But even among the best of these, many will continually spend the strength of their minds and vigor of their spirits, about their affairs all the day long; and, if they can pray in the morning and evening, with some thoughts of spiritual things, suppose they acquit themselves very well. As if a man should pretend that his great design is, to prepare himself *for a voyage* to a far country, where is his patrimony and his inheritance, but all his thoughts are about some few *trifles*, which, if indeed he intend his voyage, he must leave behind him; and of his main design he scarce thinks at all. We profess that we are bound for immortality, and glory: but is it any evidence we really design it, if all our thoughts are consumed about the trifles of this world, which we must leave behind us, and we have only occasional thoughts of things above?

This whole rule is grounded on that of our Saviour: "Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink? or wherewith we shall be clothed? But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow." When we have done all we can, earthly things, as to our interest in them, amount to no more, than *what we eat, what we drink, and wherewith we are clothed.* About these things our Saviour forbids us *to take any thought*, not absolutely, but with a double limitation. As first, that we take no such thought about them, as should carry along with it a *disquietude of mind*, through a distrust of the fatherly care and providence of God. This is the design of the context. Secondly, no thought that for *constancy* and *intenseness of spirit*, should be like to those which we ought to have about spiritual things. *Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteous-*

ness. Let that be the chief and principal thing in your thoughts and consciences.

Let a man, industriously engaged in the way of his calling, try himself by this *rule* every evening. Let him consider what have been his thoughts about his earthly occasions, and what about spiritual things; and then ask himself whether he be spiritually minded or not. Be not deceived; *as a man thinketh, so is he.* And if we account it a strange thing, that our thoughts should be more exercised about spiritual things, than about the affairs of our callings, we must not think it strange, if, when we come to the trial, we cannot find that we have either life or peace.

Moreover, it is known, how often, when we are engaged in spiritual duties, *other thoughts* will impose themselves on our minds. Those which are about men's secular concerns will do so. The world will frequently make an *inroad* on the ways to heaven, to disturb the passengers and wayfaring men. There is nothing more frequently complained of, by such as are awake to their duty, and sensible of their weakness. Call to mind, therefore, how often, on the other hand, *spiritual thoughts* impose themselves on your minds, whilst you are engaged in your earthly affairs. Sometimes, no doubt, with all that are true believers it is so. *Or ever I was aware*, saith the spouse, *my soul made me as the chariots of Aminidab.* But if these thoughts of heavenly things so arising in us, bear *no proportion* with the other sort, it is an evidence what frame and principle is predominant in us.

(2.) There are a *multitude of thoughts in the minds of men*, which are *useless* and *unprofitable.* These ordinarily, through a dangerous mistake, are looked on as not sinful, because, as it is supposed, the matter of them is not so; and therefore men rather shake them off for their folly, than their guilt. But they arise from a corrupt fountain, and wofully pollute the mind and conscience. Wherever there are *vain thoughts*, there is sin. Such are those numberless imaginations, whereby men fancy themselves "to be what they are not, to do what they do not, to enjoy what they enjoy not, to dispose of themselves and others," at their pleasure. That our nature is liable to such

a pernicious folly, which some of tenacious fancies have turned into *madness*, we are beholden alone to our cursed apostacy from God. Hence the prince of *Tyrus* thought *he was a god*, and *sat in the seat of God*. So it hath been with others; and in those, in whom such imaginations are kept within some better order and bounds, yet being traced to their original, they will be found to spring, some of them, immediately *from pride*, some from *sensual lusts*, some from the *love of the world*, all from self, and the old ambition *to be as God*. I know no greater misery in this world, than the *debasing of our nature* to such vain imaginations; and a perfect freedom from them is a part of the blessedness of heaven. It is not my present work to show how *sinful* they are; let them be esteemed only fruitless, foolish, and ludicrous. But let men examine themselves, *what number of these vain thoughts*, night and day, rove up and down in their minds. If now it be apprehended too severe, that men's thoughts of *spiritual things* should exceed them that are employed about their *lawful callings*, let them consider what proportion they bear to those which are *altogether vain* and useless. Do not many give more time to them, than they do to holy meditations? And shall we suppose that those with whom it is so, are spiritually minded?

(3.) There are thoughts that are *formally evil;* they are so in their own nature, being *contrivances to fulfil the desires of the flesh in the lusts thereof*. These also will assail the minds of believers. But they are always looked on as *professed enemies* to the soul, and are watched against. I shall not therefore make any comparison between them and spiritual thoughts, for they abound only in them that are carnally minded.

2. The second rule is, that we consider, whether thoughts of spiritual things *do constantly take possession of their proper seasons*. There are some times in the course of men's lives, wherein they retire into their own thoughts. The most busy men in the world have some times of *thinking* to themselves. And those who design no such thing, as being afraid of coming to be wiser or better than they are, do yet spend time therein, whether they will or not. But they who are *wise* will be at home as much as

they can, and have as many *seasons* for such retirements, as is possible for them to attain. If that man be *foolish*, who busieth himself so much abroad in the concerns of others, that he hath no time to consider the state of his own house and family; much more is he so, who spends all his thoughts about other things, and never makes use of them in an inquiry, how it is with himself and his own soul. However, men can hardly avoid having *some seasons*, partly *stated*, partly *occasional*, wherein they enter into their own thoughts. The evening and the morning, the times of waking on the bed, those of the necessary cessation of all ordinary affairs, of walking, journeying, and the like, are such seasons.

If *thoughts of spiritual things abound in us*, they will ordinarily, and that with constancy, possess these seasons. For they are expressly assigned to them in the way of rule, expressed in *examples* and *commands*. If they are usually given up to other ends and occasions, it is an open evidence that *spiritual thoughts* have but little interest in our minds. It is our duty to afford to them *stated times* taken away from other affairs that call for them. But if instead thereof we rob them of what is *their own*, which no other business can lay any just claim to, how dwelleth the love of spiritual things in us? Most professors are convinced that it is their duty to pray morning and evening, and it is to be wished that they were all found in the practice of it. But if ordinarily they judge themselves, in the performance of that duty, to be discharged from any further exercise of spiritual thoughts, they can make no pretence to be spiritually minded.

3. Consider how we are affected with our *disappointments about these seasons*. Have we by negligence, by temptations; have we by occasional diversions or affairs of life, been taken off from thoughts of God, of Christ, of heavenly things, when we ought to have been engaged in them; how are we affected with a review hereof? A carnal mind is well enough satisfied with *the omission of any duty*, so it have the pretence of a *necessary occasion*. If it hath lost a temporal advantage, through attendance to a spiritual duty, it will deeply reflect on itself, and it may be, like the duty, the worse afterwards. But a gracious

soul will mourn under a review of such *omissions*, and by every one of them be stirred up to more watchfulness for the future. Alas, will it say, how little have I been with Christ this day! How much time hath passed me without a thought of him!

Indeed, that woful *loss of time* that is found amongst many professors, is greatly to be bewailed.—Some lose it on themselves, by a continual track of fruitless *impertinent thoughts* about their own concerns. Some in vain converse with others. How much of this time ought to be redeemed for holy meditations? The good Lord make all professors sensible of their loss of former seasons, that they may be the more watchful for the future, in this great concern of their souls. Little do some think what light, what assurance, what joy, what readiness for the cross or for heaven, they might have attained, had they laid hold on all just seasons of exercising their thoughts about spiritual things, who now are surprised with every fear or difficulty that befals them.

This is the first thing that belongs to our being spiritually minded; for although it does not absolutely consist therein, yet is it inseparable from it. And thus of abounding and abiding in thoughts about spiritual things, such as arise naturally from a spiritual frame of heart within.

CHAPTER V.

The objects of spiritual thoughts. Rules directing to steadiness in the contemplation of heavenly things. Motives to fix our thoughts with steadiness in them.

I proceed to inquire what are, or what ought to be, the *special objects* of those thoughts, which, under the qualifications laid down, are the evidences of our being *spiritu-*

ally minded. Many are barren in this duty, because they know not what to fix upon, nor how to *exercise their thoughts*, when they have chosen a subject for their meditations. Hence they spend their time in fruitless desires that they could use their thoughts to more purpose, rather than making any progress in the duty itself. They *tire themselves*, not because they are not willing to go, but because they cannot *find their way*. Wherefore I shall first give some *general rules*, and then some *particular instances*, in way of direction.

1. Observe the *special calls of Providence*, and apply your minds to the duties required in them. There is a voice in all signal dispensations of Providence. "The voice of the Lord crieth unto the city, the men of wisdom shall see thy name; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." There is a call, a cry in every rod of God, which makes a declaration of his name, his holiness, his power, his greatness. This every *wise substantial man* will labor to discern, and so comply with the call. God is greatly provoked when it is otherwise. "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see and be ashamed." If therefore we would apply ourselves to our present duty, we are wisely to consider *what is the voice of God*, in his present providential dispensations. Is not *his wrath in them revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of men*, especially of false professors of the gospel? Doth he not also signally declare the uncertainty and instability of earthly enjoyments, from life itself to a shoe-latchet? The *fingers* that appeared *writing* on the wall *the doom of Belshazzar*, did it in characters that none could read but *Daniel*. But the present call of God in these things, is made plain upon tables, that he may run who readeth it. If the heavens gather blackness with clouds, and it thunder over us; any that are on their journey and will not believe that there is a storm coming, must bear the severity of it.

Suppose then this to be the voice of providence, in these indications of the will of God, what are the duties that we are called to?

(1.) A diligent *search into ourselves*, and a holy watch with respect to *those sins* which the displeasure of God is

declared against. That present providences are indications of God's displeasure, we take for granted. But the most are apt to cast the causes of them on others, and to excuse themselves. But, alas! when the storm came on the ship at sea, wherein there was *but one person that feared God;* upon an inquiry for whose sake it came, the lot fell on him. The cause of the present storm may as well be the *secret sins* of professors, as the *open provocations* of ungodly men. God will punish severely those *whom he hath known.* It is therefore certainly our duty to *search diligently*, that nothing be found resting in us, against which God is declaring his displeasure. Take heed of negligence and security herein. When our Saviour foretold his disciples that *one of them should betray him*, he who alone was guilty, was the *last* that said, *Master, is it I?* Let no hopes you have of your acceptance with God, no sense of your sincerity in any of your duties, no visible difference between you and others in the world, impose themselves on your minds to divert them from diligence in this duty: *The voice of the Lord crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom will see his name.*

(2.) A holy resignation of our persons, lives, families, all our enjoyments, to the sovereign will and wisdom of God; so that we may be in readiness to part with all things upon his call, without repining. This also is plainly declared in the voice of present providences. God is making *wings* for men's *riches;* he is shaking their habitations; taking away the visible defences of their lives; proclaiming the instability of all things here below: and if we are not ready to contend with him, we have nothing left to give us *rest and peace* for a moment, but a holy resignation of all to his sovereign pleasure.

Would you now know what you should fix your thoughts upon, so that they may be evidences of your being spiritually minded? I say, be frequently conversant about *these things.* Count them part of your business, allow them some part of your time, cease not until you have the testimony of your consciences, that you have in sincerity stated these duties in your minds; which will never be done without many thoughts about them. Unless it be so with you, God will be greatly displeased at the neglect of

his coming and call, now it is so plain and articulate. And if any calamity, *public or private*, overtake you under a neglect of these duties, you will be wofully surprised, and not know which way to turn for relief. This therefore is the season wherein you may have an especial experiment whether you be *spiritually minded* or not. It is the wisdom of faith to draw forth grace into exercise according to present occasions. If this grace be habitually resident in you, it will put itself forth in many thoughts about these present duties.

But, alas! for the most part, men are apt *to walk contrary to God in these things*, as the wisdom of the flesh is contrary to him in all things.

Here lies the ground of their self-deceivings; they are the professors of the Gospel in a peculiar manner; they judge themselves believers; they hope they shall be saved, and have many evidences for it. But one *negative evidence*, will render a hundred that are *positive*, useless. *All these things have I done*, saith the young man; *yet one thing thou wantest*, saith our Saviour; and the want of that one, rendered his *all things* of no avail to him. Many things you have done, many things you do, many grounds of hope abide with you; neither yourselves nor others doubt of your condition; but are you *spiritually minded?* What grounds have you to judge that you are so, if the current of your thoughts lie in direct contrariety to the present calls of God? If at such a time as this, your love to the world be such as ever it was, and perhaps be increased; if your desires are strong to secure the things of this life to you and yours; if the *daily contrivance of your minds* be, not how you may attain a constant resignation of yourselves and your *all* unto the will of God, which will not be done without much thoughtfulness and meditation on the reasons of it and motives to it, I cannot understand how you can judge yourselves to be spiritually minded.

If any therefore shall say, that they would *abound more* in spiritual thoughts, only they know not what to fix them upon; I propose this, in the first place, as that which will lead them to the due performance of present duties.

2. The *special trials and temptations of men*, call for the exercise of their thoughts in a peculiar manner, with

respect to them. If a man hath a bodily pain or distemper, it will cause him to think much of it, whether he will or not; nor will he always be complaining of their smart, but inquire into their causes, and seek their removal. Yet are there some distempers, as *lethargies*, which take away all thoughts of themselves; and some are of such a slow, secret progress, as *hectic fevers*, that they are not taken notice of. But both these are mortal. And shall men be more negligent about the *spiritual distempers* of their souls; so as to take no thought about them? Is it not to be feared, that where it is so, they are such as either in their own nature have deprived them of spiritual sense, or by their deceitfulness are leading on insensibly to death eternal?

There is, I confess, some difficulty how to exercise our thoughts aright about our temptations; for the great way of the prevalency of temptation, is by stirring up *multiplied thoughts* about their objects. And this is occasioned several ways. (1.) From the previous power of *lust in the affections*. This will fill the mind with imaginations, in compliance therewith. They are the means whereby lust *draws away* the heart from duty, and *enticeth* unto sin. (2.) They are occasioned by renewed representations of the object of sin; as that which is *real*; *Achan* saw the wedge of gold, and *coveted it*. Or *imaginary*, when the imagination, being infected by lust, represents the pleasures of sin to the mind. Or from the *suggestions of Satan*, who useth all his wiles to stir up thoughts about that sin whereunto the *temptation* leads; and temptation seldom fails of its end, when it can stir up a multitude of unprofitable thoughts about its object. It is no way safe to advise such persons to have many thoughts about their temptations; they will all turn to their disadvantage.

I speak to them only, unto whom their *temptations are their affliction* and their burden. And such persons also must be very careful how they suffer their thoughts to be exercised about the *matter* of their temptation, lest it be a snare too hard for them. Men may begin their thoughts of any object with *abhorrence and detestation*, and end them in *complacency and approbation*. There have been instances wherein persons have entered with a resolution

to punish sin, and have been ensnared by the occasion, to the commission of the sin they thought to punish. Yea, often a man that hath some spiritual strength, and therein engageth to the performance of duties, if in the midst of them the *matter of his temptation* is so presented to him, as to take hold of his thoughts; in a moment, as if he had seen *Medusa's head*, he is turned into a stone; his spirits are all frozen, his strength is gone, all actings of grace cease, his armor falls from him, and he gives up himself a prey to his temptation. It must be a new supply of grace that can give him any deliverance. Therefore, whilst persons are exercised with any temptation, I do not advise them to be conversant in their thoughts about the matter of it. For sometimes remembrances of former satisfaction of their lusts; sometimes present surprisals; sometimes the craft of Satan, fixing their imagination on it, will be too hard for them, and carry them to a fresh compliance with that sin, which they would be delivered from.

Think of the *guilt of sin*, that you may be humbled. Think of the *power of sin*, that you may seek strength against it. Think not of the *matter of sin*, the things that are in the world suited to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, lest you be more and more entangled. But the present direction is, think much of the ways of *relief* from the power of your own temptation leading to sin: but this, men, unless they are spiritually minded, are very loth to come to. I speak not of them that love their *shackles*, that glory in their yoke. Such men know not well what to do, unless they may in their minds converse with the objects of their lusts, and multiply thoughts about them continually. The apostle calls it *making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

But I speak, as I said before, of them only, whose *temptations are their afflictions*, and who groan for deliverance from them. Acquaint such persons with the only way of relief in this distress, as it is expressed: "He is a merciful and faithful High Priest in things appertaining unto God; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." "For we have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like

as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Let them know that the only way for their deliverance is by faith on Christ.

I mention this, only to show the weight and necessity of the duty proposed. For when *men under the power of conviction*, are pressed with temptation, they will do any thing rather than betake themselves to the only efficacious relief. Some will groan and cry out under their vexation from the torture they are put to, in the conflict between their temptations and convictions. Some will betake themselves to the pretended relief that any *false religion* tenders to them. But to apply themselves in thoughts of faith unto Jesus Christ, whose grace alone is sufficient for all, that they will not be persuaded to.

We are all of us liable to *temptations*. Of these there is no doubt but any man, not judicially hardened, may know both his disease and the remedy. For instance; one may have an eminency in gifts, and usefulness or success in his labors, which gives him great acceptance with others; such an one shall hardly avoid a double temptation: first of spiritual pride, and self-exaltation. Hence the apostle will not admit a *novice*, one inexperienced in the ways of grace, and deceits of sin, into the office of the ministry, lest he should be *lifted up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil*. The best of men can hardly fortify their minds against the *secret workings of pride*, upon successes and applause, unless they keep them constantly balanced with thoughts of their own vileness in the sight of God. And, secondly, remissness to exact, universal mortification, which they countenance themselves against, by their acceptance and success above others in the ministry. It were much to be desired, that all we who are *ministers*, would be careful in these things; for although some of us may not much *please others*, yet we may so far please ourselves, as to expose our souls to these snares; and the effects of negligence herein do openly appear unto the disadvantage of the gospel. Others are much conversant in the world and the affairs of it. Negligence, as to a *spiritual watch*, vanity in converse, love of earthly things, with conformity to the world, will

on all occasions impose themselves upon them. If they understand not their several temptations, *spiritual mindedness* will be impaired in them continually. Those that are *rich*, have their special temptations, which for the most part are many, plausible, and effectual: and those that are poor, have theirs also. The snares of some lie in their *constitutions;* of others, in their *society;* of most, in the *various circumstances of life.* Those who are upon their watch in any due measure, who exercise any wisdom or observation concerning themselves, may know wherein their temptations lie.

3. All things in religion, both in faith and practice, are to be the *objects* of such thoughts.

It is our duty greatly *to mind the things that are above*, as to their reality, their present state, and our future enjoyment of them. To be *heavenly minded*, and to be *spiritually minded*, is all one; or it is the effect of being spiritually minded as to its original and essence; it is the cause of it, as to its growth and degrees; and it is the evidence of it, in experience. Nor do I understand how it is possible for a man to place his chief interest in things above, and not have many thoughts of them. It is the great advice of the apostle, on a supposition of our interest in Christ, and conformity to him: "*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.* For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Whilst we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Without doubt, the generality of Christians are greatly defective in this duty; they think little of an eternal country. Wherever men are, they do not use to neglect thoughts of that country wherein their inheritance lies. If they are absent from it for a season, yet will they labor to acquaint themselves with the principal concern of it. But this *heavenly country*, wherein lies our eternal inheritance, is not regarded. Men do not think as they ought, of

things *eternal and invisible:* it were impossible if they did so, that their minds should be so earthly, and their affections cleave to present things. He that looks steadily on the *sun*, although he cannot bear the lustre of his beams fully, yet his sight is so affected with it, that when he calls off his eyes from it, the things about him are all dark to him: and he who looks steadily in his contemplations on *things above*, though he cannot comprehend their glory, yet a vail will be cast by it on all the desirable beauties of earthly things, and take off his affections from them.

I shall consider what are the *principal motives* to this duty; and give *some directions* how we may exercise our thoughts on those things above.

(1.) *Faith* will be strengthened by it. Invisible things are the proper objects of faith: it is the *evidence of things not seen*. Wherefore in our thoughts of them, faith is in its proper exercise, which is the principal means of its increase.

Things of imagination, which maintain a value of themselves by darkness, will not bear a *diligent search* into them; they lose of their reputation on every serious inquiry. If rational men would but give themselves the liberty of free inquiry by their own thoughts, it would quickly cashier the *fool's paradise of Mahomet*, the *purgatory of the Papists*, and all such creatures of imagination and superstition. But where things are real and substantial, the more they are inquired into, the more they evidence their *being* and subsistence. There is no way, therefore, to strengthen faith, but by a daily contemplation on its objects. They who do not think of them *frequently*, shall never believe them *sincerely*. They admit not of any *collateral* evidence, where they do not evidence themselves to our souls. Faith, thus exercised, will give them a *subsistence*, not *in themselves*, which they have antecedent thereto; but *in us*, in the minds of them that believe. *Imagination* creates its own object: *faith* finds it prepared beforehand. It will not leave a *bare notion* of them in the understanding, but give them a *spiritual subsistence* in the heart; as Christ himself *dwells in our hearts by faith*.

General thoughts of heaven and glory do but fluctuate up and down in the mind, and very little influence it to

other duties; but *assiduous contemplation* will give the mind such distinct apprehensions of heavenly things, as shall duly affect it with the glory of them. In the contemplation of these things consists the principal *food of faith*, whereby it is nourished and strengthened: and we are not to expect much work where there is not provision of proper food for them that labor. No wonder if we find faith faint and weak in the work it hath to do, if we neglect to guide it daily to that which should administer strength to it.

(2.) It will give *life and exercise to the grace of hope.* Hope is a glorious grace, whereunto blessed effects are ascribed in the Scripture; by it are we *purified, sanctified, saved;* and, to sum up the whole of its excellency and efficacy, it is *Christ in you the hope of glory.* Where Christ evidenceth his presence with us, he gives us an *infallible hope* of glory. Hope in general is but an uncertain expectation of a future good which we desire; but as a gospel grace, all uncertainty is removed from it, which would hinder us of the advantage intended in it. It is an *earnest expectation, proceeding from faith, trust, and confidence, accompanied with longing desires of enjoyment.* From a mistake of its nature it is, that few Christians labor after it, or have the benefit of it; for to *live by hope*, they suppose infers a state not only *beneath* the *life of faith*, and all assurance in believing, but also *exclusive* of them.—They think *to hope to be saved* is a condition of men who have no grounds of assurance. But this is to turn a blessed fruit of the Spirit into a common affection of nature. *Gospel hope* is a fruit of faith; yea, the height of all grace issues in a *well-grounded hope*, nor can it rise any higher.

Now the reason why men have no more *benefit* by this excellent grace is, they do not abide in the contemplation of the things *hoped* for. The especial *object* of hope is *eternal glory.* The peculiar *use* of it, is to support and refresh the soul in all trials, under all weariness and despondences, with a firm expectation of a speedy entrance into that glory, with an earnest desire after it. Wherefore, unless we acquaint ourselves, by *continual meditation*, with the reality and nature of this glory, it is impossible it should be the object of a vigorous, active *hope*, such as

that whereby the apostle says *we are saved*. Without this we can neither have that evidence of eternal things, nor that preparedness in our minds for them, as should keep us in the exercise of *gracious hope* about them

Suppose sundry persons engaged in a voyage to a *remote country*, wherein all of them have an apprehension that there is a place of rest, and an inheritance provided for them. Under this apprehension they all put themselves upon their voyage, to possess what is so prepared. But some of them have only a general notion of these things, they know nothing distinctly concerning them, and are so busied about other affairs, that they have no leisure to inquire into them, or suppose that they cannot come to any satisfactory knowledge of them in particular, and so are content to go on with *general hopes* and expectations. Others, by all possible means acquaint themselves particularly with the nature of the *climate* whither they are going, with the *excellency of the inheritance*, and provision that is made for them. Their voyage proves long and wearisome, their difficulties many, and their dangers great; and they have nothing to encourage themselves, but the expectation of the country whither they are going. Those of the first sort will be very apt to despond and faint; their general hopes will not be able to relieve them. But those who have a distinct apprehension of the *state of things* whither they are going, and of their *incomparable excellency*, have always in readiness wherewith to cheer their minds and support themselves.

In that pilgrimage wherein we are engaged towards an heavenly country, we are sure to meet with all kinds of difficulties and perils. It is not a general notion of blessedness that will excite in us a spiritual, refreshing hope. But when we meditate on future glory as we ought, that grace which is for the most part dead as to its exercise, will be most vigorous and active. This therefore is an inestimable benefit of the duty exhorted to, which they find the advantage of, who are spiritually minded.

(3.) This alone will make us *ready* for all sufferings that we may be exposed to.

When a storm begins to arise at sea, the mariners bestir themselves in the management of the *tackling of the ship;*

but if the storm increase and come to extremity, they are forced to forego all other means, and betake themselves to a sheet-anchor, to hold their ship steady against its violence. So when a *storm* of persecution and trouble begins to arise, men have various ways for their relief. But if it once comes to *extremity*, if sword, nakedness, famine, and death, are inevitably coming upon them, they have nothing to betake themselves to that will yield them solid relief, but the faith of things invisible and eternal.

So the apostle declares: "For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." He lays all sorts of afflictions in one scale, and declares them to be *light*, and but for a moment. Then he lays glory in the other scale, and finds it to be weighty and eternal; *an exceeding weight of glory*. In the one, is sorrow for a little while, in the other, eternal joy. In the one, pain for a few moments, in the other, everlasting rest; in the one, is the loss of some few temporary things; in the other, the full fruition of God in Christ, who is all in all.

Hence the same apostle casts up the account of these things, and gives us his judgment concerning them. *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;* there is no comparison between them, as if one had as much evil in them, as the other hath of good; as though his state was any way to be complained of, who must undergo the one, whilst he hath an interest in the other.

It is inseparable from our nature to fear distressing sufferings, that are above the power of nature to bear. Even our Lord Jesus himself, having taken on him all the sinless properties of our natures, had a *fear*, though holy and gracious with respect to his own. Those who, through a *stout heartedness*, do contemn them before their approach, boasting in themselves of their abilities to undergo them, censuring such as will not *unadvisedly* engage in them, are

such as seldom glorify God when they are really to conflict with them. *Peter* alone trusted to himself that he would not forsake his master, and seemed to take the warning ill that they should all do so; and he alone *denied* him. All church histories are filled with instances of such as, having borne themselves high before the approach of *trials*, have shamefully miscarried when their trials have *come*. Wherefore it is allowed us, to use all lawful means for the avoiding of them. Both rules and examples of the scripture give sufficient warrant for it. But there are seasons wherein, without any tergiversation, they are to be undergone, to the glory of God, and in the discharge of our duty, confessing Christ before men, as we would be owned by him before his Father in heaven. All things now call us to prepare for such a season, to be *martyrs in resolution*, though we should never really lose our lives by violence. Nothing will give us this preparation, but to have our minds exercised in the contemplation of things that are invisible and eternal. He who is thus *spiritually minded*, who hath his thoughts and affections set on things above, will always be in readiness for any circumstance of his sufferings.

Those views which such an one hath had by faith, of the *uncreated glories above*, of the things *in heavenly places, where Christ sits at the right hand of God*, will now abide with him continually, and put forth their efficacy to his support and refreshment. Alas! what will become of many of us, who are grovelling continually on the earth, who are strangers to the thoughts of heavenly things, when distressing troubles shall befal us? Do you come to me in your distress, saith *Jeptha*, when in the time of your peace you drove me from you? When we would thus think of heavenly things to our refreshment, we shall hardly get them to make an abode with us. I know God can come in by the mighty power of his spirit and grace, to support and comfort the souls of them who are called, and even surprised into the greatest of sufferings. Yet do I know also, that it is our duty not to tempt him, in the neglect of the means which he hath appointed for the communication of his grace to us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, as *the author and fin-*

isher of our faith, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and despised the shame. His mediatorial glory in the salvation of the church, was the matter of the *joy set before him.* This he took the view and prospect of, in all his sufferings, to his refreshment and support. And his example, as *the author and finisher of our faith.* is more efficaciously instructive than any other rule or precept. Eternal glory is *set before us also;* it is the design of God's wisdom and grace, that by the contemplation of it we should relieve ourselves in all our sufferings, yea, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. How many of those blessed souls now in the enjoyment of God and glory, who passed through fiery trials were enabled to rejoice in the flames by a *prepossession of this glory* in their minds through believing? Yea, some have been so filled with it, as to take off all sense of pain under the most exquisite tortures. When *Stephen* was to be stoned, to encourage him in his suffering, the *heavens were opened, and he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God.* Who can conceive to what contempt of all the rage of the *Jews,* and all the pains of death, this view raised his holy soul? To obtain therefore, such views frequently by faith, as they do who are truly *spiritually minded* is the most effectual way to encourage us in all our sufferings.

(4.) This is the *most effectual means to wean the heart from things here below.* For there is a season wherein there is such a contempt required in us of all relations and enjoyments, as our Saviour calleth, the *hating of them;* that is, not absolutely, but in comparison of him and the Gospel.

If any man come to me, and hate not father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Some, I fear, if they did but consider it, would be apt to say, *This is a hard saying, who can bear it?* and others cry out with the disciples in another case, *Lord, who then can be saved?* But it is the word whereby we must be judged, nor can we be the disciples of Christ on any other terms.

I speak not of those who, by rapine, deceit, and oppression, strive to enrich themselves; nor of those who design nothing more than the attainment of *greatness* in the world,

though not by ways of open wickedness; least of all, of them who make *religion*, and perhaps their ministry therein, a means for the attaining secular ends and preferments. No wise man can suppose such persons to be *spiritually minded*, and it is most easy to disprove all their pretences. But I intend only those at present, whose means of attaining *riches* are lawful, and unblameable; who use them with some *moderation*, and profess that their portion lies in better things. But even among these also, there is oftimes that *inordinate love* to present things, that is not consistent with their being *spiritually minded*. They are wholly taken up with their own concerns, and count all lost that is not spent on them. Yet the things which they do, they judge to be good in themselves; their hearts do not condemn them as to the matter of them. The *valuation* they have of their *relations* and *enjoyments* they suppose to be lawful, within the bounds which they have assigned to it. Their care about them is, in their own minds, but their duty. It requires much spiritual wisdom, to fix right boundaries to our affections about earthly things. But let men plead and pretend what they please, I shall offer one rule in this case which will not fail. And this is, that when men are so confident in the good state of their affection towards earthly things, as that they will oppose their engagements in them to known duties of religion, they are gone into a sinful excess. Is there a state of the poor that requires their liberality and bounty? you must excuse them, they have *families to provide for;* when what is expected from them signifies nothing at all, as to a due provision for their families, nor is what would lessen their inheritances one penny in the issue. Are they called to an attendance on seasons of religious duties? *they are so full of business, that it is impossible for them* to have leisure for any such occasions; so by all ways declaring that they are under the power of a predominant affection to earthly things. This fills all places with lifeless, useless professors, who approve themselves in their condition, whilst it is visibly unspiritual and withering.

The heart will have something whereon in a way of *preeminence*, it will fix itself and its affections. This in all its perpetual motions it seeks for rest and satisfaction in; and

every man hath an *edge*—the *edge of his affections* is set one way or other, though it be more keen in some than others. And whereas all sorts of things that the heart can fix upon, or turn the *edge* of its affections unto, are distributed by the Apostle into *things above* and *things beneath*, things heavenly and things earthly, if we have not such a prospect of heavenly things as to cause our hearts to cleave to them and delight in them, let us pretend what we will, it is impossible but that we shall be under the power of a predominant affection to the things of this world.

Herein lies the great danger of multitudes at this present season; for let men profess what they will, under the power of this frame, their eternal state is in hazard every moment; we may cast them under two heads.

(1.) Some do not at all understand that things are amiss with them, or that they are much to be blamed. They plead, as was before observed, that they are all lawful things which their hearts cleave to, and which it is their duty to regard. May they not delight in *their own relations*, especially when others break all bonds of relation in the provision they make for their lusts? May they not be *careful in good and honest ways* of diligence about the things of the world, when the most heap them up by deceit and oppression? May they not *contrive for the promotion of their children* in the world, to add the other hundred or thousand pounds to their advancement, that they may be in as good condition as others, seeing he is worse than an *infidel who provides not for his own family?* By such reasonings do many justify themselves in their earthly mindedness. And so fixed are they in the approbation of themselves, that if you urge them to their duty, you shall lose their acquaintance, if they do not become your enemies for telling them the truth. Yea, they will avoid one duty that lieth not against their earthly interest, because it leads to another. They will not engage in *religious assemblies*, for fear duties of *charity* should be required of them. On what grounds such persons can satisfy themselves that they are spiritually minded, I know not.

(2.) Others are sensible of the *evil of their hearts*, at least are afraid lest it should be found that their hearts do

cleave inordinately to these things. Hence they endeavor to contend against this evil, sometimes by *forcing themselves* to such acts of piety or charity as are contrary to that frame, and sometimes by laboring a *change of the frame itself:* especially they will do so when God is pleased to awaken them by afflictions, such as write vanity and emptiness on all earthly enjoyments. But for the most part, they strive not lawfully, and so obtain not what they seem to aim at.

This disease with many is mortal; and will not be thoroughly cured in any but by the due exercise of this part of spiritual mindedness. If by any means a man seem to have taken off his heart from the love of *present things*, and be not at the same time taken up with *the love of things that are heavenly*, his *seeming mortification* is of no advantage to him. So persons frequently through disappointments, or dissatisfaction with the world, have betaken themselves to *monasteries*, *convents*, or other retirements suiting their principles, without any advantage to their souls. God is no such severe master, as to require us to take off our affections from those things which the law of our nature makes dear to us, as wives, children, houses, lands, and possessions, and not propose to us what is incomparably *more excellent* to fix them upon.

And when our Saviour requires that we should *part with all* for his sake and the gospel, he promiseth an *hundred fold* in lieu of them, even in this life; namely, an interest in things spiritual and heavenly. Wherefore without an assiduous meditation on heavenly things, as a better, more noble and suitable object of our affections to be fixed on, we never can be freed in a due manner from an inordinate love of the things here below.

It is sad to see some *professors*, who will keep up spiritual duties in churches and in their families, who will speak of spiritual things, and keep themselves from the *open excesses* of the world; yet when they come to be tried by such duties as entrench on their adherence to earthly things, quickly manifest how remote they are from being *spiritually minded*. Were they to be tried, as our Saviour tried the young man; *Go sell what thou hast, give to the poor, and follow me;* something might be pleaded in excuse for their tergiversation. But alas! they will

decline their duty when they are not touched to the *hundredth part* of their enjoyments: their minds are so full of earthly things, they so cleave to them in their affections, that no sense of duty, no example of others, no concernment of the glory of God or the Gospel, can make any impression on them. If there be yet in them so much light and life of grace, as to *design a deliverance* from this woful condition, the means insisted on must be made use of.

Especially this advice is needful to those who abound in the goods of this world. The poor, the afflicted, the sorrowful, are prompted, from their outward circumstances, as well as excited by inward grace, frequently to think of the *things above*, wherein lies their only refuge against the trouble of their present condition. But the enjoyment of these things in abundance, is directly contrary to this duty.

Earthly enjoyments enlarge men's earthly desires; and the love of them grows with their income. A moderate stock of waters, sufficient for our use, may be kept within ordinary banks. But if a flood be turned into them, they overflow all about them.—The *increase* of riches enlargeth the desires of men after them, beyond all bounds of sobriety, or safety. He that labors hard for his daily bread, hath seldom such vehement desires of an addition to what he hath, as many who already have more than they know how to use, or what to do with. The last advantage serves for nothing but to stir them up to look out for another. And yet such men would, on other accounts, be esteemed *good Christians*, and spiritually minded as all good Christians are.

These are some few of the many advantages which we may obtain by *fixing our thoughts* on the things that are above. And there are some things which make me willing to give a few directions for the practice of this duty.

CHAPTER VI.

Directions to the exercise of our thoughts on things above. Right notions of future Glory stated.

Because great difficulties arise in the discharge of the duty in hand, I shall give some especial directions concerning it.

First. *Possess your minds with right apprehensions of things above, and of the state of future glory.* We are in this duty, *to look at the things which are not seen.* It is faith only whereby we have a prospect of them; for *we walk by faith; and not by sight.* And faith can give us no interest in them, unless we have due apprehensions of them, for it doth but assent and cleave to the truth of what is proposed to it. And the greatest part of mankind both deceive themselves, and *feed on ashes*, in this matter.

All that have an apprehension of a *future state* of *happiness*, agree in this matter, that it contains in it, or is accompanied with, a *deliverance from all that is evil.* But in what it is so, they are not agreed. Many esteem only those things that are grievous, and destructive to nature, to be so; that is, what is *penal*, in sickness, sorrow, loss, poverty, with all kinds of outward troubles, and *death* itself, are evils. Wherefore, they suppose that the *future state of blessedness* will free them from all these things, if they can attain to it. This they will lay in the balance against the troubles of life, and sometimes it may be against the pleasures of it, which they must forego. Yea, *persons profane and profligate* will, in words at least, profess, that *heaven will give them rest from* all their troubles. But it is no place of rest for such persons.

To *believers* themselves also, *these things are evil*, such as they expect a deliverance from in heaven: and there is no doubt, but it is our duty, under all our sufferings, persecutions, and sorrows, to raise up our minds to the con-

templation of that state, wherein we shall be freed from them all. It is a *blessed notion of heaven*, that God shall therein *wipe away all tears from our eyes*: and it would be to our advantage, if we accustomed our minds more to this kind of relief than we do; if, upon the incursion of fears, dangers, sorrows, we did more readily retreat, to thoughts of *that state* wherein we shall be freed from them all; even *this* most *inferior consideration* of it, would render the thoughts of it more *familiar*, and the thing itself more useful to us. Much better it were, than on such occasions to be exercised with *heartless complaints*, uncertain hopes, and fruitless contrivances.

But there is that, which, to them who are *truly spiritually minded*, hath *more evil in it* than all these things together, and that is, *sin*. Heaven is a state of deliverance from sin, from all sin, in all the causes, concomitants, and effects of it. He is no true believer, to whom *sin* is not the greatest trouble. Other things, as the loss of dear relations, or extraordinary pains, may make deeper impressions on the mind, by its natural affections, at some seasons, than ever our sins did at any one time, in any one instance. So a man may have a greater trouble in *sense of pain*, by a fit of the *tooth-ache*, which will be gone in an hour, than in an *hectic fever* or consumption, which will assuredly take away his life. But take in the whole course of our lives, and I do not understand how a man can be a sincere believer, to whom *sin is not the greatest burden and sorrow*.

1. Wherefore, in the first place, it belongs to the true *notion of heaven*, that it is a state wherein we shall be *eternally freed from sin*. He that truly *hates sin*, whose principal desire and design of life is to be freed from it, as far as it is possible; who walks in self-abasement, through a sense of his many disappointments, when he hoped it should act in him no more, cannot, as I judge, but frequently betake himself for refreshment to thoughts of that state wherein he shall be *freed from it*, and *triumph over it* to eternity. This is a *notion of heaven* that is easily fixed on the mind, which we may dwell upon, to the great advantage of our souls.

Frequent meditations of heaven, under this notion,

argue a man to be *spiritually minded*. For it is a convincing evidence that *sin is a burden* to him, that he longs to be delivered from it and all its consequents; that no thoughts are more welcome to him, than those of that state wherein sin shall be no more. And although men are troubled about their sins, and would be freed from them, so far as they *perplex their minds*, and make their consciences uneasy; yet if they are not much in the prospect of this relief, if they find not refreshment in it, I fear their trouble is not such as it ought to be. Wherefore, when men can so *wrangle* and *wrestle* with their convictions of sin, and yet take up the best of their relief in hopes that it will be better with them, at some time or other, in this world, without longing desires after that state wherein *sin shall be no more;* they can give no evidence that they are spiritually minded.

It is quite otherwise with *sincere believers* in the exercise of this duty. The considerations of the grace and love of God, of the blood of Christ, of the purity and holiness of that good spirit that dwelleth in them, of the light, grace, and mercy, which they have attained through the promises of the gospel, are those which make the *remainders of* sin most grievous and burdensome to them. This is that which even breaks their hearts, and makes some of them go mourning all the day long, namely, that any thing of that which alone God *hates*, should be found remaining with them. It is, in this condition, an evidence that they are *spiritually minded*, if, together with watchful endeavors for the universal mortification of sin, and utter excision of it, both root and branch, they constantly add these thoughts of that blessed state, wherein they shall be absolutely and eternally freed from all sin.

Let them who cannot arise in their minds to any other notion of these *invisible things* dwell on this consideration of them, wherein they will find no small spiritual advantage and refreshment to their souls.

2. As to the positive part of this glorious future state, the thoughts of men are very various. And that we may know as well what to avoid, as what to embrace, we shall a little reflect on some of them.

(1.) Many are able to entertain no *rational concep-*

tions about a future state of blessedness, no *notions* wherein either faith or reason is concerned. *Imagination* they have of something that is *great and glorious*, but what it is they know not. No wonder if such persons have no delight in, no use for, thoughts of heaven. When their *imaginations* have fluctuated up and down in all uncertainties for a while, they are swallowed up in *nothing*. Glorious, and therefore desirable, they take it for granted that it must be: but nothing can be so to them, but what is *suitable* to their present inclinations and principles; and hereof there is nothing in the true spiritual glory of heaven, or in the eternal enjoyment of God. But whereas what is truly heaven, pleaseth them not, and what doth please them is not heaven, they seldom endeavor, in good earnest, to exercise their thoughts about it.

It were well if darkness and ignorance of the true nature of eternal glory, did not exceedingly prejudice *believers themselves*, as to their delight in and meditations about it. They have nothing fixed which they can betake themselves to in their thoughts. And by that way, whatever diverts the mind of men from the power and life of *spiritual worship*, as do all pompous solemnities in the performance of it, greatly hinders them as to *right conceptions* of our future state. There was a promise of *eternal life* given to the saints under the Old Testament: but as they were accustomed to a worship that was *carnal* and *outwardly pompous*, they never had clear apprehensions of the future state of glory: for life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel. Wherefore, although no man living can see or find out the *infinite riches of eternal glory;* yet is it the duty of all to be acquainted with the nature of it in general, so that they may have fixed thoughts of it, love to it, earnest desires after it, all under its own true and proper notion.

(2.) So great a part of mankind as the *Mahometans*, to whom God has given the most desirable parts of the world to inhabit, conceive the state of *future blessedness to consist in the full satisfaction of their sensual lusts and pleasures.* An evidence this is, that the religion which they profess, has no efficacy on their minds to change them from the love of sin. It doth not at all *enlighten*

their minds to discern a beauty in spiritual things, nor excite their affections to the love of them, nor free the soul to look after blessedness in such things as alone are suited to its rational constitution. Wherefore, it is nothing but an artifice of the god of this world, to blind the eyes of men to their eternal destruction.

(3.) Some of the *philosophers* of old attained an apprehension, that the blessedness of men in another world *doth consist in the soul's full satisfaction in the goodness and beauty of the Divine Nature:* and there is a truth in this notion, which contemplative men have adorned with excellent and rational discourses: and sundry who have been learned among Christians, have greatly improved this truth by the light of the Scripture. From *reason* also, they frame their conception concerning the capacity of the souls of men for the *immediate enjoyment* of God, and what is suited therein to their utmost blessedness. No more is required to these things, but a due consideration of the *nature of God and man*, with our relation to him and dependence on him. By the *light of the Scripture* they frame these things into that which they call the *beatifical vision*, whereby they intend all the ways in which God can communicate of himself to the souls of men and the utmost *elevation of their intellectual capacities* to receive those communications. It is such an intellectual apprehension of the Divine Nature and perfections, with ineffable love, as gives the soul the utmost rest and blessedness which its capacities can extend to.

These things have been by many both *piously and elegantly* illustrated, but they are *above the capacities* of ordinary Christians, who cannot reduce them to present *usefulness*, nor make them subservient to the exercise and increase of grace. The truth is, the Scripture gives us another notion of heaven and glory, *not contrary* to this, not inconsistent with it, but more suited to the faith and experience of believers. This therefore, is diligently to be inquired into, and firmly stated in our thoughts and affections.

(4.) The principal notion which the Scripture gives us of the state of heavenly blessedness, and which the meanest believers are capable of improving in daily practice, is, that *faith shall be turned into sight. and grace into*

glory. We walk now by faith and not by sight. This is the difference between our present and our future state, that *sight* hereafter shall supply the room of faith. And if *sight* come into the place of *faith*, then the *object* of that *sight* must be the same with the *present object* of our faith. So the apostle informs us, "For we know in part, and we prophecy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." Those things which we see now *darkly, as in a glass*, we shall then have an immediate sight, and full comprehension of; for that which is *perfect*, must come and do away that which is in part. What then is the principal present object of faith as it is *evangelical*, into whose room light must succeed? Is it not "the manifestation of the glory of the infinite wisdom, grace, love, kindness and power of God in Christ, the revelation of the eternal counsels of his will, and the ways of their accomplishment to the eternal salvation of the church in and by him, with the glorious exaltation of Christ himself?" Wherefore, in the full, satisfactory representation of these things to our souls, received by sight, or a direct, immediate intuition, of them, doth the glory of heaven principally consist. We behold them now darkly as in a glass; that is, the utmost which by faith we can attain to; in heaven they shall be openly and fully displayed. The *infinite, incomprehensible excellencies of the divine nature*, are not proposed in Scripture as the immediate object of our *faith*, nor shall they be so unto *sight* in heaven. The manifestation of them in Christ is the immediate object of our *faith* here, and shall be of our *sight* hereafter. Only through this manifestation of them we are led even by *faith*, ultimately to acquiesce in them; as we shall in heaven be led by *love*, perfectly to adhere to them with delight ineffable. This is our immediate objective glory in heaven; we hope for no other: and this, if God will, I shall shortly more fully explain.

Whoever lives in the exercise of faith, and hath any experience of the life, power, and sweetness of these heavenly things, to whom they are a spring of grace and consolation, they are able to meditate on the glory of them in

their full enjoyment. Think much of heaven, as that which will give you a perfect view and comprehension of the *wisdom and love* and grace of God in Christ, with those other things which shall be immediately declared.

Some, perhaps, will be ready to say, that if *this be heaven*, they can see no *great glory* in it, no such beauty as for which it should be desired. It may be so; for some have no instrument to take a view of invisible things but carnal imaginations; some have no light, no principle, no disposition of soul whereto these things are either acceptable or suitable. Some will go no further in the consideration of the *divine excellencies* of God, and the faculties and actings of our souls, than *reason* will guide them, which may be of use: but we look for *no other heaven*, we desire none, but what we are led to, and prepared for, by the *light of the Gospel;* that which shall perfect all the beginnings of God's grace in us; not what shall be quite of another nature, and destructive of them. We value not that heaven which is equally suited to the desires and inclinations of the *worst of men*, as well as of *the best;* for we know that they who like not *grace* here, neither do nor can like that which is *glory* hereafter. No man who is not acquainted experimentally in some measure with the life, power, and evidence of *faith* here, hath any other heaven in his aim but what is erected in his own imagination. The glory of heaven which the gospel prepares us for, which faith conducts us to, which the souls of believers long after, as that which shall give full rest, and complacency, is the open, *perfect manifestation* of the glory, of the wisdom, goodness, and love of God in Christ, in his person and mediation, with the revelation of all his counsels concerning them and the communication of their effects to us. He that likes it not, may betake himself to *Mahomet's paradise*, or the *philosopher's speculations;* in the *gospel heaven* he hath no interest. These are the things which we see now *darkly as in a glass*, by faith: in the view of them are our souls gradually changed into the likeness of God; and the comprehension of them is that which shall give our utmost conformity to him, whereof our natures are capable. In the *experience* of their reality given us by the Holy Ghost, do all our spiritual conso-

lations consist. The effects produced by them in our souls are the first fruits of glory. Our enjoyment of these things, however weak and frequently interrupted, our apprehensions of them, however dark and obscure, are the only means whereby we are *made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.*

It is true, that there are sundry *other things* that belong to this state of glory; but what we have mentioned is the *fountain* and spring of them all. We can never have an immediate enjoyment of God in the immensity of his nature, nor can any created understanding conceive such things. God's communications of himself to us, and our enjoyment of him, shall be *in and by the manifestation of his glory in Christ.* He who can see no glory, who is sensible of no blessedness in these things, is a stranger to *that heaven* which the scripture reveals, and which faith leads to.

It may be inquired, what change is to be wrought in ourselves, that we may enjoy this glory? Now that depends principally as to our souls in the "perfection of all grace, which is initially wrought, and subjectively resides in us, in this world." The *grace* which we have here shall not be done away as to its *essence* and nature, though somewhat of it shall cease as to the *manner of its operation.* What soul could think with joy of going to heaven, if thereby he must lose all his present *light*, *faith*, and *love* of God, though he were told that he should receive that in lieu of them which is more excellent, whereof he hath *no experience*, nor can understand of what nature it is? When the saints enter into rest, their *good works* follow them; and how can they do so, if their *grace* do not accompany them, from whence they proceed? The perfection of our present graces, which are here weak, and interrupted in their operations, is a principal eminency of the state of glory; *faith* shall be heightened into *vision*, as was proved before; which doth not destroy its nature, but cause it to cease as to its *manner of operation* towards things invisible. If a man have a weak, small faith in this life, with little evidence, and no assurance, so that he doubts of all things, questions all things, and hath no comfort from what he doth believe; if afterwards, through supplies of grace,

he hath a mighty *prevailing evidence of the things believed*, is filled with comfort and assurance; this is not by a *faith* or grace of another kind from what he had before, but by the same faith, raised to an higher degree of perfection. When our Saviour cured the blind man, and gave him his sight, at first he saw all things obscurely; he saw *men, as trees walking;* afterward he saw all things clearly. It was not a *sight of another kind* which he then received from what he had at first, only its imperfection, whereby he *saw men like trees, walking*, was taken away. Nor will our *perfect vision* of things above, be a grace absolutely of another kind from the *light of faith* which we here enjoy, only what is imperfect in it will be done away. *Love* shall have its perfection also, and the least change in its manner of operation of any grace whatever. And there is nothing that should more excite us to labor after a growth *in love to God* in Christ, than this, that it shall to all eternity be the same in its nature and in all its operations, only both the one and the other will be made absolutely perfect. The soul will by it be enabled to cleave to God unchangeably, with eternal delight, and complacency. *Hope* will be perfect in enjoyment, which is all the perfection it is capable of. So shall it be as to other graces.

This *subjective perfection of our natures*, especially in all the faculties, powers, and affections of our souls, and all their operations, belongs to our blessedness, nor can we be blessed without it. All the *objective glory* in heaven would not, in our beholding and enjoying of it, (if it were possible,) make us happy, if our own natures were not freed from all irregular and imperfect operations. What is it then that must give our nature this *subjective perfection?* It is that grace alone, whose beginnings we are here made partakers of; for therein consists the *renovation of the image of God* in us. And the immediate communication of that image to us, is the absolute perfection of our natures, the utmost which their capacity is suited to. And this gives us the last thing to be inquired into, namely, by what *means in ourselves* we shall *eternally abide in that state?* And this is by the *unalterable adherence of our whole souls to God*, in perfect love and delight. This is that whereby alone the soul reacheth to the essence of God, and the in-

finite incomprehensible perfections of his nature: for the *perfect nature* hereof, divine revelation hath left under a *veil*, and so must we do also. Nor do I designedly handle these things in this place, but only in the way of a direction how to exercise our thoughts about them.

This is that *notion of heaven*, which those who are *spiritually minded*, ought to be conversant with; this is *no heaven* to any others. Those who have not an experience of the excellency of these things in this world, and their incomparable transcendency to all other things, cannot conceive how *heavenly glory* and blessedness should consist in them. Unskilful men may cast away *rough, unwrought diamonds* as, useless stones; they know not what *polishing* will bring them to. Nor do men unskilful in the mysteries of godliness, judge there can be any glory in *rough unwrought grace;* they know not what lustre and beauty the polishing of the heavenly hand will give to it.

It is generally supposed, that however men differ about religion here, yet they agree well enough *about heaven;* they would all go to the same heaven. But it is a great mistake, they differ in nothing more; they would not all go to the *same heaven*. How few are they who value that heavenly state which we have treated of; or understand how *any blessedness* can consist in the enjoyment of it? But this and no other heaven would we go to. Other notions there may be of it, which being but fruits and effects of men's own imaginations, the more they dwell in the contemplation of them, the more *carnal they may grow*, at best the more superstitious. But *spiritual thoughts* of this heaven, consisting principally in freedom from all sin, in the perfection of all grace, in the vision of the glory of God in Christ, and all the excellencies of the divine nature as manifested in him, are an effectual means for the improvement of *spiritual life*, and the increase of all graces in us: for they cannot but effect an assimilation in the heart to the things contemplated on, where the principles of them are already begun. This is our first direction.

Secondly. Having fixed *right apprehensions* of heavenly things in our minds, it is our duty to *contemplate* greatly on them, and our own concernment in them. Without this, all our speculations concerning the nature of

eternal things, will be of no use to us; and for your encouragement and direction, take these few short rules relating to this duty. (1.) Here lies the great trial, whether we are *spiritually minded* or not, by virtue of this rule; *if we are risen with Christ, we shall mind the things that are above.* (2.) This is the great means whereby we may attain further degrees in that blessed frame of mind, if it be already formed in us, by virtue of that *rule; beholding the glory of God as in a glass, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory.* (3.) Here lies the great evidence where we have a *real interest* in the things above or not; whether we place our portion and blessedness in them, according to that *rule; where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also.* Are they our *treasure*, our portion, our reward, in comparison whereof all other things are but loss? then we shall assuredly be conversant in our minds about them. (4.) It cannot be imagined, that a man should have in him a principle suited to things above; that his soul should be under the conduct of those habits of grace, which strive after perfection, and yet not have his *thoughts* greatly exercised about these things.

What is the matter with men, that they are so *stupid?* They all generally desire to go to heaven, at least when they can live here no longer. Some, indeed, have no other regard to it, but only that they would not *go to hell.* But most would *die the death of the righteous*, and have their latter end like his; yet few there are who endeavor to try how it is suited to their principles and desires; but content themselves with such general notions of it as please their imaginations. It is no wonder if such persons seldom exercise their thoughts about it, nor do they so much as pretend to be spiritually minded. But as for those who are instructed in these things, who profess their chief interest to lie in them, not to abound in meditation concerning them, argues indeed, that whatever they profess, they are earthly and carnal.

Again; meditate and think of the *glory of heaven*, so as to compare it with the *opposite state of death and eternal misery.* Few men care to *think much of hell*, and the everlasting torments of the wicked. Those do so *least*, who are in *most danger* of falling therein: they put far

from them the evil day, and suppose their covenant with death and hell to be sure. Some begin to advance an opinion that there is *no such place*, because it is their interest and desire that there should be none. Some out of profaneness, make a scoff at it, as though a *future judgment* were but a fable. Most seem to think there is a *severity* in thoughts about it, which it is not fit we should be too much terrified with. Some *transient thoughts* they will have of it, but not suffer them to abide in their minds, lest they should be too much discomposed. Or they think it not consistent with the *goodness of Christ* to leave any men in that condition; whereas there is more spoken *directly of hell*, its torments and their *eternity*, by himself, than in all the scripture besides. These thoughts, in most, proceed from an unwillingness to be troubled in their sins, and are useful to none. It is the height of folly for men to endeavor the *hiding of themselves*, for a few moments, from that which is unavoidabiy coming upon them unto eternity, and the due consideration whereof is a means for an escape from it. But I speak only of *true believers:* and the more they are conversant, in their thoughts, about the future state of *eternal misery*, the greater evidence they have of the life and confidence of faith. It is a necessary duty to consider it, as what we were by nature obnoxious to, as being *children of wrath;* what we have deserved by our *personal sins*, as the *wages of sin is death;* what we are redeemed from, through *Jesus the deliverer*, who saves us from the wrath to come; what an *expression* it is of the indignation of God against sin, who hath prepared *this Tophet of old;* that we may be delivered from sin, kept up to an abhorrency of it, walking in humility, self-abasement, and the admiration of divine grace. This, therefore, is required of us, that in our meditations, we *compare the state of eternal glory*, as a free and absolute effect of the grace of God through Christ Jesus, with that *state of eternal misery* which we had deserved. And if there be any spark of grace or of holy thankfulness in our hearts, it will be stirred up to its due exercise.

Some, it may be, will say, that they cannot get their minds fixed on these things. Weakness, weariness, darkness, diversions, occasions, prevalently obstruct their abid-

ing in such thoughts. I shall speak further to this afterwards; at present I shall only suggest two things. (1.) If you cannot *attain*, yet continue to follow after spiritual thoughts. Let your minds be rising towards them every hour, yea, an hundred times a day, on all occasions, in a continual sense of duty; and sigh within yourselves for deliverance, when you find disappointments in them. (2.) Take care you *go not backwards*, and lose what you have wrought. If you neglect these things for a season, you will quickly find yourselves neglected by them. So I observe it every day in the hearing of the word. Whilst persons keep up themselves to a diligent attendance on it, where they find it preached to their edification, they find great delight in it, and will undergo great difficulties for the enjoyment of it: let them be diverted from it for a season, and it grows indifferent to them; any thing will satisfy them that pretends to the same duty.

CHAPTER VII.

Spiritual thoughts on the glorious state of heaven. First, of Christ himself. The use of such thoughts. Advantage in sufferings.

It will be to our advantage, having *right notions of the glory* of the blessed state above, in our minds, to fix on *some particulars* belonging to it, as the especial object of our thoughts and meditations. *Think then much of him who is the life and centre of heaven*, that is, Christ himself. I shall here be very brief, because I have designed a particular treatise on this subject, of *beholding the glory of Christ*, both here and to eternity. At present, therefore, a few things only shall be mentioned, because on this occasion they are not to be omitted. The *whole of the glo-*

ry of the state above, is expressed by *being ever with the Lord; where he is, to behold his glory.* For in and through him, is the beatifical manifestation of God and his glory made for evermore: and through him are all communications of inward glory unto us. The present resplendency of heavenly glory consists in his *mediatory ministry*, as I have at large elsewhere declared: and he will be the means of all glorious *communications* between God and the church to eternity. Wherefore, if we are spiritually minded, we should fix our thoughts on Christ above, as the centre of all heavenly glory. To help us herein we may consider the things that follow.

(1.) Faith hath continual recourse to him on the account of what *he did and suffered* for us in this world: for thereon, pardon of sin, justification and peace with God, depend. This ariseth, primarily, from a sense of our own wants. But love of him is no less necessary to us than *faith* in him. And although we have powerful motives to love, from what he did and was in this world, yet the formal reason of our adherence to him thereby, is *what he is in himself*, as he is now exalted in heaven. If we rejoice not at the remembrance of his present glory, if the thoughts of it be not frequent with us, and refreshing to us, how dwelleth his love in us?

(2.) Our hope is that, ere long, we shall be ever with him; and if so, it is certainly our wisdom and duty to be *here with him* as much as we can. It is a vain thing for any to suppose, that they place their chief happiness in *being forever in the presence* of Christ, who care not at all to be with him here, as they may. And the only way of our being present with him here, is by *faith* and *love*, acting in spiritual thoughts and affections; and it is an absurd thing for men to esteem themselves Christians, who scarce think of Christ all the day long. Yet some, as one complained of old, scarce ever think or speak of him, but *when they swear by his name.* I have read of them who have lived and died in continual centemplation on him, so far as the imperfection of our present state will admit. I have known them, who call themselves to a *reproof*, if at any time he hath been many minutes out of their thoughts. And it is strange that it should be otherwise with them

who *love him in sincerity;* yet I wish I did not know more, who give evidences that it is a *rare thing* for them to exercise serious thoughts and meditations about him. Yea, there are some, who are not averse, upon occasions, to speak of God, of mercy, of pardon, of his power and goodness; who, if you mention *Christ to them*, with any thing of faith, love, trust in him, they seem to them as a strange thing. Few there are who are sensible of any religion beyond what is natural. The things of the wisdom and power of God in Christ, are foolishness to them.

In your *thoughts of Christ*, be very careful that they are *conceived and directed according to the rule of the word*, lest you deceive our own souls, and give up the conduct of your affections to vain imaginations. *Spiritual* notions, befalling *carnal* minds, did once, by the means of superstition, ruin the power of religion. A conviction men had that they must *think much of Jesus Christ*, and that this would make them conformable to him; but having no real *evangelical faith*, nor the wisdom of faith to exercise it in a due manner; nor understanding what it is to be truly like him, they gave up themselves to many foolish inventions and imaginations; by which they thought to express their *love* and conformity to him. They would have images of him which they would embrace, adore, and bedew with their tears. They would have *crucifixes*, as they called them, which they would carry about them, and wear next to their hearts, as if they resolved to lodge Christ always in their bosoms. They would go in *pilgrimage* to the place where he *died* and rose again, and purchase a feigned *chip of a tree*, whereon he suffered, at the price of all they had in the world. They would endeavor, by *long thoughtfulness*, fastings, and watchings, to cast their souls into *raptures and ecstasies*, wherein they fancied themselves in his presence. They came at last to make themselves like him, in getting *impressions of wounds* on their sides, *their hands and feet*. Unto all these things did superstition corrupt the minds of men, from a pretence of a principle of truth; for there is no more certain *gospel truth* than this, that believers ought continually to contemplate on Christ, by faith in their thoughts and affections; and that thereby they are transformed *into his im-*

age. And we are not to forego our duty, because other men have been mistaken in theirs; nor part with *practical fundamental* principles of religion, because they have been abused by superstition. But we may see herein, how dangerous it is to depart in any thing from the *conduct of scripture light and rule.* Would you then think of Christ as you ought, pray that the *Holy Spirit* may abide with you continually, to remind you of him, which he will do in all in whom he doth abide; for it belongs to his office. Take some express place of scripture, wherein he is set forth either in his person, office, or grace, to you.

(3.) This duty lies at the foundation of all that *blessed communion and intercourse,* that is between Jesus Christ and the souls of believers. This, I confess, is *despised* by some, and the very notion of it esteemed *ridiculous.* But they do therein no less than renounce *Christianity,* and turn the Lord Christ into an *idol,* that neither knoweth, seeth, nor heareth. But I speak to them who are not utter strangers to the *life of faith,* who know not what religion is, unless they have real, spiritual intercourse and communion with the Lord Christ thereby. No *thoughts* of Christ, proceeding from faith, accompanied with love and delight, shall be lost: they that sow this seed shall return with their sheaves; Christ will meet them with *gracious intimations* of his acceptance, will delight in them, and return a *sense of his own love* to them. He never will be, he never was, behind with any poor soul in *returns of love.* Those gracious promises which he hath made, of *coming* to them that believe in him, of *making his abode* with them, and of *supping* with them, all expressions of a gracious presence and intimate communion, depend on this duty.

Again: I speak now with especial respect to *him in heaven.* The glory of his presence, as God and man eternally united; the discharge of his mediatory office, as he is at the right hand of God; the glory of his present acting for the church, as he is the minister of the sanctuary, and the true tabernacle which God hath fixed, and not man; the love, power, and efficacy of his intercession, whereby he takes care for the accomplishment of the salvation of the church; the approach of his glorious coming

to judgment; are to be the *objects of our daily thoughts and meditations.*

Let us not mistake ourselves. To be spiritually minded, is not to have the *notions* and knowledge of spiritual things in our minds; it is not to be constant, no, not to abound, in the performance of duties, both which may be where there is no grace in the heart at all. It is to have our minds really exercised with delight about heavenly things, the things that are above, especially Christ himself, as at the right hand of God.

Again: *So think of eternal things, as continually to lay them in the balance against all the sufferings of this life.* This I have spoken of before; and it is necessary it should be pressed upon all occasions. It is very probable that we shall *yet suffer* more than we have done. Those who have gone before us, have done so; it is foretold in the scripture, that if we will *live godly in Christ Jesus, we must do so;* we stand in need of it, and the world is prepared to bring it on us. And as we *must suffer*, so it is necessary to the glory of God, and our own salvation, that we suffer in a due manner. *Mere sufferings* will neither commend us to God, nor any way benefit our own souls. When we *suffer according to the will of God*, it is an eminent grace, gift, and privilege. But many things are required hereto. It is not enough that men suppose themselves to suffer for *conscience sake.* Nor is it enough that we suffer for this or that *way of profession* in religion, which we esteem to be true, and according to the mind of God, in opposition to what is not so. The *glory of sufferings*, on these accounts solely, hath been much *sullied* in the days wherein we live. It is evident that persons, out of a natural courage, accompanied with deep radical persuasions, and having their minds influenced with some sinister ends, may *undergo things hard and difficult*, in giving testimony to what is not according to the mind of God. Examples we have had hereof in all ages, especially in that wherein we live. We have had enough to take off all paint and appearance of honor from them, who, in their *sufferings, are deceived in what they profess.* But men nay, from the same principles, suffer for what is indeed ccording to the mind of God; yea, may give their bodies

to be burned, and yet not to his glory, nor their own eternal advantage. Wherefore, we are duly to consider all things that are requisite to make our sufferings acceptable to God, and honorable to the gospel.

I have observed, in many, a frame of spirit with respect to *sufferings*, that I never saw good event of when it was tried to the uttermost. *Boldness*, *confidence*, a *pretended contempt of hardships*, and *scorning* other men whom they suppose defective in these things, are the *livery* they wear on this occasion. Such principles may carry men out in a *bad* cause, but they will never do so in a *good one*. *Evangelical truth* will not be honorably witnessed to, but by *evangelical graces*. Distrust of ourselves, a due apprehension of the nature of the evils to be undergone, and of our own frailty, with continual prayers to be delivered from them, or supported under them, and prudent care to avoid them without an *inroad on conscience*, or neglect of duty, are much better preparations for an entrance into a state of suffering. Many things belong to our *learning aright* this first and last lesson of the gospel, namely, of *bearing the cross*, or undergoing all sorts of sufferings for the profession of it. But this only is that which we now press, as an evidence of our sincerity in our sufferings, and an effectual means to enable us cheerfully to undergo them, which is, to have such a continual *prospect of the future state of glory*, as to lay it in the balance against all that we may undergo. For,

(1.) To have our minds filled with thoughts thereof, will give us an *alacrity* in our entrance into sufferings in a way of duty. Other considerations will offer themselves to our relief, which will quickly fade and disappear. They are like a *cordial water*, which gives a little relief for a season, and then leaves the spirits to sink beneath what they were before it was taken. Some relieve themselves from the consideration of the *nature of their sufferings*; they are not so great but that they may conflict with them, and come off with safety. But there is nothing of that kind *so small*, but it will prove too *hard and strong* for us, unless we have special assistance. Some do the same from their duration; they are but for ten days or six months, and then they shall be free. Some from the

compassion and esteem of men. These and the like considerations are apt to occur to the minds of all sorts of persons, whether they are *spiritually minded* or not. But when our minds are accustomed to thoughts of the *glory that shall be revealed*, we may look cheerfully and comfortably on the loss of name, reputation, goods, liberty, and life, as "knowing in ourselves that we have better and more abiding comforts" to betake ourselves to. And we can no other way glorify God by our *alacrity* in the entrance on sufferings, than when it ariseth from a prospect into, and valuation of, those invisible things which he hath promised, as an *abundant recompense* for all we can lose in this world.

(2.) The great aggravation of sufferings is their *long continuance*, without any rational appearance or hopes of relief. Many who have *entered into sufferings* with much courage and resolution, have been *wearied and worn out* with their continuance. *Elijah* himself was hereby reduced to pray that God would *take away his life*, to put an end to his ministry and calamities. And not a few in all ages have been hereby so *broken in their natural spirits*, and so shaken in the exercise of faith, as that they have lost the glory of their religion, in seeking deliverance by *sinful compliances* in the denial of the truth. And although this may be done out of mere weariness (as it is the design of Satan *to wear out the saints of the Most High*,) with reluctance of mind, and a love yet remaining to the truth in their hearts, yet hath it constantly one of these two effects. Some by the *overwhelming* sorrow that befalls them on account of their failure in profession, and out of a deep sense of their unkindness to the Lord Jesus, are stirred up immediately to *higher acts of confession* than ever they were before engaged in, and to an *higher provocation* of their adversaries, until their former troubles are doubled upon them, which they frequently undergo with great satisfaction. Instances of this nature occur in all histories of great persecutions. Others being *discouraged* in their profession, and perhaps neglected by those whose duty it was rather to *restore them*, have, by the craft of Satan, given place to their *declensions*, and become vile apostates. To prevent these evils arising from the *duration of*

sufferings, without a prospect of deliverance, nothing is more prevalent than a constant contemplation on the future reward and glory. When the mind is filled with the thoughts of the unseen glories of eternity, it hath in readiness what to lay in the balance against the longest continuance of sufferings, which in comparison are but for a moment.

I have insisted the longer on these things, because they are the peculiar object of the thoughts of them that are indeed spiritually minded.

CHAPTER VIII.

Spiritual thoughts of God himself. The opposition to them, and neglect of them; with their causes, and the way of their prevalency. Predominant corruptions expelling due thoughts of God, how to be discovered, &c. Thoughts of God, of what nature, and what they are to be accompanied with, &c.

I have reserved to the last place, that which is the absolute foundation and spring of all spiritual things, namely, *God himself*. He is the fountain whence all these things proceed, and the ocean wherein they issue; he is the centre and circumference wherein they all begin, meet, and end. So the apostle issues his profound discourse of the counsels of the divine will and mysteries of the gospel; "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory forever." All things arise from his *power*, and are disposed by his *wisdom* into a tendency to his glory; "of him, and through him, and to him are all things." Under that consideration alone are they to be the objects of our spiritual meditations, namely, as they

come from him, and *tend to him*. All other things are finite and limited; but they *begin* and *end* in that which is immense and infinite. So *God is all in all:* he, therefore, ought to be the only supreme, absolute object of our thoughts and desires; other things are from and for him only. Where our thoughts do not immediately and directly, or mediately and by just consequence, tend to, and end in him, they are not *spiritual*.

To make way for directions how to *exercise our thoughts on God himself*, some things must be premised concerning a sinful defect herein, with the causes of it.

It is the great character of a man presumptuously and flagitiously wicked, that *God is not in all his thoughts*. That is, *he is in none of them*. And of this want of thoughts of God there are many degrees; for all wicked men are not equally forgetful of him.

1. Some are under the power of *atheistical thoughts:* they deny, or question, or do not avowedly acknowledge, the very *being of God*. This is the height of what the *enmity of the carnal mind* can rise to. To acknowledge God, and yet to refuse to be *subject to his law or will*, a man would think were as bad, if not worse, than to *deny the being of God:* but it is not so. That is a rebellion against his *authority*—this, an hatred to the *only Fountain of all goodness, truth, and being;* and that because men cannot own it, but withal they must acknowledge it to be infinitely *righteous*, holy, and powerful, which would destroy all their desires and security. Such may be the person in the *Psalm*, (for the words may be so read,) *All his thoughts are, that there is no God*. Howbeit, the context describes him as one who rather *despiseth his Providence*, than denieth his being. But such there are, whom the same *Psalmist* elsewhere brands for *fools*, though themselves seem to suppose that wisdom was born and will die with them.

It may be, never any age since the *flood* did more abound with *open Atheism*, among such as pretended to the use of reason, than that wherein we live. Among the ancient civilized Heathen, we hear ever and anon of a person *branded for an Atheist*, yet are not certain whether it was done justly or not: but in all nations of

Europe at this day, cities, courts, towns, fields, armies, abound with persons who, if any credit may be given to what they say or do, *believe not that there is a God.* And the reason may be a little inquired into.

Now this is no other, in general, but that men have wasted the *light and power* of the Christian religion. It is the *fullest* revelation of God that ever he made; it is the *last* that ever he will make in this world. If this be despised, if men rebel against the light of it, if they break the cords of it, and are senseless of its power, nothing can preserve them from the *highest atheism* that the nature of man is capable of. It is in vain to expect relief or preservation from inferior means, where the highest and most noble is rejected. *Reason*, or the light of nature, gives evidences to the being of God, and arguments are still well pleaded from them to the confusion of *Atheists;* and they were sufficient to retain men in an acknowledgment of the *Divine Power and Godhead*, who had no other, no higher evidences of them; but where men have had the benefit of divine revelation, where they have been educated in the principles of the Christian religion, have had some knowledge, and made some profession of them; and have, through love of sin, and hatred of every thing that is truly good, rejected all convictions concerning the *being*, *power*, and *rule* of God, they will not be kept to a confession of them, by any considerations that the light of nature can suggest.

There are, therefore, among others, *three reasons* why there are *more Atheists* among them who live where the Christian religion is professed, and the power of it rejected, than among any other sort of men, even than there were among the Heathens themselves.

(1.) God hath designed to *magnify his word above all his name*, or all other ways of the revelation of himself to the children of men. Where, therefore, this is rejected and despised, he will not give the *honor* to reason, or the light of nature, that they shall preserve the minds of men from any evil whatever. *Reason* shall not have the same efficacy on the minds of men who reject the light and power of divine revelation by the word, as it hath, or may have, on them whose best guide it is, who never enjoyed

the *light of the gospel:* and, therefore, there is oft-times more *common honesty* among *civilized Heathens* and *Mahometans*, than amongt degenerate Christians; and, from the same reason, the children of professors are sometimes irrecoverably profligate. It will be said, many are recovered to God by *afflictions*, who have despised the word; but it is otherwise; never any were converted to God by afflictions, who had rejected the word. Men may by afflictions be recalled to the *light of the word;* but none are immediately turned to God by them. As a good shepherd, when a sheep wanders from the flock, and will not hear his call, sends out his dog, which stops him and bites him; hereon he looks about him, and hearing the call of the shepherd, returns again to the flock. But with this sort of persons it is the way of God, that where the principal means of the revelation of himself, and wherein he doth most glorify his wisdom and his goodness, is despised, he will not only take off the efficacy of inferior means, but will *judicially* harden the hearts, and blind the eyes of men, that such means shall be of no use to them.

(2.) The contempt of the Christian religion, leaves on the mind such a *depraved, corrupt habit*, that it cannot but be wholly inclined to the worst of evils, as all our original, vicious inclinations succeeded immediately on our loss of the image of God. The best things corrupted, yield the worst savor, as *manna stank and bred worms;* the knowledge of the gospel being rejected, *vile worms* take the place of it in the mind, which grow into *vipers* and *scorpions.* Every degree of *apostacy* from gospel-truth brings a proportionate degree of inclination to wickedness into the hearts of men. Whereas, therefore, multitudes from their darkness, unbelief, temptation, love of sin, pride, and contempt of God, fall off from all subjection of soul to the gospel, either *notionally* or *practically*, deriding or despising all supernatural revelations; they are a thousand times more disposed to *downright Atheism*, than persons who never had the benefit of such revelations. Take heed of decays; whatever ground the gospel loseth in our minds, sin possesseth for its own ends.

Let none say, it is *otherwise with them.* Men grow cold and negligent in the duties of gospel worship, public and

private, which is to reject gospel light. Let them pretend what they please, that in *other things*, in their minds and conversations, it is well with them; indeed it is not so. Sin will, one way or other, make an *increase* in them, proportionate to these *decays*, and will sooner or later discover itself so to do. And themselves, if they are not utterly hardened, may greatly discover it, *inwardly* in their *peace*, or *outwardly* in their lives.

(3.) Where men are *resolved not to see*, the greater the light is that shines about them, the faster they must *close their eyes*. All *Atheism* springs from a *resolution* not to see things invisible and eternal. Love of sin, a resolved continuance in the practice of it, the effectual power of vicious inclinations, in opposition to all that is good, make it the *interest* of such men that there should be no God to call them to an account. For a supreme unavoidable Judge, an eternal Rewarder of good and evil, is inseparable from the first notion of a Divine Being. Whereas, therefore, the most glorious light, and uncontrollable evidence of these things shines forth in the scripture, men that will love and live in sin, must close their eyes with all the arts and powers that they have, or else the truth will pierce into their minds to their torment. This they do by *downright Atheism*, which alone pretends to give them security against the light of divine revelation. Against all other convictions, they might take shelter from their fears, under less degrees of it.

It is not, therefore, to the disparagement, but *honor of the gospel*, that so many avow themselves to be *Atheists*, in those places wherein the truth is known and professed: for none can have the least inclination or temptation thereto, until they have beforehand *rejected the gospel*, which immediately exposeth them to the worst of evils.

Nor is there any *means for the recovery of such persons*. The opposition that hath been made to *Atheism*, with arguments for the *Divine Being and existence* of God, taken from reason, in this and other ages, hath been of good use to cast *contempt* on the pretences of evil men, to justify themselves in their folly. But that they have so much as *changed the minds* of any, I much doubt. No man is under the power of *atheistical thoughts*, or can be, but he

that is ensnared into them by his desire to live securely and uncontrollably in sin. Such persons know it to be their interest, that there should be no God, and are willing to take shelter under the bold expressions and reasonings of them, who by the same means have hardened and blinded their minds into such foolish thoughts. But the most *rational arguments* for the being of the Deity, will never prove an effectual cure to a *predominant* love of sin, in them who have resisted and rejected the means and motives to that end, declared in divine revelation. And unless the love of sin be cured in the heart, thoughts of the acknowledgment of God will not be fixed in the mind.

2. There are those of whom also it may be said, *that God is not in all their thoughts*, though they acknowledge his essence and being For they are not practically influenced in any thing by the notions they have of him. Such is the person of whom this is affirmed, *Psal.* x. 4. He is one who, through *pride and profligacy*, with hardness in sin, *regards not God in the rule of the world.* Such is the world filled with at this day. "They profess that they know God, but in their works deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate." They think, they live, they act, in all things, as if there were no God, at least as if they never thought of him with fear and reverence. And for the most part we need not seek far for evidences of their disregard of God, the *pride of their countenances testifies against them.* And if they are followed further, cursed oaths, licentiousness of life, and hatred of all that is good, will confirm the same. Such as these may *own God in words*, may be *afraid of him in dangers*, may attend outwardly on his worship; but they *think not of God at all* in a due manner; he is not in all their thoughts.

3. There are yet less degrees of this disregard of God and forgetfulness of him. Some are so filled with *thoughts of the world*, that it is impossible they should think of God as they ought. For as the love of God and the love of the world in prevalent degrees are inconsistent, *(if a man loveth this world, how dwelleth the love of God in him?)* so thoughts of God and of the world, in the like degree, are inconsistent. This is the state of many, who yet,

would be esteemed *spiritually minded.* They are continually conversant in their minds about earthly things. Some things *impose themselves* on them under the notion of duty: they belong to their callings, they must be attended to. Some are *suggested* to their minds from daily occasions and occurrences. *Common converse* in the world engages men in no other but worldly thoughts; *desire* of earthly things, their enjoyment and increase, exhaust the vigor of their spirits all the day long. In the midst of a multitude of thoughts arising from these, whilst their hearts and heads are reeking with them, many fall immediately in their seasons to the *performance of holy duties.* Those times may suffice for thoughts of God. But notwithstanding such duties, what through the want of a *due preparation* for them, what through the fulness of their minds with other things, and what through a *neglect of exercising grace* in them, it may be said comparatively, that *God is not in all their thoughts.*

I pray God, that this, at least *as to some degrees of it,* be not the condition of many among us. I speak not now of men who *visibly* and openly live in sin, profane in their principles, and profligate in their lives.—The *prayers* of such persons are an *abomination* to the Lord; neither have they ever any thoughts of him, which he doth accept: but I speak of them who are *sober* in their lives, *industrious* in their callings, and not *openly negligent* about the outward duties of religion.—Such men are apt to approve of themselves, and others also to speak well of them; for these things are in themselves commendable and praiseworthy. But if they are traced home, it will be found, as to many of them, that *God is not in all their thoughts* as he ought to be. Their earthly conversation, their vain communication, with their foolish designs, do all manifest, that the vigor of their spirits, and the most intense contrivances of their minds, are engaged in things below. Some refuse, transient thoughts, are sometimes *cast away* on God, which he despiseth.

4. Where persons do *cherish secret predominant lusts in their hearts and lives,* God is not in their *thoughts* as he ought to be. He may be, he often is, much in the *words* of such persons, but in their thoughts he is not, he cannot

be, in a due manner. And such persons, no doubt, there are. Ever and anon, we hear of one and another whose *secret lusts* break into a discovery. They flatter themselves for a season, but God oft-times so orders things in his holy providence, that their *iniquity shall be found out to be hateful.* Some hateful lust discovers itself to be predominant in them. One is drunken, another unclean, a third an oppressor. Such there were ever found among professors of the gospel, and that in the best of times; among the apostles, one was a *traitor*, a *devil.* Of the first professors of Christianity, there were those, *whose God was their belly, whose end was destruction, who minded earthly things.* Some may take advantage of this acknowledgement, that there are such evils among professors. And it must be confessed, that great *scandal* is given hereby unto the world, casting both them that give it, and them to whom it is given, under a most dreadful wo. But we must bear the reproach of it, as they did of old, and commit the issue of all things to the watchful care of God. —However, it is good in such a season to be "jealous over ourselves and others, to exhort one another daily whilst it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." And because those with whom it is thus, cannot be *spiritually minded*, yet as there are some difficulties in the case, as to the predominancy of a secret lust or sin, I shall consider it somewhat more distinctly.

(1.) We must distinguish between a *time of temptation* in some, and the *ordinary state* of mind and affections in others. There may be a *season*, wherein God, in his holy, wise orderings of all things towards us, and for his own glory, may suffer a *lust or corruption* to break loose in the heart, to strive, and tempt, to the great disquietude of the mind and conscience. Neither can it be denied, but that falling in conjunction with some *vigorous temptation*, it may proceed so far as to *surprise the person* in whom it is, into actual sin to his defilement and amazement. In this case no man can say, "he is tempted of God, for God tempteth no man," but every man is "tempted of his own lust and enticed." But yet temptations, of what sort soever they be, so far as they are afflictive, corrective, or penal, are ordered by God himself. For there is *no*

evil of that nature, and he hath not done it. And where he will have the power of any corruption to be *afflictive* in any instance, two things may safely be ascribed to him.

One is, he *withholds the supplies of that grace*, whereby it might be effectually mortified and subdued. He can give a *sufficiency of efficacious grace*, to repel any temptation, to subdue all our lusts and sins. For he can and doth work in us *to will and to do*, according to his pleasure. Ordinarily he doth so in them that believe; so that although their lusts may *rebel* and *war*, they cannot defile or prevail. But to the continual supplies of this *actual prevailing grace*, he is not obliged. When it may have a tendency to his holy ends, he may, and doth, withhold it. When a *proud soul* is to be humbled, a *careless soul* to be awakened, an *unthankful soul* to be convinced and rebuked, a *backsliding soul* to be recovered, a *froward, selfish, passionate soul* to be broken, he can leave them for a season to the exercise of a prevalent corruption, which, under his holy guidance, shall contribute greatly to his blessed ends. If a man, through disorder and excesses, is contracting any *habitual distempers of body*, which gradually and insensibly tend to his death; it may be an advantage to be cast into a *violent fever*, which threatens immediately to take away his life. For he will hereby be *thoroughly awakened* to the consideration of his danger, and not only labor to be freed from his fever, but also for the future to watch against those *disorders and excesses* which cast him into that condition. And sometimes a loose, careless soul, that walks in a formal profession, contracts many *spiritual diseases*, which tend to death and ruin. No arguments or considerations can prevail with him, to awaken himself, to *shake himself out of the dust*, and to betake himself to a more diligent and humble walking before God. In this state, it may be, through the permission of God, he is *surprised* into some open, actual sin. Hereon, through the vigorous actings of an enlightened conscience, and the stirrings of any sparks of grace which yet remain, he is amazed, terrified, and stirs up himself to seek after deliverance.

The other thing is, that God may, and doth, in his providence, "administer objects and occasions of men's lusts,"

for their trial. He will place them in such circumstances, as shall be apt to provoke their *affections*, *passions*, and *inclinations*, to those objects that are suited to them.

If any one shall inquire how we know this *difference*, namely, that which is between the "occasional prevalence of any lust or corruption in conjunction with a temptation; and the power of sin in any instance habitually indulged in the mind:" answer:

It is no great matter whether we are able to *distinguish* between them or not. For the end why God suffers any corruption to be a snare and temptation, is to awaken the souls of men out of their security, and to humble them for their pride and negligence. The more severe are their *apprehensions* concerning it, the more effectual it will be to this end. It is good, it may be that the soul should apprehend more of what is *sinful* in it, as it is a *corruption*, than of what is *afflictive* in it, as it is a *temptation*. For if it be a predominant lust, if there be any *spark of grace* remaining in the soul, it will immediately be put upon a diligent search into itself, which will issue in deep self-abasement, the principal end designed. But,

For the *relief of them* that may be perplexed in their minds, about their condition, I say, there is an apparent difference between these things. A lust or corruption arising up or breaking forth into a *violent temptation*, is the continual *grief*, and affliction of the soul wherein it is. And as the temptation for the most part which befals such a person, will *give him no rest* from its reiterated solicitations; so he will *give the temptation no rest*, but will be continually contending against it. It fills the soul with an *amazement* at itself, and continued self-abhorrence that any such seeds of filth and folly should be yet remaining in it. With them in whom any sin is *ordinarily prevalent*, it is otherwise. According to their light and renewed occasional convictions, they have trouble about it, unless their consciences are utterly seared. But this trouble respects principally, if not solely, its guilt and effects. They know not what may ensue on their compliance with it, in this world and another.

(2.) We must distinguish between the *perplexing solicitation* of any lust, and the *conquering predominancy* of

it. The evil that is *present with us*, will be soliciting and pressing to sin of its own accord, even where there is no such especial temptation, as that spoken of before. And sometimes an especial, particular lust, may be so warmed and fomented by men's *constitutions within*, or be so exposed to exciting occasions *without*, as to bring perpetual trouble on the mind. Yet this may be where no sin hath the *predominancy* inquired after. And the difference between the *perplexing solicitation* of any corruption to sin, and the *conquering prevalency* of it, lies in this; that under the former, the thoughts, and contrivances, of the mind, are generally inclined to an *opposition to it*, and a conflict with it, how an absolute *victory* may be obtained against it. Yea, death itself is sweet to such persons under this notion, as it is that which will deliver them from the *perplexing power of their corruptions.* In the other case, namely, of its *predominancy*, it disposeth the thoughts actually for the most part *to make provision for the flesh, and to fulfil it in the lusts thereof.* It fills the mind with pleasing contemplations of its object, and puts it on contrivances for satisfaction. Yea, part of the *bitterness of death* to such persons, is, that it will make an everlasting separation between them and the satisfaction they have received in their wealth, profits, and pleasures.

(3.) There is a difference in the degree of such a predominant corruption. In some it *taints* the affections, and *works over* the will to acts of a secret complacency in sin, but proceeds no further. The whole mind may be vitiated by it, and rendered, in the multitude of its thoughts, *vain*, *sensual*, or *worldly*, according as is the nature of the prevailing corruption. Yet here God puts *bounds* to the raging of some men's corruptions, and says to their proud waves, *thus far shall ye proceed, and no further.* He either lays a *restraint* on their minds, that when lust hath *fully conceived*, it shall not bring forth sin, or he sets an *hedge* before them in his providence, that they shall not be able, in their circumstances, to find their way to what perhaps they most earnestly desire. A *woful life* it is that such men lead. They are cotinually *tortured* between their corruptions and convictions, or the love of sin, and fear of the event. With others it pursues its course into *outward*,

actual sins, which in some are discovered in this world, in others they are not: for "some men's sins go before them unto judgment, and some follow after." Some fall into sin upon *surprisal*, from a concurrence of temptation with corruption and opportunities; some *habituate* themselves to a course in sin. But among those who have received any *spiritual light*, this seldom falls out, but from the great displeasure of God. For when men have long given way to the prevalency of sin in their *affections*, and God hath set many an *hedge* before them, to put bounds to their inclinations, sometimes by *afflictions*, sometimes by *fears and dangers*, sometimes by the *word;* and yet the bent of their spirits is towards their sin; God takes off his *hand of restraint*, and "gives them up to their own hearts' lusts, to do the things that are not convenient." All things suit their desires, and they rush into actual sins and follies, setting their feet in the paths that go down to the chambers of death. The uncontrollable power of sin in such persons, and the greatness of God's displeasure against them, make their condition most deplorable.

Those that are in this *state*, of either sort, are remote from being *spiritually minded*, nor *is God in all their thoughts* as he ought to be. For,

(1.) They *will not* meditate on God. *Love of sin* is the spring in them, and the whole stream of the thoughts which they delight in, is towards the pleasures of it. If any thoughts of God come in, as a *faint tide* for a few minutes, and drive back the other stream, they are quickly repelled and carried away with the strong current of those which proceed from their powerful inclinations. Yet may such persons abide in the "performance of outward duties;" pride of their gifts, may give them delight in their own performances. But in these things they have no *real thoughts of God*, none that they delight in, none that they seek to stir up in themselves; and those which impose themselves on them they reject.

(2.) As they *will not*, so they *dare not*, think of God. They *will not*, because of the power of their lusts; they *dare not*, because of their guilt. No sooner should they begin to think of him in good earnest, but their sin would lose all its desirable forms and appearances, and represent

itself in the *horror of guilt* alone. And in that condition all the properties of the divine nature are suited to increase the dread of the sinner. *Adam* had heard God's voice before with delight and satisfaction; but on the *hearing of the same voice* after he had sinned, he hid himself, and cried that he was afraid. There is a way for men to think of God *with the guilt of sin upon them*, which they intend to *forsake;* but none for any to do it with the guilt of sin which they resolve to *continue in*. Wherefore, of all these sorts of persons it may be said, that God is not in all their thoughts, and therefore are they far enough from being *spiritually minded*. Two things will utterly *vitiate* all thoughts of God, and render them useless to us.

Vain curiosity, and Carnal boldness. It is unimaginable how the subtle disquisitions and disputes of men, about the *nature*, *properties*, and *counsels* of God, have corrupted, by *vain curiosity*, and striving for an *artificial accuracy*, in expression of men's apprehensions. When the *wits* and minds of men are engaged in such thoughts, "God is not in all their thoughts," even when all their thoughts are concerning him. When once men are got into their "metaphysical curiosities, and logical niceties," in their contemplations about God and his divine properties, they bid farewell, for the most part, to all *godly fear and reverence*. Others are under the power of *carnal boldness*, that they think of God with no other respect, than if they thought of worms of the earth like themselves. There is no *holy awfulness* upon their souls in the mention of his name. By these things, may our thoughts of God be *so vitiated*, that the heart in them shall not be affected with a reverence of him, nor any evidence be given that we are *spiritually minded*.

It is this *holy reverence* that is the means of bringing *sanctifying virtue* into our souls, from God, upon our thoughts of him. No one thinks of God with a *due reverence*, but he shall be sensible of advantage by it. Hereby do we sanctify God in our access to him, and when we do so, he will *sanctify and purify our hearts*, by those very thoughts in which we draw nigh to him.

We may have many sudden, occasional transient thoughts of God, that are not introduced in our minds by a preced-

ing *reverential fear*. But if they leave not that fear on our hearts, in proportion to their continuance with us, they are of no value, but will insensibly habituate us to a common bold frame of spirit, which he despises.

So it is in the case of thoughts of a contrary nature. Thoughts of sinful objects, may arise in our minds from the remainders of corruption; or be occasioned by the temptations of Satan; if these are immediately *rejected*, the soul is not more prejudiced by their *entrance*, than it is advantaged by their *rejection*, through the power of grace. But if they make frequent *returns* into the mind, or make any *abode* or continuance in their soliciting of the affections, they greatly *defile* the mind and conscience, disposing the person to the further entertainment of them. So, if our *occasional thoughts of God* do immediately leave us, and pass away without much affecting our minds; we shall have little or no benefit by them. But if by their frequent visits, and some continuance with us, they dispose us to an holy *reverence of God*, they are blessed means of promoting our sanctification. Without this, there may be thoughts of God to no advantage of the soul.

There is implanted in our nature such a sense of *a Divine Power* and presence, as that, on all sudden surprisals, it will act according to that sense and apprehension. There is a voice in nature itself, upon any thing that is suddenly too hard for it, which cries out immediately to the God of nature. So men, on such occasions, without any consideration, are surprised into a calling on the name of God and crying to him. And from the same *natural apprehension* it is, that wicked and profane persons will break forth on all occasions into cursed swearing by his name. So men in such ways have thoughts of God, without either reverence or godly fear, without giving any glory to him, and for the most part to their own disadvantage. Such are all thoughts of God that are not accompanied with holy *fear and reverence*.

There is scarce any duty that ought at *present* to be more pressed on the consciences of men, than this of keeping up a constant *holy reverence* of God, in private and public, in their inward thoughts, and outward communication,—*Formality* hath so prevailed in religion, that very

many manifest little or *no reverence of God*, in the most solemn duties of his worship; and less it may be in their secret thoughts. Some ways that have been found out to keep up a pretence and appearance of it, have been *destructive* to it.

But herein consists the very life of religion. The *fear of God* is, in the Old Testament, the usual expression of all the due respect of our souls to him; and that because where that is not in exercise, nothing is accepted with him. And thence the whole of our wisdom is said to consist therein, and if it be not in prevalent exercise, all our duties are utterly lost as to the ends of his glory, and the spiritual advantage of our own souls.

CHAPTER IX.

What of God or in God we are to meditate upon. His being; omnipresence and omniscience; also his omnipotence. The benefit of such thoughts.

These things mentioned have been premised in general, as to the nature of our *thoughts* on God. That which remains, is to give some particular instances of *what we are to think* upon in an especial manner.

I. We ought to abound with thoughts of faith concerning the being of God. Satan, knowing the *weakness of our minds* in the immediate contemplation of things infinite and incomprehensible, will sometimes take advantage to insinuate *blasphemous imaginations*. He will take that very time, trusting to our weakness, and his own methods of subtility, to suggest his temptations of *atheism*, by ensnaring inquiries, when we go about to refresh our souls with thoughts of the divine being and excellencies. "But is there a God indeed? How do you know that there is a

God? and may it not be otherwise?" will be his language to our minds; for, from his first temptation, by way of an ensnaring question, "yea, and hath God said it, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" he proceeds still much in the same methods. So he did with our Saviour himself, *if thou be the Son of God.* Is there a God? How if there should be none? In such a case the rule is given us by the apostle: "above all, take the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked," of *the wicked one*, that is the devil. And two ways will faith act itself on this occasion.

1. By a *speedy rejection of such diabolical suggestions with detestation.* So did our Saviour in a case not unlike it, *Get thee behind me, Satan.* Wherefore if any such thoughts are suggested, or seem to arise in your minds, know assuredly that they are no less *immediately from the devil*, than if he personally stood before you, and visibly appeared to you; if he did so, there is none of you but would *arm yourselves* with an utter defiance of what he should offer to you. It is no less necessary on this occasion, when you may *feel* him, though you *see* him not. Suffer not his *fiery darts* to abide one moment with you; reject them with indignation; and strengthen your rejection with some pertinent text of scripture, as our Saviour did. If a man have a grenado or a fire-ball cast into his clothes by his enemy, he doth not consider whether it will *burn* or not, but immediately shakes it off from him. Deal no otherwise with these *fiery darts*, lest by their abode with you they inflame your imagination to greater disturbance.

2. In case they utterly depart not upon this endeavor for their exclusion, return immediately, without further dispute, to your *own experience.* When the devil hath asked you the question, if you answer him you will be ensnared; but if thereon you ask yourselves the question, and apply yourselves to your own *experience* for an answer to it, you will frustrate all his designs.

There are arguments to be taken, as was said, from the *light of nature*, and reason in its proper exercise, sufficient to defeat all objections of that kind. But these are not our proper weapons in case of our *own temptation*, which alone is now under consideration. It requires longer and

more sedate reasonings, than such a state will admit of; nor is it a *sanctified medium* for our relief.

It is what is suited to suggestions on the occasion of our meditations that we inquire after. In them we are not to argue on such principles, but to take the *shield of faith* to quench these fiery darts. And if on such occasions Satan can divert us into long disputes about the *being of God*, he hath his end, by carrying us off from the meditation on him which we designed, and after a while he will prevail to make it a common road and trade, that no sooner shall we begin to think of God, but immediately we must *dispute about his being*.

Therefore the way in this case for him who is *really a believer*, is to *retreat* immediately to his own experience, which will pour shame and contempt on the suggestions of Satan. There is no believer who hath knowledge and time to exercise the wisdom of faith in the consideration of God's dealings with himself, but hath an inward *witness* of his eternal power and Godhead, as also of those other perfections of his nature, which he is pleased to manifest and glorify by Jesus Christ. Wherefore, on this suggestion of Satan, that there *is no God*, he will be able to say, better tell me that I do not live nor breathe; that I am not fed by my meat, nor warmed by my clothes, that I know not myself nor any thing else: for I have spiritual *sense and experience* of the contrary; like him of old, who when a *cunning sophister* would prove *to him by syllogisms*, that there was no such thing as *motion*, gave no answer to his arguments, but *rose up and walked*. How often, will he say, have I had experience of the *power and presence of God* in prayer, as though I had not only heard of him by the hearing of the ear, but also seen him by the seeing of the eye? How often hath he put forth his power and grace in *me by his spirt and his word* with an uncontrollable evidence of his being, goodness, love, and grace? How often hath he refreshed *my conscience* with the sense of the pardon of sin, speaking that peace to my soul, which all the world could not communicate to me? In how many *afflictions*, dangers, troubles, hath he been a present help and relief? What sensible *emanations* of life and power from him have I obtained in meditation on his grace and glory? He who had *been blind*, answered the *Pharisees*

to their ensnaring captious questions; be it what it will, *one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.* Whatever, saith such a soul, be in this temptation of Satan, one thing I know full well, that *whereas I was dead, I am alive*, whereas *I was blind, now I see, and that by an effect of divine power.*

This shield of faith, managed in the hand of *experience*, will quench the fiery darts of Satan; and he will fall under a double defeat. His temptation will be repelled by the proper way of resistance, whereon he will not only desist in his attempt, but even fly from you. *Resist the devil*, saith the apostle, *and he will fly from you.* He will not only depart and cease to trouble you, but will depart as one defeated and confounded. And it is for want of this resistance, that many hang so long in the briers of this temptation. Recalling the *experiences* we have had of God, will lead us to the exercise of all kinds of graces, which is the greatest disappointment of our adversary.

In thoughts of the *divine being and existence* we are apt to *be at a loss*, to be *overwhelmed* in our minds, because the object is too great and glorious for us to contemplate on. *Eternity* and *immensity*, every thing under the notion of *infinite*, take off the mind from its distinct actings, and reduce it as it were to nothing. Hereon in some, vain and foolish imaginations are apt to arise, and inquiries how can these things be, which we cannot comprehend. Others are utterly at a *loss*, and turn away their thoughts from them, as they would do their eyes from the bright beams of the sun. Two things are advisable in this case.

1. That we betake ourselves to an *holy admiration* of what we *cannot comprehend.* In these things we cannot see God and live; nay, in life eternal itself, they are not *absolutely* to be comprehended, only what is *infinite* can fully comprehend what is so. Here they are the *objects of* faith and worship; in them we may find rest and satisfaction, when inquiries and reasonings will disquiet us, and it may be, overwhelm us. Infinite glory forbids us any near approach, but only by faith. The soul thereby bowing itself to God's adorable greatness, and incomprehensible perfections; finding ourselves to be nothing, and God to be all, will give us rest and peace in these things. We

have but unsteady thoughts of the *greatness of the world*, and all the nations and inhabitants of it; yet are it and these but as "the dust of the balance and the drop of the bucket, as vanity, as nothing," compared with God: what then can our thoughts concerning him issue in, but *holy admiration?*

2. In case we are brought to a *loss* and disorder in our minds, on the contemplation of any one *infinite property of God*, it is good to divert our thoughts to the *effects of it*, such as whereof we have, or may have experience; for what is too great or high for us *in itself*, is made suitable to our understandings in its *effects*. So the "invisible things of God are known in, and by, the things that are seen." And there is indeed no property of the divine nature, but we may have an experience of it, as to some of its *effects* in and upon ourselves. These we may consider, and in the streams taste of the fountain which we cannot approach. By them we are led to an *holy admiration* of what is in itself infinite, immense, incomprehensible. I cannot comprehend the *immensity of God's* nature; it may be, I cannot understand the nature of immensity; yet if I find by experience, and do strongly believe, that he is always present wherever I am, I have the faith of it, and satisfaction in it.

II. Thoughts of *the divine being*, those of his omnipresence and omniscience ought continually to accompany us. We cannot take one step in a walk before him, unless we remember, that always and in all places he is present with us; that our *inward thoughts* are continually in his view, no less than our outward actions. And as we ought to be perpetually under an awe of, and in the fear of God in these apprehensions, so there are *some seasons* wherein our minds ought to be in the actual conception and thoughts of them, without which we shall not be preserved in our duty.

1. The first *season of this nature* is, in *times, places*, with other occasions of *temptation*, and consequently of *sinning*. With some, *company* constitutes such a season; and with some, secrecy does the same. There are those who are ready, with a careless boldnes, to put themselves in such *society* as they know have been to them, occasions

of sin; every such entrance into any company, to them who know how it hath formerly succeeded, is their *actual sin*, and it is just with God to leave them to all the evil consequences that ensue. Others either *choose*, or are frequently *cast* on such society; and no sooner are they engaged in it, but they forget all regard to God, and give themselves up, not only to vanity, but to various sorts of excess. *David* knew the evil and danger of such occasions; and gives us an account of his behavior in them. "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence; I held my peace, even from good, and my sorrow was stirred; my heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue." As for their evil words and ways, he would have no communication with them. And as to good discourse, he judged it unseasonable to cast *pearl before swine*. He was therefore silent as to that also, though it was a grief and trouble to him. But this occasioned in him afterwards those excellent meditations which he expresseth in the following verses. In the entrances of these occasions, if men would remember the *presence of God with them* in these places, with the holy severity of the eye that is upon them, it would put an awe upon their spirits, and embitter those *jollities*, whose relish is given them by temptation and sin. He doth neither walk humbly nor circumspectly, who being unnecessarily cast on the society of men, wicked or profane, doth not in his entrance of them call to mind the *presence* and *all-seeing eye of God*, and at his departure from them, consider whether his *deportment* hath been such as became that presence, and his being under that eye. But alas! pretences of business, engagements of trade, and the common course of communication in the world, with a supposition that all sorts of *society* are allowed for diversion, have cast out the remembrance of God from the minds of most, even when men cannot be preserved from sin without it.

This hath sullied *the beauty* of gospel conversation amongst the most, and left in very few, any prevalent evidence of being *spiritually minded*.

Wherefore, as to them who, either by voluntary choice,

or necessity enter promiscuously into all *societies and companies*, let them know assuredly, that if they *awe* not their spirits continually with the thoughts of the *omnipresence and omniscience* of God, they will not be preserved from snares and sinful miscarriages.

Yea, such thoughts are needful to the best of us all, and in the best of our *societies*, that we behave not ourselves indecently in them at any time.

Again, to some, *privacy*, *secrecy*, *and opportunity*, are occasions of sin. They are so to persons under convictions not wholly turned to God. Many a good beginning hath been utterly ruined by this temptation. *Privacy and opportunity* have overthrown many such persons in the best of their resolutions. And they are so to all persons not yet flagitiously wicked. Cursed fruits proceed every day from these occasions. We need no other demonstration of their power and efficacy in tempting to sin, but the visible effects of them. And what they are to any, they may be to all, if not diligently watched against. So the apostle reflects on the *shameful things that are done in the dark*, in a concurrence of secrecy and opportunity. This therefore gives a just season to thoughts of the *omnipresence and omniscience* of God, and they will not be wanting in some measure in them that are *spiritually minded*.

"God is in this place; the darkness is no darkness unto him, light and darkness are with him both alike," are sufficient considerations to lay in the balance against any temptations springing out of *secrecy and opportunity*. One thought of the actual presence of the holy God, and the open view of his all-seeing eye; will do more to cool those affections, which lust may put into a tumult on such occasions, than any other consideration whatever. A speedy retreat hereunto, upon the first perplexing thoughts wherewith temptation assaults the soul, will be its strong tower, where it shall be safe.

2. A second season calling for the exercise of our thoughts of the *omnipresence and omniscience* of God, is made up of our *solitudes* and *retirements*. These give us the most genuine trials, whether we are *spiritually minded* or not. What we are in them, that we are, and no more. But yet in some of them, as in walkings and in journeyings,

vain thoughts and foolish imaginations are exceedingly apt to solicit our minds. Whatever is stored up in the affections or memory, will at such a time *offer itself* for our present entertainment: and where men have accustomed themselves to any sort of things, they will press on them for the possession of their thoughts, whether they will or not. The *Psalmist* gives us the way to prevent this evil; "I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel; my reins also instruct me in the night season. I have set the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand." His reins, that is, his affections, and secret thoughts, gave him counsel, and instructed him in all such seasons; but whence had they that wisdom and faithfulness? In themselves they are the seat of all lusts and corruptions; nor could they do any thing but seduce him into an evil frame. It was from hence alone, *that he has set the Lord always before him.* Continual apprehensions of the presence of God kept his mind, in that *awe* and *reverence*, that they always instructed him to his duty.

3. Times of *great difficulties, dangers, and perplexities of mind*, are a season calling for the same duty. Suppose a man is left *alone* in his trials for the profession of the gospel, as it was with *Paul* when *all men forsook him, and no man stood by him.* Suppose him to be brought before *princes, rulers*, or *judges*, that are filled with rage, and armed with power against him, all things being disposed to affect him with dread and terror. It is the duty of such an one to call *off his thoughts from all things visibly present,* and to fix them on the *omnipresence* and *omniscience* of God. He sits amongst those judges, though they acknowledge him not; he rules over them at his pleasure; he knows the cause of the oppressed, and justifies them whenever the world condemns; and can deliver them when he pleaseth. With the thoughts hereof did those *holy souls* support themselves, when they stood before the fiery countenance of the bloody tyrant on the one hand, and the burning fiery furnace on the other. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou

hast set up." Thoughts of the presence and power of God, gave them not only comfort and support under their distress, when they were alone and helpless, but courage to defy the tyrant to his face. And when the apostle was brought before *Nero*, that monster of cruelty and villany, and all men forsook him, he affirms *that the Lord stood by him, and strengthened him.*

Wherefore, on such occasions, when the hearts of men are ready to quake, when they see all things about them *filled with terror*, and all help far away, it is their duty and wisdom to *abstract* their thoughts from all outward and present appearances, and to fix them on the presence of God. This will greatly change the scene of things in their minds; and they will find that *strength, and wisdom*, are on their side alone; all that appears against them, being but *folly*, and *weakness.*

So when the servant *Elisha* saw the place where they were, compassed with an *host*, both horses and chariots that came to take them, he cried out for fear, *Alas, my master, how shall we do?* But upon the praying of the prophet, the Lord opening the eyes of the young man, to see the heavenly guard that he had sent to him, the mountain being full of horses and chariots of fire round about *Elisha*, his fear departed. And when, in the like extremity, God opens the eye of faith to behold his glorious presence, we shall no more be afraid of men. Herein did the *holy martyrs* triumph of old, and even despised their bloody persecutors. Our Saviour himself made it the ground of his support on the like occasion. *Behold* saith he to his only friends, "the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every one to his own, and leave me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Can we but possess our soul with the apprehension, that when we are *left alone* in our trials and dangers, from any countenance of friends, or help of men, yet that indeed we are *not alone because the Father is with us*, it will support us under our despondencies, and enable us to do our duties.

4. Especial providential warnings, call for thoughts of *God's omnipresence and omniscience.* So *Jacob*, in his nightly vision, instantly made this conclusion; *God is in*

this place, and I know it not. We have frequently such warnings given to us. Sometimes we have so in the things which are esteemed *accidental*, whence it may be we are strangely delivered. Sometimes we have so in the things which we see to *befall others*, by thunder, lightning, storms at sea or land. For all the works of God, especially those that are rare and strange, have *a voice* whereby he speaks to us. The first thing suggested to a spiritual mind, in such seasons, will be, God is in this place, he is present that liveth and seeth, as *Hagar* confessed on the like occasion.

III. Have frequent thoughts of *God's almighty power.* This most men, it may be, suppose they need not much exhortation to; for who doth not grant it on all occasions? Men grant it indeed in general; for *eternal power* is inseparable from the first notion of the Divine Being. So are they conjoined by the apostle, *his eternal power and godhead.* Yet few believe it for themselves, and as they ought. Indeed, to believe the *almighty power of God*, with reference to ourselves and all our concerns, temporal and eternal, is one of the highest acts of faith, which includes all others in it. For this is that which God at first proposed alone as the proper object of our faith, in our entrance into covenant with him. *I am God Almighty;* that which *Job* arrived to, after his long trial; *I know*, saith he, *thou canst do every thing, and no thought of thine can be hindered. God hath spoken once*, (saith the Psalmist,) *twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God.* It was that which God saw it necessary *frequently* to instruct him in. For we are ready to be affected with the appearances of *present power* in creatures, and to suppose that all things will go according to their wills, because of their *power*. But it is quite otherwise; all creatures are poor, feeble ciphers, that can do nothing; *power belongs* to God; it is a flower of his crown imperial, which he will suffer none to usurp; if the proudest of men go beyond the bounds of his present permission, he will *send worms* to eat them up, as he did to *Herod.*

It is utterly impossible we should walk before God, to his glory, or with any real satisfaction in our own souls, unless our minds are continually exercised with thoughts

of his *almighty power*. Every thing that befals us, every thing that we hear of, which hath the least danger of it, will discompose our minds, and either make us tremble like the leaves of the forest, that are shaken with the wind, or betake ourselves to foolish or sinful relief, unless we are firmly established in the faith hereof. Consider *the promises of God* to the church which are upon record, and yet unaccomplished; consider the present state of the church in the world, with all that belongs to it; in all the fears and dangers they are exposed to, and we shall quickly find, that unless this *sheet-anchor* be well fixed, we shall be tossed up and down at all uncertainties, and exposed to most violent temptations. Unto this end are we called hereunto by God himself, in his answer to the despondent complaints of the church in its greatest dangers and calamities. "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Take one instance, which is the continual concernment of us all. We are obnoxious to *death* every moment. It is never the further from any of us, because we think not of it as we ought. This will lay our bodies in the dust, from whence they will have no more *disposition* nor *power* in themselves to rise again, than any other part of the earth. Their recovery must be an act of *almighty power*, when God shall call, and we shall answer him out of the dust. And it will transmit the soul into an *invisible world*, putting a final end to all relations, enjoyments, and circumstances here below. I speak not of them who are *stout-hearted* and *far from righteousness*, who live and die like beasts, or under the power of horrible presumption, without any due thoughts of their future and eternal state. But as to others, what satisfaction can any man have in his life, whereon his all depends, and which is passing from

him every moment; unless he hath continual thoughts of the *mighty power of God*, whereby he is able *to receive his departing soul*, and *to raise his body out of the dust?*

Not to insist on more particulars; thus is it with them who are spiritually minded; thus must it be with all, if we pretend a title to that privilege. They are *filled with thoughts of God*, in opposition to that character of wicked men, that *God is not in all their thoughts.* And it is greatly to be feared, that many of us, when we come to be weighed in the balance, will be found too light. Men may be in the performance of *outward duties;* they may hear the word with some delight, and do many things gladly; they may escape the *pollutions that are in the world through lust*, and not run into the same excess with other men; yet may they be strangers to inward thoughts of God with delight and complacency. I cannot understand how it can be otherwise with them, whose minds are over and over filled with earthly things, however they may satisfy themselves with pretences of their callings and lawful enjoyments.

To walk with God, to live to him, is not merely to be found in an abstinence from outward sins, and in the performance of outward duties, though with diligence in the multiplication of them. All this may be *done upon such principles, for such ends*, with *such a frame of heart*, as to find no acceptance with God. It is our hearts that he requireth, and we can no way give them to him, but by holy thoughts of him with delight. This is to be spiritually minded; this it is to walk with God. Let no man deceive himself: unless we thus *abound in* holy thoughts of God, unless our meditation of him be sweet to us, all that we else pretend to will fail us in the day of our trial.

CHAPTER X.

Directions to such as complain that they know not how to abide in holy thoughts of God, and heavenly things. Rules concerning stated Spiritual Meditation.

Some *will* say, yea, many on all occasions *do* say, that there is not any thing in all their duty towards God wherein they are more at a loss, than they are in this one, of *fixing their thoughts on things heavenly or spiritual.* They acknowledge it a duty; they see an excellency in it, with inexpressible usefulness. But although they often attempt it, they cannot attain to any thing, but what makes them ashamed of themselves. Their *minds* they find are *unsteady*, apt to wander to *other things*, and not to abide on the object which they design to meditation. Their abilities are small, their invention barren, their *memories* frail, and their *judgments*, to dispose of things into right order, weak. They know not what *to think on* for the most part; and when they fix on any thing, they are immediately at a loss as to any progress, and so give over. Hence *other things*, or *thoughts of other things*, take advantage to impose themselves on them, and what began in *spiritual meditation* ends in *carnal vanity.* On these considerations, oft-times they are discouraged to enter on the duty, oft-times give it over so soon as it is begun, and are glad if they come off without being losers by their endeavors, which often befalls them. With respect to other duties, it is not so with them. To such to whom their defect is a burden; who mourn under it, and desire to be freed from it, I shall offer the things that ensue.

1. That sense of the vanity of our minds, which this consideration, duly attended to, will give us, ought greatly to humble our souls. Whence is it, that we cannot abide in meditations of things spiritual and *heavenly?* Is it

because they are things worthless and unprofitable, so that it is to no purpose to spend our thoughts about them? Or is it because the *faculties* and powers of our souls were not originally suited to the contemplation of them, and delight in them? The *cause*, of all this evil, lies at our own doors. All this, and all other evils, came upon us by the entrance of sin. And therefore *Solomon*, in his inquiry after all the causes and effects of vanity, brings it under this head; "Lo, this only have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." For hereby our minds, that were created in a state of blessed adherence to God, were wholly turned off from him, and not only so, but filled with enmity against him. In this state, that *vanity* which is prevalent in them, is both their sin and their punishment. Their *sin*, in a perpetual inclination to things vain, sensual, and wicked. And their *punishment*, in that being turned off from the chiefest good, wherein alone rest is to be found, they are filled with darkness, and confusion, being like *a troubled sea that cannot rest*, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

By grace our minds are *renewed;* that is, changed and delivered from this frame; but they are so partially only. The *principle of vanity* is no longer *predominant* in us. But the remainders of it are *effectually operative* in all actings of our minds towards God, affecting them with *uncertainty* and *instability*. As he who hath received a great wound in any principal part of his body, though it may be so cured, as that death shall not immediately ensue thereon; yet it may make him go weak and lame all his days, and hinder him in the exercise of all the powers of life. The *vanity of our minds* is so cured, as to deliver us from *spiritual death;* but yet such a wound, such a weakness, doth remain, as hinders us in all the operations of *spiritual life*. When there is *war* in any place, it behooveth them that are concerned, to have an eye to all their enemies. But if they are vigilant, in their opposition to those that are without, and in the mean time *neglect* such as traitorously act within among themselves, betraying their councils, and weakening their strength, they will be undoubtedly ruined. Wise men do first take care of what is within, as knowing if they are there betrayed, all they do against

their open enemies is to no purpose. In the warfare wherein we are engaged, we have enemies of all sorts that openly and visibly, in various temptations fight against our souls. These it is our duty to *watch against*. But it is *this internal vanity of mind*, that endeavors, in all things, to betray us, to weaken us in all our graces, or to hinder their due operations; and to open the doors of our hearts to our cursed enemies. If our principal endeavor be not to discover, suppress, and destroy this traitor, we shall not succeed in our spiritual warfare.

This, therefore, being the *original cause* of all that disability of mind as to steadiness in holy meditations, whereof you complain, labor to be *humbled greatly*, under a sense of the remainders of this vanity of mind. So some wholesome fruits may be taken from this bitter root, and meat may come out of this eater. If, when you cannot *abide in holy thoughts of God*, and your relation to him, you reflect on this cause of it to your further humiliation and self-abasement, your good designs and purposes are not lost. Let such an one say, "I began to think of God, of his love and grace in Christ Jesus, of my duty towards him; and where now in a few minutes do I find myself? I am got into the ends of the earth, into things useless and earthly; or am at such a loss as that I have no mind to proceed in the work wherein I was engaged. O! wretched man that I am," what a cursed enemy have I within me! I am ashamed of myself, weary of myself, loathe myself, *who shall deliver me of this body of death?* Such thoughts may be as useful to him, as those which he first designed.

True it is, we can never be freed *absolutely* from all the effects of this instability of mind in this world. *Unchangeable cleaving to God*, always, in all the powers and affections of our minds, is reserved for heaven. But yet *great degrees* may be attained in the conquest and expulsion of it, such as I fear few have experience of; yet ought all to labor after. If we apply ourselves as we ought, to the increase of *spiritual light and grace*; if we labor diligently to abide and abound *in thoughts of spiritual* things, if we watch against the entertainment and approbation of thoughts whereby this *vain frame* is pleased and confirmed; there is, though not an *absolute perfection*, yet a blessed degree

of heavenly mindedness to be attained, and therein the nearest approach to glory, that in this world we are capable of. If a man cannot attain an *athletic constitution of health*, or a strength like that of *Sampson;* yet, if he be wise, he will not omit the use of such means as may make him to be useful in the ordinary duties of life. And although we cannot attain perfection in this matter, which is our duty to be continually pressing after; yet, if we are wise, we shall be endeavoring *such a cure of this spiritual distemper*, as that we may be able to discharge all the duties of the *life of God*. But if men, in all other things, *feed the vanity of their own minds*, if they permit them to *rove* continually after things foolish, sensual, and earthly; if they wilfully *supply* them with objects to that end, and labor not by all means for the mortification of this evil frame; in vain shall they desire or expect to bring them at any time, on any occasion, to be *steady in the thoughts of heavenly things*. If it be thus with any, as it is to be feared it is with many, it is their duty to mind the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in the first place, *make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good*, and not before. When the power of sanctifying grace hath made the *mind habitually spiritual and heavenly*, thoughts of such things will be natural to it, and accompanied with delight. But they will not be so until the *God of peace* have sanctified us in our whole spirits, souls, and bodies, whereby we may be preserved blameless, to the coming of Jesus Christ.

2. Be always sensible of your own insufficiency to raise in your minds, or to manage spiritual thoughts, in a due manner. The advice given is expressly laid down by the apostle, in the instance of himself; "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." He speaks principally of *ministers of the gospel*, and that of such as were most *eminently furnished* with spiritual gifts and graces. And if it be so with them, and that with respect to the duties of their calling, how much more is it so with others, who have not their graces nor their offices? Wherefore if men, without regard to the present actual grace of God, and the supplies of his spirit, suppose that they can, of themselves, exercise their minds in spiritual thoughts, and so only *fret at them-*

selves when they fall into disappointment, not knowing what is the matter with them, they will live in a lifeless, barren frame, all their days.

By the strength of their *natural abilities*, men may *frame thoughts of God* and heavenly things in their minds, according to the knowledge they have of them. They may methodize them by rules of *art*, and express them elegantly to others; but even while they do so, they may be far enough from being *spiritually minded;* for there may be in their thoughts no *actings of faith, love, or holy delight in God*, nor any grace at all. But such alone are things which we inquire after; such wherein the graces of the Spirit are in their proper exercise. With respect to them, we have no sufficiency in ourselves, *all our sufficiency must be of God.*

3. Remember, that I have not at present treated of *solemn, stated meditation;* concerning which, other *rules and instructions* ought to be given. *By solemn or stated meditation*, I intend the thoughts of some subject spiritual and divine, with the fixing, forcing, and ordering our thoughts about it, with a design to affect our own hearts and souls with the matter of it, or the things contained in it. By this design it is distinguished from the *study* of the word, wherein our principal aim is to learn the truth, or to declare it to others. And so also from *prayer*, whereof God himself is the immediate object. But in *meditation* it is the affecting of our own hearts with *love, delight*, and *humiliation.* At present, I have only showed what it is to be *spiritually minded*, or of what sort the course of our thoughts ought to be, with respect to all the occasions of the *life of God.* This persons may be in a readiness for, who are yet *unskilful* in stated meditation. For there is required to the latter such an exercise of our natural faculties and abilities, as some, through their weakness and ignorance, are incapable of. But as to the former, it is not unattainable by any in whom is the spirit of faith and love. For it is but the frequent actings of them that I intend. Wherefore, do your hearts lead you to *many thoughts* of God and spiritual things? Do they *spring up in you*, as water in a well of living waters? Are you ready, on all occasions, to *entertain* such thoughts, and to be conversant

with them, as opportunity offers itself? Do you *labor* to have in readiness what is *useful* for you, with respect to temptations and duties? Is *God in Christ*, and the things of the gospel, the ordinary *retreat* of your souls? Though you should not be able to carry on an ordinary, stated meditation in your minds, yet you may be *spiritually minded.*

A man may not have a capacity and ability to carry on a great trade of merchandize in the world. The knowledge of all sorts of commodities and seasons of the world, and nations of it, with those contrivances and accounts which belong to such *trade*, may be above his comprehension, and he may quickly ruin himself in undertaking such an employment. Yet may the abilities of this man serve him well enough to carry on a *retail trade* in a *private shop*, wherein perhaps he may thrive as well, and get as good an estate, as any of those whose *greater capacities* lead them forth to more *large* and hazardous employments. So it may be with some in this case. The natural faculties of their minds are not sufficient to enable them to *stated meditation.* They cannot cast things into *method* and order; nor frame the *conceptions* of their minds into words significant and expressive; yet as to *frequency of thoughts of God*, they may *thrive* and be *skilful* beyond most others of greater natural abilities. Howbeit, because even *stated meditation* is a necessary duty; I shall have regard thereto in the following direction; wherefore,

4. Whatever principle of grace we have in our minds, we cannot attain to a ready exercise of it in spiritual meditation without great diligence, nor without great difficulty.

As good it is for a *poor* man to expect to be rich in this world without industry, or a *weak* man to be strong and healthy without food and exercise; as to be *spiritually minded* without an earnest endeavor after it. It may be inquired, what is requisite thereto? And we may name some of those things, without which such an *holy frame* will not be attained. As,

(1.) A continual watch is to be kept on the soul against the *incursions* of vain imaginations, especially in such seasons wherein they are apt to obtain advantage. If they are suffered to make an *inroad* into the mind, if we accustom ourselves to give them entertainment, if they are wont

to lodge within; in vain shall we hope or desire to be spiritually minded. Herein consists a principal part of that duty which our Saviour so frequently, so *emphatically* chargeth on us all; namely, to *watch*. Unless we keep a strict watch herein, we shall be betrayed into the hands of our spiritual enemies; for all such *thoughts* are but making provision for the flesh to fulfil its desires in the lust thereof, however they may be disappointed as to actual sin. This is the substance of the advice given us in charge, *Prov.* iv. 23. *Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.*

(2.) Careful avoidance of all societies and businesses of this life, which are apt, under various pretences, to draw and seduce the mind to an earthly or sensual frame. If men will venture on those things which they have found by *experience*, or may find by *observation*, seduce and draw off their minds from an heavenly frame to that which is contrary thereto, and will not *watch* to their avoidance, they will be filled with the fruit of their own ways. Indeed by the common converse of professors among themselves and others, walking, talking, and behaving themselves like other men, being as full of the world as the world is of itself; they have lost the grace of being spiritually minded within, and stained the glory of profession without. The rule observed by *David* will manifest how careful we ought to be herein. "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence; I held my peace even from good, and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me: while I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue."

(3.) An *holy constraint* put on the mind to abide in the duty of spiritual thoughts and meditations; pressing it continually with the consideration of their necessity and usefulness. The more *inward* and *purely spiritual* any duty is, which hath no outward advantages, the more prone will the mind be to decline from it. It will be so, more from *private prayer* than public, more from *meditation* than prayer. And other things will be apt to draw it aside from objects without, and various stirrings of the affections within. An holy constraint is to be put upon it, with a sudden re-

jection of what rises up to its diversion or disturbance. Wherefore, we are to call in all *constraining motives*, such as the consideration of the *love of Christ*, to keep the mind steady to its duty.

(4.) *Diligent use of means* to furnish the soul with that *light and knowledge* of heavenly things, wich may administer continual *matter of holy* thoughts and meditations, from within ourselves. The want hereof is that which keeps many from the least proficiency in these duties. As a man may have some skill or ability for a *trade*, yet if he have no materials to work upon, he must sit still and let his trade alone. And so must men do to the work of *holy meditation:* whatever be the ability of the natural faculties, their *inventions* or *memories*, if they are not furnished with *knowledge* of *things spiritual and heavenly*, which are the subject matter of such meditations, they must let their work alone. Hence the apostle prays for the *Colossians*, that the word of God might *dwell in them richly in all wisdom.* That is, that they might abound *in the knowledge of the mind of Christ*, without which we shall be unfit for this duty.

(5.) *Steadiness in our conflict with Satan*, who, by various artifices and the injection of *fiery darts*, labors continually to divert us from the duties. He who is furnished in any measure with *spiritual wisdom and understanding*, may find him more sensibly at work in his craft and opposition with respect to this duty, than any other way. When we stand thus before the Lord, he is *always at our right hand to resist us;* and oft-times his strength is great. Steadiness in the resistance of him, on these occasions, is one great part of our *spiritual warfare.* And we may know that he is at work, by his engines and methods. For they consist in his suggestion of foolish, or corrupt imaginations. When they begin to *rise in our minds*, at such times as we would engage them in spiritual meditations, we may know assuredly from whence they are.

(6.) Mortifications to the world in our affections and desires, with moderation in our endeavors after the needful things of it, are also necessary; yea, to that degree, that without them no man can in any sense be said to be *spiritually minded.* For otherwise our affections cannot be so

preserved under the power of grace, as that spiritual things may be always serviceable to us.

Some, it may be, will say, that "if all these things are required, it will take up a man's weole life and time to be *spiritually minded*. They hope they may attain it at an easier rate.

I answer; that however it may prove an *hard saying* to some, yet I must say it, and my heart would reproach me if I should not say, that if the *principal part of our time* be not spent about these things, whatever we suppose, we have indeed neither life nor peace. The first fruits of all were to be offered to God; and in sacrifices he required the blood, and the fat of the inwards. If the *best be not his*, he will have nothing. It is so as to our time. Tell me, I pray you, how you can spend your *lives* to better purpose; and I shall say, Go on and prosper. Do you think you came into this world to spend your whole time and strength in your employments, your trades, your pleasures, to the satisfaction of the will of the flesh and of the mind? Have you time enough to eat, to drink, to sleep, to talk *unprofitably*, it may be *corruptly*, in all sorts of unnecessary societies, but have not enough *to live to God*, in the very essentials of that life which consists in these things? Alas! you came into the world under the law, *it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment;* and the end why your life here is granted to you, is, that you may be prepared for that judgment. If this be neglected, if the *principal part of your time* be not improved with respect to this end, you will fall under the sentence of it to eternity.

But men are apt to mistake in this matter. They may think that these things tend to take them off from their *lawful employments and recreations*, which they are generally afraid of, and unwilling to purchase any frame of mind at so dear a rate. They may suppose, that to have men *spiritually minded*, we would make them mopes, and to disregard all the lawful occasions of life. But let not any be mistaken; I am not upon a design that will be easily, or, it may be, honestly defeated. Men are able to defend themselves in their *callings* and *enjoyments*, and to satisfy their consciences against any persuasions to the contrary. Yet

there is a season, wherein we are obliged *to part with all we have*, and give up ourselves wholly to follow Christ in all things. *Mat.* xix. 21. And if we neglect or refuse it *in that season*, it is an evidence that we are hypocrites. And there was a time when *superstition* had so much power on the minds of men, that multitudes were persuaded to forsake, to give up all their interest in *relations*, *callings*, *goods*, *possessions*, and betake themselves to tedious pilgrimages, yea, hard services in war, to comply with that superstition; and it is not the glory of our profession, that we have so few instances of men parting with all, and giving up themselves to heavenly retirement. But I am at present on no such design; I aim not to take men out of their lawful earthly occasions, but to bring spiritual affections and thoughts into the management of them all. The things mentioned will deprive you of *no time* you can lay a claim to, but will sanctify it all.

I confess, he must be a great *proficient* in *spirituality*, who dares venture on an *absolute retirement*, and he must be well satisfied that he is not called to an usefulness among men inconsistent *therewith*. Yet men under the due exercise of grace, may attain to a *fixedness* in heavenly meditation, and to a blessed advancement of all grace, and a near approach to glory. And I would hope it was so with many of them in ancient times who renounced the world, with all circumstances of relations, state, inheritances, and betook themselves to retirement in wildernesses, to abide always in divine contemplation. But afterwards, when *multitudes*, whose minds were not so prepared, by a real growth in all grace, and mortification to the world, as they were, betook themselves under the same pretences to a *monastical retirement*, the devil, the world, sensual lusts, superstition, and all manner of evils pursued them, found them out, possessed them, to the unspeakable damage and scandal of religion.

This therefore is not that which I invite the *common sort of believers* to. The generality of Christians have lawful callings, employments, and businesses, which ordinarily they ought to abide in. That they also may live to God in these occasions, they may do well to consider two things.

(1.) Industry in men's callings, is a thing in itself very

commendable. If in nothing else, it hath an advantage herein, that it is a means to preserve men from *those excesses in lust and riot*, which otherwise they are apt to run into. And if you consider the two sorts of men, whereunto the generality of men are distributed, namely, of them "who are industrious in their affairs, and those who spend their time, as far as they are able, in idleness and pleasure," the former sort are far more amiable and desirable. Howbeit, it is capable of being greatly abused. Earthly mindedness, covetousness, devouring things holy as to times and seasons of duty, uselessness, and the like pernicious vices, invade and possess the minds of men. There is no *lawful calling* that absolutely excludes this grace of being *spiritually minded* in them that are engaged in it, nor any that includes it. Consider the *ministry:* it calls on those that are employed in it, to have their thoughts conversant about heavenly things. They are to *study* about them, to *meditate* on them, to *commit them to memory*, to speak them out to others. It will be said, Surely such men must needs be spiritually minded.—But a man may with great industry engage himself about these things, and yet this mind be most remote from being *spiritual*. The event declares that it may be so, and the reasons of it are manifest. It requires more watchfulness, more care, more humility, for a minister to be spiritually minded in the discharge of his calling, than to any sort of men in theirs: and that, because the commonness of the exercise of such thoughts, with their design upon others in their expression, will take off their power and efficacy. And he will have little benefit by his own *ministry*, who aim not, in the first place, at an experience in his own heart of the power of the truths which he teaches to others. And there is evidently as great a failing herein among us, as among any other sort of Christians, as every occasion of trial demonstrates.

(2.) Although industry in any honest calling be allowable, yet unless men labor to be spiritually minded in the exercise of that industry, they have neither life nor peace. Hereunto all the things before mentioned are necessary; I know not how any of them can be abated, yea, more is required than is expressed in them. If you burn this roll, another must be written, and many like things must

be added to it. And the objection from the expense of time in the observance of them, is of no force. For a man may do as much work whilst he is spiritually minded, as whilst he is carnal. Spiritual thoughts will no more hinder you in your callings, than those that are *vain* and earthly, which all sorts of men can find leisure for, in the midst of their employments. If you have filled a vessel with chaff, yet you may pour into it a great deal of water, which will be contained in the same space. And if it be necessary that you should take in much of the chaff of the world into your minds, yet are they capable of such *measures of grace* as shall preserve them sincere to God.

5. This frame will never be preserved, nor the duties mentioned be ever performed in a due manner, unless we *dedicate some part of our time peculiarly to them.* I speak to them only concerning whom I suppose that they do daily *set apart some portion of time* to holy duties, as prayer and reading of the word, and find, by experience, that it succeeds well with them. For the most part, if they lose their *seasons*, they lose their duties. For some have complained, that the urgency of business, and multiplicity of occasions, driving them at first from the *fixed time* of their duties, hath brought them into a course of neglecting duty itself. Wherefore, it is our wisdom to *set apart* constantly some time to the exercise of our thoughts about spiritual things in the way of meditation. And I shall close this discourse with some directions in this particular, to them who complain of their disability for the discharge of this duty.

(1.) Choose a time of freedom from *other* occasions and diversions. And because it is our duty to *redeem time* with respect to holy duties, such a season may be the more useful, the more the *purchase of it* stands us in. We are not at *any time*, to serve God with what *costs us nought*, nor with *any time* that comes within the same *rule*. If we will allow only the *refuse of our time* to this duty, when we have nothing else to do, and it may be, are *fit for nothing else*, we are not to expect any great success in it. This is one reason why men are so lifeless in spiritual duties, namely, the seasons which they allot to them. When the body is wearied with the labors of the day, and the mind indisposed, even by the means of necessary refreshment,

men think themselves special fit to *treat with God* about the great concerns of his glory, and their own souls. This is that which God condemneth by the prophet. "And if you offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?" Both the law of nature, and all the laws of holy institutions, require that we should serve *God with the best that we have.* And shall we think to offer that *time* to God, wherein we are unfit to appear before an earthly ruler? Yet such, in my account, are the seasons, especially the *evening seasons*, that most men choose for the duties of their holy worship. If, therefore, you seriously intend this duty, choose the seasons for it wherein you are the most fit, when even the *natural vigor of your spirits* is most free and active. Possibly some will say, this may be such a time as when the occasions of the world call most earnestly for your attendance to them. I say that is the season I would recommend. And if you can conquer your minds to *redeem it* for God at that rate, your endeavors in it will be prosperous. However, trust not to times that will offer themselves. Take them not up at hazard. Let the time itself be a *free-will offering* to God, taken from the *top* of the heap, or the choicest part of your useful time.

(2.) *Preparation* of mind to a due reverence of God and spiritual things, is required. When we go about this duty, if we rush into thoughts of heavenly things without a reverential preparation, we shall quickly find ourselves at a loss. *Grace to serve God with reverence and godly fear*, is required in all things wherein we have to do with him, as in this duty we have, in an immediate and especial manner. Endeavor, therefore, in the first place, to get your hearts *deeply affected with an awful reverence of God*, and an holy regard to the heavenly nature of the things you would meditate upon. Hereby your minds will be composed, and the roots of other thoughts, be they vain or earthly, which are apt to arise and divert you to this duty, will be cast out. If various thoughts conflict in our minds, some for this world, and some for another, those for this world may carry it for a season. But where a due

reverence of God hath cast out the *bond-woman and her children*, the workings of the flesh in its vain thoughts and imaginations, the mind will be at liberty to exercise itself on spiritual things.

(3.) *Earnest desires after a renewed sense of spiritual things*, are required. If we engage in this duty merely on a conviction of the *necessity* of it, or set ourselves about it because we think we ought to do so, and it will not be well utterly to neglect it, we may not expect to be successful in it: but when the soul hath at any time *tasted that the Lord is gracious;* when its meditations on him *have been sweet;* when spiritual things have had a relish in the mind and it comes to this duty with earnest desires to have the like tastes, the like experience, yea, to have them increased; then is it in the way of an hopeful progress. And this also will make us persevere in our endeavors to go through with what we undertake; namely, when we do know, by former experience, what is to be attained in it, if we dig and search for it, as treasure.

If you shall think that the right discharge of this duty may be *otherwise attained;* if you suppose that it *deserves not* all this cost and charge about it; judge by what is past, whether it be not adviseable to give it over and let it alone. As good lie quietly on the ground, as continually attempt to rise, and never once to effect it. Remember how many successive attempts you have made, and all have come to nothing, or that which is as bad as nothing.

When after this preparation you find yourselves yet perplexed and entangled, not able comfortably to persist in spiritual thoughts, to your refreshment, take these directions for your relief.

Cry to God for help. Bewail the darkness, weakness, and instability of your minds, so as to groan within yourselves for deliverance. And if your *designed meditations* issue only in a gracious sense of your own insufficiency, with application to God for supplies of strength, they are by no means *lost.* The thoughts of *Hezekiah*, in his meditations, did not seem to have any great order or consistency, when he so expressed them; "like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes failed with looking upwards; O Lord I am oppressed,

undertake for me." When the soul labors sincerely for communion with God, but sinks into *broken confused thoughts* under the weight of its own weakness, yet if he looks to God for relief, his *chattering and mourning* will be accepted with God, and profitable to himself.

Supply *the brokenness of your thoughts with ejaculatory prayers*, according as either the matter of them, or your defect in the management of them doth require. So was it with *Hezekiah* in the instance before mentioned; where his meditations were *weak and broken*, he cries out in the midst of them, *O Lord I am oppessed, undertake for me.* And meditation is properly "a mixture of spiritual apprehension of God and heavenly things, in the thoughts and conceptions of the mind, with desires and supplications thereon.

It is good and profitable to have some special designed subject of meditation in our thoughts. I have at large declared before what things are the *proper objects* of the thoughts of them that are *spiritually minded.* But they may be more peculiarly considered as the matter of designed meditation. And they may be taken out of some especial *spiritual experience* that we have lately had, or some *warnings* we have received of God, or something wherewith we have been *peculiarly affected* in the reading or preaching of the word, or what we find the *present* frame of our souls to require; or that which most frequently supplies all, *the person and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.* If any thing of this nature be peculiarly designed, *antecedently to this duty*, and a season be sought for it, the mind will be kept from wandering after variety of subjects, wherein it is apt to lose itself, and bring nothing to perfection.

Lastly, be not discouraged with an apprehension, that all that you can attain to in the discharge of this *duty, is so little, so contemptible, as that it is to no purpose to persist in it. Nor be wearied with the difficulties you meet with in its performance.* You have to do with him only in this matter, who will not only break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; whose will it is, that none should *despise the day of small things.* And if there be in this duty a *ready mind*, it is accepted according to what a man

hath, and not according to what he hath not. He that can bring into this treasury only *the mites of broken desires and ejaculatory prayers*, so they be his *best*, shall not come behind them who cast into it out of their great abundance, ability, and skill. To faint and give out, because we cannot arise to such a height as we aim at, is a fruit of pride and unbelief. He who finds himself to gain nothing by continual endeavors after holy, fixed meditations, but only a *living active sense of his own vileness* and unworthiness, is a sufficient gainer by all his pains. But ordinarily it shall not be so; constancy in the duty, will give ability for it. Those who conscientiously abide in its performance, shall increase in light, and experience, until they are able to manage it with great success. These few plain directions may possibly be of some use to the weaker sort of Christians, when they find a disability in themselves to the discharge of this duty.

PART II.

CHAPTER XI.

The seat of Spiritual Mindedness in the Affections. The means used by God himself, to call the Affections of men from the World.

In the account given at the entrance of this discourse, of what it is to be *spiritually minded*, it was reduced to three heads.

First, The *habitual frame of the mind in its affections.*

Secondly, The *usual exercise of the mind in its thoughts, about heavenly things.*

Thirdly, Its *complacency in spiritual things*, so thought and meditated on.

The *second* of these hath hitherto alone been spoken of. The *first* and *last* I shall now handle together, and therein comprehend the account of what it is to be *spiritually minded.*

The greatest contest of heaven and earth is about the *affections* of the poor worm, which we call man. That the *world* should contend for them, is no wonder. It is the *best* that it can pretend to. All things here below are capable of no higher ambition than to be *possessed of the affections of men.* And as they lie under the curse, it can do us no greater mischief than by prevailing in this design. But that the *holy God* should engage in the contest, and strive for the affections of man, is an effect of *infinite condescension and grace.* This he doth expressly; *my Son*, saith he, *give me thy heart.* It is our affections he asketh for, and comparatively nothing else; to be sure he will accept of nothing from us without them. The most fat and costly sacrifice will not be accepted, if it be without a heart. All the dispensations of his will, by his word; all the de-

signs of his effectual grace, are suited to this end, namely, to recover the affections of man to himself. So he expresseth himself concerning his word. "And now, *Israel*, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul?" And as to the word of his grace, he declares it to the same purpose. "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed; to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul."

And on the other side, all the *artifices* of the world, all the *paint* it puts on its face, all the great *promises* it makes, all the *false appearances* and *attires* it clothes itself with, by the help of Satan, have no other end but to *draw the affections of men to itself*.—And if the world be preferred before God, in this address which is made to us for our affections, we shall justly perish with the world to eternity; and be rejected by him whom we have rejected.

Our affections are all we have to bestow; the only power of our souls, whereby, if we may, we give away ourselves from ourselves, and become another's. Other faculties of our souls, even the most noble of them, are suited to receive in to our own advantage; by our affections we can give away *what we are, and have*. Hereby, we give our hearts to God, as he requireth. Wherefore to him we give our affections, to whom we give ourselves, and all that we have; and to whom we give them not, whatever we give, we give nothing at all.

In what we do to or for others; whatsoever is praiseworthy in it, proceeds from the *affections* wherewith we do it. To do any thing for others without an *animating affection*, is but a contempt of them; for we judge them really unworthy that we should do any thing for them: to give to the poor upon their importunity, without pity or compassion; to supply the wants of saints without love and kindness, with other duties of the like nature, are things that can recommend us neither to God nor men. It is so in general with God and the world. Whatever we do in the service of God, whatever we undergo, or suffer for his name's sake, if it proceed not from the cleaving of our souls to him by our *affections*, it is de-

spised by him. And however, on the other hand, we may be diligent, and sedulous about the things of this world, yet, if it have not our *affections*, we are not of the world. *They are the seat of all sincerity*, the life and soul of every thing that is praise-worthy; whatever men pretend, as their affections are, so are they.

Affections are in the soul as the *helm in the ship;* if it be laid hold on by a skilful hand, he turneth the whole vessel which way he pleaseth. If God hath the powerful *hand of his grace upon our affections*, he turns our soul to a compliance with his institutions, instructions, afflictions, all sorts of providences, and in mercy holds them firm against all storms of temptations, that they shall not hurry them on pernicious dangers. Such a soul alone is pliable to all intimations of God's will.

All others are stubborn and stout-hearted, and far from righteousness. And when the world hath the hand on our affections, it turns the whole industry of the soul, to its concerns. And it is in vain to contend with any thing that hath the *power of our affections* in its disposal, it will prevail at last.

On all these considerations, it is of the highest importance to consider aright how things are in our *affections*, and what is their prevailing bent. *Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.* Every man hath his edge, which may be sharpened by outward helps and advantages: the predominant inclination of a man's *affections* is his edge. According as that is set, that way he is sharp and keen, but blunt to all other things.

Now because it must be, that our affections are either *spiritual* or *earthly* in a prevailing degree; that either *God* hath our hearts, or the *world;* that our edge is towards *heaven*, or towards *things here below;* before I come to give an account of the nature and operations of spiritual affections, I shall consider some of these *motives* which God is pleased to make use of, to call off our affections from the desirable things of this world; for as they are such, as cannot be neglected, without the greatest contempt of divine wisdom and goodness, so they serve to enforce those arguments that are proposed to us, to set our *affections on things above*, which is to be spiritually minded,

First. He hath, in all manner of instances, poured *contempt on the things of this world*, in comparison of things spiritual and heavenly. All things here below were at first made beautiful, and were declared by God himself to be *exceeding good.* They were then desirable to men, and the enjoyment of them would have been a blessing, without danger of temptation; but since the entrance of sin, whereby the *world fell under* the power of Satan, the things of it in his management, are become effectual means to draw off the heart and the affections from God. Being now in this condition, through the *craft of Satan*, God hath showed, by various instances, that they are all *vain*, and every way to be despised, in comparison of things eternal.

He did it most signally in the *life and death of Christ.* What can be found in this world, after the Son of God hath spent his life in it, not having where to lay his head; and after he went out of it on the cross? Had there been aught of real worth here below, certainly he had enjoyed, if not crowns and *empires*, which were all in his power; yet such *possessions* as men of sober and moderate affections, esteem a competency. But things were quite otherwise disposed, to manifest that there is nothing of value in those things, but only to support nature to the performance of service to God. He never attained, more than *daily supplies of bread* out of the stores of Providence, and which alone he hath instructed us to pray for. In his cross the world proclaimed all its good qualities, and hath given to them that believe, its naked face to contemplate. Hence is that inference of the apostle, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."

Whither so fast, my friend? "What meaneth this rising so early, and going to bed late, eating the bread of carefulness?" Why this diligence? Why these contrivances? Why these hoardings of wealth? To what end is all this care and counsel? Alas! saith one, it is to get *enough of this world* for me and my children, to raise an estate for them, which, may be a competency, to give them some satisfaction in their lives, and some reputation in the world. Fair pretences! neither shall I ever discourage any from

the exercise of industry in their lawful callings: but yet I know, that with many, this is but a pretence for a shameful engagement of their affections to the world. Wherefore, in all these things, have an eye to *Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith:* behold how he is set before us in the gospel, poor, despised, reproached, persecuted, nailed to the cross, and all this by the world. Whatever be your designs and aims, let his cross continually interpose between your affections and this world. If you are believers, your hopes are, within a few days, to be with him for ever more. To him you must give an account of yourselves, and what you have done in this world: will it be accepted with him to declare what you have saved of this world: what you have gained; and what you have left behind you? Was this any part of his employment? Hath he left us an example for any such course? No man can set his affections on things here below, who hath any regard to the pattern of Christ, or is in any measure influenced with the power of his cross.

What he did forego and trample on for our sake, that ought not to be the object of our affections; nor can such affections prevail in us, if he dwell in our hearts by faith.

He hath done the same *in his dealings with the apostles*, and generally with all that have been most dear to him, and instrumental of his glory in the world. He had great work to do by the apostles. The laying of the foundations of the glorious kingdom of Christ was committed to them. Who would not think that he should provide for them, if not *principalities or popedoms*, yet at least *archbishoprics, and bishoprics*, with other good ecclesiastical dignities and preferments? Hereby might they have been made *meet to converse with princes*, and had been freed from the contempt of the vulgar; but *Infinite Wisdom* did otherwise dispose of them and their concerns in this world; for as God was pleased to exercise them with the common afflictions and calamities of this life, which he makes use of to take off the sweetness of *present enjoyments*, so they lived and died in a condition of poverty, persecution, and reproach. God set them forth as examples as to other ends, namely, of *light*, *grace*, *zeal* and *holiness* in their

lives, so to manifest of how little concernment to our own blessedness, or an interest in his love, is *the abundance of all things here below*, as also, that the want of them all may consist with the highest *participation* of his love and favor. "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were, appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. Even to this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place, and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things to this day." And if this consideration be not of weight with others, undoubtedly it ought to be so with them who are called to preach the gospel, and are the *successors to the apostles*. There can be nothing more *absurd*, nothing more *opposite* to the *wisdom* and *will of God*, in his dealings with those *first* and most *honorable dispensers of it*, than for such persons to follow greedily after secular advantages, *and honor*.

God continues to cast contempt on these things, by giving always incomparably the *greatest portion* of them to the vilest men, and his own avowed enemies. Those *monsters of men*, *Nero* and *Heliogabalus*, had more power over the things of this world, than ever had the best of men. Look on all the principal *treasures and powers of this world*, as in the hands of one of these *monsters*, and there disposed of by *Divine Providence*, and you may see at what rate God values them.

At this day, the most noble, and fruitful parts of the earth, are given to the *great Turk*, with some other *eastern potentates*, either *Mahometans or Pagans*, who are prepared for *eternal destruction*.

Doth not God proclaim herein, that the things of this *world* are not to be valued or esteemed? If they had a *real worth in themselves*, would the holy and righteous God make such a distribution of them? Who would set his heart on those things which God poureth into the *bosoms of the vilest men*, to be a snare to them here, and an aggravation *of their condemnation for ever?* It seems, *you*

may go and take the world, and *take the curse*, *death* and *hell along with it;* and what will it *profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?*

He doth continue to give perpetual instances of their uncertainty in the utter disappointment of men that have had expectations from them. The instances so multiplied, as that most men in the world, unless they are like the fool in the *gospel*, who bade his soul take its ease for many years, because his *barns* were full, live in perpetual apprehensions, that they shall speedily lose whatever they enjoy; or are under the power of a stupid security. By these ways, doth God *cast contempt on all things here below;* discovering the folly and falseness of the promises which the world makes to allure our affections to itself.

Secondly. God hath added to their vanity, by shortening the lives of men, to so uncertain a season, as it is impossible they should take any solid satisfaction in what they enjoy here below. So it is expressed by the *Psalmist.* "Behold thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth, and my age is nothing before thee."

God hath reduced the life of man to the small pittance of *seventy years;* casting what may fall out of a longer continuance into *travail* and *sorrow.* Besides, that space is shortened with the most, by various and innumerable incidents. In these *seventy years*, consider how long it is before men begin to have a relish of the things of this life; how many things fall in to make us weary of them before the end of our days; how few among us, *not one of a thousand, attain that age;* what is the uncertainty of all men living, as to the continuance of their lives to the next day; and we shall see that God hath left no such season for their enjoyment, as might put a value upon them. And when, on the other hand, it is remembered, that this man, who is of such short continuance in this world, is yet made for *eternal blessedness* or *misery*, which state depends wholly on his interest in things above, they must forfeit all their reason, as well as bid defiance to the grace of God, who give them up for things below.

Moreover, God hath openly and fully declared the *danger that is in these things*, as to their enjoyment and use; and what multitudes of souls miscarry, by an inordinate

adherence to them! For they are the matter of those temptations, whereby the souls of men are ruined forever; the fuel that supplies the fire of their lusts, until they are consumed by it.

Men, under the power of spiritual convictions, fall not into sin, fail not eternally, but by the means of temptation. That is the *mire wherein this rush doth grow.*—For others who live and die in the madness and wildness of nature, without any restraint from the power of convictions, need no external temptations, but only *opportunities* to exert their lusts. But those who by any means are *convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment*, fall not into *actual sin* but upon *temptations*. Whatever it be, *which prevaileth* on a *convinced person*, to sin, that is temptation. Wherefore, this is the great means of ruin to the *souls of men*.

Now, though there are many principles of *temptation*, many causes that actually concur in its *efficacy*, as *Satan, and other men*, yet the *matter of almost all ruinous temptations is taken out of this world, and the things of it.* Thence doth satan take all his darts; thence do evil men derive all the means whereby they corrupt others, and thence is all the fuel of sin and lust taken. And which adds to this evil, all that is in the world contributes its utmost thereto. "All that is in the world, is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." It is not a direct formal enumeration of the things that are in the world, nor a distribution of them under several heads; but it is so of the principal lusts of the minds of men, whereto all things are subservient. Wherefore, not only the matter of all *temptations*, is taken from the world, but everything that is in the world is apt to be abused to that end. For it were easy to show, that there is nothing valuable in this whole world, but it is reducible to a subserviency to one or other of these lusts, and is applicable to the service of temptations.

When men hear of these things, they are apt to say to unclean persons, drunkards, oppressors, proud, ambitious persons, it may be so; but as to them, they use the things of this world with a due moderation, *so as they are no snare to them.* But if the affections of men are set upon them,

one way or other, there is nothing in the world, but is thus a snare and temptation.

Lastly. Things are so ordered in the wise dispensation of God's providence, that it requires *much spiritual wisdom to distinguish between the use and abuse of these things*, between a lawful care about them, and an inordinate cleaving to them. Few distinguish aright here; and therefore in these things will many find their great mistake at the last day.

Some make their own inclinations the measure of what is lawful; some the example of others; some the course of the world; some their own real or pretended necessities. They confess that there is an inordinate love of those things and an abuse of them. But their care, love, and industry, are all allowable.

Hence we may have men approving of themselves as just stewards of their enjoyments, whilst others judge them *hard, covetous, earthly-minded;* no way laying out what they are intrusted with, to the glory of God, in any due proportion. Others also think not amiss of themselves who live in palpable excesses, *pride of life*, sensual pleasures, vain apparel, feastings and entertainments, in direct contempt of the rules which our Saviour gives.

But what if any of us should be *mistaken in our rule and application of it* to our condition? Men at sea may have a fair gale of wind; they may sail freely and smoothly for a season, and yet, instead of being brought into a port, be cast on *destructive shoals* or *rocks.*

And what if that which we esteen *allowable care, and industry*, should prove to be the fruit of earthly affections, inordinate and predominant in us; what if that which we approve in ourselves *should be disapproved of God; we are cast forever, we belong to the world, and with the world we shall perish.*

It may be said, that if it be so difficult to distinguish between the *lawful use of things here below*, and their *abuse;* on the knowledge whereof our eternal condition depends, it is impossible but men must spend their time in solicitous anxiety of mind, as not knowing when they have aright discharged their duty.

Where the soul is sincere, there is no need in this case of any more *anxiety of mind*, than there is about other duties. But when it is biassed by self-love, it is not so; and therefore I shall so far digress in this place, as to give some directions to those who in sincerity would be satisfied in this *lawful use of earthly things;* so as not to adhere to them with inordinate affections.

First. Remember always that you are not *proprietors*, nor *absolute possesors of these things*, but only stewards of them. With respect to men, you are, or may be, *just proprietors* of what you enjoy; with respect to him who is the *great possessor of heaven and earth*, you are but stewards. This stewardship we are to give an account of, as we are taught in the *parable*. *Luke* xvi. 1, 2. This rule always attended to, will be *a blessed guide in all instances of duty.*

But if a man be left in trust with houses and large possessions, as a steward for the right owner, if he fall into a pleasing dream, that they are all his own, and use them accordingly, it will be a woful surprisal to him, when he shall be called to account for all he hath received, whether he will or not; and when indeed he hath nothing to pay. It will scarce be otherwise with them at the great day, who forget the trust which is committed to them, and suppose they may do what they will, with what they call their own.

Secondly. There is nothing in the ways *of getting, enjoying, or using of these things*, but giveth its own evidence to spiritual wisdom, *whether it be within the bounds of duty or not.* Men are not lightly deceived herein, but when they are evidently under the power of corrupt affections, or will not at all attend to themselves, and the language of their own consciences.

A due examination of ourselves in the sight of God, with respect to these things, will greatly give check to our corrupt inclinations, and discover the folly of those reasonings, whereby we deceive ourselves into the love of earthly things, and bring to light the secret principle of self-love, which is the root of all this evil.

Thirdly. If you would be able to make a right judgment in this case, be sure that you have another object for

your affections, which is predominant in your minds, and which will evidence itself to be so on all occasions. Let a man be never so observant of himself, as to all outward duties required of him, with respect to these earthly things; let him be liberal in the disposal of them on all occasions; let him be watchful against all intemperance in the use of them; yet if hath not *another object* for his affections, which hath a prevailing influence upon them; if they are not *set upon the things that are above;* one way or other, it is the world that hath possession of his heart. For the affections of our minds will and must be placed, in chief, on things below or things above; there will be a predominant love in us; and therefore, although all our actions should testify another frame, yet if God, and the things of God, be not the *principal object* of our affections; by one way or other, unto the world we belong: this is taught us expressly by our Saviour.

Fourthly. Labor continually for the *mortification of your affections* to the things of this world. They are, in the state of corrupted nature, set and fixed on them; nor will any reasonings take them off in a due manner, unless they are mortified to them by the cross of Christ. Whatever *change* be otherwise wrought in them, it will be of no advantage to us. It is *mortification* alone, that will take them off from earthly things, to the glory of God. Hence the apostle, having given us that charge, *set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth,* adds this, as the only way whereby we may do so: *Mortify therefore your members that are on the earth.* Let no man think that his affections will fall off from earthly things of their own accord. The keenness of them, in many things, may be abated by the decay of their natural powers in age. They may be abated by frequent disappointments, by sickness and afflictions, as we shall see immediately: or they may be willing to a distribution of earthly enjoyments, to have the reputation of it, wherein they still cleave to the world, but under another shape and appearance. They may be startled by convictions, so as to do many things gladly, that belong to another frame. But on one pretence or other, they will for ever cleave to earthly things, unless

they are mortified to them, through faith in the cross of Christ.

Fifthly. In all instances of duty belonging to your *stewardship* of earthly things, as in works of charity, piety, and compassion, give authority in and over your souls, to the rule of the word. Let neither self, nor unbelief, nor the custom and example of others, be heard to speak; but let the *rule alone* be attended to, and to what that speaks, yield obedience.

Unless these things are found in us, none of us, can have any *refreshing evidence* or *assurance*, that he is not under the power of an inordinate, and predominant love to this world.

And indeed, to add a little further on the occasion of this *digression*, it is a sad thing to have this exception made against the *state of any man*, on just grounds; *yea, but he loves the world.* He is sober and industrious, he is constant in duties of Religion, it may be, an earnest preacher of them, a man of sound principles, and blameless as to the excesses of life: *but he loves the world.* The question is, how doth this appear? It may be, what you say, is but one of those evil surmises which all things are filled with. Wherefore, I speak it not at all to give countenance to the rash judging of others, which none are more prone to, than those who one way or other are eminently guilty themselves. But I would have every man judge himself, that we be none of us condemned of the Lord. If notwithstanding the things mentioned, any of us do centre in self, if we prefer *self* above all other things, aim at the *satisfaction of self* in what we do it is to be feared, that the world, and things that are in it, have the principal interest in our affections.

And the danger is yet greater with them who, in *pride of life, vanity in apparel, excess in drinking, pampering the flesh every day,* tread close on the heels of the world, if they do not also fully keep company with it. Altogether in vain is it for such persons to countenance themselves with an appearance of other graces in them, or the sedulous performance of other duties. This one rule will eternally prevail against them; *if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

Lastly. To close this matter, and to show us what we are to expect, in case we set our affections on things here below, and they have thereby a predominant interest in our hearts, God hath positively determined and declared, that if it be so, he will have nothing to do with us, nor will accept of those affections which, we pretend, to spare for him, and spiritual things. If we abstain from open sins, if we are constant in religious duties, and give ourselves up to walk after the *most strict sort in religion*, like *Paul* in his *Pharisaism*, may we not, will some say or think, find acceptance with God, though our hearts cleave inordinately to the things of this world? I say, God hath peremptorily determined the contrary; and if other arguments will not prevail with us, he leaves us at last to this, *go love the world and the things of it, but know assuredly you do it to the eternal loss of your souls.* These few instances have I given of the arguments and motives whereby God is pleased to deter us from fixing *our affections on things here below.*

CHAPTER XII.

What is required in our affections, that they may be spiritual.

As to the principle acting in them, that our affections may be spiritual, it is required that they be *changed, renewed, and inlaid with grace, spiritual and supernatural.*

By nature, our affections are depraved. Nothing in the whole nature of man, no power or faculty of the soul, is fallen under greater disorder by the entrance of sin, than our affections. In them is the heart wholly turned off from God. It were a long work to set forth this deprava-

tion of our affections, nor doth it belong to our present design. Some few things I shall briefly observe concerning it, to make way for what is proposed concerning their change.

(1.) This is the only corruption of our nature by the fall, evident to reason itself. Those who were wise among the heathen, saw it and complained of it. They found a weakness in the mind, but saw nothing of its darkness and depravation *as unto things spiritual.* But they were sensible of this disorder of the affections in things moral, which renders the minds of men like a troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. This greatly aggravates the neglect of them who are not sensible of it in themselves, seeing it is discernable in the light of nature.

(2.) They are the spring of all actual sin in the world. The evil heart in the scripture, is the corrupt affections of it, with the imaginations of the mind, whereby they are excited. These are they which at this time fill the whole world with darkness, confusion, and terror. And we may learn what is their force and efficacy from these effects. So the nature of the plague is most evident, when we see thousands dying of it every week.

(3.) They will not be under the conduct of the mind, its light, or convictions. *Rebellion against the light of the mind,* is the very form whereby their corruption acts. Let the apprehensions of the mind, and its motions of good and evil, be what they will, they reject them, and lead the soul in pursuit of their inclinations. Hence no natural man doth in any measure answer the light of his mind, or the convictions of his understanding; but he sees and approves of better things, following those that are worse. And there is no greater spiritual judgment, than for men to be given up to themselves, and their own evil affections.

Whilst our *affections* are in this condition, we are far enough from being *spiritually minded;* nor is it possible to engage them in an *adherence* to *spiritual things.*

In this state, they may be two ways wrought upon, and yet not renewed.

First. There may be various *temporary impressions* made on them, sometimes there are so by the *preaching of the word.* Men may hear it with joy, and do many things

gladly. Sometimes it is so by *judgments, dangers, sickness, apprehensions of the approach of death.* These things take men off for a season from their greedy delight in earthly things. On many other occasions, by great variety of causes, there may be *temporary impressions* made on the *affections*, that shall seem, for a season, to have turned the stream of them. And we have many, who one day will be wholly for God, resolved to forsake sin and all the pleasures of it; but the next, return to all their former excesses. For this is the effect of those *impressions*, that whereas men ordinarily are predominantly actuated by *love, desire*, and *delight*, which lead them to act according to the true natural principles of the soul; now they are for a season actuated by fear and dread, which put a kind of force on all their inclinations. They have other thoughts of *good* and *evil*, of *things eternal* and *temporal*, of *God*, and their *own duty* for a season. And some of them may persuade themselves, that there is a change in their hearts which there is not; like a man who persuades himself that he hath *lost his ague, because his present fit is over.* The next trial of temptation carries them away again *to the world and sin.*

There are sometimes sudden *impressions* made on *spiritual affections*, which are always of great advantage to the soul, renewing its engagements to God and duty. So is it often with believers in *hearing the word*, and other *occasions.* On all of them they *renew their cleavings to God with love and delight.* But the effect of these *impressions* on *unrenewed affections*, is neither *spiritual* nor *durable.* Yea, for the most part, they are but checks given in the providence of God to the raging of their lusts.

Secondly. There may be an *habitual change wrought in the passions and affections of the mind*, as to the inordinate and violent pursuit of their inclinations, without any *gracious renovation of them. Education, philosophy*, or *reason, long afflictions, spiritual light and gifts*, have wrought this change. So *Saul*, upon his call to be king, became *another man.* Hereby persons, naturally *passionate* and *furious*, have been made *sedate* and *moderate;* and those who have been *sensual*, have become *temperate*; yea, *and haters of religion*, to be *professors of it.* All

these things, and many more of the like nature, have proceeded from a change wrought upon the affections only; whilst the will and conscience, have been totally unsanctified.

By this change, where it is alone, no man ever became *spiritually minded.* For whereas there are two parts of the *depravation of our affections;* that whereby they are *turned off from God,* and that whereby they *inordinately cleave to other things;* their change principally, if not only, respects the latter. They are brought into some order with respect to present things. The mind is not continually tossed up and down by them, as the *waves of the sea,* that are troubled, and cast up *mire* and *dirt.* They do not carry those in whom they are into vicious, sensual actions, but they allow them to make *virtue* in *moderation, sobriety, temperance, fidelity,* and *usefulness* in several ways, to be their design. And it is admirable to think what degrees of eminency in all sorts of *moral virtues,* upon this one principle of moderating the affection, even many among the *heathens* attained to. But as to their *aversion from God* and *spiritual things,* in the true *spiritual notion* of them, they are not cured by this change.

Again, this alteration doth but *turn the course of men's affections,* it doth not change the nature of them. They are the same in their spring and fountain as ever they were, only they are *habituated to another course* than what of themselves they are inclined to. You may take a *young whelp* of the most fierce and savage creatures, as of a *tiger,* or a *wolf,* and by custom make it as tame and harmless as any *domestic creature.* But although it may be turned to quite another way or course of acting than what it was of itself inclined to, yet its nature is not changed. And, therefore, frequently, on provocation, it will fall into its own savage inclination; and having tasted of the blood of creatures, it will never be reclaimed. So is it with the *depraved affections* of men with respect to their change; their *streams are turned,* they are *habituated* to a new course; their nature is not altered, at least not from rational to spiritual, from earthly to heavenly. Yet this is that which was most beautiful and desirable in nature, the glory of it, and the utmost of its attainments. He who

has by any means *proceeded to such a moderation of his affections* as to render him kind, benign, patient, useful, preferring public good before private; will rise up in judgment against those who, professing themselves to be under the conduct of the light of grace, do yet, by being morose, angry, selfish, worldly, manifest that their affections are not subdued by the power of that grace. Wherefore, that we may be *spiritually minded*, there is yet another work upon our *affections* required, which is their *internal renovation*, whereby not only the *course of their actings* is changed, but their nature is spiritually renewed. I intend that which is expressed in that great evangelical promise, *Isa.* xvii. 6—9. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatlings together, and a little child shall lead them; and the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." A change is promised in the natures, principles, and first inclinations of the worst sinners who pass under the power of gospel grace.

CHAPTER XIII.

The renovation of our affections. How different from any other change wrought in them; and how it is evidenced so to be. The first instance in the universality accompanying of affections spiritually renewed. The order of the exercise of our affections with respect to their objects.

That which is now our concern is, to inquire of what nature *that work is which hath been on our own affections.* And we ought to use the best of our diligence herein;

because the great means whereby multitudes deceive their own souls, persuading themselves that there has been an effectual work of grace in them, is the change that they find in their *affections*, which may be without any spiritual renovation.

First. As to *temporary* and *occasional impressions* in the *affections*, whether from the word, or any other divine warning, they are common to all sorts of persons. Some there are, whose *consciences are seared with a hot iron*, who, being past feeling, *give themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.* Such persons having hardened themselves in a long course of sin, and being given up to a *reprobate mind*, have, it may be, no such impressions on their affections on any occasion, as to move them with a sense of things spiritual and eternal. They may be *terrified* with danger, sudden judgments, and other revelations of the wrath of God from heaven against the ungodliness of men; but they are *not drawn* to take shelter in thoughts of spiritual things. Nothing but *hell* will awaken them to a due consideration of themselves and things eternal.

It is otherwise with the generality of men, who are not profligate and impudent in sinning: for, although they are in a natural condition, and a course of sin, in the neglect of known duties, yet by one means or other, most frequently by the preaching of the word, their *affections are stirred towards heavenly things.*

Sometimes they are afraid, sometimes they have hopes and desires about them. These put them on resolutions and some temporary endeavors *to change their lives*, to abstain from sin, and to perform holy duties. But, as the prophet complains, "their goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew, so passeth it away." Yet by means hereof do many poor ignorant souls deceive themselves, and cry peace, peace, when there is no peace. And they will sometimes express how they are affected with their long neglect of spiritual things, that others may entertain good hopes concerning them; but all comes to nothing in the trial.

There is no difficulty to distinguish between these *occasional impressions* on the affections, and that spiritual ren-

ovation of them which we inquire after. This alone is sufficient to do it, that they are all of them *temporary* and evanescent. *They abide for a while only*, as our Saviour speaks, and every occasion defeats all their efficacy. They may be frequently renewed, but they never abide. Some of them immediately pass away, and are utterly lost between the place where men hear the word and their own habitations, and in vain shall they inquire after them again; they are gone forever. Some endure longer in the mind, and produce some outward effects; none of them will hold any trial, or shock of temptation.

Yet I have somewhat to say to those who have such *impressions on their affections.*

(1.) *Despise them not*, for God is in them. Although he may not be in them in a *way of saving grace*, yet he is in them in that which may be preparatory thereto. They are not common human accidents, but especial divine warnings.

(2.) *Labor to retain* a sense of them upon your hearts and consciences. You have got nothing by losing so many of them already; and if you proceed in their neglect, after a while you will hear of them no more.

(3.) *Put no more in them than belongs to them.* Do not conclude that your state is good, because you have been affected at the hearing of the word, or under a sickness, or in a danger. Hereon many think that now all is well with them, wherewith they please themselves, until they are wholly immersed in their former security.

Secondly. We may consider the difference between the *habitual change* of the affections before described, and that *renovation by grace* which renders them *spiritual.* Multitudes are herein deceived to their ruin; for they build their hopes of eternal life on such a *change* in themselves as will not abide the trial. This difference, therefore, is to be examined by scripture light, and the experience of them that believe. And,

There is a *double universality* with respect to the *spiritual renovation of our affections;* that which is *subjective*, with respect to the affections themselves: and that which is *objective*, with respect to spiritual things.

1. Sanctification extends itself to the *whole spirit, soul*

and body. When we say that we are *sanctified in part* only, we do not say that any part, power, or faculty of the soul, is unsanctified, but only that the work is not absolutely perfect in any of them. All sin may retain power in some one affection, as *anger*, *fear*, or *love*, more than in all the rest; as one affection may be more eminently sanctified in some than in others. For it may have advantages to this end from *men's natural tempers*, and various outward circumstances. Hence some find little difficulty in the *mortification of all other lusts* or corruptions, in comparison of what they meet with in some one *inordinate affection* or corruption. I have known persons shining exemplarily in all other graces, who have been scarcely free from giving great *scandal* by the excess of their passions. And yet they have known that the setting themselves to the sincere vigorous mortification of that disorder, is the most eminent pledge of their sincerity in other things. For the trial of our self-denial lies in the things that our natural *inclinations* lie strongest towards. Howbeit, as was said, *there is no affection where there is this work of renovation*, but it is sanctified and renewed; none of them is left absolutely to the service of sin and Satan. There is no affection from whence the soul hath received the greatest damage, that was, as it were, the *field wherein the contest is managed between sin and grace*, but hath its spiritual use and exercise, when the mind is renewed.

There are some so inordinately subject to *anger*, as if they were absolutely under the power and dominion of it; yet do they also know how to be angry, and sin not in being angry, at sin in themselves and others. *Yea, what indignation; yea, what revenge.* God is pleased sometimes to leave more than ordinary of the power of corruption in one *affection*, that it may be an occasion of the continual exercise of grace in the other affections. Yet are they all sanctified in their degree; that which is *relieved*, as well as that which doth *relieve:* and, therefore, as the remainder of sin in them that believe, is *called the old man, which is to be crucified in all the members of it*, because of its adherence to the whole person in all its powers and faculties, so the grace implanted in our natures

is called the new man, there being nothing in us that is not affected with it. As nothing in our natures *escaped the taint of sin*, so nothing in our natures *is excepted from the renovation that is by grace.* He in whom any one *affection* is utterly unrenewed, hath no one graciously renewed in him. Let men take heed how they indulge any *depraved affection*, for it will be an unavoidable impeachment of their sincerity. Think not to say, with *Naaman*, *God be merciful to me in this thing, in all others I will be for him.*

He requires the whole heart, and will have it, or none. The chief work of a Christian is to make *all his affections*, in all their operations, subservient to the *life of God.*

To be entirely for God, to follow him wholly, to cleave to him with purpose of heart, is to have all our *affections* renewed and sanctified, without which we can do none of them. When it is otherwise, there is a double heart. *Their heart is divided, now shall they be found faulty.*

Whatever is wrought upon our affections, when they are not spiritually renewed; *that change, as to the degree of it, is not universal;* it doth not affect the whole mind in all its powers and affections: until a vital prevailing principle and habit of grace is implanted in the soul, sin will radically adhere to all the faculties and affections. So was it with the *young man* that came to our Lord, to know what he should do to obtain eternal life.

Thus there are many who in other things are reduced to *moderation*, *sobriety* and *temperance*, yet there remaineth in them the *love of money* in a predominant degree, which to them *is the root of all evil.* Some seem to be religious, but they *bridle* not their tongues; through anger, envy, hatred, and the like, their religion is vain.

The most of men, in their several ways of profession, pretend not only to religion, but to zeal in it; yet their affections to earthly enjoyments have no bounds. Some of old, who had most eminently in all other things subdued their passions were the greatest persecutors of the gospel.

Some who seem to have had a mighty change wrought in them by a *superstitious devotion*, do yet walk in the *spirit of Cain* towards all the disciples of *Christ* as it is

with the principal *devotionalists* in the *church of Rome;* and elsewhere we may see some go soberly about the persecution and destruction of other *Christians.* Some will cherish one *secret lust* or other, which they cannot but know to be pernicious to their souls.

Some love the praise of men, which will never permit them to be truly spiritually minded; so our Saviour testifieth of some, that they could *not believe, because they loved the praise of men.* This was the known vice of all the ancient *philosophers:* they had many of them, on the principles of reason, and by severe exercise, subdued their affections to great moderation about *temporary* things; but in the mean time, were all of them *slaves,* to *vain* glory, and the praise of men, until by the public observation of it, they lost that, also, among wise and considerate men. And generally, if men, *not spiritually renewed,* were able to search themselves, they would find that their affections are so far from having any change wrought in them, that they are a quiet habitation for sin, where it exerciseth its dominion.

2. There is an *universality* that is *objective in spiritual things,* with respect to the renovation of our affections; that is, affections spiritually renewed fix themselves upon, and cleave to, *all spiritual things* in their proper places, and to their proper ends. For the ground and reason of our adherence to any one of them, are the same with respect to them all: that is, their relation to God in Christ. Wherefore, when our affections are renewed, we make no *choice in spiritual things,* cleaving to some, and refusing others, making use of *Naaman's* restraint; but our adherence is the same to them all in their proper places and degrees. And if, by reason of darkness and ignorance, we know not any of them to be from God, as for instance, the observation of the Lord's day, it is of unspeakable disadvantage to us. An equal respect is required in us to all God's commands: yet there are various *distinctions* in spiritual things: and a man ought to value one above another, as to the degrees of his esteem, although he is to be *sincere,* with respect to them all.

(1.) God himself, that is, as revealed in and by Christ, is in first the place, the proper and adequate object of our af-

fections, as they are renewed. He is so for his own sake alone. This is the spring, the centre, and chief object, of our *love*. He that loves not God for *what he is in himself*, and what from himself alone *he is, and will be to us in Christ*, hath no true affection for any spiritual thing whatever. And not a few here are deceived, which should make us the more strict in the examination of ourselves. They suppose that they love *heaven* and the duties of divine worship, which persuasion will not endure the trial. As to *God himself*, they can give no evidence that they have any love to him, either on the account of the *glorious excellencies of his nature*, with their relation to him, and dependence on him, nor on account of the *manifestation of himself in Christ*, and the exercise of his grace. But whatever be pretended, there is no love to God, whereof these things are not the formal reason. And because all men pretend that they *love God*, and defy them that think them so vile as not so to do, though they live in open enmity against him, it becomes us strictly to examine ourselves on what grounds we pretend so to do. It is because, indeed, we see an excellency, a beauty, in the glorious properties of his nature, such as our souls are refreshed and satisfied with, and in whose enjoyment our blessedness will consist, so that we always *rejoicee at the remembrance of his holiness*. It is our great joy that God is what he is; is it from the glorious manifestation that he hath made of himself and all his holy excellencies in Christ, with the communication of himself to us in him and by him? If it be so indeed then is our Lord generous and gracious, from the renovation of our affections. But if we say we love God, yet truly know not why, or if it is upon principles of education, because it is esteemed the height of wickedness to do otherwise, we shall be at a loss when we are called to our trial. This is the first object of our affections.

(2.) In other spiritual things, *renewed affections* cleave to them, according as *God is in them*. God alone is loved for himself, all other things for him, in the measure and degree of his presence in them. This alone gives them *pre-eminence* in renewed affections; for instance, God is in the human nature of the man Christ Jesus, in a

way and manner *incomprehensible*, so as he is in the same kind in nothing else. Therefore is the *Lord Christ*, even as to his human nature, the object of our love in such a degree as no other thing, spiritual or eternal, but God himself, is or ought to be, and all other spiritual things become so from the presence of God in them; and from the *degree of that presence* have they their nature and use. Accordingly they are, or ought to be, the object of our affections, as to the degree of their exercise. Evidence of the presence of God in things and persons, is the only attractive of renewed affetions.

(3.) In those things which seem to *stand in an equality* as to what is of God in them, yet on some especial occasions and reasons, our love may go forth eminently to one more than another. Some *particular truth* with the grace communicated by it, may have been the means of our conversion to God, of our edification in an especial manner, of our consolation in distress; it cannot be, but that the mind will have a peculiar respect to such truths, and the grace administered by them. And so it is as to duties. We may have found such a lively communion with God in some of them, as may give us a peculiar delight in them.

But notwithstanding these differences, affections, spiritually renewed, cleave to all spiritual things, *as such*. For the true reason of their so doing, is the same in them all, namely, *God in them;* only they have several ways of acting themselves towards them, whereof I shall give one instance.

Our Saviour distributes *spiritual things* into *those that are heavenly, and those that are earthly*, that is, comparatively so. "If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

The heavenly things are the deep and mysterious councils of the will of God. These renewed affections cleave to, with *holy admiration*, and satisfactory submission, captivating the understanding to what it cannot comprehend. So the apostle declares it, *Rom.* xi. 33—36. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God? How unsearchable are his judgments, and his

ways past finding out! for who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen." What the mind cannot comprehend, the heart doth admire and adore, delighting in God, and giving glory to him in all.

The earthly things intended by our Saviour in that place, are the *the work of God upon the souls of men in their regeneration*, wrought here in the earth. Towards these the affections act with delight. The experience of the grace of God in believers is sweet to their souls. They have a regard to all God's precepts, a delight in all his counsels, a love to himself and all his ways.

Whatever other change is wrought on the affections, if they be not spiritually renewed, it is not so with them. For as they do not cleave to any spiritual things, in their own true, proper nature, in a due manner, because of the evidences of the presence of God in them; so there are always some of them, whereto those whose affections are not renewed, maintain an aversation and an enmity. And although this frame doth not instantly discover itself, yet it will do so upon any especial trial. So was it with the *the hearers of our Saviour*, *John* vi. There was a great impression made on their affections, by what he taught them *concerning the bread of God*, that came down from heaven, and gave life to the world. For they cried, *Lord, evermore give us of this bread.* But when the mystery of it was further explained to them, they liked it not, but cried, *This is a hard saying, who can bear it?* and fell off both from him and his doctrine, although they had followed him so long as to be esteemed his disciples.

I say, therefore, whensoever men's affections are not renewed, whatever other change may have been wrought upon them, as they have no true delight in any spiritual things, in their own nature, so there are some instances, wherein they will maintain *their natural enmity to them.* This is the first difference between affections spiritually renewed, and those which, from any other causes, may have some kind of change wrought in them.

CHAPTER XIV.

The second difference between Affections spiritually renewed, and those which have been only changed by light and conviction. Grounds and reasons of men's delight in duties of divine worship, and of their diligence in their performance, who are not spiritually minded.

The second difference lieth herein, That there may be a change in the affections, wherein men may have delight in the duties of religious worship, and diligence in their observance; but it is the spiritual renovation of the affections that gives delight in God, through Christ, in any duty of religious worship whatever.

Where the truth of the gospel is known and publicly professed; there is great variety in the minds and practices of men, about the duties of religious worship. Many are *profane* in their minds and lives, who *practically at least*, despise, or wholly neglect, the observance of them. These are stout-hearted, and far from righteousness. Some attend to them *formally* and *cursorily*, from the principles of their education, and it may be, out of some convictions they have of their necessity. But many there are, who, in the *way they choose*, are diligent in their observance, and that with great delight, who yet give no evidence of the spiritual renovation of their minds. Yea, the way whereby some express their devotion in them, being *superstitious* and *idolatrous*, is inconsistent with that or any other saving grace. Therefore we must diligently search into the *reasons of men's delight in divine worship*, who yet continue in their minds altogether unrenewed. And,

First. Men may be greatly affected with the *outward part of divine worship*, and the manner of its performance, who have no delight in what is internal, and spiritual, therein. "He was a burning and a shining light; and ye

were willing for a season to rejoice in this light." So many were delighted in the preaching of *Ezekiel*, because of his eloquence and the elegance of his *parables*. This gave them both delight and diligence in hearing, whereon they call themselves the people of God, though they continued to live in sin; *their hearts went after covetousness*. The same may befall many at present, with reference to the *spiritual gifts* of those by whom the word is dispensed. I deny not but that men may be more delighted with the preaching of one than another, for they may find more *spiritual advantage thereby*, than by the gifts of others. But that which at present we insist on, hath respect only to some outward circumstances pleasing the minds of men.

This was principally evident under the Old Testament, whilst they had carnal ordinances and a worldly sanctuary. Oft-times under that dispensation, the people were given up to all sorts of *idolatry and superstition*. And when they were not so, yet were the body of them carnal and unholy, as is evident from the whole track of God's dealings with them by his prophets, and in his providences. Yet had they great delight in the outward solemnities of their worship, placing all their trust of acceptance with God therein. They who did truly and really believe, looked through them all to Christ, whom they did fore-signify; without which, the things were a yoke to them, and a burthen almost insupportable. But those who were carnal, delighted in the things themselves, and for their sakes *rejected him* who was the life and substance of them all. And this proved the great means of the apostacy of the Christian church also. For to maintain some appearance of spiritual affections, men introduced carnal incitations of them into *evangelical worship*, such as *singing with music and pompous ceremonies*. For they find such things needful to reconcile the worship of God to their minds and through them they appear to have great delight therein. Could some men but in their thoughts separate divine service from *that outward order*, *those methods of variety*, *show*, and *melody*, wherewith they are *affected*, they would have no delight in it, but look upon it as a thing that must be endured. How can it be otherwise conceived of among the *Papists?* they with much earnestness,

many evidences of devotion, sometimes with difficulty and danger, repair to their solemn worship. And yet, when they are present, understand not one word, whereby their minds might be excited to real faith, love, and delight in God. Only order, ceremony, music, and other incentives of *carnal affections*, make great impressions on them. Affections spiritually renewed, are not concerned in these things. Yea, if those in whom they are, should be engaged in the use of them, they would find them means of *diverting their minds* from the proper work of divine worship, rather than an advantage therein. It will appear so to themselves, unless they are content to lose their spiritual affections, embracing in their stead a carnal, *imaginary devotion*. Hence, two persons may at the same time attend to the same ordinances of divine worship, with *equal delight*, on very *distinct principles*, as if two men should come into the same garden, planted and adorned with every variety of herbs and flowers; one ignorant of the nature of them, the other a skilful *herbalist*. Both may be equally delighted, the one with the colors and smell of the flowers, the other with the consideration of their various natures, their uses in *physical* remedies, or the like. So it may be in the hearing of the word. For instance, one may be delighted with the outward administration, another with its spiritual efficacy, at the same time. Hence, *Austin* tells us, that singing in the church was laid aside by *Athanasius at Alexandria;* not the people's singing of psalms, but a kind of singing in the reading of the scripture, and some offices of worship, which began then to be introduced into the church. And the reason he gave why he did it, was, that the modulation of the voice and *musical tune*, might not divert the minds of men from that spiritual affection which is required of them in sacred duties. What there is of *real order* in the worship of God, is suited and useful to spiritual affections, because proceeding from the same spirit, whereby they are internally renewed. *Beholding your order. Col.* ii. 5. Every thing of God's appointment is both helpful and delightful to them. None can say with higher raptures of admiration, how amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord, than they, whose *affections*

are renewed. Yet is not their delight terminated on them, as we shall see immediately.

Secondly. "Men may be delighted in the performance of outward duties of divine worship, because in them they comply with, and give some kind of satisfaction to, their convictions." When conscience is awakened to a sense of the necessities of such duties, namely, of those wherein divine worship doth consist, it will give the mind no rest or peace in the neglect of them. Let them be attended to in the seasons which light, conviction, and custom call for, it will be so far satisfied, as that the mind shall find *present ease and refreshment in it.* And when the soul is wonted to this relief, it will not only be diligent in the performance of such duties; it will not only not omit them, but it will delight in them, as those which bring in great advantage. Hence many will not *omit the duty of prayer every morning*, who are resolved to live in sin all the day long. And there are but few who sedulously endeavor to *live and walk* in the frame of their hearts and ways, answerable to their own prayers; yet all that is in our prayers beyond our endeavors to answer it in a conformity of heart and life, is but the exercise of gifts in answer to conviction. Others find an allay of troubles in duties, like that which sick persons may find by drinking cold water in a fever, whose flames are assuaged for a season by it. They make them as an *antidote* against the poison and sting of sin, which allayeth its rage, but cannot expel its venom.

Or these duties are to them, like the *sacrifices for sin under the law:* they gave a guilty person present ease; but as the apostle speaks, they made not men perfect. They took not away utterly a *conscience condemning for sin.* Presently, on the first *omission* of duty, a sense of sin returned on them. Then were the sacrifices to be repeated for a renewed propitiation. This gave that *carnal people* such satisfaction in those sacrifices, that they trusted to them for righteousness and salvation. So it is with persons who are constant in spiritual duties merely from conviction. The performance of those duties gives them a *present relief* and ease; though it heal not their wounds, it assuageth their pain, and dispelleth their present fears.

Hence are they frequent in them, and that oft-times not without delight; because they find ease thereby. And their condition is somewhat dangerous, who, upon the sense of the guilt of any sin, do betake themselves for relief to their prayers; which having discharged, they are much at ease in their consciences, although they have obtained no real sense of the pardon of sin, nor any strength against it.

It will be said, do not all men, the best of men, perform all *spiritual duties out of a conviction of their necessity?* Do they not know it would be their sin to omit them, and so find satisfaction in their minds upon their performance? I say they do; but it is one thing to perform a duty out of a conviction of necessity, as it is God's ordinance; another thing to perform it, to quiet conscience under its trouble. This begins and ends in self; self-satisfaction is the sole design of it. By it men aim at some rest and quietness in their own minds, which otherwise they cannot attain. But in the performance of duties in faith, from a conviction of their necessity as God's ordinance, and their use in the way of his grace, the soul begins and ends in God. It seeks no satisfaction in them, nor finds it *from them*, but in and from God alone *by them*.

Thirdly. The principal reason why men, whose affections are only changed, not spiritually renewed, delight in holy duties of divine worship, is, because *they place their righteousness before God in them*. They know not, they seek not after, any other righteousness but what is of their own working out. Whatever notions they may have of the *righteousness of Christ*, that which they practically trust to is their *own;* and it discovers itself so to be, on every trial that befalls them. Yea, when they cry to the Lord, and pretend to faith in Christ, they quickly make it evident that their principal trust is in themselves. Now in all that they can plead in a way of duties or obedience, nothing carrieth a fairer pretence to a righteousness, than what they *do in the worship of God*, and the acts of religion towards him. They secretly suppose, not only that there is a righteousness in these things, which will *answer for itself*, but such also as will make *compensation* in some measure for their sins; and therefore, whereas they cannot but fre-

quently fall into sin, they relieve themselves from the reflection of their consciences by a *multiplication of duties*, and renewed diligence in them.

It is inconceivable what satisfaction men will take in any thing that seems to contribute so much to a *righteousness of their own.*

This made the Jews of old so pertinaciously adhere to the ceremonies and sacrifices of the law, and to prefer them above the gospel, the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof. They looked and sought for righteousness by them. Those who for many generations were kept up with great difficulty to any *tolerable observance* of them, when they had learned to place *all their hopes of a righteousness in them*, would, and did adhere to them, to their temporal and eternal ruin. And when men were persuaded that righteousness was to be attained by works of *munificence* and supposed *charity*, in the dedication of their substance to the *use of the church;* they who otherwise were covetous, would *lavish gold out of the bag*, and give up their whole patrimony with all their ill-gotten goods to attain it, so powerful an influence hath the desire of self-righteousness upon the minds of men. It is the best fortification of the soul against Christ and the gospel, the last reserve whereby it maintains the interest of self against the grace of God.

Hence I say, those that place their righteousness, or that which is the principal part of it, in the *duties of religious worship*, will not only be diligent in them, but oft-times abound in a multiplication of them. Especially will they do so, if these may be performed with a show of *humility and devotion*, requiring nothing of the exercise of faith, or sincere divine love therein. So it is with many in all kinds of religion, whether the way of their worship be true or false; whether it be appointed of God, or rejected by him.

Fourthly. The *reputation of devotion in religious duties*, may insensibly affect the unrenewed minds of men with great diligence and delight in their performance. However men are divided in their *apprehension* and *practice*, about religion; however different from each other, their *ways of divine worship* are; yet it is amongst all

sorts of men, yea, in the secret thoughts of them who outwardly contemn these things, a *matter of reputation* to be devout, to be diligent, to be *strict* in those duties of religion, which, according to their own light and persuasion, they judge incumbent on them. This greatly affects the minds of men, whilst pride is secretly predominant in them, and they love the *praise of men more than the praise of God.*

Especially will this consideration prevail on them, when they suppose that the *credit of the way which they profess*, in competition with others, depends much on their *reputation* as to strictness in duties of devotion. For then will they not only be *diligent* in themselves, but *zealous* in drawing others to the same observances. These two principles, their own *reputation*, and that of their *sect*, constituted the life and soul of Pharisaism of old. According as the minds of men are influenced with these apprehensions, so will a delight in those duties whereby their reputation is attained, thrive and grow in them.

I am far from apprehending that any men are, (at least I speak not of them who are,) such *vile hypocrites*, as to do all that they do in religion to be *seen and praised of men*, as some among the *Pharisees* did. But I speak of them, who, being under the convictions and motives beforementioned, do also yet give admittance to this *corrupt desire of reputation.* For every such end being admitted and prevalent in the mind, will universally influence the affections to a delight in those duties, whereby that end may be attained.

Fifthly. I should, in the last place, insist on *superstition.* As this is an undue fear of the divine nature, will, and operations, built on false notions of them, it may befall the minds of men in all *religions, true and false.* It is an *internal vice of the mind.* As it respects the *outward way of religious service*, and consists in the devout performance of such duties as God indeed accepts not, but forbids; so it belongs only to religion as it is false and corrupt. How in both respects it will engage the minds of men to the performance of religious duties, and for the most part with the most scrupulous diligence, is too long a work here to be declared. It may suffice to have mentioned

it among the reasons why men, whose affections are not spiritually renewed, may yet greatly delight in the diligent performance of the outward duties of religion. Our design in these things is the discovery of the true nature of this grace of being *spiritually minded.* Hereto we have declared that it is necessary that our affections be *spiritually and supernaturally renewed.* And because there may be a great change wrought on the affections of men, with respect to spiritual things, where there is nothing of this *supernatural renovation;* our present inquiry is, what are the differences between the affections of the one sort and of the other; whether *spiritually renewed,* or *occasionally changed,* and wherein the great exercise of them consists in the duties of religious worship. I have declared what are the reasons, whence men of *unrenewed minds* delight oft-times in the *duties of divine worship,* and are diligent in the performance of them.

From these considerations, it may be made manifest that the greatest part of the *devotion* that is in the world, doth not spring from the spiritual renovation of the minds of men, without which it is not accepted with God. That which remains to further the discovery we are in pursuit of, is, what are the *reasons* whereon those, whose minds and affections are spiritually renewed, do delight in the institutions of divine worship; and attend to their observance with great heed and diligence?

CHAPTER XV.

Delight of believers in the holy institutions of divine worship. The grounds thereof. The evidence of being spiritually minded thereby, &c.

That all *true believers*, whose minds are spiritually renewed, delight in all the institutions and ordinances of divine worship, is fully evident, both in the *examples* of saints in the scripture and their own experience. For this hath been the greatest cause of their suffering persecution, and *martrydom* itself, in all ages. If the *primitive Christians* under the power of the pagan emperors, or the *witnesses for Christ* under the *antichristian apostacy*, would have omitted the observance of them they might have escaped the rage of their adversaries. But they *loved not their lives*, in comparison to that delight which they had in the observance of the commands of Christ, as to the duties of evangelical worship. *David* gives us frequently an instance hereof in himself. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God; with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day." "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart crieth out for the living God. The sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thy altars, O Lord of hosts,

my King and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah."

But a *greater than David is here.* Our Lord Jesus Christ himself did upon all occasions declare his *delight* in all the ordinances of divine worship, which were then in force by virtue of divine institution. For although he severely reproved and rejected whatever men had added thereto, under the pretence of a *supererogating strictness*, or outward order, laying it all under that dreadful sentence; *every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be plucked up*, and cast into the fire; yet as to what was of *divine appointment*, his delight therein was exemplary to all his disciples. With respect hereto was it said of him, *that the zeal of God's house had eaten him up*, by reason of the affliction which he had in his spirit, to see the worship of it polluted, and despised. This caused him to *cleanse the temple*, the seat of divine worship, from the pollutors and pollutions of it, not long before his sufferings, in the face and to the high provocation of all his adversaries. So with earnest desire he longed for the celebration of his last passover. *Luke* xxii. 15. "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." And it is a sufficient evidence of the spirit and practice of his disciples afterwards, in reference to the duties of *evangelical worship*, that the apostle gives it as an assured token of an unsound condition, when any "fall into a neglect of them."

These things are manifest and unquestionable. But our present inquiry is only, *what it is* in which believers so delight in the institutions of divine worship, and what it is that engageth their hearts to a diligent observance of them. And I say, in general, that their delight in all ordinances of divine worship, is *in Christ himself, or God in Christ.* This alone is that which they seek after. They make use of the *streams* but only as means of communication from the spring. When men are really *renewed in the spirit of their minds*, it is so. Their regard to duties of divine worship, is, as they are appointed of God, a blessed means of *communion* between himself in Christ, and their souls. By them doth Christ *communicate of his love and grace* to

us. It is the *treasure* hid in the field, which, when a *man hath found, he purchaseth the whole field;* but it is that he may enjoy the *treasure* which is hid therein. This *field is the gospel*, and all the ordinances of it. This men do purchase sometimes at a dear rate, even with the loss of all they enjoy. But yet if they obtain nothing but the field, they will have little cause to rejoice in their bargain. It is *Christ the treasure alone, that pearl of price*, that will certainly enrich the soul. The field is to be used only, to find and dig up the *treasure* that is in it.

But yet we must treat more distinctly of these things. Those whose affections are spiritually renewed, *delight in ordinances of divine service;* on the grounds and reasons ensuing.

First. In general they do so, as they find *faith* and *love*, and delight in God through Christ, excited by them. This is their first and immediate end in their institution. It is a pernicious mistake to suppose that any *external duties of worship*, as hearing the word, prayer, or the sacraments, are appointed or accepted for themselves.

Such thoughts the *Jews of old* had concerning *their sacrifices;* namely, that they were appointed for their *own sakes*, and were acceptable service to God, merely on their own account. Wherefore God, to deliver them from their pernicious mistake, affirms oft-times, that he never appointed them at all: that is, for any such end. And now under the gospel, sundry things destructive to the souls of men have proceeded from such a supposition. Some have always satisfied themselves with the *external observance of them*, without desiring any holy communion with God in them. And by following this track, the generality of Christians wander out of the way.

But all the duties of the second commandment, as are all instituted ordinances of worship, are but means to express and exercise those of the first, as *faith*, *love*, fear, trust, and delight in God.

This being the immediate end of all divine institutions, this being the only way whereby we may give glory to God in their observance; we may consider how, those whose affections are *spiritually* renewed, apply their minds to their observance.

They come to them with this *desire*, *expectation*, namely, to be excited by them to the *exercise of divine faith and love*. When it is not so with any, they do in various degrees take the name of God in vain. These are the ways of drawing nigh to God, as they are every where called in scripture. To suppose that a drawing nigh to God may consist merely in the *outward performance* of duty, whatever be its *solemnity*, is to reject all due *reverence* of him. *Forasmuch*, saith the Lord, *as this people draw near to me* with their mouths, and with their *lips do honor me*, but have removed their hearts *far from me*, therefore I will proceed against them. The *mouth* and *lips* are put by *a synechdoche*, for all the means of outward worship and honor. These men may diligently attend to, whilst *their hearts are far from God*. But all this worship is rejected of God with the highest tokens of his displeasure against it.

Our souls then have no way of approach to God in duties of worship, *but by faith;* no way of adherence to him, *but by love;* no way of abiding in him, but by *reverence and delight*. Whenever these are not in *exercise*, *outward duties* of worship are so far from being a means of such an *approach to him*, that they set us at a *greater distance* from him, at least are utterly useless to us. So indeed they are to the most who come to them, *they know not why*, and behave themselves under them, *they care not how:* nor is there any evil in the hearts and ways of men, whereof God complaineth more in his word, as that which is accompanied with the highest contempt of him. And because these ordinances of divine worship are means which the wisdom and grace of God have appointed to this end, namely, the exercise of divine faith and love. I do not believe that they by whom these means are *despised* or neglected, have *any delight in the exercise of these graces*.

I have seen *public worship forsaken*, either on pretences of *higher attainments in faith*, light, and love, than to stand in need of them any more; or on a *foolish opinion*, that they cease upon the *dispensation of the spirit*, which is given to us to make them effectual; or on some *provocations* that men have taken to themselves, which they have

thought they could revenge by a neglect of public administrations, or through slavish peace and negligence in times of difficulty, as is the manner of some, who forsake the assemblies of the saints. Yet, I never saw, but it issued in a great decay, if not in an *utter loss of* all *faith and love*, and sometimes in open profaneness. For such persons contemn the means, which God in his infinite wisdom and goodness hath appointed. The principal way whereby we may *sanctify the name of God*, in all duties of his worship, and obtain the benefit of them to our own souls, is by a conscientious approach to them with an holy *desire* to be found in the exercise of faith and love.

To be under an efficacious influence from this *design*, is the best preparation for any duty. *So David* expresseth his delight in the worship of God. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." He longed for the tabernacle, but it was the enjoyment of God himself, the living God, that he sought after. This was that which made him so fervent in his desires after those ordinances of God. So he expresseth it. "To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." *David* had had great communion with God by *faith and love* in the solemn duties of his worship. And this was that which inflamed him with desires after renewed opportunities to the same end.

Two things alone doth faith regard in all duties of worship, as to the outward administration of it. The one *absolutely*, the other *comparatively;* both with respect to the *end* mentioned, or the exercise, and increase of grace in us. The first is, that they be of divine appointment. Where their *original* and *observance* are resolved into divine authority, there, and there alone, will they have a divine efficacy. In all these things, faith hath regard to nothing but divine precepts and promises. Whatever hath regard to any thing else, is not faith, but fancy. And therefore these uncommanded duties in religion, which so abound in the *papal church*, as that, if not the whole, yet all the principal, parts of their worship consist in them, are such in their discharge it is impossible *faith* should be in

a due exercise. That which it hath *comparative respect to*, is the *spiritual gifts* of them to whom the administration of the ordinances of the gospel, is committed. With respect to them, believers may have more satisfaction in the *ministry* of one than of another, as was touched before. But this is not because one is more learned than another, or more *elegant* than another, hath more *ability of speech* than another, or fervency in utterance than another, but because they find the *gifts of one* more suited, *to stir up faith and love* to an holy exercise in their hearts, than what they find in some others. Hence, they have a peculiar value for, and delight in, the *ministry of such persons*, especially when they can enjoy it in due order, and without the offence of others. And ministers that are wise, will, in holy administrations, neglect all other things, and attend to this alone, how they may be *helpful to the faith, and love, and joy of believers*, so far as they are the object of their ministry.

This is the first ground whereon *affections spiritually renewed* cleave to ordinances of divine worship with delight and satisfaction; namely, because they are the means appointed and blessed of God for the increase of faith and love.

Secondly. The second is, *Because they are the means of communicating supplies of divine grace, to the souls of them that believe.* So far as our affections are renewed, this is the principal attractive to cleave to them with *delight.*

They are, as was observed before, the ways of our approaching to God. Now we do not draw nigh to God, as himself speaks as a *dry heath, or a barren wilderness*, where no refreshment is to be obtained. To make a pretence of *coming to God*, and not with expectation of receiving good and great things from him, is to despise God himself, to overthrow the nature of the duty, and deprive our own souls of all benefit thereby; and the want hereof is that which renders the worship of the most fruitless to themselves. We are always to *come to God*, as to an eternal spring of goodness, grace, and mercy, of all that our souls stand in need of, of all that we can desire in order to our everlasting blessedness; and all these things,

as to believers, may be reduced to the two heads beforementioned.

I. They come for a *communication of a sense of his love in Jesus Christ*. Hence do all our *peace, consolation, and joy*, all our encouragement to do and suffer according to the will of God, solely depend; in these things do our souls live, and without them we are of all men the most miserable.

It is the Holy Spirit who is the immediate efficient cause of all these things in us. *He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts.* He *witnesseth our adoption* to us, and thereby an interest in the love of the Father. But the *outward way* whereby he communicates these things to us, and effects them in us, is by the *dispensation of the gospel.* He doth the same work, also in *prayer*, and oftimes in other holy administrations.

So Christ, by his word, *knocks at the door of the heart;* if it be opened by faith, *he cometh in, and suppeth with men*, giving them a gracious refreshment, by the testimony of his own love, and the love of the Father. This believers look for and this they do, in various measures, receive *by*, the ordinances of divine worship. And although some, through their fears and temptations, are not sensible hereof, yet do they secretly receive those blessed gracious supplies, whereby their souls are held in life, without which they would pine away and perish. Those who are humble and sincere, know how often their souls have been refreshed in them, and how long sometimes the impressions they have received of divine grace and love have continued with them, to their unspeakable consolation. They remember what they have received in the opening and application of *the exceeding great and precious promises* that are given to them, whereby they are gradually more and more made *partakers of the divine nature;* how many a time they have received *light* in darkness, *refreshment* under despondencies, *relief* in their conflicts with dangers and temptations. For this cause do affections that are spiritually renewed cleave to them. Who can but love that which he hath found, by experience, to be the means of communicating to him the most inestimable benefit, whereof in this life he can be made partaker?

He who hath found an *hidden treasure*, although he should at once take away the whole of it, yet will esteem the place where he found it; but if it be of that nature, that no more can be taken of it at once but what is sufficient for the present occasion, yet is so full and boundless, as that whenever he comes again to seek for it, he shall be sure to obtain present supply, he will always value it, and constantly apply himself to it. And such is the treasure of grace that is in the ordinances of divine worship.

If we are strangers to these things, if we never received *efficacious intimations of divine love* to our souls, in the duties of divine *worship*, we cannot delight in them as we ought. What do men come to hear the word of God for? What do they pray for? What do they expect to receive from him? Do they come to God as the *eternal fountain of living waters?* as the God of all grace, peace, and consolation? Or do they come to his worship without any design, as to a dry and empty show? Do they fight uncertainly with these things, as men beating the air? Or think they bring something to God, but *receive* nothing from him? That the best of their business is to please him in doing what he commands; but to receive any thing from him, they expect not, nor do ever examine themselves whether they have done so or not? It is not for persons who *walk in such* ways, ever to attain a due delight in the ordinances of divine worship.

Believers have other designs herein; and among the rest, this in the first place, that they may be *made partakers of refreshing, comforting pledges of the love of God in Christ*, and thereby of their adoption, of the pardon of their sins, and acceptance of their persons. According as they meet with these things in the duties of holy worship, public or private, so will they value, and adhere to them. Some men are full of *other thoughts* and affections, so as that these things are not their principal design or desire, or are contented with that measure of them which they suppose themselves to have attained; or, at least are not sensible of the need they stand in to have fresh communications of them made to their souls; supposing that they can do well enough without a renewed sense of divine love every day: some are so *ignorant* of

what they ought to look after, in the duties of gospel worship, as that it is impossible they should have any real design in them. Many of the better sort of professors are too negligent in this matter: they do not long and pant in the inward man after renewed pledges of the love of God; they do not consider how much they have need of them, that they may be encouraged and strengthened to all other duties of obedience; they do not prepare their minds for the reception of them, nor come with *expectation* of their communication to them; they do not rightly fix their faith on this truth, namely, that these holy administrations and duties are appointed of God, in the first place, as the means of conveying his love, and a sense of it, to our souls. From hence spring the *lukewarmness*, coldness, and indifferency in and to the duties of holy worship, that are growing among us: for if men have the *principal design* of faith in them, and disesteem the *chiefest benefit* which is to be obtained by them, whence should zeal for them, delight in them, or diligence in attendance to them, arise? Let not any please themselves under the power of such decays; they are indications of their inward frame, and those infallible. Such persons will grow *cold, and negligent*, as to the duties of public worship; they will put themselves neither to charge nor trouble about them; every occasion of life diverts them, and when they do attend upon them, it is with great indifference. Yet would they have it thought that all is still well within as ever it was, they have as good a respect to religion as any. But these things openly discover an ulcerous disease in the very souls of men, as evidently as if it were written on their foreheads; whatever they pretend to the contrary, they are under the power of *woful decays* from all due regard to spiritual and eternal things. And I would avoid the society of such persons, as those who carry an infectious disease about them, unless it were to help on their cure.

2. *They come for supplies of internal, sanctifying, strengthening grace.* All that we do in the life of God may be referred to *observance of duties; and conquest over temptations.* Hence the great thing which we labor for, is spiritual strength with respect to these things. This

is that which every true believer groaneth after in the inward man, and which he preferreth infinitely above all earthly things. So he may have grace sufficient in any competent measure for these ends; let what will befall him, he desireth no more in this world. God in Christ is the fountain of all his grace. There is not one drachm of it to be obtained but from him alone. And as he communicates it to us of his own sovereign pleasure; so the ordinary means whereby he will do it, are the *duties of his worship*. "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings, as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

All spiritual strength is in God; but what relief can that afford us, who are feeble, or fainting? He will act suitably to his nature in the communication of this grace; but, how shall we have an interest in this grace? Wait on him in the ordinances of his worship. The word, as preached, is the food of our souls, whereby God administereth growth and strength to them. "Desire, saith he, the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." But what encouragement have we thereto? *if so be*, saith he, *you have tasted that the Lord is gracious!* If, by the dispensation of this word, you have had experience of the kindness of God to your souls, you cannot but desire and delight in it; and otherwise you will not do so. When men have sat some good while under the dispensation of the word, and in the enjoyment of other ordinances, without tasting in them that the Lord is gracious, they will grow weary of them. Wherefore prayer is the way of his *appointment* for the application of our souls to him, to obtain a participation of all needful grace, which, therefore, he has proposed to us in the promises of the covenant, that we may know what to ask, and how to plead for it. In the *sacraments* the same promises are sealed to us, and the

grace represented in them effectually exhibited. *Meditation* confirms our souls in the exercise of faith. By these means, doth God communicate all supplies of renewing, strengthening, and sanctifying grace to us, that we may live to him in all *holy obedience*, and be able to get the *victory over our temptations.* Under this apprehension believers approach to God in the ordinances of his worship: they come to them as the means of God's *communication* to their souls; hence they cleave to them with *delight*, so far as their affections are renewed.

As they come to them with these designs and expectations, so they have experience of the spiritual benefits which they receive by them, which more and more engageth their affections. All these things, those who have a change wrought in their affections, but not a spiritual renovation, are strangers to. They neither have the design before mentioned in coming to them, nor the experience of this efficacy now proposed in their attendance on them. But these benefits are great; as, for instance, when men find the effect of the *word preached* on their souls, in its enlightening, strengthening, transforming power; when they find their *hearts* warmed, their *graces* excited their *desponding spirits* under trials and temptations relieved, their whole souls gradually more and more conformed to Christ; when they find themselves by it *extricated* out of snares, fears, temptations, and brought to satisfaction and rest; they cannot but delight in the dispensation of it, and rejoice in it as the *food of their souls.* And it is a great hinderance to the increase of spiritual life, to fruitfulness, thankfulness and consolation, when we are negligent in our meditation about the *benefits* that we receive by the word. For whilst it is so with us, we can neither *value the grace of God*, in granting us this inestimable privilege, nor perform any duty with respect to it, in a right manner. This renders it an especial object of our affections as spiritually renewed. That heavenly delight in the statutes and testimonies of God, which *David* expresseth, (*Psal.* cxix.) arose from the spiritual advantage which he received by them, as he constantly declares. And the sole reason, on the one hand, why men grow so *careless and cold*, in their attendance to the preaching of the word, is because they

have no experience of any spiritual advantage by it. They have been brought to it by one means or another, mostly by conviction of their duty. Their minds have been variously affected with it, to a joy in the hearing of it, and readiness to sundry duties of obedience: but after a while, when a sense of those *temporary impressions* is worn off, finding no real *spiritual benefit* by it, they lose all delight in it, and become very indifferent as to its enjoyment. And none can give any greater evidence of their being destitute of all *saving grace*, than when they apostatize from some degree of zeal for the dispensation of the *word* of God, with such a cursed indifferency, as many are overtaken with. It cannot be otherwise. For seeing this is a way and means of the *exercise of all grace*, it will not be neglected, but where there is a *decay of all grace;* however men may please themselves with other pretences. And when they are thus ensnared, every foolish prejudice, every provocation, every wanton opinion and imagination will confirm them in their *gradual backsliding*.

And as it is with *believers*, as to the hearing of the *word in general*, so it is as to the *degrees of advantage* which they find by it. When men have enjoyed the dispensation of the *word* in a peculiar manner, *spiritual* and *effectual;* if they can be content to forego it, for that which is more *cold and lifeless*, provided it possesseth the same time and outward form with the other, it is no great evidence that their souls prosper. It is therefore those alone, who have a sense of the efficacy of the *word* on their souls, who cleave to it with spiritual love and delight. They continually remember what holy impressions it hath made on them, what encouragements to faith and obedience it hath furnished them with, and long after a renewed sense of its enjoyments. When we do not find in ourselves this foundation of spiritual delight in the dispensation of the gospel, we can have no great evidence that our affections are renewed.

So also it is in the duties of *prayer and meditation*. When the soul of a believer hath had experience of communion with God in them; of spiritual refreshment from them; of the benefits which are obtained by them, in recovery from temptations, snares, despondencies, in victory

over sin and Satan, with the like advantages wherewith fervent and *effectual prayer*, and sincere *heavenly meditation* are accompanied, it cannot but have delight in them; but if indeed, we have no *experience* of these advantages in these duties, they cannot but be a burden to us. He who had the benefit of a serene and wholesome air in a recovery from many diseases with the preservation of his health so obtained, will love it and prize it; and so will he these duties, who hath been partaker of the saving mercies wherewith they are accompanied. Some have been delivered from the *worst of temptations*, by a sudden remembrance of the frame of their souls, and the intimations of God's love in such, or such a prayer, at such a time.

When others have been under the power of such despondencies as that no present tenders of relief can approach to them, they have been suddenly raised and refreshed by the remembrance of the intimate love and kindness between Christ and their souls, that has evidenced itself in former duties. Multitudes in fears, distresses, and temptations, have found relief to their spirits, and encourment to their faith, in the remembrance of the returns they have had to former supplications in the like distresses. These are grounds of spiritual delight in these duties.

Heartless, lifeless, wordy prayer, the fruit of convictions and gifts, or of custom and outward occasions, however *multiplied*, and whatever devotion they seem to be accompanied with, will never engage spiritual affections to them. When these things are absent, prayer is but a dead carcass, which it would be a torment to a soul spiritually alive to be tied to. There may be a season indeed, when God will seem to hide himself from believers in their prayers, so as they shall neither find that life in themselves which they have done formerly, nor be sensible of any gracious communications from him; but this is done only for a time, and principally to stir them up to that fervency and perseverance in prayer, as may recover them into their former, or a better estate than yet they have attained to. The like may be said concerning all other duties of religion, or ordinances of *divine worship*.

Thirdly. Believers, whose affections are spiritually renewed, delight greatly in the duties of *divine worship*, *be-*

cause they are the great instituted way whereby they may give glory to God. This is the first and principal end of all *duties of religion*, as they respect divine appointment, namely, to *ascribe to God the glory that is his due;* for in them, acknowledgment is made of all the glorious excellencies of the divine nature, our dependence on him, and relation to him. And this is that which, in the *first place*, believers design in all the *duties* of divine worship. And the pattern set us by our blessed Saviour, in the *prayer he taught his disciples*, directs us thereto. All the first requests of it concern immediately the glory of God, and the advancement thereof. For therein also all the blessedness and safety of the church is included. Those who fail in this design, err in all that they do; they never tend to the mark proposed to them. But this is that which principally *animates* the souls of them that believe in all their *duties*. Wherefore, that way whereby they may directly and solemnly ascribe glory to God, is precious and delightful to them: and such are all the duties of divine worship.

CHAPTER XVI.

Assimilation to things heavenly and spiritual in Affections spiritually renewed. This assimilation the work of faith. How, and whereby. Reasons of the want of growth in our spiritual affections, as to this assimilation.

When affections are *spiritually renewed* in their exercise on spiritual things; *there is an assimilation wrought in them, to those spiritual things by faith.* But when there is a *change* in them only, from other causes, and not from renewing grace, there is an *assimilation of spiritual things to those affections, by imagination.*

First. *Affections spiritually renewed are, in all their exercise, under the guidance of faith.* It is faith which, in its spiritual light, hath the leading of the soul in the whole life of God; we live here by *faith*, as we do hereafter by *sight*. If our affections deviate or decline in the least from the *guidance of faith*, they degenerate from their spirituality, and give up themselves to the service of superstition. Next to *corrupt*, *secular* interest, in the management of crafty, selfish seducers, this hath been the great inlet of all superstition and false worship in the world. *Blind affection* groping in the dark after *spiritual things*, having not the saving light of faith to conduct them, have seduced the minds of men into all manner of superstitions. And wherever they will lead the way, when *faith* goeth not before them to discover both way and end, they that lead, and the mind that is led, must fall into one snare and pit or another.

Wherefore, affections that are *spiritually renewed* act not but as *faith* discovers their object, and directs them to it. It is faith that works by love; we can *love nothing sincerely* with divine love, but *what we believe savingly* with divine faith. Let our affections to any spiritual things be never so vehement, if they spring not from faith, if they are not guided by it, they are neither accepted with God, nor will promote the interest of spirituality and holiness to our own souls. And this is the reason whence we oftimes see great and plausible appearances of spiritual affections, which yet endure *only for a season*. They have been excited, by one means or another, outward or inward; but not having the *light* of faith to guide them to their proper object, they either wither and die, or else keep the mind *tossed up and down* in perpetual disquietude, without rest or peace. *The foolish man wearieth himself, because he cannot find the way to the city.* So was it with them, who, on account of their attendance to the doctrine of Christ, are called his disciples. Having preached to them about the *bread which came down from heaven*, and giveth life to them that feed on it, they were greatly affected, and cried out, *Lord, evermore give us of this bread.* But when he proceeded to declare the mystery of it, they having not faith to apprehend it, their affec-

tions immediately decayed, and they forsook both him and his doctrine.

We may consider one especial instance of this nature. Persons every day fall under great and *effectual convictions of sin*, and of their danger thereby. This stirs up all their affections, especially their *fears*, *hopes*, *desires*, *sorrow*, *self-revenge*, according as their condition calls for them. Hence sometimes they grow restless in their complaints, and turn themselves every way for relief, like men that are bewildered in the night. But in this state, tell them of the only *proper means* of their relief, which, let the world say what it will, is *Christ and his righteousness alone*, and they quickly discover that they are strange things to them, such as they do not understand, nor indeed approve. They cannot discern them, nor any beauty in them, for which they should be desired.

Wherefore, after their affections have been tossed up and down for a season, under the torment of this conviction, they come to one or other of these issues with them. For either they utterly decay, and the mind loseth all sense of any *impressions* from them, so as that they wonder in themselves, whence they were so *foolish* as to be troubled with such *melancholy fancies*, and so commonly prove as bad a sort of men as live upon the earth; or they take up a formal legal profession, wherein they never attain to be *spiritually minded*. This is the best end that our affections towards spiritual things, not guided by the light of faith, come to.

Secondly, *faith hath a clear apprehension of spiritual things, as they are in their own nature.* It is true the light of it cannot *fully comprehend* the nature of all those things which are the objects of its affections: for they are infinite and incomprehensible, such as are the nature of God, and the person of Christ; and some of them, as future glory, are not yet clearly revealed; but it discerns them all in a due manner, so that they may in themselves, and not in any corrupt representation, or imagination of them, be the object of our affections. They are, as the Apostle speaks, *spiritually discerned*, which is the reason why the natural man cannot receive them, namely, because he hath not ability spiritually to discern them. And this

is the principal end of the renovation of our minds, the principal effect of faith, namely, the communication to our minds, of a spiritual saving light, whereby we may see spiritual things as they are in their own nature, and proper use. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe according to the working of his mighty power." "God shines in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." The end God designs, is to draw our hearts to himself. And to this end, he gives to us a glorious internal delight, whereby we may be enabled to discern the true nature of the things that we are to cleave to with love and delight. Without this we have nothing but *false images* of spiritual things in our minds; not always as to the *truth* or *doctrine* concerning them, but as to their *reality*, power and efficacy. This is one of the principal effects of faith, as it is the principal part of the renovation of our minds, namely, to discover in the soul, and represent to the affections, things *spiritual* and *heavenly*, in their nature, and genuine excellency. He that believes in Christ in a due manner, who discovers the *excellency of his person*, and the *glory* of his meditation, will both love him, and *rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*. So is it in all other instances; the more steady is our view by faith of spiritual things, the more firm and constant will our affections be in cleaving to them. And wherever the mind is darkened about them by temptation or seduction from the truth, there the affections will be quickly impaired. Wherefore,

Thirdly. Affections thus fixed on, spiritual things, under the light of faith, are more and more renewed, or made more spiritual and heavenly.

This *transformation* is wrought by faith; and the means whereby it works herein, are our affections. In them, as we are carnal, we are conformed to this world: and by them, as sanctified, *are we transformed in the renewing of*

our minds. And this transformation is the introduction of a *new nature* into our souls, diverse from that wherewith we were before endued.

The mind hereby becomes the *Temple of God*, wherein he dwells by the Spirit; Christ also dwelleth in believers, and they in him. *God is love*, and he that "dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Love, in its proper exercise, gives a mutual inhabitation to God and believers. In brief, he whose affections are set upon heavenly things, will be *heavenly minded.* And in the due exercise of them, will that heavenly mindedness be increased. The transformation that is wrought, is not in *spiritual things* themselves, but in our *affections*, which are made like to them.

This growth of our affections into spirituality is oftimes very *slow, and sometimes imperceptible.* Yea, for the most part, it is a hard thing to find it satisfactorily in ourselves or others. Our affections stand like *shrubs in the wilderness*, which see not when good cometh, and are not like plants in a garden enclosed, which are watered every day. But it is not so without our folly and our sin.

The folly that keeps many in this condition, consists herein: *The generality of Christians are contented with their present measures, and design little more, than not to lose the ground they have gained.* And a *pernicious folly* it is, that both ruins the glory of religion, and deprives the souls of men of peace and consolation. But so it is, men have some grounds of persuasion, or *at least* they hope, and suppose they have such grounds, that they are passed *from death to life*, that they are in a state of grace and acceptance with God. This state they will endeavor to preserve by a diligent *performance* of the duties it requireth, and the *avoidance* of such sins, whereby they might make a forfeiture of it. But as for earnest watchful endeavors *to thrive in this state*, to grow in grace, to be changed from glory to glory into the image of Christ, to press forward towards the mark of the high calling, and after perfection to lay hold on eternal life, to be more holy, more humble, more righteous, more spiritually minded; to have their affections more and more *transformed* into the likeness of things above; they are but *few*, that sin-

cerely and diligently apply themselves to these things. The *Measures* which they have attained to, give satisfaction to the church, and reputation in the world, that they are professors, and some to speak peace to their own souls. To be more holy, and heavenly, to have their affections more taken up with the things above, they suppose somewhat inconsistent with their present occasions and affairs. By this means hath religion lost much of its glory, and the souls of men have been deprived of the principal advantages of it in this world.

Such persons are like to men who live in a country wherein they are not only *pressed with poverty*, and all sorts of misery; but are also obnoxious to grievous punishments, and death itself, if they are taken in it. In this condition they are assured of another country, wherein, so soon as they arrive, they shall be freed from all *fear of danger*, and if they pass further into it, they shall meet with riches, plenty, and a fair inheritance provided for them. Hereon they betake themselves to obtain possession of it. But no sooner do they come within the *borders*, and so are free from *danger*, but they sit down, and will go no further to enjoy the *good things of the country* whereto they are come. And it falls out with many of them, that through their sloth, negligence, and ignorance, they take up *short of the true bounds* and limits of the country of liberty and peace which they aimed at, whereby danger and death surprise them unawares. This ruin could not have befallen them, had they industriously endeavored to enter into the *heart of the country*, and have possessed the good things thereof. At best, being only in the *borders*, they lead a poor life all their days, exposed to wants and danger.

So it is in this case. Men falling under the *power of convictions*, and those restless fears wherewith they are accompanied, will stir up themselves, and inquire how they may *fly from the wrath to come*, how they may be delivered from the state of sin, and the eternal misery which will ensue thereon.

In the *gospel*, not only *mercy and pardon* are proposed to them, on their believing, which is the first entrance into the heavenly country; but *peace*, and *joy*, and *spiritual*

strength, upon their admission into it, and a progress made in it by faith and obedience. But many, when they have attained so far, as that they have *some hopes of pardon and freedom from the curse*, so as to deliver them from their tormenting fears, will endeavor to preserve those hopes, and keep that state; but will not pass on to a full enjoyment of the *precious things of the gospel*, by growth in grace and spiritual affections. But how many of them fall under woful mistakes! For supposing themselves to be in a gospel *state*, it proves in the issue, that they never entered into it. They were not, it may be, *far from the kingdom of heaven*, in the same sense as it was spoken of him who never came thither. There is no way to secure an interest in the gospel, as to pardon, safety and deliverance, but by a growth in holiness, which gives an entrance in the *choicest* mercies and privileges of it.

This *folly of men* in *taking up with their measures*, endeavoring only to maintain that state which they hope they have attained, is the great reason why their affections do not daily grow up into spirituality, through an *assimilation* to heavenly things. And a *folly* it is, attended with innumerable aggravations.

It is contrary to the *genuine principle of gospel grace*. For it is every where compared by our Saviour to things which, from *small seeds and beginnings*, grow up by a continual increase to large measures; as to a *grain of mustard seed*, a *little leaven*, and the like.

That grace whose nature it is not to thrive and grow, may justly be suspected, by them who take care of their own souls, and would not be eternally deceived.

It is contrary to the most excellent *promises* recorded in the Old Testament and the New; and which are amongst the principal supports of the faith, and comfort of believers. God hath given them to us, to encourage us into an expectation of such supplies of grace, as shall cause us to *thrive and grow* against all opposition, to the uttermost of our continuation in this world. And they are so multiplied as that there is no need to mention any of them in particular; God evidencing thereby how great is the grace, and how precious, which he so often promiseth, and of what consideration it is to ourselves. Wherefore the fol-

ly of taking up with present measures of grace, is attended with unspeakable evils.

(1.) It is an *evidence* that such persons care not, for grace or holiness for their own souls, but merely to serve their turn at present, as without this they can have no hopes to get to heaven. This sufficiently discovers men to be wholly under the power of *self-love*, for, if they may have so much grace as may save them, they care for no more.

(2.) It is repugnant to the *honor of gospel grace*, as though it would carry us so far, and no further, in the way to glory. For it must be known, that this sort of persons who sit down in their present attainments, either really have no grace at all, or that which is of the lowest, and most imperceptible degree. For if any one hath attained any *considerable growth* in faith and love, in the mortification of sin, in heavenly mindedness, it is utterly impossible but that ordinarily he will be pressing forward towards further degrees of spiritual strength in the life of God. What thoughts can these persons have concerning the glory, and efficacy of gospel grace which they suppose they have received? If they measure them by the effects which they find in themselves, as to the mortification of sin, or delight in duties of holiness, or spiritual consolation, they can see no excellency in them; for they do not manifest themselves but in their *success*, as they transform the soul daily into the image of Christ.

(3.) *It is that which hath lost the reputation of religion in the world*, and the honor of the gospel itself: for the most part of professors take up with such lustre upon it, as gives no commendation to the religion they profess. Their measures allow them such a conformity to the world, in their words, and actions, in their gestures, and attire, as that they are no way visibly to be distinguished from it. And, on the other side, if all visible professors would endeavor continually to grow in spirituality of mind, with fruits suitable thereto, it would bring a conviction on the world, that there is a *secret invisible power* accompanying the religion they profess, transforming them daily into the likeness of God.

(4.) Whatever is pretended to the contrary, it is *incon-*

sistent with all solid peace of conscience; for no such thing is promised to any who live in such a contempt of divine promises; nor is it attainable, but by the diligent exercise of all those graces which lie neglected under this frame. Few men are able to judge whether they have real, eternal, abiding peace, or not, unless it be in case of trials and temptations. At other seasons, general hopes and confidences may supply the want of it in their minds: but when any danger, or conviction befalls them, they cannot but inquire how it is with them. And if they find their affections cold, earthly, carnal, withering, there will be an end of their supposed peace, and they will then find that the root of all this evil lies in this frame and disposition. They have been so far satisfied with their present attainments in religion, as that the utmost of their endeavors have been but to preserve their station, or not to forfeit it by open sins, to keep their souls alive from the severe reflections of the word, and their reputation fair in the church of God. *Spiritually to thrive, to prosper in their souls, to wax fat and flourishing* in the inward man, to *bring forth more fruit* as age increaseth, to *press* towards perfection, are things they have not designed nor pursued.

Hence it is that so many among us are visibly at an *unthrifty stand* in the world: that where they were one year, there they are another, like *shrubs in the wilderness*, not like the plants in the garden of God, not *as vines planted in a very fruitful hill.* Yea, though many are sensible themselves that they are *cold*, *lifeless*, and *fruitless*, yet will they not be convinced that there is a necessity of making a daily progress in spirituality, whereby the inward man may be renewed day by day, and grace augmented with the increase of God. This is a work, as they suppose, for them who have nothing else to do; not consistent with their *business*; not necessary, as they hope, to salvation, nor, it may be, to be attained by them if they should set themselves about it. This apprehension upon the beginning of the declension of the Christian religion in the many, cast off all holiness and devotion to a sort of men who undertook to retire themselves utterly out of the world; amongst whom also the substance of religion was quickly lost, and a cloud of *superstition*, embraced in the

room of it. But this folly is ominous to the souls of men.

Those who have made the *greatest progress* in the conformity of their affections to things spiritual and heavenly, know most of its excellency. It is a comely thing to see a Christian weaned from the world, minding heavenly things, green and flourishing in spiritual affection.

That which men complain of, is the *difficulty of the work.* They can, as they suppose, preserve their present station; but to press forward, to grow in grace, this is too hard for them. But this *complaint* is unequal and *unjust*, and adds to the guilt of their sloth. It reflects upon the words of our Saviour, that his *yoke is easy, and his burden light*, that his commandments are not grievous. It expresseth unbelief in the promises of God, tendering such supplies of grace, as to render all the ways of wisdom, mercy and peace. It is contrary to the experience of all who have, with any sincerity and diligence, engaged in the ways of gospel obedience; and the whole cause of the pretended difficulty lies in themselves alone. It is

First, *A desire to retain some thing inconsistent with such a progress:* for unless the heart be ready on all occasions to esteem every thing as *loss* for Christ, the work will be accompanied with insuperable difficulties. This is the first principle of gospel obedience, that all things are to be *despised for Christ.* But this difficulty ariseth not from the thing itself, but from our indisposition to it, and unfitness for it. That which is an *easy, pleasant walk* to a healthy man, is a toilsome journey to him that is diseased. In particular, whilst men will retain an *inordinate respect* to the world, the vanities, the pleasures, the profits, of it; *whilst self-love*, putting an undue valuation on our persons, our relations, our reputations, doth cleave to us, we shall labor in the fire when we engage in this duty, or, rather, we shall not at all sincerely engage in it; wherefore the apostle tells us that, in this case, we must *cast off every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us*, if we intend to run with joy the race that is set before us.

Secondly. It is because men dwell continually upon the entrances of religion, in the first and lowest exercise of grace. Some are always beginning; and the beginning of things is always difficult. They design not to be *complete*

in the whole will of God, nor to give all graces their perfect work, which the apostle commends in them that are perfect and complete. Hence he calls such persons *babes* and *carnal*, comparatively to them that are strong men and spiritual Such persons do not oblige themselves to the whole work of religion, but only what they judge *necessary to them* in their present circumstances. In particular, they do not attempt a thorough work in the mortification of any sin, but are *hewing and hacking* at it, as their convictions are urgent. They give not any grace its *perfect work*, but are always making essays, and so give over.

Whilst it is thus with any, they shall always be deluded with the apprehensions of insuperable difficulties, as to the growth of their affections in spirituality. Remove these things out of the way, as they ought to be removed, and we shall find all the paths wherein we are to walk towards God to be *pleasantness and peace*.

Thus there may be affections truly spiritual and graciously renewed in some persons, who yet do not thrive *in an assimilation to heavenly things*. But they may thank themselves, if, as they bring no honor to Christ, so they have no solid peace in their own souls.

Let us not dwell on heartless complaints that we do not find our affections lively and heavenly, that we do not find the inward man to thrive. The general reason of this evil state is our own *sinful* carelessness, with, perhaps, an indulgence to some known corruption. And we do in vain seek after *refreshing cordials*, as though we were only spiritually faint, when we stand in need of lancings and burnings, as nigh to a lethargy: it would be too long to give instances of these sins, which fail not effectually to obstruct the *thriving of spiritual affections*. But in general, when men are careless as to that continual *watch* which they ought to keep over their hearts; whilst they are *negligent* in holy duties, either as to the seasons of them, or in the manner of their performance; when they are *strangers* to holy meditation and self-examination; whilst they *inordinately pursue* the things of the world, or are so *delicate* that they will not undergo the hardship of an heavenly life, either as to the *inward* or *outward* man; much more

when they are under the *predominant influence* of any particular lust; it is in vain to think of thriving in spiritual affections.

CHAPTER XVII.

Decays in spiritual affections, with the causes and danger of them. Advice to them who are sensible of the evil of spiritual decays.

Some there are, who, upon the beginning of a profession of their *conversion* to God, have made a great appearance of vigorous, active, spiritual affections; yea, it is so with most, who are really so converted. *God takes notice in his people*, of the love of their *espousals*.

In some, this vigor of spiritual *affections* is from the real power of grace, exerting its efficacy on their hearts. In others, relief from *conviction*, by spiritual illumination, will produce this effect. And this falls out to the advantage of such persons, that generally a change is wrought in their *younger days*. For then their *affections* are active, and bear great sway in the whole soul, and the change that is made, is most eminent in them, be it what it will. But as men increase in age, they often decay in their spiritual affections. They will abide in their profession, but have *lost their first love*.

It is a shame unutterable, that it should be so with any who make profession of that religion, wherein there are so many *incomparable excellencies* to engage them to it more and more; but why should we hide what experience makes manifest in the sight of the sun; and what multitudes proclaim concerning themselves? Wherefore, I

look upon it as a great evidence, if not absolutely of the sincerity of grace, yet of the life and growth of it, when men, as they grow up in age, grow in contempt of the world, in duties of charity and decay not in any of them. But I say, it is usual that the *entrances* of men's profession of religion are attended with *vigorous active affections* towards spiritual things. Of them, who really and sincerely believed, it is said, that on *their believing, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* And of those who only had a work of conviction on them, improved by temporary faith, that they *received the word with joy*, and did *many things gladly.*

In this state do many abide until their affections be wholly transformed into the image of things above. But with many of all sorts it is not so; they fall into woful decays as to their affections about spiritual things, and consequently in their whole profession and conversation, their moisture becomes as the drought in summer. They honor not the gospel with any fruits of love, zeal, or delight, nor are *useful* any way to others by their example. Some of them have had *seeming recoveries*, and are yet again taken into a lifeless frame: warnings, afflictions, sicknesses, the word, have awakened them, but they are fallen again into a *dead sleep;* so as that they seem to be *trees whose fruit withereth; without fruit; twice dead; plucked up by the roots.*

There may be *a time of temptation*, wherein a soul may apprehend in itself not only *decay*, but an utter loss of all spiritual affections, when yet it is not so. As believers may apprehend, that the "Lord hath forsaken and forgotten them," so they may, under temptations, apprehend that they have *forsaken God*, when they have not done so: as a man in the *night* may apprehend he has lost his way, and be in great distress, when he is in his proper road. For temptation brings darkness and leads into mistakes in all things. They find not, it may be, grace working in love, joy, and delight, as formerly, nor that activity of heart in holy duties, which spiritual affections gave to them. But yet it may be, the same *grace works in godly sorrow* by mourning, and self-abasement, no less effectually, nor

less acceptably to God. Such as these I separate from the present consideration.

There may be a *decay in affections themselves*, at least as to the outward *symptoms* and effects of them, and on this ground, their operations towards spiritual things may be less sensible. So men in their younger days may be more ready to express their sorrow by tears, and their joy by sensible exaltation of their spirits than in riper years. And this may be so, when there is no decay of grace in the *affections* as renewed. But, when it is so, it is a *burthen* to them in whom it is. They cannot but have a *godly jealousy* over themselves, lest the decays they find, should not be in the *outward*, but in the *inward*, not in the natural, but the spiritual, man. And they will labor, that in all duties, and at all times, it may be with them as in days of old, although they cannot attain that vigor of spirit, that life, joy, peace, and comfort, which many have had experience of.

There will be also in such persons, no *decays in holiness* of life, nor as to diligence in all religious duties. If the decay be really of grace in the affections, it will be accompanied with a proportionable decay in all other things, wherein the life of God is concerned. But if it be only as to the sensible actings of natural affections, no such decay will ensue. Grace will, in this case, more vigorously act in the other faculties and powers of the soul, as the *judgment* and the *will* in their approbation of spiritual things. But, when men find, their affections yet active, and intent on other things, as the lawful enjoyments of this life; it is in *vain for them* to believe that the decays they find are in their affections as natural, and not as they ought to conclude as gracious. If we see a man in his old age grow more in love with the things of this world, and less in love with the things of God, it is not through the weakness of nature, but through the strength of sin.

On these occasions, there may be an *apprehension* of a decay in spiritual *affections*, when it may not be so, at least not to the *degree* that is apprehended. But when it is so *really*, as it is evidently with many, it is a woful frame of heart, and never enough to be lamented. It is that which lies in direct *contradiction* to that Spiritual Mindedness

which is life and peace. It is a *consumption* of the soul which threatens it with death every day.

It belongs not to my design to treat of it in particular; yet I cannot let it pass without some remarks upon it, it being an evil almost *epidemical* among professors, and prevalent in some to such a degree, as that they seem to be utterly forsaken of all powers of spiritual life. Now, there is a multiplication of evils wherewith this state of mind is accompanied. For,

First. It is that which of all things the Lord Christ is most displeased with in *churches* or professors. He pities them in their temptations, he *suffers* with them in their persecution, he *intercedes* for them on their surprisal, but threatens them under their *spiritual decays.* This he cannot bear with, as that which both reflects *dishonor* upon himself, and which he knows to be *ruinous* to them. He will longer bear with them who are utterly dead, than with those who abide under these decays. This is the only case wherein he threatens to cast off a *church;* to take away his *candlestick* from it, unless it be that of *false worship and idolatry.* He that spake thus to the churches of old, speaks now the same to us; for he lives for ever, *and is always* the same, and his word is living and unchangeable. There is not one of us who are under this frame, but the Lord Christ, by his word and spirit, testifieth his displeasure against us; and if he be against us, who shall plead for us? Consider what he says in this case, *Rev.* ii. 5. and iii. 3. O who can stand before these dreadful intimations of his displeasure! the Lord help us to mind it, lest he in whom we profess to place our only trust, be in our trial found our greatest enemy. Take heed of such sins as Christ himself, our only advocate, hath put a mark upon as those which he will not save us in.

Secondly. It is that wherewith above all things the *Holy Spirit is grieved.* His work it is to give an increase and progress in our souls. He begins it, and carries it on. And there can be no greater grief to a wise and gracious workman, than to have his work *decay* and go backward under his hand. This is the occasion of those *complaints* of God which we find in the scripture, of the unprofitableness and backsliding of men, after the use of means and

remedies for their fruitfulness and cure. "What," saith he, "could I have done more for my vineyard than I have done? Why then, when I looked for grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?" Can any thing be apprehended to be such a just matter of grief to the Holy Spirit, as to see those whom he had once raised up to holy and heavenly affections, so as that their delights were in the things that are above, to become earthly or sensual, which is the state of them who are under the power of spiritual decays? And this is the only case wherein God speaks to men in the way of complaint and expostulation; and useth all sorts of arguments to convince them of their folly herein.

Wherein a wise, tender, and careful parent, hath been diligent, in the use of all means for the *education of his child*, and he for some time hath given *good hopes of himself*, finds him to slacken in his diligence, to be careless in his calling, to delight in evil company; how solicitous is his heart about him, how much is he grieved and affected with his miscarriage! The heart of the spirit of God is infinitely more tender towards us, than that of the most affectionate parent can be towards an only child. And when he with cost and care hath nourished, and brought us up to some progress in spiritual affections, wherein all his concerns in us lie, for us to grow cold, dull, earthly minded, to cleave to the pleasures or lusts of this world, how is he grieved, how is he provoked! It may be this consideration of *grieving the Holy Spirit*, is of no great weight with some; but let such persons know, it is impossible for them to give a greater evidence of a profligate hardness in sin.

Thirdly. It is absolutely inconsistent with all *comfortable assurance of the love of God.* Whatever persons under the power of such a frame, pretend to of that kind, it is sinful security, not gracious assurance or peace; and constantly, as professors decay in their spiritual affections, stupidity of conscience and security of mind grow upon them. It is so, unless they are sometimes overtaken with some *greater sin*, which reflects severely on their consciences, and casts them for a time under troubles and distresses. But that *peace with God*, and a *comfortable*

assurance of salvation, should be consistent with an habitual decay in grace, is contrary to the whole tenor and testimony of the scripture: and the supposition of it would be the bane and poison of religion. I do not say that our assurance and peace with God arise wholly from the actings of grace in us; there are other causes of them, whereto they are principally resolved; but this I say, under an habitual declension of grace in the spirituality of our affections, no man can maintain *a gracious sense of the love of God*, or of peace with him. And therefore there is no duty more severely to be pressed on all at this day, than a diligent examination of the grounds of their peace; lest it should be with any of them as it was with *Laodicea*, who was satisfied in her condition, when it was most miserable, and almost *desperate*. Yea, I must say that it is impossible that many professors, whom we see and converse with, should have any solid peace with God. Do men *gather* figs *from thorns, or* grapes *from thistles*? It is a fruit that will not grow on a vain, earthly, selfish frame of mind; and therefore such persons, whatever they pretend, are either asleep in a sinful security, or live on most uncertain hopes, which probably may deceive them. Nothing can be so ruinous to our profession, as once to suppose it is an *easy matter*, a thing of course, to maintain our peace with God. God forbid that our utmost diligence, and continued endeavors to thrive in every grace, should not be required thereto. The whole beauty and glory of our religion depends hereon. *To be spiritually minded is life and peace.*

Fourthly. Such a decay as that described, is a dangerous symptom that those in whom it is, will at last be found to be but *hypocrites*. I know such persons may have pretended evidences to the contrary, and are well enough satisfied with their own sincerity, in many things; so as that it is impossible to fix upon them the conviction of being but *hypocrites*. But this apprehension ariseth from a false notion of hypocrisy. No man they suppose is an *hypocrite*, but he that generally or universally pretends himself in religion to be what he is not, and what he knows himself not to be, or at least, might easily know. And it is *true* that this is the broadest notion of *Pharisai-*

cal hypocrisy. But he who under light, profession, gifts, duties, doth habitually and willingly fail in any point of sincerity, is no less a perishing hypocrite than the former. I do not say that every one in whom there is this prevalent decay in spiritual affections, is an hypocrite; God forbid: I only say that where it continues without remedy, it is such a *symptom* of hypocrisy, as that he who is wise, and hath a care of his soul, will not rest until he hath searched it to the bottom. For it seems as if it were thus with such persons, they have had a false or imperfect work in that *conversion unto God* which they have professed. Conviction of sin, communication of spiritual light and gifts, alteration upon the affections, change of society and conversation, have made it up. Now it is the nature of such a *work* greatly to flourish for a season, in all the principal parts and duties of profession: but it is in its nature also *gradually to decay*, until it be quite withered away: in some, it is lost by the power of some *vigorous temptations*, and particular lusts indulged, ending in worldliness and sensuality; but in the most it *decays gradually.* Wherefore, whilst men find this decay in themselves, unless they are fallen under the power of a destructive security, unless they are *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, they cannot but think it their duty to examine how things stand with them, whether they ever effectually closed with Christ, and had the faith of God's elect, which works by love; seeing it is with them, as though they had only a work of another nature. For a saving work in its own nature, and in the diligent use of means, thrives and grows, as the whole scripture testifieth; but it is this false and imperfect working that hath no root, and is thus subject to withering.

Fifthly. Persons in such a state are apt to deceive themselves with false *hopes and notions*, whereby the *deceitfulness of sin*, doth put forth its power, to harden them to their ruin. This pernicious effect is produced, by the prevalency of a particular *lust*, or by a neglect of *spiritual duties*, under which the soul pines away and consumes.

As to the first of these, there are *three false notions*, whereby the *deceitfulness of sin* deludes the souls of men.

The (1) is, that it is that *one sin alone* wherein they would be indulged. Let them be spared in this *one thing*, and in all others they will be exact enough. This is the composition that *Naaman* would have made in the matters of religion; and it is that which many trust to. Hence it hath by the event been made to appear, that some persons have lived long in the practice of some gross sins, and yet all the while used a *semblance of great diligence* in certain duties of religion.—This is a false notion whereby poor sinners delude their own souls. For suppose it possible that a man should give himself up to any lust, or be under the power of it, and yet be observant of all other duties, yet this would give him *no relief* as to the eternal condition of his soul. The rule is peremptory to this purpose. One sin willingly lived in, is as able to *destroy a man's soul*, as a thousand. Besides, it is practically false. —There is no man that lives in any one known sin, but he really lives in more, though that only bears the chiefest sway. With some such persons, these sins appear to others, though they appear not to themselves: in some they are manifest to themselves, although they are hidden from others. But let no man *relieve himself* with thoughts that it is but *one sin*, whilst that one sin keeps him in a constant neglect of God. Hence,

(2.) They judge, that although they cannot as yet *shake off their sin*, yet they will continue still to love God, and abound in the duties of his worship. They will not become haters of God and his ways, and persecutors for all the world; and therefore hope that, notwithstanding this one, *lesser sin*, which their constitution and their circumstances *engage them in*, that it may be well with them at the last. This, also, is a *false notion*, for no man that *willingly liveth in any sins can love God at all;* as it is but a false *pretence of love* to God that any man hath, who liveth in any known sin. Let not your light deceive you, nor your gifts, nor your duties, nor your profession; if you live in sin, you love not God.

(3.) They determine, that at such *or such* a time, they will utterly give over, so as that iniquity shall not be their ruin. But this is a false notion also, an effectual instrument of the deceitfulness of sin. He that will not *now*

give over, who will not immediately upon the discovery of the prevalency of any sin, endeavor sincerely and constantly its relinquishment, say what he will, he never intends to give over: nor is it probable in an ordinary way that ever he will do so. When men's decays are from the prevalency of particular sins, by these and the like false notions they harden themselves to ruin.

Those who are *pining away under a hectical consumption, of the vital spirits* of religion, have also false notions, whereby they deceive themselves. As,

(1.) That although they have some cause to *mistrust themselves*, yet indeed their condition is not so bad as *some may apprehend*, or they have not as yet been overtaken with any *enormous sin*, which hath filled their consciences with terror. But this is a *false notion also;* for every decay is dangerous, especially such as the mind is ready to plead for, and to countenance itself in.

(2.) They are prone to suppose that this decay doth not arise from the evil of their own hearts, but from their circumstances, business, and state of life, which, when they are freed from, they will at least return to their former delight in spiritual things. But this is a false notion also. Let men's circumstances and occasions of life be what they will, all their departures from God are from an evil heart of unbelief.

(3.) They judge it no hard matter to retrieve themselves out of this state, but that which they can easily do, when there is an absolute necessity for it. But this is a *false notion also. Recovery from backsliding* is the hardest task in the Christian religion, and which few make either comfortable or honorable work of.

Wherefore I say, upon the whole, that whoso find themselves under the power of this *wretched frame*, if they rest in that state, without groaning and laboring for deliverance from it, they can have no well-grounded hopes in themselves of life and immortality; yea, they are in those *paths which go down to the chambers of death.*

I cannot let this pass, without something of advice to them who find themselves under such decays.

First. Remember former things: call to mind how it was with you in the *spring* and *vigor of your affections,*

and compare your present enjoyment, and quiet, with what they were then. This will be a great principle of return to God.

God himself makes it, *on his part*, a ground of his return to us in a way of mercy. Even when a people are under *manifold decays*, whilst yet they are within the bounds of God's covenant, he will remember their first love, with the fruits of it in trials and temptations, which moves his compassion towards them. And the way to have God thus remember it, is for us to remember our former experience with delight, and longing of soul that it were with us as in days of old.

It is the way too, whereby the saints of old have encouraged themselves under their greatest despondencies. So doth the *Psalmist*: "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan; and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." *David*, in the time of his persecution by *Saul* when he wandered up and down in deserts, and solitudes, had, under his distresses, great spiritual communion with God, as many of his *Psalms* composed on such occasions testify. And the greater his distresses were, the more fervent were his affections in all his addresses to God. And he was never in greater, than when he escaped out of the cave at *Adullam*, and went thence unto *Mizpeh* of *Moab*, to get shelter for his parents. Then was he in the land of the *Hermonites*. There, no doubt, *David* had a blessed exercise of his faith, and of all his affections towards God, wherein his soul found great refreshment. Being now in great distress of spirit, among other things, under a sense that God had forgotten him, he calls to mind the blessed experience he had of communion with God in the land of the *Hermonites*, wherein he now found support and refreshment. So at other times he called to remembrance *the days of old*, and his *song in the night*, or the sweet refreshment he had in spiritual converse with God in former times. I have known one in the depth of distress and darkness of mind, who, going through temptation to destroy himself, was relieved and delivered in an instant of ruin, by a sudden remembrance that at such a time, and in such a

place, he had prayed fervently with the engagement of all his affections to God.

Wherefore, you that are sensible of these decays or ought so to be, take the advice of our Saviour, *Remember whence you are fallen;* call to mind the former days; consider if it were not better with you than now: when, in your lying down and your rising up, you had many thoughts of God, and of the things of God, and they were precious to your souls; when you rejoiced at the *remembrance of his holiness;* when you had zeal for his glory, delight in his worship, and were glad when they said, "Let us go to the house of God together;" when you poured forth your souls with freedom and enlarged affections before him, and were sensible of the visits and refreshments of his love: *Remember what peace*, what tranquillity of mind, what joy you had whilst it was so with you; and consider what you have gotten since you have forsaken God, in any degree. Dare to deal plainly with yourselves. Is not all wherein you have to do with God, either from custom and selfishness, or attended with trouble, and fears? Do you truly know either how to live or how to die? Are you not sometimes a terror to yourselves? It must be so unless you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. What have all your lovers done for you, that you have entertained in the room of God and spiritual things? Speak plainly; have they not defiled you, wounded you, weakened you, and brought you into that condition, that you know not what you are, nor *to whom ye do belong?* What are your thoughts when you are most awake, when you are most yourselves? Do you not sometimes pant within yourselves, and say, O that *it were with us as in former days?*

And if you can be no way affected with *the remembrance of former things*, then one of these two great evils you are certainly under: Either, you never had true and real communion with God in any duties: you had only a temporary work, which excited your affections for a season, which, now it is worn off, leaves no sweet remembrance of it upon your minds. Or else,

You are *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, and there is no way left to give an impression of spiritual things upon your minds. You have truly nothing left in

religion, but the fear of hell and trouble of duties. I speak not to such at present.

As to those to whom *this frame is a burden*, there is no more effectual means to stir them to endeavors for deliverance, than a *continual remembrance* of former experiences they have had of holy intercourse with God. This will revive and strengthen the things *that are ready to die*, and beget a self-abhorrence in them, in consideration of that woful frame of mind, which by their sinful negligence they have brought themselves into.

Secondly. Consider, that as there are many things dreadfully pronounced in the Scripture against *backsliding and backsliders in heart*, yet also there are special calls and promises given to those in your condition. And know assuredly, that upon your compliance or *non-compliance* with them, depends your everlasting blessedness or wo.

"Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. Add thereto this blessed promise, "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from them." If you design to live and not die, it must be by yielding *obedience* to this call, and pleading this *promise before God*, mixing it with faith. Here lies your great encouragement and your only relief. As you value your souls, defer not the duty you are called to, one moment. You know not how soon you may be without the *reach of calls* and promises.

Thirdly. As to those who, on these considerations, do not only *desire*, but *endeavor* also to retrieve themselves from this condition, I shall give no advice at present but this: *be in good earnest.* As the prophet speaks in another case; if you *will return, return and come;* make thorough work of it. You must do so at one time or another, or you will perish. Why not now? Why is not this the best season? Who knows but it may be the only time you will have for it? It were easy to multiply all sorts of arguments to this purpose. Trifling endeavors, *occasional resolutions and attempts*, like the *early cloud*, and *morning*

dew, shifting with warnings and convictions, until their impressions are worn out, will ruin your souls. Unless there be universal diligence and *permanency* in your endeavors, you are undone. Then shall ye know the Lord, *if you follow on* to know him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It remains only as to this head, that we briefly consider what is the *state of spiritual affections* thus daily exercised. And this we shall do by showing.

(1.) What is their *pattern*.
(2.) What is their *rule*.
(3.) What is their *measure*.

First. The *pattern* which we ought continually to bear in our eyes, is Jesus Christ, and the affections of his holy soul. The mind is the seat of all our affections; and this is that which we ought continually to design and endeavor, namely, that the *same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus*. *To have our minds so affected with spiritual things*, as was the mind of Christ, is the principal part of our duty and grace. Nor do I think that any man can attain any considerable *degree* in spiritual mindedness, who is not much in the contemplation of the *same mind* that was in Christ. To this purpose, ought we to furnish our minds with instances of the holy affections that were in Christ, and their blessed exercise on all occasions. The Scripture makes a full representation of them. What glorious things are spoken of his love to God, and his delight in him, whence also he *delighted to do his will*, and *his law was within his heart*, seated in the throne of his affections. What compassion had he for the souls of men, yea, for the whole human kind, in all their sufferings, and distres-

ses! How were all his affections always in perfection of order, under the *conduct of the spirit of his mind!* Thence was his *self-denial*, his *contempt of the world*, his readiness for the cross, to do or suffer according to the will of God. If this pattern be continually before us, it will put forth a transforming efficacy to change us into the same image. When we find our minds liable to any disorders, cleaving inordinately to the things of this world, moved with *intemperate passions*, vain and frothy in conversation, let us ask of ourselves, whether this be the frame of mind that was in Christ Jesus? This, therefore, is an evidence that our affections are spiritually renewed, and we have received some *progress* in an *assimilation* to heavenly things; namely, when the soul is delighted in making Christ our *pattern*.

Secondly. The *Rule* of our affections in their utmost spiritual improvements, is the *Scripture*. And two things are respected in them. Their *internal actings and outward exercise*.

Of both, the Scripture is the *entire rule*. And with respect to the former it gives us one general law, that is comprehensive of all others; namely, that *we love the Lord our God with all our hearts*, souls, minds, and strength, that in all instances we prefer him above all things; that we inseparably cleave to him, and do nothing whatever, at any time, that is not influenced by the love of God. This perfection, as we shall see immediately, is not attainable absolutely in this life; but it is proposed to us as that which the excellency of God's nature requires, which the faculties of our nature were created for, and which we ought in all things to design and aim at. But the indispensable obligation of this *rule* is, that we should always *endeavor* to cleave to God continually in all things, to prefer him above all, and delight in him as our chief good. When this disposition is habitually fixed in our minds, it will declare itself in all instances of duties, on all occasions of trial, when other things put in for a predominant interest in our affections, as they do every day. And if it be not so with us, we shall be at a continual loss in all our ways. This is that which makes us lifeless and heartless in duties, careless in temptations forgetful of God, when it

is impossible we should be preserved from sin without a due remembrance of his holiness. In brief, the want of a *predominant love to God*, kept in continual exercise, is the spring of all that unprofitable profession of religion that the world is filled with.

There are also *outward ways* whereby our spiritual affections are expressed. The *rule* of them also is the Scripture. The way marked out therein, is the only channel wherein the *stream of our spiritual affections takes its course to God.* The graces required therein, are to act by this rule: the duties it prescribes, are those which they stir up and enliven; the religious worship which it appoints, is that wherein they have their exercise. Where this rule hath been neglected, men's religious affections have grown irregular, and ungovernable. All the *superstitions* that the world is filled with, owe their origin principally to men's affections set loose from the rule of the word. There is nothing so absurd, and foolish, nothing so horrid and difficult, but they have engaged men in. Hence they will rejoice in such *penances* as are not without their *austerities;* in such ontward duties of devotion as are troublesome and chargeable; in every thing that hath *a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglect of the body.* Hence will all their affections be more sensibly moved by *images* and *pictures*, than by all the motives which God employs to draw their affections to himself. Nothing is more extravagant than the affections of men, tinctured with some devotion, if they forsake the *rule* of the Scripture.

Thirdly. Consider the *measure* of our *attainments*, or to what degrees through *due exercise* and *holy diligence*, they may be raised. Now this is not absolute perfection. "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect, but I follow after," as the apostle speaks. But there is that attainable, which those who pretend highly to perfection seem to be strangers to. And the state of our affections under a due exercise, implies an *habitual suitableness to spiritual things upon the proposal of them.* The ways whereby spiritual things are *proposed to our minds* are various. They are so, *indirectly* by all the especial *providences wherein* we are concerned; by our own

thoughts and stated *meditations;* they are so by the motions of the Holy Spirit, when he causeth us to hear a *word behind us saying, this is the way, walk in it;* by holy converse with others; by all sorts of occurrences. And as the ways of their proposal are various, so the *seasons* wherein a representation of them is made to us, are comprehensive of all, at least are not exclusive of any, times and seasons of our lives. Be the way of their proposal what it will, and whenever be the season of it, if our affections are duly improved by spiritual exercises they will be ready to give them entertainment. Hence, on the other hand, are *shiftings* in duties, proneness to *comply with diversion,* all to keep off the mind from closing with those spiritual things which it is not suited to. Wherefore, as to the ordinances of divine worship, when men have a prevalent reluctance to engage in them, or when they are satisfied with an outward attendance on them, it is because they are carnal. When men can receive the fiery darts of Satan into their bosoms, and suffer them to abide there, yea, foster and cherish them in thoughts of the lusts that they kindle; but quickly quench the motions of the spirit, they are carnally minded. *When* afflictions, and deliverances, do not engage the mind in thoughts of spiritual things, men *are carnal.* When every corruption, or passion—as anger, envy, displeasure at this or that person or thing, can divert the mind from compliance with the proposal of spiritual things that is made to it, we are carnal.

It is otherwise, when our affections are conformed to things spiritual and heavenly. As the *full soul loathes the honey-comb,* so a mind under the power of carnal affections, hath an aversion to all spiritual sweetness. But *spiritualized affections* desire them, have an appetite to them, and find them nourishing as *milk is to new-born babes.*

They do in them *taste that the Lord is gracious.* Every thing that is wholesome food, that is good nourishment, though it be but *bitter herbs,* is sweet to him that is hungry. And when by our affections we have raised up in us a *spiritual appetite* to heavenly things, however any of them in their own nature, or in their dispensation, may be *bitter to flesh and blood,* as are all the doctrines of the *cross,* they are all sweet to us, and we can taste how gra-

cious the Lord is in them. When the soul is filled with the *love of this world*, or when the appetite is lost by *spiritual sickness*, or vitiated by any prevalent sin, heavenly things are unsavory. There may be in the dispensation of the word a *pleasing relish*, given to the fancy; there may be so to the understanding, when the affections find no complacency in the things themselves. But to them who are spiritually minded to the degree intended, they are all pleasant; the affections taste them immediately, as the palate doth food.

They are a *just repository* of all graces, and therein the treasury of the soul. There are *graces of the spirit*, whose formal *direct residence* is in the understanding and the will, as faith itself. And therein are all other graces radically comprised, they grow from that root. But the most of them have their *principal residence* in the affections. In them are they preserved, secure and ready for exercise, on all occasions: and when they are duly spiritual, there is nothing that tends to their *growth or* quickening, but they *readily receive it*, and preserve it. Hereby they come to be filled with *all graces*.

Where our affections are *spiritually renewed*, the *person of Christ is the centre of them*. It is he whom the souls of his saints love for his own sake, and all other things of religion in and for him. The *air* is pleasant and useful, that without which we cannot live or breathe; but if the *sun* did not enlighten it, and warm it with its beams; if it were always one perpetual night, what refreshment could be received by it? Christ is *the sun of righteousness*, and if his beams did not animate, and enlighten the best duties of religion, nothing desirable would remain in them. This is the most certain *character* of affections spiritually renewed. They can rest in nothing but in Christ; they fix on nothing but what is amiable by a participation of his beauty; and in whatever he is, therein they find complacency.

CHAPTER XIX.

We shall now inquire into some of those considerations of heavenly things, under which *affections, spiritually renewed*, cleave to them with *delight and complacency.*

First. And the first is, that as they comprehend God in Christ, they have an *infinite beauty in them, which is powerfully attractive of spiritual affections*, and which alone is able to fill and satisfy them. Love is the most ruling and prevalent affection in the whole soul: but it cannot be fixed on any object without an apprehension, true or false, of an amiableness in it, from a *goodness* suitable to all its desires.

Many pretend to love God but they know not why. Why they love *other things*, they know well enough, but why they *love God*, they cannot tell. Many are afraid of him, and suppose they *ought to love him*, and therefore pretend so to do, though indeed they know they do not; they do but *flatter him with their lips*, when their hearts are far from him. Some are much *affected* with the mercies they receive from him, and suppose that they love him on that account. But this love is no other but what the *devil* falsely charged *Job* with. Some have delight in the outward rites of divine worship, wherewith they satisfy themselves that they love God and spiritual things, when they only please their own carnal minds. Many have a *traditional apprehension* that they ought to love God; they know no reason why they should not; they know it will be ill for them if they do not, and these take it for granted that they do. How few are there, who have that spiritual apprehension of the love of God in Christ, as thereby alone to be drawn after him, and to delight in him! yet is this the ground of all sincere real love to God. Two things are required that we may apprehend an amiable goodness in any thing and cleave to it with sincere affection; *real excellency in itself*, and a *suitableness to*

our condition. The first of these is in God, from what he is in himself; the latter is from what he is to us in Christ; from both he is the only suitable object to our *affections.* Under this apprehension do we love God for his own sake; not exclusively to our own advantage.

It may be, some cannot say that a *distinct apprehension* of these things was the first foundation of their love to God; yet are they satisfied that they do love him in sincerity with all their souls. And it may be so. God sometimes casts the skirts of his own love over the *heart* of a poor sinner, and efficaciously draws it to himself, without a distinct apprehension of these things, by a mere sense of the love it hath received. So *Elijah* passed by *Elisha,* and cast his mantle upon him as a transient act. But there was such a *communication of virtue* thereby, that he ran after him, and would not be deferred, though *Elijah* said, *go back again, for what have I done to thee.* When God hath so cast his love on any soul, it follows after him with all its affections. And whereas God may seem, at some times, to say, *go back again,* its answer is, *Lord whither shall I go?* I cannot leave thee, my heart is given up to thee, and shall never be taken from thee.

But I say to such, and to all others, that if we would have refreshing evidences of our *love to God,* if we would have it thrive and flourish, be fervent and constant, we are to exercise ourselves to the contemplation of divine goodness, and the *suitableness* of it to our souls by Jesus Christ.

Secondly. As we must see a *goodness* in spiritual things *absolutely,* that we may fix our affections on them, so we must see it *comparatively* with respect to all other things, which gives them a preference in our affections before them all. The *trial of love* lies in the *prevailing degree,* on more or less. If we love other things, *father, mother, houses, lands, possessions,* more than Christ, we do not love him at all. Nor is there any *equality allowed in this matter.* If we love not Christ *more than all these things,* we love him not at all. We must see an *excellency* in things spiritual and heavenly, rendering them more desirable than all other things whatever.

With what *loving countenances* do men look upon their

temporal enjoyments! with what tenacious embraces do they cleave to them! They see that in them which is suitable to their *affections*. Let them pretend what they please, if they see not a *greater goodness*, in spiritual things, they *love them* not in a due manner; it is temporal things that hath the rule of their *affections*. Our Psalmist prefers "Jerusalem before his chief joy." Another affirms, that the "law of God's mouth was better to him than thousands of gold and silver." More to be desired are the "statutes of the Lord than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, or the honey comb." This is the only stable foundation of all divine *affections*. And let not any deceive themselves with vain pretences, whilst their esteem of present enjoyments, evidently engages all their affections. Much more when we see men not only giving up the whole of their time and strength, with the vigor of their spirits, but sacrificing their *consciences* also, to the attaining of dignities, honors, wealth, and ease in the world, who know in their own hearts, that they perform religious duties with respect to *temporal* advantages, I cannot conceive how it is possible they should discern an excellency in spiritual things above all others.

All *spiritual things are resolved into an infinite fountain of goodness*, so that our affections may find full assured satisfaction in them. It is otherwise as to all temporal things. Men would fain have them to be such as might give *absolute rest and satisfaction*. But they are every one of them so far from it, that all of them together cannot compose their minds in rest and peace for one hour. They gain sometimes a transport of affections, and seem for a season to have *filled the whole soul*, so it hath no leisure to consider their emptiness and vanity. But a little composure of men's thoughts, show that they are but a diversion in a journey or labor; they are no rest. Hence are they called *broken cisterns*, that will hold no water. Let a man prize them at the highest rate, let him possess them in abundance, beyond whatever any man enjoyed in this world, or his own imagination could reach; let him be assured of the most peaceable continuance in the enjoyment of them; yet would he not dare to pretend, that they afforded him perfect rest and peace. Should he do

so, the working of his mind every day, would convince him of his falsehood and folly.

But *spiritual things* lead us to the fountain of living waters, the eternal spring of goodness and blessedness.

I do not say that our affections do attain to this *full rest* and satisfaction in this life: but what they come short of therein, ariseth not from any *defect in the things themselves* to give this rest and satisfaction, as it is with the whole world; but from the weakness of our affections which are only in part renewed, and cannot take in the full measures of divine goodness, which in another world they will receive. But whilst we are here, the more firmly we adhere to them, the nearer approaches we make to our rest and centre.

The adherence of our affections to spiritual things, is *perfective of our present state.* That which of all other things doth most debase the nature of man; wherein it makes the nearest approaches to brutality; yea, whereby it becomes in some respects more vile than the nature of beasts; is the giving up of the affections to things sensual, base, and unworthy of its more noble principles.—Hence are men said to *debase themselves unto hell;* and their affections become vile; so that their being under the power of them, is an effect of *revenging justice* for the worst of sins. There is nothing more *vile*, nothing more contemptible, nothing more like to *beasts* in *baseness*, and to *hell* in *punishment*, than is the condition of them who have enslaved their nature to brutish, sensual affections. I say *vile affections* fixed on, and cleaving to, sensual objects, debase the nature of man, and corrupt and enslave all his more noble faculties; the very conscience is defiled by them.

But the fixing of spiritual affections on spiritual objects, is *perfective of our present* condition. Not that we can attain perfection by it; but that our souls are in progress towards perfection. *Vile affections* fixed on, and furiously pursuing things carnal and sensual, debase our nature beneath its rational constitution, and make it degenerate into bestiality: so spiritual affections fixed on, and cleaving to things heavenly, *exalt our nature*, making an approach to the state of angels, and of just men made perfect. And

as brutish affections, when they have the reins, and are pursued with greediness, darken the mind, and disturb all the rational powers of the soul, so holy affections fixed on spiritual things, *elevate*, enlarge and enlighten the mind with true wisdom and understanding. For the *fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from iniquity that is understanding*. And again; as the power of vile affections fills the soul with tumult, fear, and shame, where men are not utterly profligate, so that their conscience is a very hell for confusion and trouble; so spiritual affections, duly exercised on their proper objects, preserve all things in order in the whole soul, *they are life and peace*. All things are quiet and secure in the mind; there is order and peace in the whole soul, in all its faculties, and all their operations. Hence many persons have utterly renounced earthly things, and betaken themselves to the contemplation of things above. Many, I confess, of them were mistaken as to the practical part of their devotions, having various *superstitions* imposed on their minds by the craft of others; but they missed it not in the principle, that tranquillity of mind was attainable only in setting our affections upon things above. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Whence are all the disorders in your minds? are they not from hence? namely, *from your lusts*. Do but search yourselves, and you will quickly see whence all your troubles arise. Your *lusts, war in you*, continually inclining you to things earthly or sensual. Hence many are most at quiet when they are in the world, worst when at home in their families; but never are they in such confusion, as when they are forced to retire into themselves.

The due exercise of our affections on heavenly things, hath quite another tendency and effect. *It so unites the mind* to them, that all the powers and faculties of it are in progress towards their perfection. True wisdom and understanding, soundness of judgment, in eternal things, holiness in the affections, liberty in the will, power in the heart, and peace in the conscience, do in their measures all ensue. Whatever tastes we may have of these things, or temporary experience, they will not flourish in us, not abide with us unless we are thus spiritually minded.

CHAPTER XX.

Having declared wherein this duty of being *spiritually minded* doth consist, that which remains in compliance with the text, from whence the whole is educed, is to manifest *how it is life and peace*, which is affirmed by the apostle.

That *spiritual life* whereof we are made partakers in this world, is *a life of sanctification*. This is that life wherewith we are *quickened by Christ Jesus*, when before we were *dead in trespasses and sins*. Of this life the apostle treats directly in this place; for having in the first four verses of the chapter, declared the *life of justification* in the nature and causes of it; in the following he treats of death spiritual in sin, with the life of sanctification, whereby we are freed from it.

And to be *spiritually minded is this life in* that it is the principal *effect and fruit of it*. The life itself consists in the communication of a principle of life, to all the faculties and powers of our soul, enabling us to live to God. All duties of obedience, internal and external, proceed from this fountain. Nothing is acceptable to God, but what is influenced by it, and is an effect of it; but it principally puts forth its efficacy in rendering our *minds spiritual*, which, if it effect not, it works not at all; that is, we are utterly destitute of it. The immediate work, of sanctification, is to renew the mind, to make it spiritual, and gradually carry it on to that degree which is here called being *spiritually minded*.

It is also the proper *evidence of it*. Would any one know whether he be *spiritually alive unto God*, with the life of sanctification and holiness; the communication of it to him being by an almighty act of creating power, it is not easily discernible, so as to help us to make a right judgment of it, from its essence; but where things are in

themselves indiscernible, we may know them, from their inseparable *adjuncts*, which are therefore called by the names of the essence itself. Such is this being *spiritually minded*, with respect to the *life of sanctification;* it is an inseparable property and adjunct of it, whereby it infallibly evidenceth itself to them in whom it is. In these two respects it is the life of *sanctification*.

Peace with God, through the blood of Christ, is one thing, and *peace in our minds*, through an holy frame in them, is another. The former is communicated to us by an immediate act of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. The latter is an *effect* on our minds, begun and gradually carried on, by our own *diligence* in duties, and the exercise of all grace.

Peace is taken for a *peculiar fruit of the Spirit*, consisting in a gracious quietness and composure of mind, in the midst of difficulties, temptations, and troubles. There are two things from which we are secured by this *peace*, which is an effect of being spiritually minded.

The first is *offences*. *Wo to the world*, saith our Saviour, *because of offences*. All ages, all times and seasons, are filled with them, and they prove destructive to the souls of many. Such are the *scandalous divisions* that are among Christians; the endless differences of opinions, and diversity of practices in religion and the worship of God; the falls and sins of professors; the fearful ends of some of them; the reproaches that are cast on all that engage in any *peculiar way of holiness* and strictness of life, with other things of the like nature, whereby the souls of innumerable persons are subverted. Against any noxious influence on our minds from these things, are we secured by this *peace*. So the Psalmist assures us, *Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them*. The law, or the word of God, is the only outward rule of our communion with him. Wherefore, to love the law, is the principal part of our being heavenly minded, yea, virtually that which comprehends the whole: for to such as do so, *nothing* shall be an offence, a stumbling-block, or cause of falling into sin. And the reason is, they have such an *experience* of the truth, power, and holiness of the gospel, as that the miscarriages of men, un-

der a profession of it, shall never be to them an *occasion of falling*, or being offended at Christ.

The second is *afflictions* of all sorts. It is known by all, what dejections these things are apt to fill the minds of men with. Against all these effects, this *peace* gives us security. It makes us preserve a peaceable, yea, a joyous life in our conflict with them.

Both these, as here joined together, *life and peace*, comprise an *holy frame of mind, wherein the souls of believers find rest, refreshment, and satisfaction in God, in the midst of temptations, afflictions, offences, and sufferings.* It is the soul's composure of itself in God, so as not greatly to be cast down with any thing that may befall it, but to afford men cheerfulness and satisfaction in themselves, though they *walk* sometimes in the *valley of the shadow of death.*

Our next inquiry is, how this *spiritual mindedness is life and peace*, or how it produceth the frame of mind so expressed; and this it doth several ways.

It preserves the mind in *a holy frame in the performance of all duties.* This also is indispensably required to the preservation of life and peace. And there are four things which hinder us from such attendance to holy duties, as may be advantageous to our souls; against all which we have relief by being spiritually minded.

Distractions. Despondencies. Weariness. Unreadiness of grace for exercise.

(1.) *Distraction of mind and thoughts*, hath this evil effect, which few take the right way of deliverance from. For this evil will not be cured by attendance to any *particular directions*, without a change of the *whole frame* of our minds. Nothing can give us relief but a prevalent delight in things spiritual and heavenly. For hence arise all our distractions; the want of fixing our minds on spiritual things with delight, makes them obnoxious to be diverted from them on all occasions, yea, to seek occasions for such diversions. It is this frame alone, namely, of *spiritual mindedness*, that will give us this delight: for thereby the soul is transformed to the likeness of spiritual things; so that they are pleasant to our affections. The mind and the things themselves, are thereby so fitted to

each other, that on every occasion they are ready for mutual embraces, and not easily drawn off by any distractions, yea, they will all be prevented hereby.

(2.) *Despondencies in duties*, arise from the frequent incursions of the *guilt of sin.* The remembrance hereof frequently solicits the minds of persons in their first entrances to duty, unless they are under special actings of grace, stirring them up to earnestness and fervency, in what they undertake. At other seasons it renders men *lifeless and heartless*, so that they know not whether they had best pray or not, when duty and opportunity call them thereunto. To be spiritually minded is the great preservative against these disheartening incursions of sin. It is the soul's *watch and guard* against them, whence ever they proceed. No lust can be *prevalent* in a spiritual mind.

(3.) *Wearinsss in spiritual duties*, abate their tendency to the improvement of life and peace in us. This evil ariseth from the same cause with that of distraction before mentioned. And it is oft-times increased by the weakness and indispositions of the outward man. Sometimes the *spirit is willing*, but, through the weakness of the flesh, it is disappointed. The principal cure hereof, lies in that *delight* which spiritual mindedness gives to the soul in spiritual things. For where there is a *constant delight* in any thing, there will be no weariness. This is the only relief against that *weariness* which proceeds from the indispositions of the outward man: for, as it will preserve the mind from attending too much to their solicitations; so it will offer an holy violence to the complaints of the flesh, silencing them with a delight in holy duties.

(4.) *The unreadiness of grace for its proper exercise*, is another thing which defeats the benefit of holy duties. The seasons of them are come; sense of duty carries men to the performance of them. But when they should enter upon them, those graces of faith, love, fear, and delight, wherein the soul and being of them do consist, are out of the way, unready for a due exercise; so that men satisfy themselves with the *mere outward performance* of them. The heart and mind have been taken up with other things; due preparation hath been wanting; men

come to them with reeking thoughts of *earthly occasions;* and it is no easy matter immediately out of such a frame, to stir up grace to a due exercise. But herein lieth the very life of being spiritually minded. The nature of it consists in preserving all grace in a *readiness* for its exercise as our occasions require.

And this is an effectual way, whereby this grace comes to be *life and peace.* For they cannot be attained without such a constancy and spirituality in all holy duties, as we shall never arrive at, unless we are spiritually minded.

Lastly; this frame of mind brings the soul to its nearest *approaches to heaven and blessedness,* wherein lie the eternal springs of life and peace. According to the degrees of this grace in us, such are those of our approaches to God. Nearness to him, gives us our initial conformity to him, by the renovation of his image in us, as our presence with him will give us perfection therein; for *when we see him we shall be like unto him.* God therefore alone, as he is in Christ, being the fountain of *life and peace,* by our drawing nigh to him, and by our likeness to him, will they thrive and flourish in our souls.