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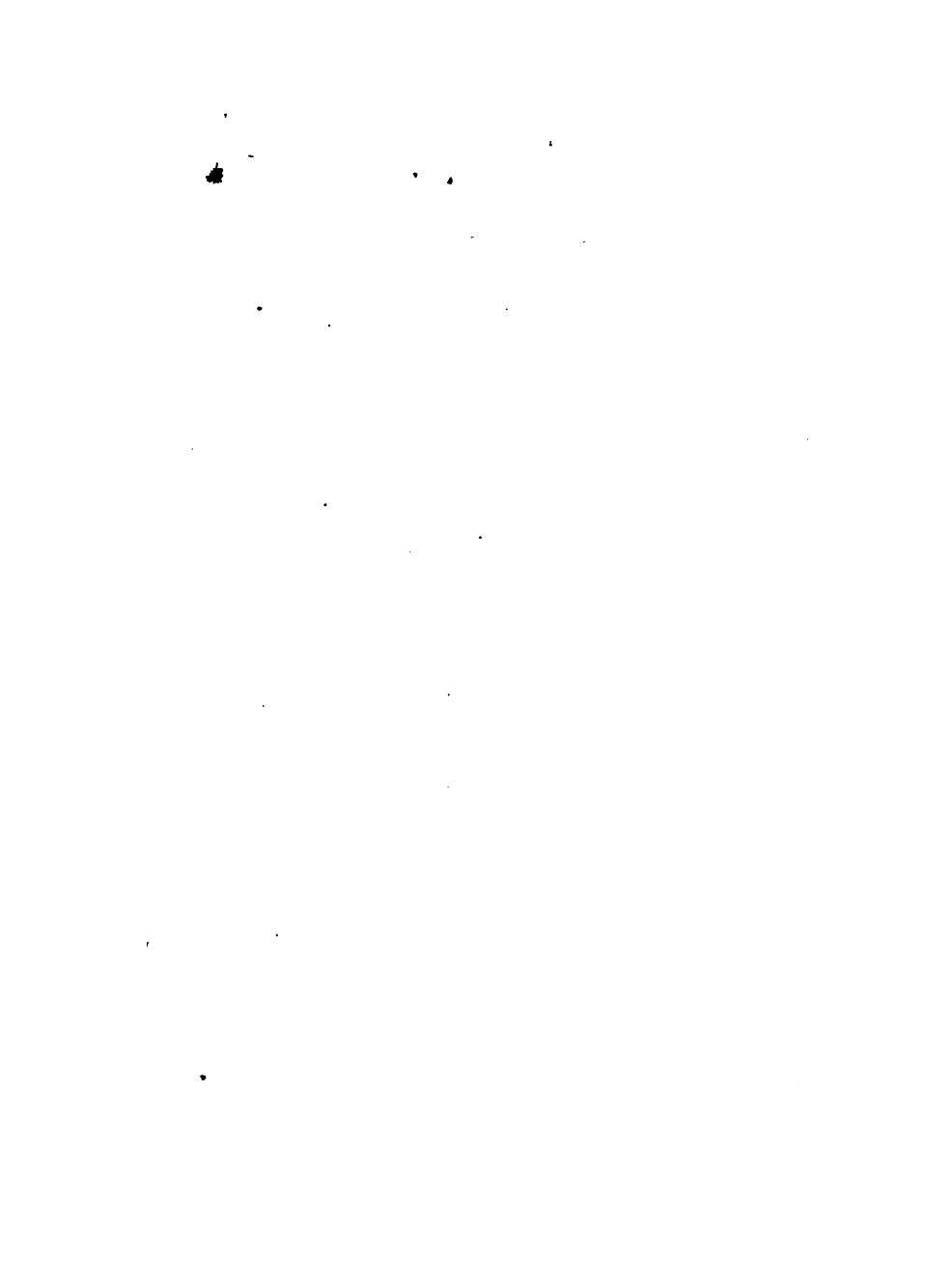
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Apples of Gold.



APPLES OF GOLD

FOR

YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN,

AND A

CROWN OF GLORY

FOR

OLD MEN AND WOMEN;

OR,

THE HAPPINESS OF BEING GOOD BETIMES, AND THE
HONOUR OF BEING AN OLD DISCIPLE.

By the *REV. THOMAS BROOKS,*

Author of "The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod," &c.

WITH A PREFACE,

By the *REV. W. K. TWEEDIE, D.D., Edinburgh.*

EDINBURGH:

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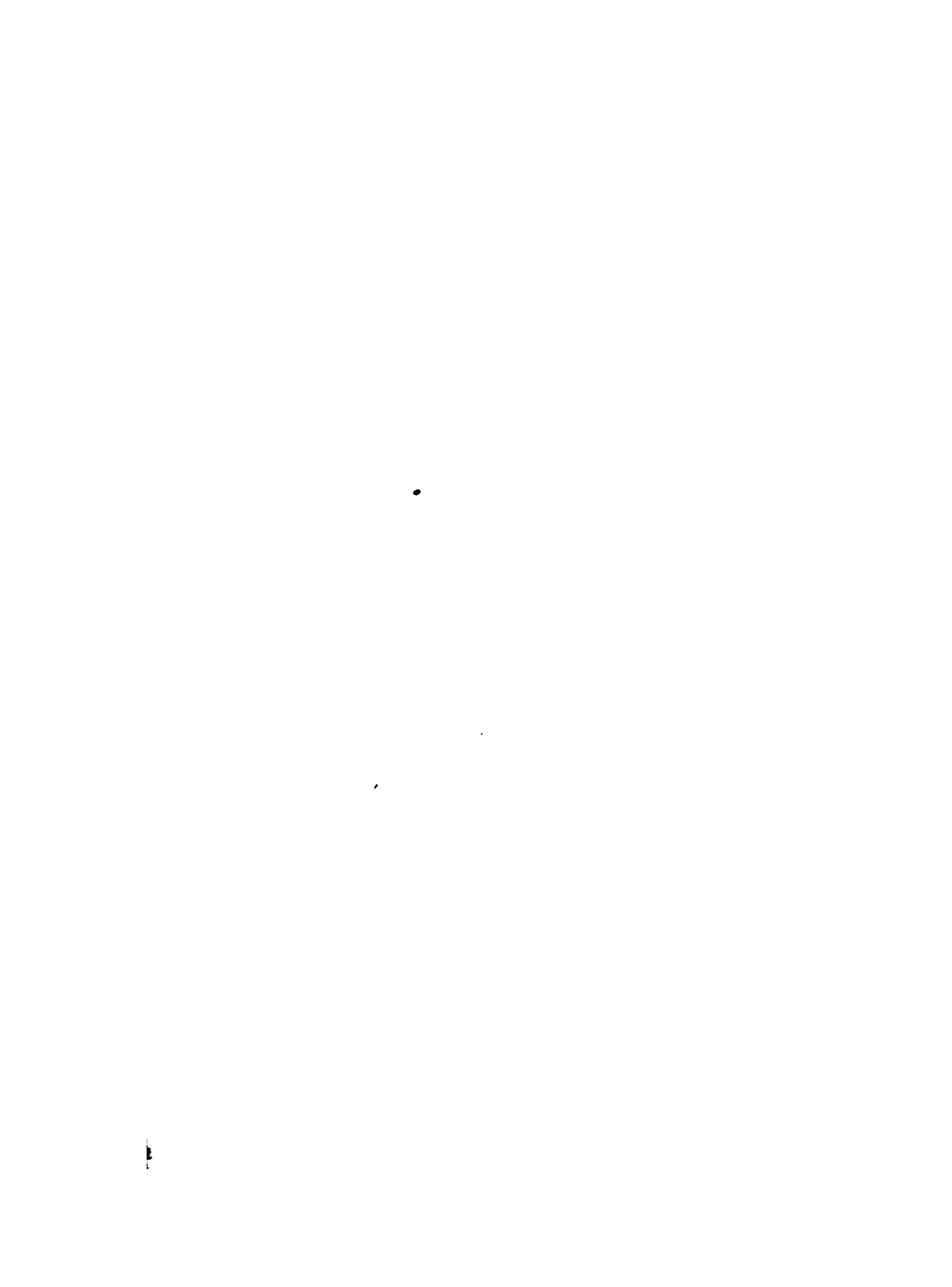
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PREFACE.

—o—

THE REVEREND THOMAS BROOKS, the author of the following treatise, was a minister in London about the year 1650. He was ejected, like many other devoted men, because the world and the powers which were then ascendant felt that either such preachers must be silenced and put down, or the truth of God, which they so powerfully applied to the conscience, would compel men to forsake the paths which they loved, and walk in those which the ungodly have always disliked. Brooks was at one time minister of the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle; at another, of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene; and in some of his works he styles himself, "Late Preacher of the Word at St. Margaret's." He died in the year 1680, and besides the work which is here reprinted, he was the author of "A Farewell Sermon in Twenty-Seven Legacies," "Heaven upon Earth," "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ," "The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod," "The Ark for God's Noahs," "A Cabinet of Choice Jewels," "A



Apples of Gold.

One thing may deserve a more special notice. All the Puritans were rigid adherents to the Word of God. It was their only and exclusive guide; as the Incarnate Word was their only and exclusive foundation, so that they were both mighty in the Scriptures and strong in the Lord. Now, Brooks was signally so. For example, in commenting on the words "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth," he lays the main stress of his pungent urgency on the word *now*, a particle which many overlook in reading that text, but which Brooks calls "an atom which it will puzzle the wisdom of a philosopher, or the skill of an angel to divide." Again, when explaining the words of David in Psalm v. 3, by two parenthetic clauses, Brooks illuminates the verse more than a page of exposition would have done in many other hands. His language is, "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct (Heb. *marshal*) my prayer unto Thee, and will look up (Heb. *look out like a watchman*)." By such scintillations, if not flashes of light, this author guides us deep into the truth and the beauty of the Word, and so leads us into the secret place of strength.

We might quote many illustrative passages from the volume, were it not to be hoped that not a few will study the whole. "Many there are," the earnest man exclaims, "many there are that are good, nay, very good, towards men, who are bad, yea, very bad towards God. Some there are who are very kind to the creature, and yet very unkind to their Creator. Many men's goodness towards the creature is like the rising sun, but their goodness towards the Lord is like a morning cloud. . . ." By such criticisms, and such lessons did this devout and loving man serve his God in his generation. As a result, his works are following him; and though some may prefer the more showy and the more superficial productions of more recent times, it is as true in this case as concerning wine, that "the old is better." Over such volumes, minds of deep-toned piety will love to linger, as over the society or the memory of a friend.

We follow this volume in thought, then, to the home of some young man. He is engrossed and absorbed with the present, or he is making haste to take up his position for this life, and is tempted to forget the interests of the life that is to come. Now,

in such a case, the counsels and the urgency of Brooks will be deemed extreme or obtrusive—they will probably be dismissed till a more convenient season, or without any view to a future season at all. But pause, my dear young friend! Before you throw away the volume, turn to page 13, and read these words: “Ah, young men! if you do not begin to be good, those sins that are now as jewels sparkling in your eyes, will at last be millstones about your necks to sink you for ever.” You cannot question that truth. How, then, are you to proceed with such an appeal pressing on the conscience? Do you silence it? or do you yield to its power? Do you choose the good part? or do you discard it? Then, be warned—it will perhaps be for ever!

Again, follow this volume to the chamber of a youth who is preparing to die. The friends of his folly have forsaken him now. That wasted form, that sunken eye, these solemn mementoes of mortality, are not welcome to those who forget that they must die. The dying one is therefore left alone with disease and death, with his conscience and his God. He has been learning, however, from “the Wonder-

ful, the Counsellor." He has taken such a monitor as Brooks to his bosom. He hears him say, "Make Christ and Scripture the only foundation for your soul and your faith to build upon;" and add, "In all places and companies, be sure to carry your soul-preservers with you;" or continue, "Walk by no rule but such as you dare die by and stand by in the day of Jesus Christ." The heart of the dying youth is opened to receive such lessons, and he learns to say, in a far profounder sense than that of General Wolfe when wounded on the heights of Abraham, and who, when he was told that the enemy whom he had conquered were fleeing, exclaimed, "Thank God, I die happy!"

It is because this volume appears well fitted, through the ever-needed blessing, to produce such results, that it is now commended to the perusal of those among the young, nay, of all ages, who love their souls, who would be happy, and prepare to meet their God.

W. K. TWEEIDIE.

EDINBURGH, *December*, 1858.



TO
ALL YOUNG PERSONS
THROUGHOUT THE NATION,

*Especially those who begin to turn their Faces toward
Zion.*

DEAR HEARTS,—A word spoken in due season, how good it is! It is often like apples of gold in pictures of silver. Many times such a word is sweet, precious, pleasing, and delectable, and strong in its operation.

A company of near friends dining together one Sabbath-day, one that was at table (to prevent impertinent discourse) said that it was a question whether they should all go to heaven or no, which struck them all into a damp, and caused every one to enter into a serious consideration with themselves. One thought, If any of this company go to hell, it must be I; and so thought another and another, and, indeed, so thought almost every one then present, as well servants that waited as those that sat at the table, as it was afterwards acknowledged; and (through the mercy and blessing of God) this

speech so wrought upon the spirits of most of them, that it proved the first instrumental means of their conversion.

I have my hopes, through grace, that this treatise, though it be sown in weakness, yet, by the blessing of the Most High upon it, it may rise in power, and be an instrumental means of the winning of souls to Christ, which is my highest ambition in this world. And therefore I have broke through all difficulties, and carnal reasonings, that might otherwise have stifled this babe in the womb, and kept it from ever seeing the light.

I have read of an emperor, that delighted in no undertakings so much as those which in the esteem of his counsellors and captains were deemed most difficult and impossible. If they said such or such an enterprise would never be accomplished, it was argument enough to him to make the adventure; and he usually prospered—he seldom miscarried.

I have never found greater and choicer blessings to attend any of my poor, weak labours, than those that have been brought forth into the world through the greatest straits and difficulties.

Valerius Maximus reports, that one telling a soldier going to war against the Persians, that they would hide the sun with their arrows, he answered, "*We shall fight best in the shade.*" Nothing should

discourage nor dishearten a soldier of Christ. (2 Tim. ii. 3, 4). Christ saith to all his soldiers (as the Black Prince's father said to him, fighting, as it were, in blood to the knees, and in great distress), "Either vanquish or die." Men of no resolution, or of weak resolution, will be but little serviceable to the good of souls. Such watchmen as will be free from the blood of souls, and be serviceable to the interest of Christ, in turning sinners from darkness to light, must be men of spirit and resolution.

I remember, St. Austin beginneth one of his sermons thus: "To you is my speech, O young men, the flower of age, the danger of the mind."

So say I, To you O young men, do I dedicate the ensuing treatise, and that,

1st, Because the matter contained therein doth primarily and eminently concern you.

2dly, Because of an earnest desire that I have for your internal and eternal welfare.

3dly, Because there is most hope of doing good among you, as I evidence more at large in the following treatise.

4thly, To countermine the great Underminer of your souls, whose great design is to poison you, and to possess you in the morning of your days.

5thly, To provoke others that are more able and worthy to be more serviceable to you in declaring,

themselves fully on this very subject, which none yet have done that I know of, though it be a point of as great concernment to young persons especially, as any I know in all the Scriptures.

6thly Because there are very many that lie in wait to deceive, corrupt, and poison your persons, with God-dishonouring, Christ-denying, conscience-wasting, and soul-damning opinions, principles, and blasphemies.

I have read of one who boasted and gloried in this, that he had spent thirty years in corrupting and poisoning youth. Doubtless, many wretches, many monsters, there be amongst us, who make it their business, their glory, their all, to delude and draw young persons to those dangerous errors and blasphemies that lead to destruction. "Error and folly," saith one very well, "be the knots of Satan, wherewith he ties children to the stake to be burnt in hell."

There is a truth in what the tragedian said long since, "Poison is commonly drunk out of a cup of gold;" so is an error or by-notion soonest taken into the judgment and conscience from persons of the fairest carriage, and smoothest conversations. Error is so foul an hag, that if it should come in its own shape, a man would loathe it, and flee from it, as from hell.

If Jezebel had not painted her face, she had not gotten so many young adulterers to have followed her to their own ruin.

Ah! young men, the blessing of the Lord upon your serious and diligent perusal of this treatise, may be a happy means to preserve you from being ensnared and deluded by those monsters, who compass sea and land to make proselytes for hell. (Matt. xxiii. 15).

And thus I have given you the reasons of my dedicating this treatise to the service of your souls. I would willingly presume that it will be as kindly taken as it is cordially tendered. I hope none of you into whose hands it may fall, will say, as once Antipater king of Macedonia did. When one presented him with a book treating of happiness, his answer was, "I have no leisure."

Ah! young men and women! as you tender the everlasting welfare of your souls, as you would escape hell, and come to heaven, as you would have an interest in Christ, a pardon in your bosoms, as you would be blessed here and glorious hereafter, find time, find leisure to read over and over the following treatise, which is purposely calculated for your eternal good. But before I go farther, I think it needful, in some respects, to give the world some further account of other reasons or motives that

have prevailed with me to appear once more in print, which are these:

1st, Having preached a sermon occasionally upon these words (on which this following discourse is built), I was earnestly importuned to print the sermon by some worthy friends. I did, as long as in modesty I could, withstand their desires, (judging it not worthy of them); but being at last overcome, and setting about the work, the breathings and comings in of God were such as hath occasioned that one sermon to multiply into many. Luther tells us, that when he first began to turn his back upon Popery, he intended no more but to withstand Popish pardons and selling indulgences; yet neither would God nor his enemies let him alone, till he resolved, with Moses, not to leave a hoof of Popery unopposed. God many times, in the things of the Gospel, carries forth His servants beyond their intentions, beyond their resolutions.

2dly, The kind acceptance and good quarter that my other pieces have found in the world, and those signal multiplied blessings that have followed them, to the winning of many over to Christ, and to the building up of others in Christ, hath encouraged me to present this treatise to the world, hoping that the Lord hath a blessing in store for this also.

3dly, That I might in some measure make up

others' neglects, whose age, whose parts, whose experiences, whose graces have long called upon them to do something considerable in this way, and that they may be provoked by my weak essay to do better, and to make up what is wanting through my invincible infirmities, and spiritual wants and weaknesses, which are so many, as may well make a sufficient apology for all the defects and weaknesses that in this treatise shall appear to a serious, judicious eye.

4thly, The love of Christ and souls hath constrained me to it; as there is an attractive, so there is a compulsive virtue in Divine love. (2 Cor. v. 14; xii. 11).

Love to Christ and souls will make a man willing to spend and be spent. He that prays himself to death, that preaches himself to death, that studies himself to death, that sweats himself to death, for the honour of Christ and good of souls, shall be no loser in the end. Divine love is like a rod of myrtle, which, as Pliny reports, makes the traveller that carries it in his hand, that he shall never be faint nor weary: Divine love is very operative; if it do not work, it is an argument it is not at all. Divine love, like fire, is not idle, but active; he that loves cannot be barren. Love will make the soul constant and abundant in well-doing. "God admits none to heaven," saith Justin Martyr, "but such as can per-

suade Him by their works that they love Him." The very heathen hath observed that God doth not love His children with a weak, womanish affection, but with a strong, masculine love; and certainly, they that love the Lord strongly, that love Him with a masculine love, they cannot but lay-out their little all for Him and His glory.

5thly, I observe that Satan and his instruments are exceeding busy and unwearied in their designs, attempts, and endeavours, in these days, to corrupt and poison, to defile and destroy the young, the tender, the most hopeful, and most flourishing plants among us.

Latimer told the clergy in his time, that if they would not learn diligence and vigilance of the prophets and apostles, they should learn it of the devil, who goes up and down his diocese, and acts by an untired power, seeking whom he may destroy. When the wolves are abroad, the shepherd should not sleep, but watch, remembering that he were better have all the blood of all the men in the world upon him, than the blood of one soul upon him, by his negligence or otherwise.

Satan is a lion, not a lamb; a roaring lion, not a sleepy lion; not a lion standing still, but a lion going up and down, as not being contented with the *prey*, the many millions of souls he hath got, he

seeks whom he may sip up at a draught, as that word in 1 Pet. v. 8 imports; his greatest design is to fill hell with souls, which should awaken every one to be active, and to do all that may be done to prevent his design, and help forward the salvation of souls.

St. Chrysostom compares good pastors to fountains that ever send forth waters, or conduits that are always running, though no pail be put under.

6thly, And lastly, I know the whole life of man is but an hour to work in; and the more work any man doth for Christ on earth, the better pay he shall have when he comes to heaven. (1 Cor. xv. 58). Every man shall at the last reap as he sows; opportunities of doing service for Christ and souls, are more worth than a world. (2 Cor. ix. 6). Therefore I was willing to take hold on this, not knowing how soon I may put off this earthly tabernacle, and remembering that there is no believing, nor repenting in the grave; so there is no praying, preaching, writing, nor printing in the grave. We had need to be up and doing, to put both hands to it, and to do all we do with all our might, knowing that the night draws on upon us wherein no man can work. (2 Pet. i. 14; Eccl. ix. 10; John ix. 4).

A Christian's dying day is the Lord's pay-day, that is a time to receive wages, not to do work. And thus I have given the world a true account of

the reasons that moved me to print the following discourse.

There are many things in this treatise that are not every day preached or read. I made it as pleasurable as time would permit, that so it might be the more profitable to the reader, and that I might the better take the young man by a holy craft, which is a high point of heavenly wisdom, there being no wisdom to that of winning souls. (2 Cor. xii. 16; Prov. xi. 30). I shall now follow this poor piece with my weak prayers, that it may be so blessed from heaven, as that it may bring in some, and build up others, and do good to all: And so rest,

Your Friend and Servant

in the Gospel of Christ,

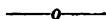
THOMAS BROOKS.

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Apples of Gold, &c.



CHAPTER I.

“And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him; for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.”—

I KINGS XIV. 13.

I SHALL only stand upon the latter part of this verse, because that affords me matter most suitable to my design: “Because in him there is found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.”

These words are a commendation of Abijah’s life: “In him was found some good thing towards the Lord,” &c. When Abijah was a child, when he was in his young and tender years, he had the seeds of græce in him, he had the image of God upon him, he could discern between good and evil, and he did that which pleased the Lord.

1. The Hebrew word *Nignar*, translated *Child*, ver. 3, is very often applied to such as we call youth, or young men, Exod. xxiv. 5.

Of such age and prudence was Abijah, as that he could choose good and refuse evil; he was a Lot in Sodom, he was good among the bad, the bent and frame of his heart was towards that which was good, when the heart both of his father and mother was set upon evil.

Abijah began to be good betimes, he crossed that pestilent proverb, *A young saint, and an old devil*. It is the glory and goodness of God that He will take notice of the least good that is in any of His, 1 Pet. iii. 6. There was but one good word in Sarah's speech to Abraham, and that was this, she called him *Lord*; and this God mentions for her honour and commendation; She called Him *Lord*. God looks more upon one grain of wheat, than upon a heap of chaff; upon one shining pearl, than upon a heap of rubbish. God finds a pearl in Abijah, and He puts it into his crown, to his eternal commendation: "There was found in him some good thing towards the Lord," &c. The Hebrew word *Matsa* sometimes signifies finding without seeking: Isa. lxx. 1, "I am found of them that sought Me not." So Psal. cxvi. 3, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow." I found trouble which I looked *not for*. I was not searching after sorrow, but I found

it. There is an elegance in the original: "The pains of hell gat hold upon me." So we read; but the Hebrew is: "The pains of hell found me" (one word signifies both); they found me, I did not find them. "There was found in Abijah some good thing towards the Lord," *i. e.*, there was found in him, without searching or seeking, some good thing towards the Lord. It was plain and visible enough; men might see and observe it without inquiring or seeking; they might run and read some good thing in him towards the Lord.

2. The word sometimes signifies finding by seeking or inquiry: Isa. lv. 6, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found," &c. So upon search and inquiry, there was found in Abijah, though young, some good thing towards the Lord.

3. Sometimes the word notes the obtaining of that which is sufficient, Josh. vii. 16; Numb. xi. 22; Judg. xxi. 14. In Abijah there was that good in him towards the Lord, that was sufficient to satisfy himself and others of the goodness and happiness of his condition, though he died in the prime and flower of his days.

And in him was found some good thing; the Hebrew word that is here rendered "good" signifies:

1. That which is right and just: 2 Sam. xv. 3, "See thy matters are good and right," *i. e.*, just and right.

2. That which is profitable: Deut. vi. 11, "Houses of all good things," *i. e.*, houses full of all profitable things.

3. That which is pleasing: 2 Sam. xix. 27, "Do what is good in thine eyes," *i. e.*, do what is pleasing in thine eyes.

4. That which is full and complete: Gen. xv. 15, "Thou shalt be buried in a good old age," *i. e.*, thou shalt be buried when thine age is full and complete.

5. That which is joyful and delightful: 1 Sam. xxv. 8, "We come in a good day," *i. e.*, we come in a joyful and delightful day. Now put all together, and you may see, that there was found in Abijah, when he was young, that which was pleasing and profitable, and that which was matter of joy and delight.

In these words you have two things that are most considerable:

1. That this young man's goodness was toward the Lord God of Israel. Many there are that are good, nay, very good towards men, who are bad, yea, very bad towards God. Some there are who are very kind to the creature, and yet very unkind to their Creator. Many men's goodness towards the creature is like the rising sun; but their goodness towards the Lord is like a morning cloud, or as the early dew, which is soon dried up by the sunbeams. *But Abijah's* goodness was towards the Lord, his

goodness faced the Lord, it looked towards the glory of God. Two things make a good Christian—good actions, and good aims; and though a good aim doth not make a bad action good, as in Uzziah; yet a bad aim makes a good action bad, as in Jehu, whose justice was approved, but his policy punished, Hos. i. 4. Doubtless Abijah's actions were good, and his aims good; and this was indeed his glory, that his goodness was towards the Lord.

It is recorded of the Catanenses, that they made a stately monument of kingly magnificence, in remembrance of two sons, who took their aged parents upon their backs and carried them through the fire, when their father's house was all in a flame. These young men were good towards their parents: but what is this to Abijah's goodness towards the Lord? A man cannot be good towards the Lord, but he will be good towards others; but a man may be good towards others that is not good towards the Lord. Oh that men's practices did not give too loud a testimony every day to this assertion!

2. He was good among the bad, he was good in the house of Jeroboam. It is in fashion to seem (at least) to be good among the good; but to be really good among those that are eminently bad, argues not only a truth of goodness, but a great degree of goodness. This young man was good in the house of Jeroboam, who made all Israel to sin; yet Abijah, as the fishes which live in the salt sea are fresh, so,

though he lived in a sea of wickedness, yet he retained his goodness towards the Lord. They say, roses grow the sweeter, when they are planted by garlick. They are sweet and rare Christians indeed, who hold their goodness, and grow in goodness, where wickedness sits on the throne; and such an one the young man in the text was.

To be wheat among tares, corn among chaff, pearls among cockles, and roses among thorns, is excellent. To be a Jonathan in Saul's court, to be an Obadiah in Ahab's court, to be an Obedmelech in Zedekiah's court, and to be an Abijah in Jeroboam's court, is a wonder, a miracle. To be a Lot in Sodom, to be an Abraham in Chaldea, to be a Daniel in Babylon, to be a Nehemiah in Damasco, and to be a Job in the land of Uz, is to be a saint among devils; and such an one the man in the text was. The poets affirm that Venus never appeared so beautiful as when she sat by black Vulcan's side. Gracious souls shine most clear, when they be set by black-conditioned persons. Stephen's face never shone so angelically, so gloriously in the church, where all were virtuous, as before the council, where all were vicious and malicious. So Abijah was a bright star, a shining sun, in Jeroboam's court, which, for profaneness and wickedness, was a very hell.

The words which I have chosen to insist upon, afford us several observations, but I shall only name

one, which I intend to prosecute at this time, and that is this, viz.:

That it is a very desirable and commendable thing for young men and women to be really good betimes.

Other scriptures speak out this to be a truth besides what you have in the text to confirm it, as that of 2 Chron. xxxiv. 1-3, "Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand nor to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images." It was Obadiah's honour, that he feared the Lord from his youth; and Timothy's crown, that he knew the scriptures from a child; and St. John's joy, that he found children walking in the truth—this revived his good old heart, and made it dance for joy in his bosom. To spend further time in the proving of this truth, would be but to light candles to see the sun at noon.

The ground and reasons of this point are these that follow:

I. Because the Lord commands it, and Divine commands are not to be disputed, but obeyed: *Eccles. xii. 1*, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Remember *now*, I say *now*. *Now* is an atom will puzzle the wisdom of a philosopher, the skill of an angel to divide: *Now* is a monosyllable in all learned languages.

"Remember now thy Creator." Remember him presently, instantly, for thou dost not know what a day, what an hour, may bring forth. Thou canst not tell what deadly sin, what deadly temptation, what deadly judgment may overtake thee, if thou dost not now remember thy Creator. Remember now thy Creator; remember to know Him, remember to love Him, remember to desire Him, remember to delight in Him, remember to depend upon Him, remember to get an interest in Him, remember to live to Him, and remember to walk with Him. Remember now thy Creator; the Hebrew is Creators—Father, Son, and Spirit. To the making of a man a council was called in heaven, *Gen. i. 26*. Remember thy Creators, remember the Father so as to know Him, so as to be inwardly acquainted with Him; remember the Son, so as to believe in Him, so as to rest upon Him, so as to embrace Him, and so as to make a complete resignation of thyself to Him. Remember the Spirit, so as to hear His

voice, so as to obey His voice, so as to feel His presence, and so as to experience His influence.

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” He doth not say, in the *time* of thy youth, but “in the days of thy youth;” to note, that our life is but a few days; it is but a vapour, a span, a flower, a shadow, a dream; and therefore Seneca saith well, that “though death be before the old man’s face, yet he may be as near the young man’s back.” Man’s life is the shadow of smoke, the dream of a shadow; one doubteth whether to call it a dying life, or a living death. Ah, young men! God commands you to be good betimes. Remember, young men, that it is a dangerous thing to neglect one of his commands, who by another is able to command you into nothing, or into hell. To act or run cross to God’s express command, though under pretence of revelation from God, is as much as a man’s life is worth, as you may see in that sad story, 1 Kings xiii. 24.

Let young men put all their carnal reasons, though ever so many and weighty, into one scale, and God’s absolute command into the other, and then write Tekel upon all their reasons: they are weighed in the balance, and found too light. Ah, sirs! what God commands must be put in speedy execution, without denying, or delaying, or disputing the difficulties that attend it. Most young men in these days do as the heathens; when their gods

called for a man, they offered a candle; or as Hercules offered up a painted man instead of a living. When God calls upon young men to serve Him in the prime of their youth, they usually put off till they are overtaken with trembling joints, dazed eyes, fainting hearts, failing hands, and feeble knees. But there will be bitterness in the end.

II. Because they have means and opportunities of being good betimes. Never had man better means and greater opportunities of being good, of doing good, and of receiving good, than now. Ah, Lord! how knowing, how believing, how holy, how heavenly, how humble might young men be, were they not wanting to their own souls! Young men might be good, yea, eminently good, would they but improve the means of grace, the tenders of mercy, and the knockings of Christ by His word, works, and Spirit. The ancients painted opportunity with a hairy forehead, but bald behind, to signify, that while a man hath opportunity before him, he may lay hold on it; but if he suffer it to slip away, he cannot pull it back again. How many young men are now in everlasting chains, who would give ten thousand worlds, had they so many in their hands to give, to enjoy but an opportunity to hear one sermon more, to make one prayer more, to keep one Sabbath more, but cannot! This is the hell of their torment, this is the scorpion that is still biting, this is the worm that is always gnawing. Woe

to us that we have neglected and trifled away those golden opportunities that once we had to get our sins pardoned, our natures changed, our hearts bettered, our consciences purged, and our souls saved. I have read of a king, who, having no issue to succeed him, espying one day a well-favoured youth, took him to court, and committed him to tutors to instruct him, providing by his will, that if he proved fit for government, he should be crowned king; if not, he should be bound in chains, and made a galley slave. Now when he grew to years, the king's executors perceiving that he had sadly neglected those means and opportunities whereby he might have been fit for state government, called him before them, and declared the king's will and pleasure concerning him, which was accordingly performed; for they caused him to be fettered and committed to the galleys. Now what tongue can express how much he was affected and afflicted with his sad and miserable estate, especially when he considered with himself, that now he is chained, who might have walked at liberty; now he is a slave, who might have been a king; now he is overruled by Turks, who might once have ruled over Christians! The application is easy.

Ah, young men, shall Satan take all opportunities to tempt you? shall the world take all opportunities to allure you? shall wicked men take all opportunities to insnare you, and to undo you? and

shall Christian friends take all opportunities to better you? and shall God's faithful messengers take all opportunities to save you, and will you neglect so great salvation? Plutarch writes of Hannibal, that when he could have taken Rome, he would not; and when he would have taken Rome, he could not. Many in their youthful days, when they might have mercy, Christ, pardon, and heaven, they will not; and in old age, when they would have Christ, pardon, peace, heaven, they cannot, they may not. God seems to say, as Theseus said once: "Go," says he, "and tell Creon, Theseus offers thee a gracious offer. Yet I am pleased to be friends, if thou wilt submit (this is my first message); but if this offer prevail not, look for me to be up in arms."

III. Because then they have fewer and lesser sins to answer for, and repent of; multitudes of sins and sorrows are prevented by being good betimes. The more we number our days, the fewer sins we shall have to number. As a copy is then safest from blotting, when dust is put upon it; so are we from sinning, when, in the time of our youth, we remember that we are but dust. The tears of young penitents do more scorch the devils, than all the flames of hell; for hereby all their hopes are blasted, and the great underminer countermined and blown up. *Morning* is the devil's verb; he bids tarry, time enough to repent; but *Morning* is God's adverb, and He bids repent early, in the morning of thy

youth; for then thy sins will be fewer and lesser. Well, young men, remember this; he that will not at the first hand buy good council cheap, shall at the second hand buy repentance over-dear. Ah, young men! if you do not begin to be good, those sins that are now as jewels sparkling in your eyes, will at last be millstones about your necks to sink you for ever.

Among many things that Beza in his last will and testament gave God thanks for, this was the first and chief, that he at the age of sixteen years had called him to the knowledge of the truth, and so prevented many sins and sorrows that otherwise would have overtaken him and have made his life less happy and more miserable. Young saints often prove old angels, but old sinners seldom prove good saints.

IV. Because time is a precious talent that young men must be accountable for. The sooner they begin to be good, the more easy will be their accounts, especially as to that great talent of time. Cato and other heathens held, that account must be given, not only of our labour, but also of our leisure. At the great day it will appear, that they that have spent their time in mourning, have *done* better than they that have spent their time in dancing; and they that have spent many days in humiliation, than they that have spent many days in idle recreations. I have read of a devout man,

who, when he heard a clock strike, would say, "Here is one hour past that I have to answer for." Ah, young men and women! as time is very precious, so it is very short; time is very swift; it is suddenly gone: Job ix. 25, "My days are swifter than a post; they flee away, they see no good." The Hebrew word *Kalal*, translated "swifter than a post," signifies anything that is light, because light things are quick in motion.

The ancients emblem'd time with wings, as it were, not running, but flying. Time is like the sun, that never stands still, but is still a-running his race. The sun did once stand still, yea, went back, but so did never time. Time is still running and flying; it is a bubble, a shadow, a dream. Can you seriously consider of this, young men, and not begin to be good betimes? Surely you cannot. Sirs, if the whole earth whereupon we tread were turned into a lump of gold, it were not able to purchase one minute of time. Oh the regretting of the damned for mis-spending precious time! Oh what would they not give to be free, and to enjoy the means of grace one hour! Ah! with what attention, with what intention, with what trembling and melting of heart, with what hungering and thirsting, would they hear the word! "Time," saith Bernard, "were a good commodity in hell, and the traffic of it most gainful, where for one day a man would give ten thousand worlds if he had

them." Young men, can you in good earnest believe this, and not begin to be good? Ah, young men and women! as you love your precious immortal souls, as you would escape hell and come to heaven, as you would be happy in life, and blessed in death, and glorious after death, do not spend any more of your precious time in drinking and drabbing, in carding, dicing and dancing; do not trifle away your time, do not swear away your time, do not whore away your time, do not lie away your time, but begin to be good, because time is a talent that God will reckon with you for. Ah, young men and women! you may reckon upon years, many years yet to come, when possibly you have not so many hours to make ready your accounts. It may be, this night you may have a summons; and then if your time be done, and your work be but to begin, in what a sad case will you be! will you not wish that you had never been born?

Seneca was wont to jeer the Jews for their ill husbandry, in that they lost one day in seven, meaning their sabbath. O that it were not too true of the most professors, both young and old, that they lose not one day in seven, but several days in seven! Sirs, time let slip cannot be recalled. The foolish virgins found it so, and Saul found it so, and Herod found it so, the Israelites found it so; yea, and Jacob, and Josiah, and David, though good men, yet they found it so to their cost.

The Egyptians draw the picture of time with three heads: the first, of a greedy wolf, gaping for time past; because it hath ravenously devoured the memory of so many things past recalling; the second, of a crowned lion, roaring for time present, because it hath the principality of all actions, for which it calls aloud; the third, of a deceitful dog, fawning for time to come, because it feeds some men with many flattering hopes, to their eternal undoing. Ah, young men and women! as you would give up your accounts at last with joy concerning this talent of time, with which God hath trusted you, begin to be good betimes!

V. Because they will have the greatest comfort and joy when they come to be old: Psal. lxxi. 5, 17, 18, compared: "Thou art my hope, O Lord God: Thou art my trust from my youth. O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared Thy wondrous works. Now also, when I am old and grey headed, O God, forsake me not, until I have shewed Thy strength unto this generation, and Thy power to every one that is to come."

Polycarp could say, when old, "Thus many years have I served my master Christ, and hitherto hath He dealt well with me." If early converts live to be old, no joy to their joy; their joy will be the greatest joy, a joy like to the joy of harvest, a joy like to their joy that divide the spoil. Their joy

will be the soundest joy, the weightiest joy, the holiest joy, the purest joy, the strongest joy, and the most lasting joy; the carnal joy of the wicked, the glistening golden joy of the worldling, and the flashing joy of the hypocrite, are but as the crackling of thorns under a pot, to the joy and comfort of such, who, when old, can say, with good Obadiah, that they feared the Lord from their youth. If, when you are young, your eyes shall be full of tears for sin, when you are old your heart will be full of joys. Such shall have the best wine at last.

Oh! that young men would begin to be good betimes, that so they may have the greater harvest of joy when they come to be old. It is sad to be sowing your seed, when you should be reaping your harvest; it is best to gather the summer of youth against the winter of old age.

VI. Because an eternity of felicity and glory hangs upon those few moments that are allotted to them. It was a good question the young man proposed, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" I know I shall be eternally happy, or eternally miserable, eternally blessed, or eternally cursed, eternally saved, or eternally damned.

O what shall I do to inherit eternal life? My cares, my fears, my troubles are all about eternity. No time can reach eternity, no age can extend to eternity, no tongue can express eternity. Eternity;

is that *unum perpetuum hodie*, one perpetual day, which shall never have end.

What shall I do, what shall I not do, that I may be happy to all eternity? I am now young and in the flower of my days; but who knows what a day may bring forth? The greatest weight hangs upon the smallest wires, and eternity depends upon those few hours I am to breathe in the world. O what cause have I, therefore, to be good, to know God, to believe, to repent, to get my peace made, and my pardon sealed, to get my nature changed, my conscience purged, and my interest in Christ cleared, before eternity overtakes me, before my glass be out, my sun set, my race run, lest the dark, the dark night of eternity should overtake me, and I made miserable for ever.

I have read of one *Myroignes*, who, when great gifts were sent unto him, he sent them all back again, saying, "I only desire this one thing at your master's hand, to pray for me, that I may be saved for eternity." O that all young men and women, who make earth their heaven, pleasure their paradise, that eat of the fat, and drink the sweet, that clothe themselves richly, and crown their heads with rosebuds, that they would seriously consider of eternity, so to hear as for eternity, and pray as for eternity, and live as for eternity, and provide as for eternity! that they may say with that famous painter *Zeuxes*, '*Aeternitati pingo*,' "I paint for eternity." We do all

for eternity, we believe for eternity, we repent for eternity, we obey for eternity. Oh that you would not make those things eternal for punishment, that cannot be eternal for use. Ah, young men and women! Christ calls, and the blood of Jesus Christ calls, and the spirit of Christ in the gospel calls, and the rage of Satan calls, and your sad state and condition call, and the happiness and blessedness of glorified saints call; these all call aloud upon you to make sure a glorious eternity, before you sail out into the dreadful ocean. All your eternal good depends upon the short and uncertain moments of your lives; and if the thread of your lives should be cut before a happy eternity is made sure, woe to you that ever you was born! Do not say, O young man, that thou art young, and hereafter will be time enough to provide for eternity; for eternity may be at the door ready to carry thee away for ever. Every day's experience speaks out eternity to be as near the young man's back as it is before the old man's face. O grasp to-day the diadem of a blessed eternity, lest thou art cut off before the morning comes! Though there is but one way to come into this world, yet there are a thousand ways to be sent out of this world. Well, young men and women, remember this: as the motions of the soul are quick, so are the motions of divine justice quick also; and if you will not hear the voice of God to-day, if you will not provide for eternity to-day, God may swear

to-morrow that you shall never enter into His rest. It is a very sad and dangerous thing to trifle and dally with God, His word, His offers, our own souls, and eternity. Therefore let all young people labour to be good betimes, and not to let Him that is goodness itself alone, till He hath made them good, till He hath given them those hopes of eternity, that will both make them good and keep them good, that will make them happy and keep them happy, and that for ever. If all this will not do, then know, that ere long those fears of eternity, of misery, that beget that monster, Despair, which, like Medusa's head, astonisheth with its very aspect, and strangles hope, which is the breath of the soul, will certainly overtake you. As it is said, *Dum spiro, spero*; so it may be inverted, *Dum spero, spiro*. Other miseries may wound the spirit, but despair kills it dead. My prayers shall be, that none of you may ever experience this sad truth, but that you may all be good in good earnest, which will yield you two heavens, a heaven on earth, and a heaven after death.

VII. Because they do not begin to live, till they begin to be really good. Till they begin to be good, they are dead God-wards, and Christ-wards, and heaven-wards, and holiness-wards; till a man begins to be really good, he is really dead, Eph. ii. 1. And that, 1. In respect of working, his works are called dead works, Heb. ix. 14. The most glister-

ing services of unregenerate persons are but dead works, because they proceed not from a principle of life, and they lead to death, Rom. vi. 21, and leave a sentence of death upon the soul, till it be washed off by the blood of the Lamb. 2. He is dead in respect of honour, he is dead to all privileges, he is not fit to inherit mercy. Who will set the crown of mercy upon a dead man? The crown of life is only for living Christians, Rev. ii. 10. The young prodigal was dead, till he began to be good, till he began to remember his Father's house, and to resolve to return home: "My son was dead, but is alive;" and the widow that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.

When Josaphat asked Barlaam how old he was, he answered, "Five-and-forty years old." To whom Josaphat replied, "Thou seemest to be seventy." "True," saith he, "if you reckon since I was born; but I count not those years which were spent in vanity." Ah sirs! you never begin to live till you begin to be good in good earnest. 1. There is the life of vegetation, and that is the life of plants. 2. There is the life of sense, and that is the life of beasts. 3. There is the life of reason, and that is the life of man. 4. There is the life of grace, and that is the life of saints; and this life you do not begin to live till you begin to be good. If a living dog is better than a dead lion, as the wise man speaks; and if a fly hath life, which the heavens have not, as the

philosopher saith; what a sad, a dead, a poor nothing, is that person that is a stranger to the life of grace and goodness, that is dead even whilst he is alive. Most men will bleed, sweat, vomit, purge, part with an estate, yea, with a limb, yea limbs, yea, and many a better thing (viz. the honour of God and a good conscience), to preserve their natural lives: as he cries out, "Give me any deformity, any torment, any misery, so you spare my life;" and yet how few, how very few, are to be found, who make it their business to attain to a life of goodness, or to begin to be good betimes, or to be dead to the world, and alive to God, rather than to be dead to God, and alive to the world? This is for a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation, that natural life is so highly prized, and spiritual life so little regarded.

VIII. Because the promise of finding God, or enjoying God, is made over to an early seeking of God: Prov. viii. 17, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." Or, as the Hebrew hath it, "They that seek me in the morning shall find me." By the benefit of the morning light we come to find the things we seek. *Shahar* signifies to seek inquisitively, to seek diligently, to seek timely in the morning. As the Israelites went early in the morning to seek for manna; and as students rise early in the morning, and sit close to it, to get knowledge; so saith Wis-

dom, "They that seek me in the spring and morning of their youth shall find me."

Now, to seek the Lord early is to seek the Lord firstly. God hath in Himself all the good of angels, of men, and universal nature; He hath all glories, all dignities, all riches, all treasures, all pleasures, all comforts, all delights, all joys, all beatitudes; God is that one infinite perfection in Himself, which is eminently and virtually all perfections of the creatures, and therefore He is firstly to be sought. Abstracts do better express Him than concretes and adjectives; He is being, bounty, power, wisdom, justice, mercy, goodness, and love itself, and therefore worthy to be sought before all other things. "Seek ye first the good things of the mind," saith Philosophy. And doth not Divinity say as much?

Again, to seek early is to seek opportunely, to seek while the opportunity does present: *Judg. ix. 33*, "Thou shalt rise early, and set upon the city;" that is, thou shalt opportunely set upon the city. Such there have been, who, by giving a glass of water opportunely, have obtained a kingdom, as you may see in the story of *Thamastus* and king *Agrippa*. Ah, young men and women! you do not know but that by an early, by an opportune seeking of God, you may obtain a kingdom that shakes not, and glory that passeth not away. There is a season wherein God may be found: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He

is near;" and if you slip this season, you may seek Him and miss Him: "Though they cry unto Me, I will not hearken unto them; when they make many prayers, I will not hear: then shall they cry unto the Lord, but He will not hear. Then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but shall not find Me." This was Saul's misery: "The Philistines are upon me, and God will not answer me." It is justice that they should seek, and not find at last, who might have found, had they but sought seasonably and opportunely.

Again, to seek early is to seek earnestly, affectionately: "With my soul have I desired Thee in the night, yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early." The Hebrew word signifies both an earnest and an early seeking. In the morning the spirits are up, and men are earnest, lively, and affectionate.

Ah! such a seeking shall certainly be crowned with finding: "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct (Hebrew, martial) my prayer unto Thee, and will look up (Heb. look out like a watchman). Let all those that put their trust in Thee rejoice, let them ever shout for joy; because Thou defendest them (Heb. Thou coverest over, or protectest them). Let them also that love Thy name, be joyful in Thee: for Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous, with favour wilt Thou compass him (Hebrew, crown him) as with a

shield." None have ever thus sought the Lord, but they have, or certainly shall find Him. "Seek, and ye shall find," Mat. vii. 7. "Your hearts shall live that seek God," Psal. lxxix. 32. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," James v. 16; or, as the Greek hath it, "The working prayer of a righteous man availeth much." That prayer that sets the whole man to work, will work wonders in heaven, in the heart, and in the earth. Earnest prayer, like Saul's sword and Jonathan's bow, never returns empty. One speaking of Luther, who was a man very earnest in prayer, said, "*Hic homo potuit apud Deum quod voluit*," "This man could have what he would of God."

Again, to seek early is to seek chiefly, primarily, after this or that thing. What we first seek we seek as chief. Now, to seek the Lord early is to seek Him primarily, chiefly: Psal. lxxiii. 1, "Thou art my God: early will I seek Thee;" that is, I will seek Thee as my choicest and my chiefest good. God is Alpha, the fountain of all grace, and Omega, the sea to which all glory runs, and therefore early and primarily to be sought. God is a perfect good, a solid good: "*Id bonum perfectum dicitur cui nil accidere, solidum cui nil decedere potest*," *Lactantius*, "That is a perfect good to which nothing can be added; that a solid, from which nothing can be spared." Such a good God is, therefore early and chiefly to be sought. God is a pure and simple good, He is a

light in whom there is no darkness, a good in whom there is no evil. The goodness of the creature is mixed, yea, that little goodness that is in the creature is mixed with much evil; but God is an unmixed good, He is good, He is pure good, He is all over good, He is nothing but good. God is an all-sufficient good. "Walk before Me and be upright," I am God all-sufficient, Gen. xvii. 1. "*Habet omnia qui habet habentem omnium*," Aug., "He hath all that hath the haver of all." God hath in Himself all power to defend you, all wisdom to direct you, all mercy to pardon you, all grace to enrich you, all righteousness to clothe you, all goodness to supply you, and all happiness to crown you. God is a satisfying good, a good that fills the heart and quiets the soul. Gen. xxxiii. 11, "I have enough," saith good Jacob; "I have all," saith Jacob, for so the Hebrew hath it (*Cholli*): "I have all, I have all comforts, all delights, all contents." "I have nothing, I have all things, because I have Christ; having therefore all things in him, I seek no other reward, for he is the universal reward," saith one. As the worth and value of many pieces of silver is to be found in one piece of gold, so all the petty excellencies that are scattered abroad in the creatures are to be found in God; yea, all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth is epitomized in Him. No good, below Him that is the greatest good, can satisfy the soul. A good wife, a

good child, a good name, a good estate, a good friend, cannot satisfy the soul; "these may please, but they cannot satisfy. "All abundance, if it be not my God, is to me nothing but poverty and want," said one.

Ah, that young men and women would but, in the morning of their youth, seek, yea, seek early, seek earnestly, seek affectionately, seek diligently, seek primarily, and seek unweariedly this God, who is the greatest good, the best good, the most desirable good; who is a suitable good, a pure good, a satisfying good, a total good, and an eternal good.

IX. Because the time of youth is the choicest and fittest time for service. Now your parts are lively, senses fresh, memory strong, and nature vigorous. The days of your youth are the spring and morning of your time, they are the first-born of your strength; therefore God requires your nonage as well as your dotage, the wine of your times as well as the lees, as you may see typified to you in the first-fruits, which were dedicated to the Lord, and the first-born. The time of youth is the time of salvation; it is the acceptable time, it is thy summer, thy harvest-time. O young man! therefore do not sleep, but awaken thy heart, rouse up thy soul, and improve all thou hast; put out thy reason, thy strength, thy all, to the treasuring up of heavenly graces, precious promises, divine experiences, and spiritual comforts against the winter of old age; and then old age will not be to thee an evil age, but

as it was to Abraham, a good old age, Gen. **xiv. 28.** Do not put off God with fair promises and large pretences, till your last sands are running, and the days of dotage have overtaken you. That is a sad word of the prophet, "Cursed be the deceiver that hath in his flock a male, and yet offereth to the Lord a corrupt thing." Ah! young men and women, who are like the almond-tree, you have many males in the flock, your strength is a male in the flock, your time is a male in the flock, your reason is a male in the flock, your parts are a male in the flock, and your gifts are a male in the flock; now if he be cursed that hath but one male in his flock, and shall offer to God a corrupt thing, a thing of no worth, of no value, how will you be cursed! cursed at home, and cursed abroad, cursed temporally, cursed spiritually, and cursed eternally, who have many males in your flock, and yet deal so unworthily, so fraudulently and false-heartedly with God, as to put him off with the dregs of your time and strength, while you spend the primrose of your youth in the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The fig-tree in the gospel that did not bring forth fruit timely and seasonably, was cursed to admiration. The time of youth is the time and season for bringing forth the fruits of righteousness and holiness; and if these fruits be not brought forth in their season, you may justly fear that the curses of

heaven will secretly and insensibly soak and sink into your souls, and then woe, woe to you that ever you were born. The best way to prevent this hell of hells, is to give God the cream and flower of your youth, your strength, your time, your talent; vessels that are betimes seasoned with the savour of life never lose it, Prov. xxii. 6.

X. Because death may suddenly and unexpectedly seize on you. You have no lease of your lives. Youth is as fickle as old age. The young man may find graves enough of his length in burial-places. As green wood and old logs meet in one fire, so young sinners and old sinners meet in one hell, and burn together. When the young man is in his spring and prime, then he is cut off and dies. One dieth in his full strength (or in the strength of his perfection, as the Hebrew hath it), being wholly at ease and quiet; his breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. David's children died when young; so did Job's and Jeroboam's. Every day's experience tells us that the young man's life is as much a vapour as the old man's is. I have read of an Italian poet, who brings in a proper young man, rich and potent, discoursing of death in the habit of a mower, with his scythe in his hand, cutting down the life of man: "For all flesh is grass," Isa. xl. 6. "And wilt thou not spare any man's person?" saith the young man. "I spare none," saith Death. Man's life is but a short day, a winter's

day; oftentimes the sun goes down upon a man before it be well up. Your day is short, your work is great, your journey long, and therefore you should rise early, and set forward towards heaven betimes, as that man doth that hath a long journey to go in a winter day.

The life of man is absolutely short: "Behold, thou madest my days as an handbreadth." The life of man is comparatively short, and that if you compare man's life now to what he might have reached, had he continued in innocency. Sin brought in death, death is a fall that came in by a fall. Or if you compare man's life now, to what they did reach to before the flood, then several lived six, seven, eight, nine hundred years; or if you compare man's days with the days of God, "Mine age is as nothing before thee;" or if you compare the days of man to the days of eternity. Ah! young men, can you seriously consider of the brevity of man's life, and trifle away your time, the offers of grace, your precious souls, and eternity? Surely you cannot, surely you dare not; if you do but in good earnest ponder upon the shortness of man's life. It is recorded of Philip, king of Macedon, that he gave a pension to one to come to him every day at dinner, and to cry to him, *Memento te esse mortalem*, Remember thou art but mortal. Ah! young men and old had need be often put in mind of their mortality, they are too apt to forget that day, yea,

to put far from them the thoughts of that day. I have read of three that could not endure that bitter word "death" mentioned in their ears; and surely this age is full of such monsters.

And as the life of man is very short, so it is very uncertain; now well, now sick; alive this hour, and dead the next. Death doth not always give warning beforehand, sometimes he gives the mortal blow suddenly; he comes behind with his dart, and strikes a man at the heart before he saith, Have I found thee, O mine enemy? Eutychus fell down dead suddenly, Acts xx. 9. Death suddenly arrested David's sons and Job's sons; Augustus died in a compliment; Galba, with a sentence; Vespasian, with a jest; Xeuces died laughing at the picture of an old woman which he drew with his own hand; Sophocles was choked with a stone in a grape; Diodorus the logician died for shame that he could not answer a jocular question propounded at the table by Stilpo; Joannes Mesius, preaching upon the raising of the woman of Nain's son from the dead, within three hours after, died himself. Ah! young men and women, have you not great cause to be good, for death is sudden in his approaches; nothing more sure than death, and nothing more uncertain than life! Therefore know the Lord, turn from your sins, lay hold on the Lord, and make peace with Him, that you may never say as Cæsar Borgia said, when he was sick to death: "When

I lived," said he, "I provided for every thing but death; now I must die, and am unprovided to die."

XI. Because it is ten to one, nay, an hundred to one, if ever they are converted, if they are not converted when they are young. God usually begins with such betimes that he hath had thoughts of love and mercy towards from everlasting: Hos. xi. 1, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him." The instances cited to prove the doctrine confirm this argument; and if you look abroad in the world, you shall hardly find one saint among a thousand, but dates his conversion from the time of his youth. It was the young ones that got through the wilderness to Canaan. If the tree do not bud and blossom, and bring forth fruit in the spring, it is commonly dead all the year after; if, in the spring and morning of your days, you do not bring forth fruit to God, it is an hundred to one that ever you bring forth fruit to him when the evil days of old age shall overtake you, wherein you shall say you have no pleasure. For, as the son of Sarac observes, "If thou hast gathered nothing in thy youth, what canst thou find in thy age?" It is rare, very rare, that God sows and reaps in old age; usually God sows the seed of grace in youth that yields the harvest of joy in age.

Though true repentance be ever so late, yet late repentance is seldom true. Millions are now in hell, *who have pleased themselves with the thoughts of*

after-repentance. The Lord hath made a promise to late repentance, but where hath He made a promise of late repentance? Yea, what can be more just and equal, that such should seek and not find, who might have found but would not seek; and that He should shut His ears against their late prayers, who have stopped their ears against His early calls? The ancient warriors would not accept an old man into their army, as being unfit for service; and dost thou think that God will accept of thy dry bones, when Satan hath sucked out all the marrow? What lord, what master will take such into their service, who have all their days served their enemies? And will God? will God? The Circassians, a kind of mongrel Christians, are said to divide their life between sin and devotion, dedicating their youth to rapine, and their old age to repentance. If this be thy case, I would not be in thy case for ten thousand worlds.

I have read of a certain great man that was admonished in his sickness to repent; who answered, that he would not repent yet; for if he should recover, his companions would laugh at him; but growing sicker and sicker, his friends pressed him again to repent, but he told them it was too late: "*Qui jam judicatus sum et condemnatus,*" "For now," said he, "I am judged and condemned."

XII. Because else they will never attain to the honour of being old disciples.

CHAPTER II.

It is a very great honour to be an old disciple.

Now this honour none reach to, but such as are converted betimes, but such as turn to the Lord in the spring and morning of their youth. It is no honour for an old man to be in coats, nor for an old man to be a babe in grace. An A, B, C old man is a sad and shameful sight. O, but it is a mighty honour to a man, when he is old, that he can date his conversion from the morning of his youth. Now that it is an honour to be an old disciple, I shall prove by an induction of particulars: as,

I. All men will honour an old disciple: Proverbs xvi. 31, "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." God requires that the aged should be honoured: Lev. xix. 32, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, (the "old man" here, is by some expounded the "wise man"), and fear thy God: I am the Lord." Hoariness is only honourable when found in a way of righteousness; a white head accompanied with a holy heart makes a man truly honourable. There are two glorious

sights in the world: the one is a young man walking in his uprightness, and the other is an old man walking in the ways of righteousness. It was Abraham's honour, that he went to the grave in a good old age, or rather, as the Hebrew hath it, "with a good gray head." Many there be that go to their graves with a gray head; but this was Abraham's crown, that he went to the grave with a good gray head. Had Abraham's head been ever so gray, if it had not been good, it would have been no honour to him. A hoary head, when coupled with an un-sanctified heart, is rather a curse than a blessing. When the head is white as snow, and the soul as black as hell, God usually gives up such to the greatest scorn and contempt: "Princes are hanged up by their hand, the faces of elders were not honoured," Lam. v. 12. And this God hath threatened long before: "The Lord shall bring against thee a nation from far, a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young." I have read of Cleanthes, who was wont sometimes to chide himself. Ariston wondering thereat, asked him, "Whom chidest thou?" Cleanthes laughed and answered, "I chide an old fellow *qui canos quidem habet, sed mentem non habet*; who hath his gray hairs indeed, but wants understanding and prudence worthy of them." The application I will leave to the gray heads and gray beards of our time, who have little

else to commend them to the world but their hoary heads and snowy beards.

II. God usually reveals Himself most to old disciples, to old saints: Job xii. 12, "With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding." God usually manifests most of Himself to aged saints; they usually pray most and pay most, they labour most, and long most after the choicest manifestations of Himself and of His grace; and therefore He opens His bosom most to them, and makes them of His cabinet council: Genesis xviii. 17, 19, "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." Abraham was an old friend, and therefore God makes him both of His court and council. We usually open our hearts most freely, fully, and familiarly to old friends; so doth God to ancient friends. Ah! what a blessed sight and enjoyment of Christ had old Simeon, that made his very heart to dance in him! "Now, Lord, letteth thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," &c. I have seen Him who is my light, my life, my love, my joy, my crown, my heaven, my all; therefore *now let Thy servant depart in peace.* So Anna,

when she was fourscore and four years old, was so filled with the discoveries and enjoyments of Christ, that she could but declare what she had tasted, felt, seen, heard, and received from the Lord. She was ripe, and ready to discover the fulness, sweetness, goodness, excellency, and glory of that Christ whom she had long loved, feared, and served. So Paul lived in the light, sight, and sweet enjoyments of Christ, when aged in years and in grace. So when had John that glorious vision of Christ among the golden candlesticks, and those discoveries and manifestations of the ruin of Rome, the fall of antichrist, the casting the beast and the false prophet into a lake of fire, the conquest of the kingdoms of the world by Christ's bow and sword, the binding of Satan, and the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, but when he was old, when he was aged in years and in grace? The Lord speaks many a secret in the ears of aged saints, of old Christians, which young Christians are not acquainted with; as that phrase imports: 2 Sam. vii. 27, "Thou, O Lord God of hosts, hast revealed to Thy servant." So you read it in your books; but in the Hebrew it is, "Lord, Thou hast revealed this to the ear of Thy servant." Some wonder how that word "to the ear" came to be left out in your books, in which indeed the emphasis lies. We will tell many things in an old friend's ear, which we will not acquaint young ones with. So doth God many

times whisper an old disciple in the ear, and acquaint him with such things that He hides from those that are of younger years. And by this you may see what an honour it is to be an old disciple.

III. An old disciple, an old Christian, he hath got the art of serving God, the art of religion, got the art of hearing, the art of praying, the art of meditating, the art of repenting, the art of believing, the art of denying his natural self, his sinful self, his religious self. All trades have their mystery and difficulty, so hath the trade of Christianity. Young Christians usually bungle in religious works, but old Christians acquit themselves like workmen that need not be ashamed. A young carpenter gives more blows and makes more chips, but an old artist doth the most and best work. A young Christian may make most noise in religious duties, but an old Christian makes the best work. A young musician may play more quick and nimble upon an instrument than an old, but an old musician hath more skill and judgment than a young. The application is easy. And by this you may also see what an honour it is to be an old disciple.

IV. An old disciple, an old Christian is rich in spiritual experiences. O the experiences that he hath of the ways of God, of the workings of God, of the word of God, of the love of God! O the divine stories that old Christians can tell of the power of the word, of the sweetness of the word, of the use-

fulness of the word, as a light to lead the soul, as a staff to support the soul, as a spirit to quicken the soul, as an anchor to stay the soul, and as a cordial to comfort and strengthen the soul! O the stories that he can tell you concerning the love of Christ, the blood of Christ, the offices of Christ, the merits of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, the graces of Christ, and the influence of Christ! O the stories that an old disciple can tell you of the indwellings of the Spirit, of the operations of the Spirit, of the teachings of the Spirit, of the leadings of the Spirit, of the sealings of the Spirit, of the witnessings of the Spirit, and of the comforts and joys of the Spirit! O the stories that an old Christian can tell you of the evil of sin, the bitterness of sin, the deceitfulness of sin, the prevalency of sin, and the happiness of the conquest over sin! O the stories that he can tell you of the snares of Satan, the devices of Satan, the temptations of Satan, the rage of Satan, the malice of Satan, the watchfulness of Satan, and the ways of triumphing over Satan! As an old soldier can tell you of many battles, many scars, many wounds, many losses, and many victories, even to admiration; so an old saint is able to tell you many Divine stories, even to admiration.

Pliny writes of the crocodile, that she grows to her last day; so aged saints, they grow rich in spiritual experience to the last. An old Christian being once asked if he grew in goodness, answered,

“Yea, doubtless I do, for God hath said, ‘The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; (now the palm-tree never loseth his leaf or fruit, saith Pliny); he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing,’” Psal. xcii. 12. A fellow to this promise Isaiah mentions: “Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are born by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb; and even to your old age; I am he; to hoary hairs will I carry you; I have made, and I will hear, even I will carry, and I will deliver you.”

There is nothing more commendable in fulness of age, than fulness of knowledge and experience; nor nothing more honourable than to see ancient Christians very much acquainted with the Ancient of days.

It is a brave sight to see ancient Christians like the almond-tree. Now the almond-tree doth flourish and is full of blossoms in winter of old age; for, as Pliny tells us, the almond-tree doth blossom in the month of January. Experiments in religion are beyond notions and expressions. A sanctified heart is better than a silver tongue. No man so rich, so honourable, so happy as the old disciple that is rich in spiritual experiences; and yet there is no Christian so rich in his experiences, but he would be richer. As Julianus said, that when he

had one foot in the grave, he would have the other in the school; so, though an old disciple hath one foot in the grave, yet he will have the other in Christ's school, that he may still be treasuring up more and more Divine experiments. And by this also you see what an honour it is to be an old disciple.

V. An old disciple is very stout, courageous, firm, and fixed in his resolution. An old Christian is like a pillar, a rock; nothing can move him. What is sucked in in youth will abide in old age. Old soldiers are stout and courageous, nothing can daunt nor discourage them. When Joshua was an hundred and ten years old, O how courageous and resolute was he! "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods that your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old." Confidius, a senator of Rome, told Cæsar boldly, that the senators durst not come to council for fear of his soldiers. He replied, "Why then dost thou go to the senate?" He answered, "Because my age takes away my fear." Ah! none so courageous, none so divinely fearless, none so careless in evil days, as ancient Christians.

An old Christian knows, that that good will do him no good, which is not made good by perseverance. His resolution is like that of Gonsalvo, who pre-**tested** to his soldiers, showing them Naples, **that** he had rather die one foot forwards, **than** to have his life secured for long, by one foot of retreat. "Shall such a man as I am flee?" said undaunted Nehemiah. He will courageously venture life and limb, rather than, by one foot of retreat, discredit his profession with the reproach of fearfulness. It was a brave, magnanimous speech of Luther, when dangers from opposers did threaten him and his associates: "Come," saith he, "let us sing the 46th Psalm, and let them do their worst." When Polycarpus was four-score and six years old, he suffered martyrdom courageously, resolutely, and undauntedly. When one of the ancient martyrs was very much threatened by his persecutors, he replied, "There is nothing of things visible, nothing of things invisible that I fear. I will stand to my profession of the name of Christ, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, come on it what will."

Old disciples, old soldiers of Christ, they have the heart and courage of Shammah, one of David's worthies, who stood and defended the field when all the rest fled. The Hebrews call a young man *nagnar*, which springs from a root that signifies to shake off, or to be tossed to and fro; to note how *fickle*, and inconstant in inconstancy young men

are; they usually are persons either of no resolution for good, or of weak resolution; they are too often won with a nut, and lost with an apple: but now aged Christians in all earthquakes they stand fast, like mount Sion that cannot be removed. And by this also you may see what an honour it is to be an old disciple, an old Christian.

VI. An old disciple, an old Christian is prepared for death; he hath been long a-dying to sin, to the world, to friends, to self, to relations, to all; and no man so prepared to die as he that thus daily dies. An old disciple hath lived sincerely to Christ, he hath lived in all conditions, and under all changes to Christ, he hath lived exemplarily to Christ, he hath lived long to Christ, and therefore the more prepared to die, and be with Christ. An old disciple hath a crown in his eye, a pardon in his bosom, and a Christ in his arms; and therefore may sweetly sing it out with old Simeon, "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace." As Hillary said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast served Christ these seventy years, and art thou afraid of death? Go out, soul, go out."

"Many a day," said old Cowper, "have I sought death with tears, not out of impatience, distrust, or perturbation; but because I am weary of sin, and fearful to fall into it." Nazianzen calls upon the king of terrors, "Devour me, devour me." And Austin, when old, could say, "Shall I die ever? Yes.

Why, then, Lord, if ever, why not now, why not now?" So when Modestus, the emperor's lieutenant, threatened to kill Basil, he answered, "If that be all, I fear not; yea, your master cannot more pleasure me, than in sending me unto my heavenly Father, to whom I now live, and to whom I desire to hasten." It was the saying of an ancient minister a little before his death, "I cannot say, I have so lived that I should not be afraid to die; but this I can say, I have so learned Christ, that I am not afraid to die." Old Christians have made no more to die than to dine. It is nothing to die, when the Comforter stands by. Old disciples know, that to die is but to lie down in their beds; they know that their dying day is better than their birth-day. And this made Solomon to prefer his coffin before his crown, the day of his dissolution before the day of his coronation.

The ancients were wont to call the days of their death, *Natalia*, not dying days, but birth-days.

The Jews to this day stick not to call their Golgathes, *Bate Caiim*, the houses or places of the living. Old Christians know that death is but an entrance into life; it is but a passover, a jubilee, it is but the Lord's gentleman-usher to conduct them to heaven, and this prepares them to die, and makes death more desirable than life. And by this you may see that it is an honour to be an old disciple.

VII. An old disciple, an old Christian shall have a great reward in heaven. Old Christians have done much, and suffered much for Christ; and the more any man doth or suffers for Christ here, the more glory he shall have hereafter. It was the saying of an old disciple upon his dying bed, "He is come, He is come (meaning the Lord) with a great reward for a little work." Agrippa having suffered imprisonment for wishing Caius emperor, the first thing Caius did when he came to the empire, was to prefer Agrippa to a kingdom; he gave him also a chain of gold, as heavy as the chain of iron that was upon him in prison. And will not Christ richly reward all His suffering saints? Surely He will. Christ will at last pay a Christian for every prayer he hath made, for every sermon he hath heard, for every tear he hath shed, for every morsel he hath given, for every burthen he hath borne, for every battle he hath fought, for every enemy he hath slain, and for every temptation that he hath overcome.

Cyrus, in a great expedition against his enemies, the better to encourage his soldiers to fight, in an oration he made at the head of his army, promised, upon the victory, to make every foot-soldier a horse-man, and every horse-man a commander, and that no officer that did valiantly should be unrewarded. But what are Cyrus' rewards to the rewards that Christ our General promises to His! Rev. iii. 21,

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.” As there is no lord to Christ, so there are no rewards to Christ’s. His rewards are the greatest rewards; He gives kingdoms, crowns, thrones; He gives grace and glory, Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

It is said of Araunah, that noble Jebusite, renowned for his bounty, that he had but a subject’s purse, yet a king’s heart: but Jesus Christ hath a King’s purse as well as a King’s heart, and accordingly He gives. And as Christ’s rewards are the greatest rewards, so His rewards are the surest rewards; He is faithful that hath promised, 1 Thess. v. 24. Antiochus promised often, but seldom gave; upon which he was called, in a way of derision, a great promiser; but Jesus Christ never made any promise, but He hath, or will perform it, 2 Cor. i. 20; nay, He is often better than His word, 1 Cor. ii. 9. He gives many times more than we ask. The man sick of the palsy asked but health, and Christ gave him health, and a pardon to boot. Solomon desired but wisdom, and the Lord gave him wisdom, and honour, riches, and the favour of creatures, as paper and packthread into the bargain. Jacob asked him but clothes to wear, and bread to eat, and the Lord gave him these things, and riches and other mercies into the bargain. Christ doth not measure His gifts by our petitions, but by

His own riches and mercy. Gracious souls many times receive many gifts and favours from God that they never dreamed of, nor durst presume to ask, which others extremely strive after, and go without.

Archelaus being much importuned by a covetous courtier for a cup of gold wherein he drank, gave it unto Euripides that stood by, saying, "Thou art worthy to ask and be denied; but Euripides is worthy of gifts, although he ask none."

The prodigal craves no more but the place of a hired servant; but he is entertained as a son, he is clad with the best robe, and fed with the fatted calf; he hath a ring for his hand, and shoes for his feet, rich supplies, more than he desired. Jacob's sons, in a time of famine, desired only corn, and they return with corn and money in their sacks, and with good news too—Joseph is alive, and governor of all Egypt. And as His rewards are greater and surer than other rewards, so they are more durable and lasting than other rewards. The kingdom that He gives is a kingdom that shakes not; the treasures that He gives are treasures that corrupt not; and the glory that He gives is glory that fadeth not away; but the rewards that men give are like themselves, fickle and inconstant, they are withering and fading. Xerxes crowned his steersman in the morning and beheaded him in the evening of the same day. And Andronicus, the Greek emperor, crowned his admiral in the morning,

and then took off his head in the afternoon. Rufus had a cardinal's hat sent him, but his head was cut off before it came to him. Most may say of their crowns, as that king said of his, "O crown, more noble than happy." It was a just complaint, which long ago was made against the heathen gods, *O facilis dare summa deos eademque tueri difficiles!* They could give their favourites great gifts, but they could not maintain them in the possession of them. The world may give you great things, but the world cannot maintain you in the possession of them. But the great things, the great rewards that Christ gives His, He will for ever maintain them in the possession of them; otherwise heaven would not be heaven, glory would not be glory. Now by all these things you see that it is a very great honour, to be an old disciple, an old Christian; and this honour you will never attain to, except you begin, to be really good betimes; except, in the morning of youth, you return to the Lord, and get an interest in Him.

I shall now come to make some use and application of this weighty truth to ourselves.

You see, beloved, that it is the great duty and concernment of young men and women to be really good betimes. If this be so, then,

1. This truth looks so sourly and sadly upon such young men and women that are only seemingly good, that make some shows of goodness, but

are not right towards God at the root. As Joash, when he was young, seemed to have good things in him towards the Lord, whilst good Jehoiada lived; but when Jehoiada was dead, Joash's goodness was buried with him, 2 Chron. xxiv. 1, &c. Ah, how many in these days that have been seemingly good, have turned to be naught, yea, stark naught!

It is said of Tiberius, that "whilst Augustus ruled, he was no ways tainted in his reputation; and that whilst Drusus and Germanicus were alive, he feigned those virtues which he had not, to maintain a good opinion of himself in the hearts of the people; but after he had got himself out of the reach of contradiction and controlment, there was no fact in which he was not faulty, no crime to which he was not accessory." Oh that this were not applicable to many young persons in these days, who have made great show, and taken upon them a great name, who have begun to outshine the stars, but are now gone out like so many snuffs, to the dishonour of God, the reproach of the gospel, the grief of others, and the hazard of their own souls!

It was a custom of old, when any were baptized, the minister delivered a white garment to be put on, saying, "Take thou this white vestment, and see thou bring it forth without spot, at the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ." Whereupon one Maritta, bay-

tizing one Elpidophorus, who, when he was grown up, proved a profane wretch, he brings forth the white garment, and holding it up, shakes it against him, saying, "This linen garment, Elpidophorus, shall accuse thee at the coming of Christ, which I have kept by me as a witness of thy apostacy." Ah, young men and women, your former professions will be a sad witness against you in the great day of our Lord Jesus, except you repent and return in good earnest to the Lord! Oh, it had been better that you had never made profession, that you had never set your faces towards heaven, that you had never pretended to God and Christ, that you had never known the way of righteousness, than after you have known it, to turn from the holy commandment!

Cyprian, in his sermon *De lapsis*, reporteth of divers, who, forsaking the faith, were given over to evil spirits, and died fearfully. Oh the delusions, and the Christ-dethroning, conscience-wasting, and soul-undoing opinions and principles, the many young ones, who once were hopeful ones, are given up to! That dreadful scripture seems to be made good in power upon them: "All you that forsake the Lord shall come to be ashamed, and they that depart from Him shall be written upon the dust," Jer. xvii. 13. To begin well, and not to proceed, is but to aspire to a higher pitch, that the fall may be the more desperate. Backsliding is a wounding sin.

You read of no arms for the back, though you do for the breast. He that is but seemingly good will prove at last exceedingly bad: "They wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived," 2 Tim. iii. 13. The wolf, though he often dissembles, and closely hides his nature, yet he will one time or other show himself to be a wolf.

In the days of Hadrian the emperor, there was one Bencosbie, who, gathering a multitude of Jews together, called himself Bencocuba, the son of a star, applying that prophecy to himself, Numb. xxiii. 17. But his mask was taken off, his hypocrisy discovered, and he was found to be Barchosaba, the son of a lie. This age hath afforded many such monsters; but their folly is discovered, and their practices abhorred. This was the young man's commendation in the text, that "there was found in him some real good towards the Lord."

2. This truth looks sourly and sadly upon such young men, who are so far from having good things in them towards the Lord, that they give themselves up to those youthful lusts and vanities that are dishonouring, provoking, and displeasing to the Lord; who roar, and revel, and gad, game and dice, and drink and drab, and what not. These make work with a witness for repentance, or hell, or the Physician of souls.

I shall but touch upon the evil of youth, and then come to that which is most intended.

CHAPTER III.

The several evils that most properly attend youth.

THE first evil that most properly attends youth is pride—pride of heart, pride of apparel, pride of parts. Young men are apt to be proud of health, strength, friends, relations, wit, wealth, wisdom. Two things are very rare: the one is to see a young man humble and watchful, and the other to see an old man contented and cheerful.

Bernard saith, that "Pride is the rich man's cousin;" and experience every day speaks out pride to be the young man's cousin. "God," said one, "had three sons: Lucifer, Adam, and Christ. The first aspired to be like God in power, and was therefore thrown down from heaven; the second, to be like Him in knowledge, and therefore deservedly driven out of Eden, when young; the third did altogether imitate and follow Him in His goodness, mercy, and humility, and, by so doing, obtained an everlasting inheritance."

Remember this, young men, and as you would get a paradise, and keep a paradise, get humble, and *keep humble*. Pride is an evil that puts men upon

all manner of evil. Accius, the poet, though he were a dwarf, yet would be pictured tall of stature. Psaphon, a proud Libyan, would needs be a god; and having caught some birds, he taught them to speak and prattle, "The great god Psaphon." Menecrates, a proud physician, wrote thus to king Philip, "Menecrates, a god, to Philip, a king." Proud Simon in Lucian, having got a little wealth, changed his name from Simon to Simonides, for that there were so many beggars of his kin; and set the house on fire wherein he was born, because nobody should point at it. What sad evils Pharaoh's pride, and Haman's pride, and Herod's pride, and Belshazzar's pride, put them upon, I shall not now mention.

Ah, young men! had others a window to look into your breasts, or did your hearts stand where your faces do, you would even be afraid of yourselves, you would loathe and abhor yourselves. Ah! young men, as you would have God to keep house with you; as you would have His mind and secrets made known to you; as you would have Christ to delight in you, and the Spirit to dwell in you; as you would be honoured among saints, attended and guarded by angels; get humble, and keep humble.

Tertullian's counsel to the young gallants of those times was excellent. "Clothe yourselves," said he, "with the silk of piety, and with the satin of

sanctity, and with the purple of modesty; so shall you have God himself to be your suitor."

II. The second evil that youth is subject to, is sensual pleasures and delights: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes." The wise man, by an ironical concession, bids him rejoice, &c., sin, &c. Thou art wilful, and resolved upon taking thy pleasure; go on, take thy course: this he speaks by way of mockery and bitter scoff: but know thou, that for all these things, God shall bring thee into judgment. So Samson made a feast; for so used the young men to do. The hearts of young men usually are much given up to pleasure. I have read of a young man, who was very much given up to pleasures, he, standing by St. Ambrose, and seeing his excellent death, turned to other young men by him, and said, "Oh! that I might live with you, and die with him." Sensual pleasures are like to those locusts, Rev. ix. 7, the crowns upon whose heads are said to be only as it were such or such in appearance, and like gold, but, ver. 10, it is said, there were (not *as it were*, but) stings in their tails. Sensual pleasures are but seeming and appearing pleasures; but the pains that attend them are true and real. He that delights in sensual pleasures shall find his greatest pleasures become his bitterest pains. The heathens looked upon the back parts of

pleasure, and saw it going away from them, and leaving a sting behind.

Pleasures pass away as soon as they have wearied out the body, and leave it as a bunch of grapes whose juice hath been pressed out; which made one to say, "*Nulla major voluptas quam voluptatis fastidium,*" "I see no greater pleasure in this world than the contempt of pleasure." Julian, though an apostate, yet professed that "the pleasures of the body were far below a great spirit." And Tully saith, "He is not worthy of the name of a man (*qui unum diem vellit esse in voluptate*) that would entirely spend one whole day in pleasures. It is better not to desire pleasures than to enjoy them." "I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?" Eccl. ii. 2. The interrogation bids a challenge to all the masters of mirth to produce any satisfactory fruit which it affordeth, if they could.

Xerxes being weary of all pleasures, promised rewards to the inventors of new pleasures, which, being invented, he nevertheless remained unsatisfied. As a bee flieth from flower to flower, and is not satisfied; and as a sick man removes from one bed to another, from one seat to another, from one chamber to another for ease, and finds none: so men given up to sensual pleasure, go from one pleasure to another, but can find no content, no satisfaction in their pleasures: Eccl. i. 8, "The eye is

not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." There is a curse of unsatisfiability upon the creature. Honours cannot satisfy the ambitious man, nor riches the covetous man, nor pleasures the voluptuous man. Man cannot take off the weariness of one pleasure by another; for after a few evaporated minutes are spent in pleasures, the body presently fails the mind, and the mind the desire, and the desire the satisfaction, and all the man.

Pleasures are Junos in the pursuit, and but clouds in the enjoyment. Pleasure is a beautiful harlot, sitting in her chariot, whose four wheels are pride, gluttony, lust, and idleness; the two horses are prosperity and abundance; the two drivers are idleness and security; her attendants and followers are guilt, grief, late repentance (if any), and oft death and ruin. Many great men, and many strong men, and many rich men, and many hopeful men, and many young men, have come to their ends by her; but never any enjoyed full satisfaction and content in her. Ah, young men, avoid this harlot, and come not near the door of her house. And for lawful pleasures, let me only say this, it is your wisdom only to touch them, to taste them, and to use them, as Mithridates used poison, to fortify yourselves against casual extremities and maladies. When Mr. Roger Ascham asked the Lady Jane Gray, how she could lose such pastime—her father,

with the duchess, being a-hunting in the park—smilingly answered, “All sport in the park is but a shadow of that pleasure I find in this book,” having a good book in her hand.

Augustine, before his conversion, could not tell how to live without those pleasures which he delighted much in; but when his nature was changed, and his heart graciously turned to the Lord, “O how sweet,” saith he, “is it to be without those former sweet delights.” Ah, young men, when once you come to experience the goodness and sweetness that is in the Lord, and in His word and ways, you will then sit down and grieve, that you have spent more wine in the cup than oil in the lamp. There are no pleasures so delighting, so satisfying, so ravishing, so engaging, and so abiding, as those that spring from union and communion with God; as those that flow from a sense of interest in God, and from an humble and holy walking with God,

III. The third sin of youth is rashness. They many times know little, and fear less, and so are apt rashly to run on and run out, often to their hazard: “Exhort young men to be sober-minded and discreet,” Tit. ii. 6. They are apt to be rash, to be hotspurs, as you may see in Rehoboam’s young counsellors, who counselled him to tell the people, that groaned under his burden, that his little finger should be thicker than his father’s loin; and that he would add to their yoke; and that whereas

his father had chastised them with whips, he would chastise them with scorpions. This rash counsel proved Rehoboam's ruin. Yea, David himself, though a good man, yet being in his warm blood, and young, how sadly was he overtaken with rashness? "As the Lord God of Israel liveth," saith he, "except thou hadst hastened, and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal, by the morning light, any man," 1 Samuel xxv. 34, 35. And this he binds with an oath. Because the master was foolishly wilful, the innocent servants must all be woeful; and because Nabal had been niggardly of his bread, David would be prodigal of his blood. Ah, how unlike a Christian, yea, how below a man, doth David carry it when his blood is up, and he a captive to rashness and passion! Rashness will admit of naught for reason, but what unreasonable self shall dictate for reason. As sloth seldom bringeth actions to good birth, so rashness makes them always abortive ere well formed. A rash spirit is an ungodlike spirit: a rash spirit is a weak spirit, it is an effeminate spirit: "A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit," Prov. xvii. 27; or, as the Hebrew will bear it, "is of a cool spirit;" not rash and hot, ready at every turn to put out his soul in wrath. Rashness unmans a man; it will put a man upon things below manhood. Herostratus, a hotspur, an obscure, base fellow, did, in one night, by fire destroy the temple of Diana at

Ephesus, which was two hundred and twenty years in building, at the cost of so many princes of all **Asia**, and beautified with the labour and cunning of so many excellent workmen. The truth is, there would be no end, should I discover the many sad and great evils that are ushered into the world by that one evil, rashness, which usually attends youth. And therefore, young men, decline it, and arm yourselves against it.

IV. The fourth sin that ordinarily attends on youth, is mocking and scoffing at religious men and religious things. They were young ones, that scoffingly and scornfully said to the prophet, "Go up, thou bald-head; go up, thou bald-head," 2 Kings ii. 23. And the young men derided and mocked Job: "But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock. Upon my right hand rise the youth; they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction," Job xxx. 1, 12. And, oh that this age did not afford many such monsters, who are notable, who are infamous in this black art of scoffing and deriding the people of God and the ways of God!

The Athenians once scoffed at Scylla's wife, and it had well nigh cost the razing of their city, he was so provoked with the indignity. And will you think it safe to scoff at the people of God, who are the spouse of Christ, who are as the apple of His eye,

who are the signet of His right hand, His portion, His pleasant portion, His inheritance, His jewel, His royal diadem? Ah, young men, will you seriously consider how sadly and sorely He hath punished other scoffers and mockers? And by His judgments on them, be warned never to scoff at the people of God or His ways more. Julian the emperor was a great scoffer of Christians, but at last he was struck with an arrow from heaven, that made him cry out, "*Vicisti Galileæ*," "Thou Galilean (meaning our Saviour Christ) hast overcome me." Felix, for one malicious scoff, did nothing day and night but vomit blood, till his unhappy soul was separated from his wretched body. Pherecides was consumed by worms alive, for giving religion but a nickname. Lucian, for barking against religion like a dog, was, by the just judgment of God, devoured by dogs. Remember these dreadful judgments of God on scoffers, and if you like them, then mock on, scoff on; but know that justice will at last be even with you, nay, above you.

V. The fifth and last evil that I shall mention, that attends and waits on youth, is lustfulness and wantonness: which occasioned aged Paul to caution his young Timothy to "flee youthful lusts," 2 Tim. ii. 22. Timothy was a chaste and chastened piece; he was much sanctified and mortified; his graces were high, and corruptions low; he walked up and down this world with dying thoughts, and with a weak, dis-

tempered, declining, dying body; his heart was in heaven, and his foot in the grave: and yet youth is such a slippery age, that Paul commands him to flee, to post from youthful lusts. Though Timothy was a good man, a weak, sickly man, a marvellous temperate man, drinking water rather than wine, yet he was but a man, yea, a young man; and therefore Paul's counsel and command is, that he "flee youthful lusts." And Solomon, who had sadly experienced the slipperiness of youth, gives this counsel, "Put away the evil of thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity," Eccl. xi. 10. He was a young man that followed the harlot to her house; he was young in years and young in knowledge. Salazer, upon the words, saith, "That was an happy age that afforded but one simple young man among many; whereas late times afford greater store." Ah, too many of the youths of this age, instead of flying from youthful lusts, post and pursue after youthful lusts. Chrysostom, speaking of youth, saith it is "*difficilem, jactabilem, fallibilem, vehementissimisque egentem frænis,*" "hard to be ruled, easy to be drawn away, apt to be deceived, and standing in need of very violent reins."

The ancients did picture Youth like a young man naked, with a veil over his face, his right hand bound behind him, his left hand loose; and Time behind him, pulling one thread out of his veil every day; intimating that young men are void of know-

ledge and blind, unfit to do good, ready to do evil, till time, by little and little, makes them wiser. Well, young man, remember this, that the least sparkling and kindling of lusts will first or last cost thee groans and griefs, tears and terrors enough. These five are the sins that usually are waiting and attending on youth; but from these the young man in the text was by grace preserved and secured; which is more than I dare affirm of all into whose hands this treatise shall fall. But though these five are the sins of youth; yet they are not all the sins of youth; for youth is capable of, and subject to, all other sins whatsoever; but these are the special sins that most usually wait and attend on young men when they are in the spring and morning of their youth.

CHAPTER IV.

Exhortation to young persons to be good betimes, and motives moving thereto.

I SHALL now hasten to the main use that I do intend to stand upon, and that is, an use of exhortation to all young persons.

Ah, sirs! as you tender the glory of God, the good of your bodies, the joy of your Christian friends, and the salvation of your own souls, be exhorted and persuaded to be really good! It was the praise and honour of Abijah, that there was found in him some good thing towards the Lord in the primrose of his childhood. Oh, that it might be your honour and happiness to be really good, that it might be to you a praise and a name, that in the morning of your youth you have begun to seek the Lord, and to know and love the Lord, and to get an interest and propriety in the Lord.

Now, that this exhortation may stick and take, I beseech you seriously to weigh and ponder these following motives or considerations:

I. Consider, it is an honour to be good betimes. A young saint is like the morning star; he is like a

pearl in a gold ring. It is mentioned as a singular honour to the believing Jews, that they first trusted in Christ: Eph. i. 12, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." This was their praise, their crown, that they were first converted and turned to Christ and Christianity. So St. Paul, mentioning Andronicus and Junia, doth not omit this circumstance of praise and honour, that they were in Christ before him: Rom. xvi. 7, "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me." And so it was the honour of the house of Stephanas that they were the first-fruits of Achaia; it was their glory, that they were the first that received and welcomed the gospel in Achaia. It is a greater honour for a young man to outwrestle sin, Satan, temptation, the world, and lust, than ever Alexander the Great could attain unto. It was Judah's praise and honour that they were first in fetching home David their king.

Ah! young men and women, it will be your eternal praise and honour, if you shall be before others, if you shall be the first among many who shall know the Lord, and seek the Lord; who shall receive the Lord, and embrace Him; who shall cleave to the Lord, and serve Him; who shall honour the Lord, and obey Him; who shall delight in the Lord, and walk with Him. The Romans built Virtue's *and Honour's* temples close together, to show that

the way to honour was by virtue. And, indeed, there is no crown to that which goodness sets upon a man's head; all other honour is fading and withering. Adonibesek, a mighty prince, is suddenly made fellow-companion with the dogs; and Nebuchadnezzar, a mighty conqueror, turned a-grazing among the oxen; and Herod, reduced from a conceited god to be the loathsomest of men, living carrion, arrested by the vilest of creatures, upon the suit of his affronted Creator; and Haman, feasted with the king one day, and made a feast for crows the next. I might tell you of Baljazet and Bellisarius, two of the greatest commanders in the world, and many others, who have suddenly fallen from the top of worldly honour and felicity into the greatest contempt and misery; but I shall not at this time. But that honour that rises from men's being gracious betimes, is such honour that the world can neither give nor take; it is honour, it is a crown that will still be green and flourishing; it is honour that will bed and board with a man, that will abide with a man under all trials and changes, that will to the grave, that will to heaven with a man.

Ah, sirs! it is no small honour to you who are in the spring and morning of your days, that the Lord hath left upon record several instances of His love and delight in young men. He chose David, a younger brother, and passed by his elder brothers;

He frowns upon Esau, and passes by his door, and sets His love and delight upon Jacob, the younger brother; He kindly and lovingly accepts of Abel's person and sacrifice, and rejects both Cain's person and sacrifice, though he was the elder brother. Among all the disciples, John was the youngest and the most and best beloved. There was but one young man that came to Christ, and he came not aright; and all the good that was in him was but some moral good; and yet Christ loved him with a love of pity and compassion. The Greek word signifies "to speak friendly and deal gently with one." And so did Christ with him. All which should exceedingly encourage young men to be good betimes, to be gracious in the morning of their youth. No way to true honour like this. But,

II. Consider, Christ loved poor sinners, and gave Himself for them, when He was in the prime of His age (being supposed to be about thirty and three). And will you put Him off with the worst of your time? Ah, young men! Christ gave Himself up to death; He made Himself an offering for your sins, for your sakes, when He was in the prime and flower of His age. And why, then, should you put off Christ to old age? Did He die for sin in the prime of His age? And will you not die to sin in the prime of your age? Did He offer Himself for you in the spring and morning of His years? And will not you offer up yourselves to Him in the spring and morning of your

years? Oh, give not Christ cause to say, "I died for you betimes; but you have not lived to Me betimes. I was early in My sufferings for you; but you have not been early in your returning to Me. I made haste to complete your redemption; but you have made no haste to secure your vocation and election. I stayed not, I lingered not; but soon suffered what I was to suffer, and quickly did what was to be done for your eternal welfare; but you have stayed and lingered (like Lot in Sodom), and have not done what you might have done, in order to your everlasting good. In the primrose of My days I sweat for you, I wept for you, I bled for you, I hung upon the cross for you, I bore the wrath of My Father for you; but you have not, in the primrose of your days, sweat under the sense of Divine displeasure, or wept over your sins, nor mourned over Me, whom you have so often grieved and pierced. I could not be quiet nor satisfied till I had put you in a capacity, into a possibility of salvation; and yet you are well enough quieted and satisfied, though you do not know whether ever you shall be saved."

Ah, sirs! how sad would it be with you, if Jesus Christ should secretly thus expostulate with your conscience in this your day! Oh! how terrible would it be with you, if Christ should thus visibly plead against you in His great day! Ah, young men and women, who but souls much left of God, blinded by Satan, and hardened in sin, can hear Jesus Christ speak-

ing thus to them: "I suffered for sinners, I laid down a ransom for souls, I pacified My Father's wrath, and satisfied His justice; I merited grace and mercy for sinners; I brought in an everlasting righteousness upon the world," &c.; I say, who can hear Jesus Christ speaking thus, and not fall in love and league with Christ, and his soul not unite to Christ, and resign to Christ, and cleave to Christ, and for ever be one with Christ, except it be such that are for ever left by Christ? Well, remember this, "*Quanto pro nobis vilior, tanto nobis charior,*" "The more vile Christ made Himself for us, the more dear He ought to be unto us." Ah! young men, remember this: When Christ was young, He was tempted and tried; when He was in the morning of His days, His wounds were deep, His burden weighty, His cup bitter, His sweat painful, His agony and torment above conception, beyond expression. When He was young, that blessed head of His was crowned with thorns; and those eyes of His, that were purer than the sun, were put out by the darkness of death; and those ears of His, that now hear nothing but the hallelujahs of saints and angels, were filled with the blasphemies of the multitude; and that blessed, beautiful face of His, which was fairer than the sons of men, was spit on by beastly, filthy wretches; and that gracious mouth and tongue, that spake as never man spake, was slandered and accused of blasphemy; *and those hands of His, which healed the sick, which*

gave out pardon, which swayed a sceptre in heaven, and another on earth, were nailed to the cross; and those feet, that were beautiful upon the mountains, that brought the glad tidings of peace and salvation into the world, and that were like unto fine brass, were also nailed to the cross. All these great and sad things did Jesus suffer for you in the prime and flower of His days. And oh! what an unspeakable provocation should this be to all young ones to give up themselves to Christ, to serve, love, honour, and obey Him, even in the spring and morning of their youth!

“Let the thoughts of a crucified Christ,” said one, “be never out of your mind. Let them be meat and drink unto you; let them be your sweetness and consolation, your honey and your desire, your reading and your meditation, your life, death, and resurrection.”

III. That it is the best and choicest way in the world, to be rich in gracious experiences, which are the best riches in all the world. As he that sets up for himself is in the most hopeful way to be rich, so he that is good in good earnest is in the ready way, the high way of being rich in grace and rich in goodness. They usually prove men of great experience and great observation. God loves to show these His beauty, and His glory in His sanctuary. He delights to cause His glory and His goodness to pass before such. These shall find all His paths drop

marrow and fatness. For these the Lord of hosts will make "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined," Isa. xxv. 6. These shall have all manner of pleasant fruits laid up at their gates for their well-beloved. None have so many choice pledges of Christ's love, nor so many sweet kisses of Christ's mouth, nor so many embraces in Christ's arms, as those souls that are good. O the grace, the goodness, the sweetness, the fatness that Christ is still a-dropping into their hearts! Christ will make their hearts His largest treasury; He will lay up most of His heavenly treasure in their souls. There He will store up mercies new and old; there He will treasure up all plenty, rarity, and variety; there He will lay up all that heart can wish, or need require. O the many drops of myrrh that fall from Christ's fingers upon their hearts! O the many secrets that Christ reveals in their ears! O the many love-letters that Christ sends to these! O the many visits that He gives to these! O the turns, the walks that He hath in paradise with these! There are none in the world for experience and intelligence to these. Ah, young men, as you would be rich in the best riches, begin to be good. As there are no riches to spiritual riches, so there is no way to be rich in these riches, but by beginning to be good in good earnest.

As for worldly riches, philosophers have *contemned them*, and preferred a contemplative life

above them. And shall not Christians much more? The prophet calls them "thick clay," which will sooner break the back than enlighten the heart. They cannot better the soul, they cannot enrich the soul. Ah, how many threadbare souls are to be found under silken cloaks and gowns! How often are worldly riches like hangmen; they hide men's faces with a covering, that they may not see their own end, and then they hang them. And if they do not hang you, they will shortly leave you; they make themselves wings and flee away. When one was commending the riches and wealth of merchants, "I do not love that wealth," saith a heathen, "that hangs upon ropes; if they break, the ship miscarrieth, and all is lost." "He is rich enough," saith St. Jerome, "that lacketh not bread; and high enough in dignity, that is not forced to serve."

"This world's wealth that men so much desire,
May well be liken'd to a burning fire,
Whereof a little can do little harm,
But profit much our bodies well to warm:
But take too much, and surely thou shalt burn.
So too much wealth to too much woe doth turn."

It was an excellent saying of Lewis of Bavyer, emperor of Germany, "*Hujusmodi corporandæ sunt opes quæ cum naufragio simul enatent*," "Such goods are worth getting and owning, as will not sink or wash away, if a shipwreck happen, but will wade and swim out with us." We see such are the spiri-

tual riches that will attend those who, in the spring and morning of their youth, shall know the Lord, and serve the Lord, and get an interest in the Lord. And thus much for the third motive.

IV. Consider that the present time, the present day, is the only season that you are sure of. Time past cannot be recalled, and time to come cannot be ascertained: Heb. iii. 15, "To-day, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." "Behold, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." 2 Cor. vi. 2. Some there be that trifle away their time, and fool away their souls and their salvation. To prevent this, the apostle beats upon the present opportunity; because if that be once past, there is no recovering it. Therefore, as the mariner takes the first winds to sail; and as the merchant takes his first opportunity of buying and selling; and as the husbandman takes the first opportunity of sowing and reaping; so should young men take the present season, the present day, which is their day, to be good towards the Lord, to seek Him and serve Him, and not to post off the present season; for they know not what another day, another hour, another moment may bring forth. That door of grace that is open to-day, may be shut to-morrow; that golden sceptre of mercy that is held forth in the gospel this day, may be taken in the next day; that love that this hour is upon the bare knee, entreating and beseeching young men to break off

their sins by repentance, to return to the Lord, to lay hold on His strength, and be at peace with Him, may the next hour be turned into wrath. Ah! the noble motions that have been lost, the good purposes that have withered, the immortal souls that have miscarried, by putting off the present season, the present day. St. Paul, discoursing before Felix of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, and, in this discourse, striking at two special vices that Felix was particularly guilty of, he falls a-trembling; and being on the rack to hear such doctrine, he bids St. Paul depart for that time, and he would call for him at a convenient season. Here Felix neglected his present season. And we never read that after this he found a convenient time or season to hear St. Paul make an end of the subject he had begun. So Christ made a very fair offer to the young man in the gospel: Matth. xix. 21, "Go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." Here Christ offers heavenly treasures for earthly treasures, unmixed treasures for mixed treasures, perfect treasures for imperfect treasures, satisfying treasures for unsatisfying treasures, lasting treasures for fading treasures. But the young man slips his opportunity, his season, and goes away sorrowful; and we never read more of him.

Ah! young men, do not put off the present season, do not neglect the present day; there is no time

yours but the present time; no day yours but the present day; and therefore do not please yourselves, and feed yourselves with hopes of time to come, and that you will repent, but not yet; and lay hold on mercy, but not yet; and give up yourselves to the Lord next week, next month, or next year; for that God that hath promised you mercy and favour, upon the day of your return, hath not promised to prolong your lives till that day comes. When a soldier was brought before Lamacus, a commander, for misbehaviour, and pleaded he would do so no more, Lamacus answered, "*Non licet in bello bis peccare,*" "No man must offend twice in war." So God, especially in these gospel-days, wherein the motions of Divine justice are more smart and quick than in former days, haply will not suffer men twice to neglect the day of grace, and let slip the season of mercy.

Ah! young men, you say you will be good toward the Lord before you die. But if you are not good towards the Lord to-day, you may die to-morrow; nay, justice may leave him to be his own executioner to-morrow, who will not repent and seek the Lord to-day. I have read of a certain young man, who, being admonished of the evil of his way and course, and pressed to leave off his wickedness, by the consideration of death, judgment, and eternity that was a-coming, answered, "What do you tell me of these things? I will do well enough; for when death

comes, I will speak but three words, and will help all. And so still he went on in his sinful ways; but in the end, coming to a bridge on horseback, to go over a deep water, the horse stumbling, and he labouring to recover his horse, but could not; at last he lets go the bridle, and gave up himself and horse to the waters, and was heard to say these three words, "Devil take all." Here were three dreadful words indeed, and an example, with a witness, for all young men to beware, who think to repent with a three-words repentance at last.

Young men, I will suppose you to be good accountants. Now, if you please to count the number, and mark the age of the sacrifices in the Old Testament, you shall find more kids and lambs offered than goats and old sheep. You have no lease of your lives; you are not sure that you shall live to Isaac's age, to live till your eyes wax dim; you are not sure that you shall live to Jacob's years, and die leaning upon the top of a staff. You read of them who die in their youth, and whose lives are among the unclean. Slip not the present season, neglect not the day of grace, let not Satan keep your souls and Christ any longer asunder, by telling you, that you are too young, that hereafter will be time enough. St. Austin tells us, that by this very temptation, the devil kept him off from receiving Christ, from closing with Christ, seven years together. He could no sooner think of inquiring after Christ, of getting

an interest in Christ, of leaving off his sinful courses, but Satan would be still a-suggesting, "Thou art too young to leave thy drunkenness; thou art too young to leave thy Delilahs," till at last he cried out, "How long shall I say, It is too soon? Why may I not repent to-day, and lay hold on Jesus Christ to-day?"

Ah, young men, this is your day, this is your season; if you will not now hearken and obey, you may perish for ever. Cæsar had a letter given him by Artimedorus that morning he went to the Senate, wherein notice was given him of all the conspiracy of his murderers; so that with ease he might have prevented his death; but, neglecting the reading of it, was slain. He slipped his season, and died for it. Ah, how many, for slipping gracious seasons and opportunities, have died for ever! Soul opportunities are more worth than a thousand worlds; mercy is in them, grace and glory are in them, heaven and eternity are in them.

V. Consider how just it is with God to reserve the dregs of His wrath for them who reserve the dregs of their time for Him. How can a husband embrace that wife in her old age, who hath spent all the time of her youth in following after strangers? Will any man receive such into his service, who have all their days served his enemies, and received such wounds, blows, and bruises that render them *unfit for service*?

Ah! young men, do not thus foolishly and unwisely requite the Lord for all His patient waiting, His gracious wooing, and His merciful dealing with you. Ah! do not put off God to old age; for old, lame, and sick sacrifices rarely reach as high as heaven. Is not old age very unteachable? In old age, are not men very unapt to take in, and as unapt to give out? In old age, oftentimes men are men and no men; they have eyes, but see not; ears, but hear not; tongues, but speak not; feet, but walk not. An aged man is but a moving anatomy, or a living mortuary. Now, how unlovely, how uncomely, how unworthily, nay, how incensing, how provoking a thing must this needs be, when men will dally with God, and put Him off till their doting days have overtaken them, till their spring is past, their summer overpast, and they arrived at the fall of the leaf, yea, till winter colours have stained their heads with gray and hoary hairs? How provoking this is, you may see in those sad words of Jeremiah, ch. xxii. 21, "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear: this hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice." But will God put up with this at their hands? No. Therefore it follows in the next verse, "Surely shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness."

Oh that young men would let this scripture lie warm every morning upon their hearts, that so they may not dare to put off God, and provoke Him to

their own confusion! Though you are young and in your strength yet, are you stronger than God? Can you make your party good with Him? If you must needs be a-provoking, provoke them that are your matches, and do not contend with Him that is mightier than you, that can command you into nothing, or into hell at pleasure.

VI. Consider, that the sooner you are good on earth, the greater will your reward be in heaven.

The sooner you are gracious, the more at last you will be glorious. You read in the Scripture of a reward, of a great reward, and of a full reward. Now, those that are good betimes, that know, seek, serve, and love the Lord, in the spring and morning of their youth, they are in the fairest way of gaining the greatest and fullest reward. And this I shall make clear by that which follows:

1. The sooner any man begins to be really good, the more good he will do in this world. Now, the more good any man doth on earth, the more glory he shall have in heaven. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Man's wages, man's rewards shall be according to his works. He that doth most work here, shall have most reward hereafter. God will at last proportion *the one to the other*, the reward to the work: "He

which soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully," 2 Cor. ix. 6. Though no man shall be rewarded for his works, yet God will at last measure out happiness and blessedness to His people according to their service, faithfulness, diligence, and work in this world. Grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace at the full. Glory is nothing else but a bright constellation of graces; happiness nothing but the quintessence of holiness. Grace and glory differ (*non specie, sed gradu*) in degree, not kind, as the learned speak. Grace and glory differ very little; the one is the seed, the other is the flower. Grace is glory militant, and glory is grace triumphant. And a man may as well plead for equal degrees of grace in this world, as he may plead for equal degrees of glory in the other world. Surely the more grace here, the more glory hereafter; and the more work Christians do on earth, the more glory they shall have in heaven. And the sooner men begin to be good, the more good they will do in this world; and the more they do here, the more they shall have hereafter. Philosophers seem to weigh our virtues with our vices, and according to the preponderance of either, denominate us good or bad, and so deliver us up to reward or punishment. "No man can commend good works magnificently enough," saith Luther, "for one work of a Christian is more precious than heaven and earth; and therefore all the world cannot suffi-

ciently reward one good work." And, in another place, saith the same author, "If I might have my desire, I would rather choose the meanest work of a country Christian, or poor maid, than all the victories and triumphs of Alexander the Great and of Julius Cæsar.

And again, "Whatsoever the saints do, though ever so small and mean, it is great and glorious, because they do all in faith, and by the word," saith the same author. To prevent mistakes, you must remember, that the works that Jesus Christ will reward at last are supernatural works: they are: 1. Works of God; 2. Wrought from God; 3. For God; 4. In God; 5. According to God. They are works that flow from supernatural principles, and they are directed to supernatural ends, and performed in a supernatural way. Now, the sooner a man begins to be good, the more he will abound in these good works; and the more, doubtless, any man abounds in such good works on earth, the greater reward he shall have in heaven. Yet it must not be forgotten, that the best actions, the best works of hypocrites, and all men out of Christ, are but *splendida peccata*, fair and shining sins, beautiful abominations. And as the Phoenix in Arabia gathers sweet odoriferous sticks together, and then blows them with her wings, and burns herself with them; so many a carnal professor burns himself with his *own good works*, that is, by his expecting and trust-

ing to receive that by his works, that is only to be received and expected from Jesus Christ. Though all that men can do towards the meriting of heaven is no more than the lifting up of a fe straw towards the meriting of a kingdom; yet such a proud piece man is, that he is ready enough to say with proud Vega, "*Cælum gratis non accipiam,*" "I will not have heaven of free cost." A proud heart would fain have that of debt which is merely of grace; and desires that to be of purchase which God hath intended to be of free mercy: which made one to say, "that he would swim through a sea of brimstone that he might come to heaven at last." But he that swims not thither through the sea of Christ's blood, shall never come there; man must swim thither, not through brimstone, but through blood, or he miscarries for ever.

2. Again, the sooner a man begins to be good, the more serviceable he will be to others, and the more he will provoke others to good. Now, all the good that you provoke others to, by counsel or carriage, shall be put down to your own account; as all the sins that men provoke others to are put down to their accounts. David did but send a letter concerning the death of Uriah, and the charge cometh, "Thou hast slain Uriah with the sword," 2 Sam. xii. 9. The more I stir up others to sow, the more at last I shall reap; the sooner a man begins to be good, the more good he will do, the more serviceable he will

be in the town or city where he dwells, in the family where he lives, among his relations, wife, children, kindred, servants, with whom he converses.

The sooner a man begins to be gracious, the sooner and the more useful will his arts, his parts, his gifts, his graces, his mercies, his experiences, his life, his labours, his prayers, his counsels, his example be to all that are with him, to all that are about him.

“*Lilmod lelammed,*” “We therefore learn, that we may teach,” is a proverb among the Rabbins. “And I do therefore lay in, and lay up,” saith the heathen, “that I may draw forth again, and lay out for the good of many.”

Ah! young men, as you would be useful and serviceable to many, begin to be good, and to lay in, and to lay up, and lay out for the profit and advantage of others. Augustine accounted nothing his own that he did not communicate to others. The bee doth store her hive out of all sorts of flowers, for the common benefit. It is a base and unworthy spirit for a man to make himself the centre of all his actions. The very heathen man could say that “A man’s country, and his friends, and others, challenge a great part of him.” And, indeed, the best way to do ourselves good, is to be a-doing good to others; the best way to gather, is to scatter. Memorable is that story of Pyrrhus, a merchant of Ithica, who, at sea espying an ancient man a captive in a pirate’s ship, took compassion on him, and

redeemed him, and bought his commodities which the pirates had taken from him, which were certain barrels of pitch. The old man perceiving, that not for any good service he could do him, nor for the gain of that commodity, but merely out of charity and pity he had done this, discovered a great mass of treasure hid in the pitch, whereby the merchant in a very short time became very rich, at which very time God made that word good, 2 Cor. ix. 6, "He that soweth liberally shall reap liberally;" and that word, Prov. xi. 25, "The liberal soul shall be made fat;" and that word, "The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand," Isa. xxxii. 8. It is fabled of Midas, that whatever he touched he turned into gold. It is certain that a liberal hand, a liberal heart, turns all into gold, into gain, as Scripture and experience do abundantly evidence. Now, if you put all these things together, nothing is more evident than that those that begin to be good betimes, are in the way, the ready way, the high way to be high in heaven, when they shall cease from breathing on earth. And therefore, young men, as you would be high in heaven, as you would have a great reward, a full reward, a massy, weighty crown, O labour to be good betimes! labour to get acquaintance with the Lord, and an interest in the Lord, in the spring and morning of your days!

VII. Consider that the Lord is very much affected and taken with your seeking Him, and

following after Him, in the spring and morning of your youth.

“Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown,” Jer. ii. 2.

Ah! how kindly, how sweetly did the Lord take this at their hands, that they followed Him in their youth; while their bones were full of marrow, while they were strong and fit for service, while nature was fresh, lively, and vigorous! In the law, God called for the first of all things; He required not only the first-fruits, but the very first of the first: Exod. xxiii. 19, “The first of the first-fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God.” God is the first Being, the first Good, and therefore deserves the first of the first, and the best of the best; and the first and the best is not too good for Him who is goodness itself. God, as we read in Lev. ii. 14, is so passionately set upon having the first of the first, that he will not stay till the green ears of corn be ripe, but will have the green ears of corn dried in the fire, lest He should lose His longing.

As many young women and sickly children cannot stay till the fruit be ripe, but must have it while it is green; even so saith God, “My heart, my desires are so vehemently set upon the first-fruits,

the first things, that I cannot stay, I cannot satisfy myself without them." And what would God teach us by all this, but to serve Him with the first-fruits of our age, the primrose of our childhood, the morning of our youth! God hath given you of the best; do not put Him off with the worst, with the worst of your time, the worst of your days, the worst of your strength, lest "He swear in His wrath that you shall never enter into His rest," Heb. iii. 11.

VIII. Consider, this may be a special means to prevent many black temptations, and an encouragement to withstand all temptations that you may meet with from a tempting devil and a tempting world.

An early turning to the Lord will prevent many temptations to despair, many temptations to neglect the means openly, to despise the means secretly. Many temptations about the Being of God, the goodness, faithfulness, truth, and justice of God; temptations to despair, temptations to lay violent hands on a man's self, temptations to question all that God hath said, and that Christ hath suffered, arise many times from men's delaying and putting off God to the last; all which, with many others, are prevented by man's seeking and serving the Lord in the spring and morning of his youth. It is reported of the harts of Scythia, that they teach their young ones to leap from bank to bank, from rock to rock, from one turf to another, by leaping before them,

by which means, when they are hunted, no beast of prey can overtake them. So when persons exercise themselves in godliness when they are young; when they leap from one measure of holiness to another, when they are in the morning of their days; Satan, that mighty hunter after souls, may pursue them with his temptations, but he shall not overtake them, he shall not prevail over them. As you see in Moses, Joseph, Daniel, and in the three children: these knew the Lord, and gave up themselves to the Lord in the prime and primrose of their youth, and these were all temptation-proof; Satan and the world pursued them, but could not overtake them; when the devil and the world had done their worst, the young men's bows abode in strength, and their hands, to resist, were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. "*Ego non sum ego,*" said that young convert, when tempted, "I am not the man that I was."

Luther tells of a young virgin who used to resist all temptations with this, "*Christiana sum,*" "I am a Christian." Early converts may say, when tempted, as he, "Tell me not, Satan, what I have been, but what I am and will be;" or as he in the like case, "Whatsoever I was, I am now in Christ, a new creature, and that is it which troubleth thee;" or as he, "The more desperate my disease was, the more I admire the Physician." Yea, thou mayest strain it a peg higher, and say, "The greater my sins

were, the greater is my honour;" as the devils that once Mary Magdalene had, are mentioned for her glory. When Pyrrhus tempted Fabricius the first day with an elephant, so huge and monstrous a beast as before he had not seen, the next day with money and promises of honour, he answered, "I fear not thy force, I am too wise for thy fraud."

Ah! young men, as you would be free from the saddest and darkest temptations, and as you would be armed against all temptations, O labour as for life to be good; seek and serve the Lord in the morning of your youth! No way like this for preventing earth-quakes, heart-quakes, stormy days, and winter nights.

IX. Consider the worth and excellency of your souls. A soul is a spiritual, immortal substance. It is capable of the knowledge of God; it is capable of union with God, of communion with God, and of a blessed and happy fruition of God.

Christ left His Father's bosom for the good of souls. He assumed man's nature for the salvation of man's soul. Christ prayed for souls. He sweat for souls; He wept for souls; He bled for souls; He hung on the cross for souls; He trode the wine-press of the Father's wrath for souls; He died for souls; He rose again from death for souls; He ascended for souls; He intercedes for souls; and all the glorious preparations that He hath been making in heaven these sixteen hundred years, are for souls.

Ah ! young men, do not play the courtier with your precious souls. The courtier doth all things late ; he rises late, dines late, sups late, goes to bed late, repents late.

Ah ! sirs, the good of your souls is before all, above all other things in the world, to be first regarded and provided for ; and that partly because it is the best and more noble part of man, and partly because therein mostly and properly is the image of God stamped ; and partly because it is the first converted ; and partly because it shall be the first and most glorified.

Ah ! young men, if they be worse than infidels that make no provision for their families, what monsters are they that make no provision for their own souls ! This will be bitterness in the end.

Cæsar Borgeas, being sick unto death, lamenting, said, " When I lived, I provided for every thing but death ; now I must die, and am unprovided to die." This was a dart at his heart ; and it will at last be a dagger at yours, who feast your bodies, but starve your souls ; who make liberal provision for your ignoble parts, but no provision for your more noble part.

If they deserve a hanging, who feast their slaves and starve their wives ; that make provision for their enemies, but none for their friends ; how will you escape hanging in hell, who make provision for every thing, yea, for your very lusts, but make no pro-

vision for your immortal souls? We hate the Turk for selling Christians for slaves; and what shall we think, then, of those who sell themselves, their precious souls, for toys and trifles that cannot profit, who practically say, what once a profane nobleman of Naples verbally said, viz., that "he had two souls in his body, one for God, and another for whosoever will buy it."

Ah! young men, do not pawn your souls, do not sell your souls, do not exchange away your souls, do not trifle and fool away your precious souls. They are jewels, more worth than a thousand worlds, yea, than heaven and earth. If they are safe, all is safe; but if they are lost, all is lost, God lost, and Christ lost, and the society of glorious angels and blessed saints lost, and heaven lost, and that for ever. Granctensis tells of a woman that was so affected with souls miscarrying, that she besought God to stop up the passage into hell with her soul and body, that none might have entrance.

Oh, that all young persons were so affected with the worth and excellency of their souls, and so alarmed with the hazard and danger of losing their souls, as that they may, in the spring and morning of their days, inquire after the Lord, and seek Him, and serve Him with all their might; that so their precious and immortal souls may be safe and happy for ever. But if all this will not do, then, in the last place,

X. Consider, young men, that God will at last bring you to a reckoning; He will at last bring you to judgment: Eccl. xi. 9, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." In these words you have two things: First, an ironical concession; He bids him rejoice; He yields him what he would have by irony, by way of mockery and bitter scoff: Now, thou art young and strong, lively and lusty, and thy bones are full of marrow; thou art resolved to be proud and scornful, to indulge the flesh and to follow thy delights and pleasures; well, take thy course if thou darest; or, if thou hast a mind to it, if thy heart be set upon it, "Rejoice in thy youth." The second is a commination, or a sad and severe premonition: "But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." "Will bring thee." These words import two things: 1. The unwillingness of youth to come to judgment; 2. The unavoidable that youth must come to judgment; but how soon you shall be brought to judgment, is only known to God.

St. Augustin confesses in one of his books, that as long as his conscience was gnawed with the guilt of some youthful lust he was once ensnared with, the very hearing of a day of judgment was even a hell to

him. History tells us of a young man, who being for some capital offence condemned to die, grew gray in one night's space, and was therefore pitied and spared.

Ah, young men, that the serious thoughts of this great day may put you upon breaking off the sins of your youth; and the dedicating of yourselves to the knowledge, love, and service of the Lord, in the spring and flower of your days! Ah, young men, consider the errors of your lives, the wickedness of your hearts, the sinfulness of your lives, and that strict account that ere long you must be brought to, before the Judge of all the world. The heathens themselves had some kind of dread and expectation of such a day; and therefore when St. Paul spake of judgment to come, Felix trembled, though a heathen.

The bringing into judgment is a thing which is known by reason, and is clear by the light of nature. Wherefore, in Austria, one of the nobles dying, who had lived 93 years, and had spent all his life in pleasures and delights, never being troubled with any infirmity; and this being told to Frederick, the emperor: "From whence," saith he, "we may conclude the soul's immortality; for if there be a God that ruleth this world, as divines and philosophers do teach; and that He is just, no one denieth; surely there are other places to which souls after death do go, and do receive for their

deeds, either reward or punishment; for here we see that neither rewards are given to the good, nor punishment to the evil."

Ah, young men, knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, and the terror of this day, oh that you would be persuaded to flee from the wrath to come, to cast away the idols of your souls, to "repent and be converted" in the primrose of your youth, "that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Acts iii. 19; or else, woe, woe to you that ever were born!

I have read a story of one who, being risen from the dead, and being asked in what condition he was, made answer, "No man doth believe, no man doth believe." And being farther asked what he meant by that repetition, he answered, "No man doth believe how exactly God examineth, how strictly God judgeth, how severely He punisheth. Oh that the ways of most young persons did declare to all the world that they do not, that they will not believe the dread and terror of that day that will admit of no plea nor place for apology or appeal. The highest and last tribunal can never be appealed from nor repealed.

Now, if, for all that hath been said, you are resolved to spend the flower of your days and the prime of your strength in the service of sin and the world, then know, that no tongue can express

heart can conceive, that trouble of mind, that terror of soul, that horror of conscience, that fear and amazement, that weeping and wailing, that crying and roaring, that sighing and groaning, that cursing and banning, that stamping and tearing, that wringing of hands and gnashing of teeth, that certainly shall attend you, when God shall bring you into judgment for all your looseness and lightness, for all your wickedness and wantonness, for all your profaneness and baseness, for all your neglect of God, your grieving the Comforter, your trampling under foot the blood of a Saviour; for your despising the means, for your prizing earth above heaven, and the pleasures of this world above the pleasures that be at God's right hand. Oh, how will you wish, in that day, when your sins shall be charged on you, when conscience shall be gnawing within you, when justice shall be armed against you, when the world shall be a flaming fire about you, when the gates of heaven shall be shut against you, and the flames of hell ready to take hold of you, when angels and saints shall sit in judgment upon you, and for ever turn their faces from you; when evil spirits shall be terrifying you, and Jesus Christ for ever disowning you; how will you, I say, wish in that day that you had never been born, or that you might now be unborn, or that your mothers' wombs had proved your tombs! O how will you then wish to be turned into a bird, a beast, a stock, a stone, a tree! O

that our immortal souls were mortal! O that we were nothing! O that we were anything but what we are!

I have read a remarkable story of a king that was heavy and sad, and wept; which, when his brother saw, he asked him why he was so pensive. "Because," saith he, "I have judged others, and now I must be judged myself." "And why," saith his brother, "do you so take on for this; it will haply be a long time ere that day come, and besides, that is but a slight matter." The king said little to it for the present.

Now it was a custom in that country, when any had committed treason, there was a trumpet sounded at his door in the night-time, and he was next day brought out to be executed. Now the king commanded a trumpet to be sounded at his brother's door in the night-time, who, awakening out of his sleep, when he heard it, arose, and came quaking to the king. "How now," said the king, "what's the matter, that you are so affrighted?" "I am," said he, "charged with treason, and next morning I shall be executed." "Why," said the king to him again, "are you so troubled about that, knowing that you shall be judged by your brother, and for that matter that your conscience tells you you are clear of? How much more therefore may I be afraid, seeing that God shall judge me, and not in a matter that my conscience frees me of, but of that whereof I am

guilty? And besides this, if the worst come, it is but a temporary death you shall die, but I am liable to death eternal, both of the body and soul." I will leave the application to those young persons that put this day afar off, and whom no arguments will move to be good betimes, and to acquaint themselves with the Lord in the morning of their youth.

But now, to those young men and women who begin to seek, serve, and love the Lord in the prime of their days, the day of judgment will be to them, *meliora in aura, jubilum in corde*, like music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart. This day will be to them a day of refreshing, a day of redemption, a day of vindication, a day of coronation, a day of consolation, a day of salvation; it will be to them a marriage-day, a harvest-day, a pay-day. Now the Lord will pay them for all the prayers they have made, for all the sermons they have heard, for all the tears they have shed: in this great day Christ will remember all the individual offices of love and friendship shewed to any of His; now He will mention many things for their honour and comfort, that they never minded; now the least and lowest acts of love and pity towards His shall be interpreted as a special kindness shewed to Himself. Now the crown shall be set upon their heads, and the royal robe put upon their backs; now all the world shall see that they have not served the Lord for nought.

Now Christ will pass over all their weaknesses, and make honourable mention of all the services they have performed, of all the mercies they have improved, and of all the great things that, for His name and glory, they have suffered.

CHAPTER V.

In the great day of accounts, will the sins of saints be brought into the judgment of discussion and discovery, or no? The negative proved by divers arguments.

BUT here an apt question may be moved: Whether, at this great day, the sins of the saints shall be brought into the judgment of discussion and discovery, or no? whether the Lord will in this day publicly manifest, proclaim, and make mention of the sins of His people, or no?

I humbly judge, according to my present light, that He will not; and my reasons for it are these:

I. The first is drawn from Christ's judicial proceedings in the last day, set down largely and clearly in the 25th chapter of Matthew, where He enumerateth only the good works they had done, but takes no notice of the spots and blots, of the stains and blemishes, of the infirmities and enormities, of the weaknesses and wickednesses of His people.

II. My second reason is taken from Christ's vehement protestations that they shall not come

into judgment: John v. 24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Those words, "shall not come into condemnation," are not rightly translated; the original is, "*eis crisin*," "shall not come into judgment," not "into damnation," as you read it in all your English books. I will not say what should put men upon this exposition, rather than a true translation of the original word. Further, it is very observable, that no evangelist useth this double asseveration but St. John; and he never useth it, but in matters of greatest weight and importance, and to shew the earnestness of his spirit, and to stir us up to better attention, and to put the thing asserted out of all question, and beyond all contradiction; as when we would put a thing for ever out of all question, we do it by a double asseveration, Verily, verily, it is so.

III. Because His not bringing their sins into judgment, doth most and best agree with many precious and glorious expressions that we find scattered, as so many shining, sparkling pearls, up and down in Scripture; as,

1. With those of God's blotting out the sins of His people: Isa. xliii. 25, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." "I have blotted

out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins," Isa. xlv. 22.

Who is this that blotteth out transgressions? He that hath the keys of heaven and hell at His girdle: that opens, and no man shuts; that shuts, and no man opens; He that hath the power of life and death, of condemning and absolving, of killing and making alive; He it is that blotteth out transgressions. If an under-officer should blot out an indictment, that perhaps might do a man no good; a man might for all that be at last cast by the judge; but when the judge or king shall blot out the indictment with their own hand, then the indictment cannot return. Now this is every believer's case and happiness.

2. To those glorious expressions of God's not remembering their sins any more: Isa. xliii. 25, "And I will not remember thy sins." "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least to the greatest, for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." So the apostle, Heb. viii. 12: "For I will be merciful unto their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." And again the same apostle saith, "This is the covenant that I will make with them, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and in their hearts will I write them,

and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

The meaning is, their iniquities shall be quite forgotten: "I will never mention them more, I will never take notice of them more, they shall never hear more of them from Me." Though God hath an iron memory to remember the sins of the wicked, yet He hath no memory to remember the sins of the righteous.

3. His not bringing their sins into judgment, doth most and best agree with those blessed expressions of His casting their sins into the depth of the sea, and of His casting them behind His back: "He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities: and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," Micah vii. 19. Where sin is once pardoned, the remission stands never to be repealed. Pardoned sin shall never come in account against the pardoned man before God any more, for so much doth this borrowed speech import: If a thing were cast upon the sea, it might be discerned, and taken up again: but when it is cast into the depths, the bottom of the sea, it can never be buoyed up again.

By the metaphor in the text, the Lord would have us to know, that sins pardoned shall rise no more, they shall never be seen more, they shall never come on to the account more; He will so drown their sins, that they shall never come up before Him the second time.

And so much that other scripture imports: Isa. xxxviii. 17, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back." These last words are a borrowed speech, taken from the manners of men, who are wont to cast behind their backs such things as they have no mind to see, regard, or remember. A gracious soul has always his sins before his face: "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me;" therefore, no wonder if the Lord cast them behind His back. The father soon forgets, and casts behind his back, those faults that the child remembers, and hath always in his eyes; so doth the Father of spirits.

4. His not bringing their sins into judgment doth best agree with that sweet expression of God's pardoning the sins of His people: Jer. xxxiii. 8, "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned and transgressed against Me." So in Micah, vii. 18, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of His heritage? (as though He would not see it, but wink at it) He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy." The Hebrew word *nose*, from *nasa*, that is here rendered "pardoned," signifies a taking away. When God pardons sin, He

takes it quite away, that if it should be sought for, yet it could not be found, as the prophet speaks, "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none: and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve;" and these words "and passeth by," in the aforecited 7th of Micah, according to the Hebrew *Vegnover gnal*, is, "and passeth over the transgressions of His heritage;" that is, He takes no notice of it; as a man in a deep muse, or as one that hath haste of business seeth not things before him; his mind being busied about other matters, he neglects all to mind his business.

As David, when he saw in Mephibosheth the features of his friend Jonathan, took no notice of his lameness, or any other defect or deformity: so God, beholding in His people the glorious image of His Son, winks at all their faults and deformities, which made Luther say, "Do with me what thou wilt, since Thou hast pardoned my sin." And what is it to pardon sin, but not to mention sin?

5. His not bringing their sins into the judgment of discussion and discovery, doth best agree with those expressions of forgiving and covering: Psal. xxxii. 1, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." In the original it is in the plural, "Blessednesses." So here is a plurality of blessings, a chain of pearls.

The like expressions you have in Psal. lxxxv. 2:

“Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people, Thou hast covered all their sin.” For the understanding of these scriptures aright, take notice, that, “to cover,” is a metaphorical expression; covering is such an action which is opposed to disclosure; to be covered is to be so hid and closed as not to appear. Some take the metaphor from filthy, loathsome objects, which are covered from our eyes, as dead carcases are buried under ground; some from garments that are put upon us to cover our nakedness; others from the Egyptians that were drowned in the Red Sea, and so covered with water; others from a great gulf in the earth that is filled up, and covered with earth injected into it; and others make it, in the last place, an allusive expression to the mercy-seat, over which was a covering.

Now, all these metaphors in the general tend to shew this, that the Lord will not look, He will not see, He will not take notice of the sins He hath pardoned, to call them any more to a judicial account. As when a prince reads over many treasons and rebellions, and meets with such and such which he hath pardoned, he reads on, he passes by, he takes no notice of them; the pardoned person shall never hear more of them; he will never call him to account for these sins more. So here. When Cæsar was painted, he put his finger upon his scar, his wart. God puts His fingers upon all His people’s scars and warts, upon all their weaknesses and infirmities,

that nothing can be seen but what is fair and lovely: "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee," Song of Sol. iv. 7.

6. It best agrees with that expression of not imputing of sin, Psal. xxxii. 2, "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." So the apostle, in Rom. iv. 6, 7, 8. Now, not to impute iniquity, is not to charge iniquity, not to set iniquity upon his score who is blessed and pardoned.

7. It best agrees with that expression that you have in Psal. ciii. 11, 12, "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." What a vast distance is there betwixt the east and the west! Of all visible latitudes, this is the greatest. And thus much for the third argument.

IV. The fourth argument that prevaieth with me to judge that Jesus Christ will not bring the sins of the saints into the judgment of discussion and discovery in the great day, is, Because it seems unsuitable to three considerable things, for Jesus Christ to proclaim the infirmities and miscarriages of His people to all the world:

1. It seems to be unsuitable to the glory and solemnity of that day, which to the saints will be a day of refreshing, a day of restitution, a day of

redemption, a day of coronation, as hath been already proved. Now, how suitable to this great day of solemnity, the proclamation of the saints' sins will be, I leave the reader to judge.

2. It seems unsuitable to all those near and dear relations that Jesus Christ stands in towards His. He stands in the relation of a Father, a Brother, a Head, a Husband, a Friend, an Advocate. Now, are not all these, by the law of relation, bound rather to hide and keep secret, at least from the world, the weaknesses and infirmities of their near and dear relations? And is not Christ, is not Christ much more, by how much he is more a Father, a Brother, a Head, a Husband, in a spiritual way, than any others can be in a natural way?

3. It seems very unsuitable to what the Lord Jesus requires of His in this world. The Lord requires that His people should cast a mantle of love, of wisdom, of silence and secrecy over one another's weaknesses and infirmities. "Hatred stirreth up strifes, but love covereth all sins," Prov. x. 12. Love's mantle is very large; love will find a hand, a plaister to put upon every sore. Vespasian the emperor was very ready to conceal his friends' vices, and as ready to reveal their virtues. So is Divine love in the hearts of the saints: "If thy brother offend thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother," Matth. xviii. 15. As the pills of reprehension are to

be gilded, and sugared over with much gentleness and softness, so they are to be given in a secret: "Tell him between him and thee alone." Tale-bearers and tale-hearers are alike abominable. Heaven is too hot and too holy a place for them. Now, will Jesus Christ have us carry it thus towards offending Christians, and will He Himself act otherwise? Nay, is it an evil in us to lay open the weaknesses and infirmities of the saints to the world; and will it be an excellency, a glory, a virtue in Christ to do it in the great day?

V. The fifth argument is this, It is the glory of man to pass over a transgression: Prov. xix. 11, "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression;" or to pass by it, as we do by persons or things we know not, or would take no notice of. Now, is it the glory of a man to pass over a transgression, and will it not much more be the glory of Christ silently to pass over the transgressions of His people in that great day? The greater the treasons and rebellions are that a prince passes over, and takes no notice of, the more is the honour and glory; and so, doubtless, it will be Christ's in that great day, to pass over all the treasons and rebellions of His people, to take no notice of them, to forget them as well as to forgive them.

The heathens have long since observed, that in nothing man came nearer to the glory and perfec-

tion of God Himself, that in goodness and clemency. Surely, if it be such an honour to man to pass over a transgression, it cannot be a dishonour to Christ to pass over the transgressions of His people, He having already buried them in the sea of His blood. Again, saith Solomon, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing," Prov. xxv. 2. And why it should not make for the glory of Divine love to conceal the sins of the saints in that great day, I know not: and whether the concealing the sins of the saints in the great day, will not make most for their joy and wicked men's sorrows; for their comfort, and wicked men's terror and torment, I will leave you to judge, and time and experience to decide. And thus much for the resolution of that great question. I have now done with the motives that may encourage and provoke young men to be good betimes, to know, love, seek, and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of their days.

CHAPTER VI.

*The things that must be avoided by those that would
be good betimes.*

I NOW come to those directions and helps which must, by assistance from Heaven, be put in practice, if ever you would be good betimes, and serve the Lord in the prime of your days. Now, all that I shall say will fall under these two heads:

1. Some things you must carefully and warily decline, and arm yourselves against. 2. There are other things that you must prosecute and follow.

First, There are some things that you must warily decline, and they are these:

I. If ever you would be good betimes, if you would be gracious in the spring and morning of your youth, oh then take heed of putting the day of death far from you! Young men are too prone to look upon death afar off, and put it at a great distance from them; they are apt to say to death, as Pharaoh said to Moses, "Get thee from me, and let me see thy face no more." If old men discourse to them of death, they are ready to answer as the high-priest did Judas, in a different case, "What

is that to us? see thou to that," Matth. xxvii. 4. We know sickness will come, and death is a debt we must all pay, but surely these guests are a great way from us; for doth not David say, "The years of a man are threescore years and ten," Psal. xc. 10. We have calculated our nativities, and we cannot abate a day, a minute, a moment of threescore and ten; and, therefore, it is even a death to us to think of death, there being so great a distance between our birth-day and our dying day, as we have cast up the account.

Ah, young men! it is sad, it is very sad, when you are so wittily wicked as to say with those in Ezekiel xii. 27, "Behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are afar off." Ah, young men, by putting far away this day, you gratify Satan, you strengthen sin, you provoke the Lord, you make the work of faith and repentance more hard and difficult, you lay a sad foundation for the greatest fears and doubts. Ah, how soon may that sad word be fulfilled upon you, Matth. xxiv. 48, &c., "The Lord of that servant, that saith, My Lord delayeth his coming, shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder (or cut him off), and appoint him his portion with hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." When Sodom, when Pharaoh, when Agag,

when Amalek, when Haman, when Herod, when Nebuchadnezzar, when Belshazzar, when Dives, when the fool in the gospel, were all in their prime, their pride, when they were all in a flourishing state, and upon the very top of their glory; how strangely, how suddenly, how sadly, how fearfully, how wonderfully were they brought down to the grave, to hell.

Ah, young man! who art thou, and what is thy name or fame, what is thy power or place, what is thy dignity or glory, that thou darest promise thyself an exemption from sharing in as sad a portion as ever justice gave to those who once were very high, who were seated among the stars, but are now brought down to the sides of the pit? I have read a story of one who gave a young prodigal a ring with a death's head, on this condition, that he should, one hour daily, for seven days together, look and think upon it, which bred a great change in his life.

Ah, young men! the serious thoughts of death may do that for you, that neither friends, counsel, example, prayers, sermons, nor tears, have done to this very day. Well, remember this, to labour not to die, is labour in vain, and to put this day far from you, and to live without fear of death, is to die living. Death seizeth on old men, and lays wait for the youngest. Death is oftentimes as near to the young man's back as it is to the old man's face.

It is storied of Charles IV., King of France, that being one time affected with the sense of his many and great sins, he fetched a deep sigh, and said to his wife, "By the help of God I will now so carry myself all my life long, that I will never offend Him more;" which words he had no sooner uttered, but he fell down and died. Do not, young men, put this day far from you, lest you are suddenly surprised, and then you cry out when too late, A kingdom for a Christ! a kingdom for a Christ! as once crook-backed Richard III. did in his distress, "A kingdom for a horse! a kingdom for a horse!"

Ah, young men! did you never hear of a young man that cried out, "Ah, I am so sick that I cannot live, and yet, woeful wretch that I am, so sinful that I dare not die. Oh that I might live! Oh that I might die! Oh that I might do neither!" Well, young men, remember this, the frequent, the serious thoughts of death will prevent many a sin, it will arm you against many temptations, it will secure you from many afflictions, it will keep you from doting on the world; it will make you do much in a little time, and it will make death easy when it comes, and it will make you look out betimes for a kingdom that shakes not, for riches that corrupt not, and for glory that fadeth not away. Therefore do not, oh do not put the day of death far from you! "Take heed of crying To-morrow, to-morrow," saith Luther, "for a man lives forty years before he knows

himself to be a fool, and by that time he sees his folly, his life is finished. So men die before they begin to live."

II. If you would be good betimes, then take heed of leaning to your own understanding. This counsel wise Solomon gives to his son, or the young men in his time: Prov. iii. 1, 5, "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

Youth is the age of folly, of vain hopes, and overgrown confidence. Ah! how wise might many have been, had they not been too early wise in their own opinion! Rehoboam's young counsellors proved the overthrow of his kingdom. It is brave for youth in all things to be discreet and sober-minded. Three virtues, they say, are prime ornaments of youth: modesty, silence, and obedience. Ah! young men, keep close in every action to this one principle, viz., in every action resolve to be discreet and wise, rather than affected and singular.

I remember, that a young gentleman of Athens being to answer for his life, hired an orator to make his defence. And it pleased him well at his first reading; but when the young man, by often reading it, that he might recite it publicly by heart, began to grow weary and displeased with it, the orator bid him consider, that the judge and the people were to hear it but once; and then it was likely that

they at the first instant might be as well pleased as he.

Ah! young, men your leaning upon yourselves, or upon others, will in the end be bitterness and vexation of spirit. Young men are very apt to lean upon their own wit, wisdom, arts, parts, as old men are to lean upon a staff, to support them; as the Hebrew word signifies that is rendered *lean*, in that of Prov. iii. 5. This hath been the bane of many a choice wit, the loss of many a brave head, the ruin of many a subtle pate. Ajax thought it was only for cowards and weaklings to lean upon the Lord for succour; not for him, whence he was foiled. Lean not to great parts, lean not to natural or acquired accomplishments, lest you lose them and yourselves too. Leaning to natural or moral excellencies, is the ready way to be stripped of all. Babylon, that bore herself bold upon her high towers, thick walls, and twenty years' provision laid in for a siege, was surprised by Cyrus. It was said of Cæsar, that he received not his wounds from the swords of enemies, but from the hands of friends; that is, from trusting in them.

Ah! how many young men have been wounded, yea, slain, by trusting to their own understanding, their own abilities! It was an excellent saying of St. Austin, "*In te stas, et non stas*," "He that stands upon his own strength shall never stand." A creature is like a single drop left to itself, it spends and

wastes itself presently; but if like a drop fountain and ocean of being, it hath abundance security. Ah! young men, if you will not leaning, lean then upon precious promise upon the Rock that is higher than yourself upon the Lord Jesus Christ, as John did, and the youngest of all the disciples, and the most loved of all the disciples. John leaned much Christ loved him much. O lean upon Christ's for direction, lean upon His power for protection, lean upon His purse, His fulness, for provision upon His eye for approbation, lean upon His righteousness for justification, lean upon His blood for remission, lean upon His merit for salvation.

As the young vine without the wall to support her, will fall and sink; so will you, unless Christ puts under His everlasting arms support you and uphold you; therefore, always leanings, lean upon Him. By leaning on Him will engage Him; by leaning on Him, you will have more honour than you can give; by leaning on Him you may even command Him, and make Him finally yours.

III. If you would be good betimes, if you seek and serve the Lord in the spring and in the early of your days, then take heed of flatterers and flattery. Ah! how many young men might have been very good, who are now exceeding bad, by leaning to flatterers, and affecting flattery!]

undid young Rehoboam, Ahab, Herod, Nero, Alexander, &c. Flatterers are soul-murderers, they are soul-undoers; they are like evil surgeons, that skin over the wound, but never heal it.

Anastasius the emperor's motto was, "*Melletum venenum blanda oratio*," "Smooth talk proves often sweet poison." Flattery is the very spring and mother of all impiety. It blows the trumpet and draws poor souls into rebellion against God: as Sheba drew Israel to rebel against David. It put our first parents upon tasting the forbidden fruit. It put Absalom upon dethroning of his father. It put Haman upon plotting the ruin of the Jews. It put Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, upon rebelling against Moses. It makes men call evil good, and good evil, darkness light, and light darkness. It puts persons upon neglecting the means of grace, upon undervaluing the means of grace, and upon contemning the means of grace. It puts men upon abasing God, slighting Christ, and vexing the Spirit. It unmans a man, it makes him call black white, and white black. It makes a man change pearls for pebbles, and gold for counters. It makes a man judge himself wise, when he is foolish; knowing, when he is ignorant; holy, when he is profane; free, when he is prisoner; rich, when he is poor; high, when he is low; full, when he is empty; happy, when he is miserable.

Ah! young men and young women, take heed of

flatterers, they are the very worst of sinners; they are left of God, blinded by Satan, hardened in sin, and ripened for hell. God declares sadly against them, and that in His Word and in His works. In His Word, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together: Deut. xxix. 18-20; Psal. lxxviii. 36, and xxxvi. 1, 2; Job xvii. 5; Ezek. xii. 24; Dan. xi. 21, 32, 34; Psal. xii. 2, 3, "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips, and with a double heart, do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongues that speaketh proud things." And as God declares sadly against them in His Word, so He hath declared terribly against them in His works, as you may see and read in His judgments executed upon Ahab's flattering prophets, and upon Haman, and upon Daniel's princely false accusers. And why then will not you stop your ears against those wretches that the hand and heart of God is so much against?

Again, as God declares against them, so good men detest them and declare against them, as you may see by comparing these scriptures together: Psal. v. 8, 9, 10; Prov. ii. 16; Prov. vii. 21; Prov. xxviii. 23; Job xxxii. 21, 22; 1 Thess. ii. 5, 10; Prov. xx. 19, "Meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips." Why so? Because, "A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet," Prov. xxix. 5. The Hebrew word *mahhalack* from *halack*, that is here rendered *flatterer*, signifieth a

smooth-boats, a soft, butter-spoken man, because flatterers use smooth, soft speeches. Also the word signifies to *divide*, because a flatterer's tongue is divided from his heart. Flatterers have their nets, and those that give ear to them will be taken to their ruin: "A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin," Prov. xxvi. 28. A flattering mouth ruins name, fame, estate, body, soul, life.

Valerian, the Roman emperor, used to say, "*Non acerba sed blanda*," "Not bitter, but flattering words do all the mischief." When Alexander the Great was hit with an arrow, at the siege of an Indian city, which would not heal, he said to his parasites, "You say that I am Jupiter's son, but this wound eries that I am but a man."

Now, shall good men detest them and abhor them, as they are the pests of pests, the plague of plagues; and will you own them, will you take pleasure in them, to your ruin here and hereafter? The Lord forbid. O say to all flatterers, as he to his idols, Hos. xiv. 8, "Get you hence, for what have I more to do with you?"

Nay, once more consider, that not only the good but the bad, not only the best but some of the worst of men, have manifested their detestation of flatterers and flattery. Leo the emperor used to say, "*Oculti inimici pessimi*," "A close enemy is far worse than an open." When a court parasite praised Sigis-

mund the emperor above measure, the emperor gave him a sound box on the ear.

When Aristobulus, the historian, presented to Alexander the Great, a book that he had written of his glorious acts, wherein he had flatteringly made him greater than he was; Alexander, after he had read the book, threw it into the river Hydaspes, and said to the author, "It were a good deed to throw thee after it."

When the flatterers flattered Antigonus, he cried out, "*Mentiris, mentiris in gutture, hæ virtutes non latent in me,*" "Thou liest, thou liest in thy throat; these virtues that thou speakest of, I have not in me: but I am like a leopard, that hath ten black spots to one white."

Augustus Cæsar and Tiberias Cæsar were deadly enemies to flatterers, insomuch that they would not be called lords by their own children. A good symbol is attributed to Trebonianus Gallus, viz., "*Nemo amicus idem et adulator,*" "No flatterer can be a true friend." Aristippus the philosopher, seeing Diogenes washing herbs for dinner, said, "If Diogenes knew how to make use of kings, he need not live upon raw herbs as he doth." To which Diogenes replied, "If Aristippus could content himself with herbs, he needed not to turn spaniel, or to flatter king Dionysius for a meal of meat."

Ah! young men, shall God, shall good men, shall bad men detest and declare against flatterers and flat-

tery, and will not you turn a deaf ear upon them, yea, flee from them as from a serpent, and shun them as you would shun hell itself? If you do not, the very heathens now cited will rise in judgment against you.

Flatterers are the very worst of sinners. The flatterers told Cæsar, that the freckles on his face were like the stars in the firmament. They bought and sold Aurelius the emperor at pleasure. And Augustus complained, when Varrus was dead, that he had none now left that would deal plainly and faithfully with him. So men may gain by flattery; they will be like Harpalus, who said, "*Quod regi placet, mihi placet*," "That which pleaseth the king pleaseth me," when Astyages set his own son before him to feed upon him. Oh, but let every young man say, into whose hands this treatise shall fall, "*Quod Deo placet, mihi placet*," "That which pleaseth God pleaseth me."

I have been longer on this, out of love to young men's souls, who are so apt to be ensnared in the flatterer's net. If ever you would be good in good earnest, you must abhor flatterers, as the first-born of the devil, and such as are most pernicious to men's happiness both here and hereafter. It is reported of one Oramazes, that he had an enchanted egg in which, as he boasted himself, he had inclosed all the happiness of the world; but, being broken, nothing was found in it but wind. Flatterers are the greatest cheaters, the greatest deceivers in the world. They

say of the crocodile, that when he hath killed a man, he will weep over him, as if he were sorry, and did repent for what he had done. The application is easy.

IV. If you would be good betimes, if you would seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days, then take heed of engaged affections to the things of the world.

The young man in the Gospel took many a step toward heaven: Matth. xix. 20, 21, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Christ makes a very fair offer to him in the next words: "Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." Thou shalt have heaven for earth, a sea for a drop, a treasure for a mite, a crown for a crumb. Ah, but the young man's affections were strongly engaged to the things of this world; and, therefore, he turns his back upon Christ, and goes away sorrowful, because he had great possessions. Oh, the madness and folly of this young man, who, to enjoy a temporal felicity, had bid an everlasting farewell to Christ and glory. It is said that "Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold," Gen. xiii. 2. The Hebrew word that is here rendered *rich*, signifies *heavy*; it signifies a burden, to show us that riches are a heavy burden, and a hinderance many times to heaven and to happiness. And this young man in the Gospel found it so to his

eternal undoing. Though the load-stone cannot draw the iron when the diamond is in presence, yet earthly possessions did draw this young man's soul away, when Christ, the pearl of great price, was present. The world is a silken net; and this young man found it so. The world is like golden fetters; and this young man found it so. The world is like sweet poison; and this young man found it so; for he had drunk so large a draught of it, that there was no room in his soul for Christ or heaven, for grace or glory. Some say, that when the serpent *Scitale* cannot overtake the flying passengers, she doth with her beautiful colours so astonish and amaze them, that they have no power to pass away till she hath stung them. Such a serpent the world proved to the young man in the Gospel; it did so affect and take him, so amaze him and amuse him, that he could not stir till it stung him to death.

When the moon is fullest, it is farthest from the sun; so the more men have of the world, the farther commonly they are from God. And this the young man in the Gospel made good. Many have ventured life and limb, and many a better thing, to gain the things of this world; and yet, after all, they have got nothing at all. Achan's golden wedge proved a wedge to cleave him, and his garment a garment to shroud him.

The whole world is circular, the heart of a man is triangular; and we know a circle cannot fill a

triangle; yet if it be not filled with the Three Persons in Trinity, it will be filled with the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world may be resembled to the fruit that undid us all, which was fair to the sight, smooth in handling, sweet in taste, but deadly in effect and operation. Ah! young men, have none of you found it so?

The world in all its bravery is no better than the cities which Solomon gave to Hiram, which he called Cabul, *i. e.*, *displeasing*, or *dirty*. The world will afford nothing but trivial flowers, surrounded with many briars. Oh, the vanity, the uncertainty, the imperfection of all things below! If a man should weigh his pay and his pains together, his miseries and his pleasures together, his joys and his sorrows together, his mercies and his crosses together, his good days and his bad days together, will he not conclude, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity?"

It was a wise and Christian speech of Charles V. to the Duke of Venice, who, when he had showed him the glory of his princely palace and earthly paradise, instead of admiring it, or him for it, only returned him this grave and serious memento, "*Hæc sunt quæ faciunt invitos mori*," "These are the things which make us unwilling to die." It was a good saying of one to a great lord, upon his showing him his stately house and pleasant gardens, "Sir, you had need make sure of heaven, or else, when you die, you will be a very great loser."

Ah! young men, it is only heaven that is above all winds, storms, and tempests. Nor hath God cast man out of paradise, for him to think to find out another paradise in this world. The main reason why many young men dote upon the world, is because they are not acquainted with a greater glory. Men ate acorns, till they were acquainted with the use of wheat. The woman had the moon under her feet, when she was clothed with the sun, and had a crown of twelve stars upon her head, Rev. xii. 1.

Ah! young men, were you but clothed with the Sun of righteousness, and had you a crown set upon your heads by the hand of faith, you would have all the things of this world which are as low, bespotted, and mutable as the moon, under your feet. Well, young men, as ever you would be good betimes, sit loose from the things of this world, be no longer worshippers of this golden calf, and never let the world, that should be but your servant, become your lord. Oh, let not the devil and the world have more service for an ounce of gold, than Christ shall have for the kingdom of heaven!

Ah! young men, the world and you must part, or Christ and you shall never meet. "You cannot serve God and Mammon." The two poles shall sooner meet, than the love of Christ and the love of the world.

V. If you would be good betimes, if you would

know, seek, and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your youth, then take heed betimes of carnal reason, take heed of consulting with flesh and blood.

Many a hopeful young man hath been undone temporally, and undone eternally, by hearkening to those evil counsellors.

Carnal reason is an enemy, yea, an utter enemy; nay, it is not only an utter enemy, but it is enmity, yea, enmities, Rom. viii. 7. An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity can never be reconciled. Carnal reason is not only averse, but it is utterly averse to all goodness; it builds strongholds and syllogisms against the most glorious gospel truths, and accounts the precious things of Christ as a strange thing. Carnal reason will make God and Gospel do homage to it. When carnal reason is on the throne, Christ and His truths must all bow, or be judged before its bar.

Ah! young men, as ever you would be good betimes, stop your ears against all carnal reasonings within you. Carnal reason judges the choicest things of the Gospel to be mere foolishness; it is purblind, and cannot see how to make a right judgment of Christ, His words, His ways, and yet will control all.

If you are resolved to be still scholars to this master, then you must resolve to be unhappy here, and miserable hereafter. But,

It is safer and better for you to imitate those young men, who, in the morning of their days, have graciously, wisely, and resolutely withstood those evil counsellors, carnal reason, flesh and blood. Joseph, Moses, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshech, Abednego—all these, in the primrose of their youth, were good at turning the deaf ear to carnal counsel and carnal counsellors.

Cassianus reports of a young man that had given himself up to a Christian life, and his parents misliking that way, they wrote letters to persuade him from it; and when he knew that there were letters come from them, he would not open them, but threw them into the fire. This example is worth following.

Another famous example you have in the story of King Edward VI., when Cranmer and Ridley came to him, and were very earnest to have him give way to his sister, the lady Mary, to have mass, he stood out, and pleaded the case with them, that it was a sin against God, and provoking to the eyes of His glory, &c. But they still continued to use many carnal arguments to persuade the king (who was but a child, about fifteen years of age); but he withstood them a great while; and, at length, when he saw that he could not prevail, with all his pleading, against those grave men, but that they still continued their suit, he burst out in bitter weeping and sobbing, desiring them to desist. The motioners, seeing

his zeal and constancy, wept as fast as he, and being overcome, they went away, and told one, that the king had more divinity in his little finger than they had in all their bodies.

Ah, young men! it will be your safety, and your glory, to write after his princely copy, when you are surrounded with carnal reason and carnal counsellors.

VI. If you would be good betimes, then take heed of comparing yourselves with those that are worse than yourselves.

Young men are very apt to compare themselves with those that are worse than themselves; and this proves a snare unto them, yea, oftentimes, their bane, their ruin; as it did the young Pharisee in the Gospel, who pleaded his negative righteousness: he was not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers; and stood on his comparative goodness: nor as this publican. He stands not only upon his comparisons, but upon his disparisons: being blind at home, and too quick-sighted abroad, he contemneth and condemneth the poor publican, who was better than himself, making good that saying of Seneca, "*The nature of man is very apt (Ultimus perspicillis magis quam speculis) to use spectacles to behold other men's faults, rather than looking-glasses to behold our own.*" Such Pharisees do justly incur the censure which that sour philosopher passed upon Grammarians, that "They were better acquainted with the evils of Ulysses than with their own."

Ah! young men, you know, he that drinks poison, though he drinks not so much as another; and he that commits treason, though not so great, so high treason as another; shall yet as certainly be poisoned and hanged as he that hath drunk a greater quantity of poison and committed higher acts of treason.

Sirs, do not befool and delude your own souls. If you are not as wicked as others, you shall not be as much tormented as others, but yet you shall be as certainly damned as others, you shall as certainly go to hell as others, you shall as sure be shut out for ever from God, Christ, saints, angels, and all the treasures, pleasures, and glories of heaven, as others, except it be prevented by timely repentance on your side, and pardoning mercy on God's.

Wilt thou count it madness, O young man, in him that is sick to reason thus: "I am not so sick as such and such, and therefore I will not send to the physician?" and in the wounded man to say, "I am not so desperately wounded as such and such, and therefore I will not send to the surgeon?" and in the traitor to say, "I am not guilty of so many foul and heinous treasons as such and such, and therefore I will not look after a pardon?" and in the necessitous man to say, "I am not so hard put to it as such and such, and therefore I will not welcome a hand of charity?" And wilt not thou count it the greatest madness in the world, for thee

to put off thy repentance, and thy returning to the Lord in the spring and morning of thy youth, because thou art not as sinful, as wicked as such and such? If to have a softer bed and milder punishment in hell than others, will satisfy thee, then go on; but if thou art afraid of the worm that never dies, and of the fire that never goes out, but like that stone in Arcadia, which, being once kindled, could not be quenched, O, then, begin to be good betimes; O seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days!

To think often of hell, is the way to be preserved from falling into hell. Ah! young men, that you would often consider the bitterness of the damned's torments, and of the pitilessness of their torments, and of the diversity of their torments, and of the easelessness of their torments, and of the remedilessness of their torments, "*Momentaneum est quod delectat, æternum quod cruciat,*" "The sinner's delight here is momentary, that which torments hereafter is perpetual." When sinners are in hell, dost thou think, O young man, that another Christ shall be found to die for them, or that the same Christ shall be crucified again for them, or that another gospel should be preached to them? Surely no.

Ah! why then wilt thou not betimes return and seek out after the things that belong to thy everlasting peace? I have read of Pope Clement V.,

at when a young nephew of his died, he sent his chaplain to a necromancer to know of him how he fared with him in the other world. The conjurer showed him to the chaplain, lying on a fiery bed in hell, which when the Pope understood, he ever joyed more.

Ah! young man, that these occasional hints of hell may be a means to preserve thee from lying in those everlasting flames.

Bellarmin tells us of a certain advocate of the court of Rome, that being at the point of death, was stirred up by them that stood by to repent, and call upon God for mercy. He with a constant countenance, and without sign of fear, turned his speech to God, and saith, "Lord, I have a desire to speak unto thee, not for myself, but for my wife and children; for I am hastening to hell; neither is there anything that Thou shouldst do for me."

And this he spake," saith Bellarmin, who was present and heard, "as if he had spoken of a journey to some village or town, and was no more affrighted."

Sir Francis Bacon, also, in his story of Henry VIII., relates, how it was a common byword of the Lord Cordes, that "he would be content to lie seven years in hell, so he might win Calais from the English." But if thou, O young man, art given up to such desperate atheism, and carnal apprehensions of hell, I am afraid God will one day confute thee

by fire and brimstone. But I would willing better things of all those young persons into hands this treatise shall fall. And thus ; what things must be declined and avoided, you would be good betimes, if ever you wor and serve the Lord in the spring and mor your days.

CHAPTER VII.

The things that must be practised by those that would be good betimes.

BUT as those things must be declined, so other things must be carefully and diligently practised, if ever you would be good betimes. I shall instance only those that are most considerable and weighty: as,

First, If ever you would be good betimes, then you must labour to be acquainted with four things betimes:

I. You must labour to acquaint yourselves with the Scriptures betimes. You must study the Word betimes. David studied the Word in the morning of his days, in the primrose of his youth; and this made him wiser than his enemies, yea, than his teachers; this made him as much excel the ancients as the sun excels the moon, or as the moon excels the twinkling stars. Timothy was good betimes; and no wonder: for in the primrose of his days, he was acquainted with the Scripture, he was inured to the Word from his childhood, yea, from his infancy; as the word properly signifies, see in Psal.

cxix. 9, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his ways? By taking heed according to Thy Word." There is no way to a holy heart and a clean life, but by acquainting yourselves with the Word betimes. One hath long since observed, that "God hath bowed down the Scriptures to the capacity even of babes and sucklings, that all excuses may be taken away, and that young men may be encouraged to study the Scriptures betimes." Ah! young men, no histories are comparable to the histories of the Scriptures: 1. For Antiquity; 2. Rarity; 3. Variety; 4. Brevity; 5. Perspicuity; 6. Harmony; 7. Verity. All other books cannot equal God's, either in age or authority, in dignity or excellency, in sufficiency or glory.

Moses is found more ancient and more honourable than all those whom the Grecians make most ancient and honourable, as Homer, Hesiod, and Jupiter himself, whom the Greeks have seated in the top of their Divinity.

The whole Scripture is but one entire love-letter, despatched from the Lord Christ to His beloved Spouse. And who, then, but would still be a-reading in this love-letter? Like Cecilia, a Roman maiden of noble parentage, who carried always about her the New Testament, that she might still be a-reading in Christ's love-letter, and beholding the sweet workings of His love and heart towards His dear and precious ones.

Luther found so much sweetness in the Word, in Christ's love-letter, that made him say, he would not live in Paradise, if he might, without the Word, "*At cum verbo etiam in inferno facile est vivere,*" "But with the Word he could live in hell itself."

The Word is like the stone Garamantites, that hath drops of gold in itself, enriching the believing soul. This the martyrs found, which made them willing to give a load of hay for a few leaves of the Bible in English.

St. Austin professeth that the sacred Scriptures were his whole delight.

And St. Jerome tells us of one Mepotiamus, who, by long and assiduous meditation on the holy Scriptures, had made his breast the library of Jesus Christ.

And Rabbi Chii, in the Jerusalem Talmud, saith, that in his account all the world is not of equal value with one word out of the law. That which a papist reports lyingly of the sacrament of the mass, viz., that there are as many mysteries in it as there be drops in the sea, dust on the earth, angels in heaven, stars in the sky, atoms in the sun-beams, or sands on the sea-shore, may be truly asserted of the holy Scriptures.

Oh, the mysteries, the excellencies, the glories that are in the Word! Ah, no book to this Book, none so useful, none so needful, none so delightful, none so necessary to make you happy, and to keep

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a rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye in the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lust thereof." This scripture was so sunk into his heart, as that it proved the means of his conversion, as himself reports.

This St. Augustine, as he was once preaching, his memory failing him, contrary to his purpose, he fell upon reproving the Manicheans, and by a scripture or two, not before thought of to confute their heresies, he converted Firmus, a Manichean, as he afterwards acknowledged to St. Augustin, blessing God for that sermon.

It is reported of one Adrianus, who, seeing the martyrs suffer such grievous things in the cause of God, asked, "What was that which caused them to suffer such things?" And one of them named that text, 1 Cor. ii. 9, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." And this text was sent home with such a power upon him, as that it converted him, and made him to profess religion; and not only to profess it, but to die a martyr for it.

Cyprian was converted by reading the Prophecy of Jonah. Junius was converted by reading the first chapter of John the Evangelist.

I have read of a scandalous minister that was struck at the heart, and converted, in reading that

scripture, Rom. ii. 21, "Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?"

We read that Paphnutius converted Thais and Ephron, two famous strumpets, from uncleanness, only with the Scripture argument, Heb. iv. 13, that God seeth all things in the dark, when the doors are fast, the windows shut, and the curtains drawn.

I have read of a poor man, who persuaded a young scholar to leave reading poetry, and fall upon reading the Scripture, which accordingly he did; and it pleased the Lord, before he had read out Genesis, to change his heart, and to turn him to the Lord in the primrose of his days, he being then but twenty years of age.

I have read of a young lady, called Potamia, of a very illustrious family, who endured very much in her martyrdom by the extreme cruelty of Basilides, her executioner; yet after her death, he bethinking himself of the holy words and Scripture expressions that were uttered by her during her cruel torments, became a Christian, and within a few days after was himself likewise crowned with martyrdom.

James Andreas, a godly minister, hearing of a Jew that for theft was hanged by the heels, with his head downwards; and having not seen that kind of punishment, he went to the place, where he was hanging between two dogs, that were always snatching at him to eat his flesh. The poor wretch repeated in Hebrew some verses of the Psalms, wherein he

cried unto God for mercy. Whereupon Andreas went near to him, and instructed him in the principles of the Christian religion, about Christ the Messiah, &c., exhorting him to believe in Him. And it pleased God so to bless his Scripture exhortations to him, that the dogs gave over tearing his flesh, and the poor Jew desired him to procure that he might be taken down and baptized, and hung by the neck, for the quicker despatch, which was done accordingly.

I might produce other instances; but let these suffice to provoke all young persons to a speedy, serious, diligent, and constant study of the Scripture. Ah, sirs, you do not know how soon your blind minds may be enlightened, your hard hearts softened, and your proud spirits humbled, your sinful natures changed, your defiled consciences purged, your distempered affections regulated, and your poor souls saved, by searching into the Scripture, by reading the Scripture, and by pondering upon the Scripture. You should lay up the manna of God's Word in your hearts, as Moses laid up the manna in the golden pot, and as Tamar did with the staff and the signet that she received from Judah; she laid them up till she came to save her life, and she did save her life by it, as you may see in holy story. The laying up the Word now may be the saving of your souls another day.

I have read of little bees, that when they go out in stormy weather, they will carry a little of their

comb or gravel with them, that they may be balanced, and not carried away with the wind.

Ah! young men, you had need to have your thoughts and hearts balanced with the precious Word, that you may not be carried away with every wind of doctrine, as many have been in these days, to their destruction and confusion.

Narcissus, a beautiful youth, though he would not love them that loved him, yet afterwards fell in love with his own shadow. Ah! how many young men in these days, who were once lovely and hopeful, are now fallen in love with their own and others' shadows, with high, empty, airy notions, and with strange, monstrous speculations, to their own damnation!

Holy Melancthon, being newly converted, thought it impossible for his hearers to withstand the evidence of the Gospel, but soon after he complained that old Adam was too hard for young Melancthon.

Ah! young men, young men, if you do not in good earnest give up yourselves to the reading, to the studying, to the pondering, to the believing, to the affecting, to the applying, and to the living up to the Scripture, Satan will be too hard for you, the world will be too hard for you, your lusts will be too hard for you, temptations will be too hard for you, and deceivers will be too hard for you, and in the end you will be miserable.

II. If you would be good betimes, then you must

acquaint yourselves with yourselves betimes. If you would be gracious in the spring and morning of your days, then you must see betimes how bad you are, how vile, how sinful, how wretched you are. No man begins to be good till he sees himself to be bad. The young prodigal never began to amend, he never thought of returning to his Father, till he came to himself, till he began to return to his own soul, and saw himself in an undone condition.

Ah! young men, you must see yourselves to be children of wrath, to be enemies, to be strangers, to be afar off from God, from Christ, from the covenant, from heaven, to be sin's servants and Satan's bond-slaves: Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3, 12, 13; Rom. vi. 16; John viii. 44; 2 Tim. ii. 26. The ready way to be found, is to see yourselves lost; the first step to mercy is to see your own misery; the first step towards heaven is to see yourselves near to hell. You will not look after the Physician of souls; you will not prize the Physician of souls; you will not desire the Physician of souls; you will not match with the Physician of souls; you will not fall in love, in league, with the Physician of souls; you will not resign up yourselves to the Physician of souls, till you come to see your wounds, till you come to feel your diseases, till you see the tokens, the plague-sores of Divine wrath and displeasure upon you. As the whole do not need a Physician, so they do not desire, they do not care for the Physician.

Ah! young men, as you would be good betimes, begin to acquaint yourselves with your sinful self betimes, begin to acquaint yourselves betimes with your natural and undone condition.

There is a three-fold self:

1. There is a natural self, as a man's parts: wit, reason, affections, and inclinations.

2. A religious self; and so a man's duties, graces, obedience, righteousness, holiness, are called one's self.

3. There is a sinful self; and so a man's corruptions, lusts, sinful nature and disposition are called one's self. Now, if ever you would be good betimes, you must acquaint yourselves with your sinful self betimes.

Dominicus being asked at what time he began to be a philosopher, answered, "When I began to know myself." So a man never begins to be a Christian, till he begins to know himself; and indeed, for a man to know himself, to acquaint himself with himself, is one of the hardest works in all the world. For as the eye can see all things but itself; so most can discern all faults but their own. Henry IV., Emperor of Germany's usual speech was, "*Multi multa sciunt, se atem nemo,*" "Many know much, but few know themselves."

The very heathens did admire that saying as an oracle, "*Nosce teipsum,*" "Know and be acquainted with thy own self." The main exhortation of Chilo,

one of the seven sages, was, "Know thyself." And Plato recordeth that this saying of Chilo, "Know thyself," was written in letters of gold upon the portal of Apollo's temple.

Juvenal saith, that this saying, "Know thyself," came from heaven. Macrobius saith, that the oracle of Apollo being demanded what course should be taken for attaining to felicity, answered, "Only teach a man to know himself."

Thus you see that both divinity and philosophy agree in this, that the best and surest way to true felicity, is to know ourselves, to acquaint ourselves with ourselves.

This duty the apostle chargeth upon the Ephesians, "Remember, that you being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, that at that time you were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," Eph. ii. 11, 12. Here are five *without*: without Christ, without the church, without the promise, without hope, and without God in the world.

Man in his natural state is afar off, he is *without*, three manner of ways:

1. In point of opinion and apprehension.
2. In point of fellowship and communion.
3. In point of grace and conversion.

As you would be good betimes, dwell much upon your corrupt nature betimes. Ah! such is the cor-

ruption of our nature, that propound any Divine good to it, it is entertained as fire by water, or wet wood with hissing; propound any evil, then it is like fire to straw, it is like the foolish satyr that made haste to kiss the fire; it is like that unctuous matter which, the naturalists say, sucks and snatches the fire to it, with which it is consumed. Till you come to be sensible of this, you will never begin to be good, you will never look to have your hearts changed and your soul saved.

The Ethiopians paint angels black, and devils white, in favour of their own complexion; and they say, that if the brute creatures could draw a picture of the Divine Nature, they would make their shape the copy; and thus they flatter and delude themselves. Take heed, young men, take heed that you do not put the like cheats upon your own souls. Take heed that you be not like those sinners, who, so as they can make a man's picture gay and gaudy, care not to draw it so as to resemble him. It is safest and best, O young man, to know the worst of thyself, and to know thyself as thou art in thyself, and not as thine own flattering heart, or as other flatterers may represent thee to thyself.

III. If you would be good betimes, then you must acquaint yourself with Jesus Christ betimes.

You must know him betimes. A man never begins to be good till he begins to know Him that is the Fountain of all goodness: "This is life eter-

nal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent," John xvii. 3.

The knowledge of Christ is the beginning of eternal life, it is the way to eternal life, it is a taste of eternal life, it is a sure pledge and pawn to the soul of eternal life.

The Spaniards say of Aquinas, that he that knows not him, knows not anything; but he that knows him, knows all things. He that knows Jesus Christ, not notionally only, but practically, not apprehensively only, but effectively; he knows all things that may make him happy. But he that knows not Jesus Christ, knows nothing that will stand him in stead, when he shall lie down upon a dying bed, and stand before a judgment-seat.

Justin Martyr relates, that when in his discourse with Tryphon, he mentioned the knowledge of Christ, as conducing to our happiness and perfection, Tryphon's friends laughed at it. But I hope better things of those into whose hands this treatise shall fall.

Sirs, the sun is not more necessary to the world, the eye to the body, the pilot to the ship, the general to the army, than the knowledge of Christ betimes is necessary for all those that would be good betimes.

Dear hearts, as ever you would be good betimes, you must labour, even as for life, to know and be thoroughly acquainted with these six things concerning Jesus Christ betimes:

1. If you would be good betimes, then you must know betimes, that there is every thing in Christ that may encourage you to seek Him, and serve Him, to love Him and obey Him, to believe on Him and to marry with Him. If you look upon His names, His natures, His offices, His graces, His dignities, His excellencies, His royalties, His glories, His fulness, they all speak out as much.

Art thou poor? Why, Christ hath tried gold to enrich thee. Art thou naked? Christ hath white raiment to clothe thee. Art thou spiritually blind? Christ hath eye-salve to enlighten thee. Art thou in straits? He hath wisdom to counsel thee. Art thou unrighteous? He will be righteousness unto thee. Art thou unholy? He will be holiness and sanctification to thee. Art thou hungry? He is bread to feed thee. Art thou thirsty? He is wine and milk to satisfy thee. Art thou weary? He is a bed, a seat to rest thee. Art thou sick? Why, He is a Physician to cure thee. "*Omne bonum in summo bono,*" "All good is in the chiefest Good." The creatures have their particular goodness, health hath its particular goodness, and wealth hath its particular goodness, and learning hath its, and the favour of the creature hath its; but now Jesus Christ, He is an universal good. All the pretty excellencies that are scattered abroad in the creatures are united in Christ; yea, all the volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth, is

epitomized in Him: "*Ipse unus erit tibi omnia, quia in ipso uno bona sunt omnia,*" Aug., "One Christ will be to thee instead of all things else, because in Him are all good things to be found." Abraham's servant brought forth jewels of gold and silver to win Rebecca's heart to Isaac; so should you, O young men, be often in presenting to your own view, all those amiable and excellent things that be in Christ, to win your hearts over to Christ betimes.

2. If you would be good betimes, then you must know betimes that Jesus Christ is mighty to save.

He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto Him, that believe in Him, and that cast themselves upon Him. The Lord hath laid help upon One that is mighty. Christ saves perfectly, thoroughly, perpetually, them that come unto Him.

The three tongues that were written upon the cross, in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, to witness Christ to be the King of the Jews, do each of them in their several idioms avouch this maxim, that Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour; and a threefold cord is not easily broken. They say it is true of the oil at Rheims, that though it be continually spent in the inauguration of their kings of France, yet it never wasteth. Christ is that pot of manna, that cruse of oil, that bottomless ocean, that never fails His people; there is in Christ an all-sufficiency for all creatures, at all times, in all places.

The great Cham is said to have a tree full of

pearls hanging by clusters. But what is the great Cham's tree to Christ, our tree of life, who hath all variety and plenty of all fruit upon Him? The happinesses that come to believers by Christ are so many, that they cannot be numbered; so great, that they cannot be measured; so copious, that they cannot be defined; so precious, that they cannot be valued: all which speaks out the fulness and all-sufficiency of Christ.

There is in Christ *plenitudo abundantiae, et plenitudo redundantiae*, a fulness of abundance, and a fulness of redundancy, as well as a fulness of sufficiency.

There is in Christ,

1. The fulness of the Spirit.
2. The fulness of grace.
3. The fulness of the image of God.
4. The fulness of the Godhead.
5. The fulness of glory.

But I must not now open nor dilate on these things, lest I should tire both myself and the reader.

Plutarch, in the life of Phocion, tells us of a certain gentlewoman of Ionia, who showed the wife of Phocion all the rich jewels and precious stones she had. She answered her again, "All my riches and jewels is my husband Phocion." So may a penitent sinner say of his blessed Saviour, "Christ is all my jewels, my riches, my treasures, my plea-

tures, &c. His sufficiency is all these, and more than these, to me."

The Spanish ambassador, coming to see the treasury of St. Mark at Venice, which is cried up throughout the whole world, fell a-groping to find whether it had any bottom, and being asked why, answered, in this, amongst other things, "My great master's treasure differs from yours, in that his hath no bottom, as I find yours to have;" alluding to the mines in Mexico and Potosi. But what are the Spaniard's treasures to Christ's treasures? A man may, without much groping, find the bottom of all earthly treasures; but who can find the bottom of Christ's treasures? Should all created excellencies meet in one glorified breast, yet they could not enable that glorious God-like creature to sound the bottom of those riches and treasures which are in Christ, Eph. iii. 8: all which speaks out Christ's all-sufficiency.

3. If you would be good betimes, then you must know betimes that there is a marvellous willingness and readiness in Christ, to embrace, to entertain, to welcome returning sinners, and to show mercy and favour to them.

The young prodigal did but think of returning to his father, and he ran and met him; and instead of kicking or killing him, he kissed and embraced him, his bowels rolled within him, and his compassions flowed out freely to him. "Ho, every

one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price," Isa. lv. 1. Nazianzen improveth this passage thus: "O, this easy way of contract! He giveth more willingly than others sell. If thou wilt but accept, that is all the price. Though you have no merits, though you have nothing in yourselves to encourage you, yet will you accept? If you will, all is freely yours; the waters shall be yours to cleanse you, and the milk yours to nourish you, and the bread yours to strengthen you, and the wine yours to comfort you. Here poor sinners are called three times to come: 'Come,' saith Christ, 'come, come;' to show how marvellous willing and ready He is that poor sinners should taste of gospel delicacies."

So in John vii. 37, "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." So in Rev. xxii. 17, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." So in Rev. iii. 20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come unto him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." And so in Luke xiv. 21, "The master of the house said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." Here is no

man of quality, of dignity, of worldly pomp or glory, or of any self-sufficiency, that is invited to the feast; but a company of poor, ragged, deformed, slighted, neglected, impoverished, wounded sinners: these are invited to feast with Christ.

Concerning this willingness of Christ, I shall speak more when I come to deal with old sinners in the close of this discourse; and to that I refer you for further and fuller satisfaction concerning the great readiness and willingness of Jesus Christ to entertain returning sinners.

4. If you would be good betimes, then you must know betimes that Jesus Christ is designed, sealed, and appointed by the Father to the office of a Mediator.

“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed,” John vi. 27. God the Father hath made Christ’s commission authentical, as men do theirs by their seal. It is a metaphor, a simile taken from them who give commissions under hand and seal. God the Father hath given it under His hand and seal, that Jesus Christ is the only Person that He hath appointed and sealed, allowed and confirmed, to the office of our redemption. If Jesus Christ were ever so able to save, or ever so willing and ready to save poor sinners, yet if He were not appointed, designed, and sealed for that work, the

awakened sinner would never look out after Him, nor desire union with Him, nor interest in Him; and therefore it is of very great consequence to know that God the Father hath sent and sealed Christ to be a Saviour to His people. "Him hath God the Father sealed;" sealed by way of destination, and sealed by way of qualification, sealed by His doctrine, sealed by His miracles, sealed by His baptism, sealed by His resurrection, but above all, sealed by His glorious unction: Isa. lxi. 1-3, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." Neither saints nor angels are sealed and appointed to the great work of redemption, but the Lord Jesus is. You should always look upon the Lord Jesus as sealed and anointed to the office of Mediator, and accordingly plead with Him:

"Ah, Lord! It is Thy office, as Thou art a sealed and anointed Saviour and Redeemer, to subdue my sins, to change my nature, to sanctify my heart, to

reform my life, and to save my soul; and therefore do it for Thy name's sake; O do it for Thy office sake, do it for Thy glory's sake.

“‘Thou art anointed with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows;’ Thou hast a larger effusion of the Spirit upon Thee than others; Thou art anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with power after an extraordinary measure and manner; Thou art endued with all heroical gifts and excellencies, plentifully, abundantly, transcendently; Thou art sealed and predestinated; Thou art invested with this office of Mediatorship under the Father’s hand and seal; and therefore whither should I go for salvation, for remission, for redemption, for grace, for glory, but to Thee?”

5. If you would be good betimes, then you must know betimes that there is no way to salvation but by Jesus Christ.

“Neither is there salvation in any other, (speaking of Christ): for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved,” Acts iv. 12. If ever you are saved, you must be saved by Him, and Him only; you must not look for another Saviour, nor must you look for a co-saviour; you must be saved wholly by Christ, and only by Christ, or you shall never be saved; you must cry out as Lambert did, when he was in the fire, and lifted up his hands and finger-ends flaming, “None but Christ, none but Christ.” When Augustus desired the senate to join two consuls with him for the

better government of the state, the senate answered, that they held it as a diminution of his dignity, and a disparagement of their own judgment, to join any with so incomparable a man as Augustus.

Ah! friends, it is a diminution of Christ's dignity, sufficiency, and glory, in the business of your salvation, to join anything with the Lord Jesus; and it is the greatest disparagement in the world to your own judgments, knowledge, prudence, and wisdom, to yoke any with Christ in the work of redemption, in the business of salvation.

St. Austin saith that Marcellina hung Christ's picture and the picture of Pythagoras together. Many there are, not only in Rome, but in England, who join Christ and their works together, Christ and their prayers together, Christ and their teachers together, Christ and their mournings together, Christ and their earnings together, Christ and their arms together. Ah! what a poor, what a weak, what an impotent, what an insufficient Saviour do these men make Jesus Christ to be! Except these men come off from these things, and come up only to Jesus Christ in the great business of salvation, they will as certainly and as eternally perish, notwithstanding their hearing, knowing, and talking much of Christ, as those that never heard of Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament, God commands them not to wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together: "Neither shall a garment mingled

of linen and woollen come upon thee," Deut. xxii. 11. The law was figurative, and shows us, that in the case of our justification, acceptance, and salvation, we are not to join our works, our services, with the righteousness of Christ. God abhors a linsey-woolsey righteousness. And as by the letter of this law in the Hebrew account, one thread of wool in a linen garment, or one linen thread in a woollen garment, made it unlawful, so the least manner of mixture in the business of justification makes all null and void. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work," Rom. xi. 6. He that shall mix his righteousness with Christ's, he that shall mix his puddle with Christ's purple blood, his rags with Christ's royal robes, his copper with Christ's gold, his water with Christ's wine, is in the ready way to perish for ever.

On earth kings love no co-rivals, power is impatient of participation, Christ will be Alexander or nobody; He will be all in all in the business of justification, or He will be nothing at all. We must say of Christ as it was once said of Cæsar, "*Socium habet neminem*," "He may have a companion, but He must not have a competitor."

Let us say of Christ, as the heathen once said of his petty gods, "*Contemno minutulos istos deos, Jovem propitium habeam*," "So long as he had his

Jupiter to friend, he regarded them not." So long as we have our Jesus to friend, and His righteousness and blood to friend, we should condemn all other things, and abhor the bringing of anything into competition with Him. A real Christian cares not for anything that hath not *aliquid Christi*, something of Christ in it. He that holds not wholly with Christ, doth very shamefully neglect Christ. "*Aut totum mecum tene aut totum omitte,*" saith Gregory Nazianzen.

There is no other name, no other nature, no other blood, no other merits, no other person to be justified and saved by, but Jesus Christ. You may run from creature to creature, and from duty to duty, and from ordinance to ordinance; and when you have wearied and tired yourselves in seeking ease and rest, satisfaction and remission; justification and salvation in one way and other, you will be forced, after all, to come to Christ, and to cry out, Ah! none but Christ, none but Christ! Ah! none to Christ, none to Christ! No works to Christ's, no duties, no services to Christ's, no prayers to Christ's, no tears to Christ's, no righteousness, no holiness to Christ's.

Well, friends, remember this, that all the tears in the world cannot wipe off meritoriously one sin; nor all the grace and holiness that is in angels and men, buy out the pardon of the least transgression. All remission is by the blood of Christ.

6. If you would be good betimes, then you must know betimes, that the heart of Jesus Christ is as much set upon sinners now He is in heaven, as ever it was when He was upon earth.

Christ is no less loving, less mindful, less desirous of sinners' eternal welfare now He is in heaven (in a far country) than He was when He lived on earth, witness 2 Cor. v. 20; His continuing the ministry of reconciliation among poor sinners in all ages; witness the constant treaties, that, by His ambassadors and Spirit, He still hath with poor sinners about the things of their peace, the things of eternity; witness His continual knockings, His continual callings upon poor sinners, by His Word, rod, Spirit, to open, to repent, to lay hold on mercy, and to be at peace with Him; witness His continual wooing of poor sinners in the face of all neglects, and put-offs, delays, and denials; in the face of all harsh entertainment and churlish answers; in the face of all gainsaying and carnal reasonings; in the face of all the scorn and contempt that wretched sinners put upon Him; and witness that plain word, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Christ is the same afore time, in time, and after time; He is unchangeable in His essence, in His promises, and His affections: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come."

The phrase is taken from the Greek letters

whereof *alpha* is the first, and *omega* the last. The first and last letters in the Greek alphabet are a description of Me, saith Christ, who am before all and after all, who am above all and in all; who am unchangeable in Myself, and in My thoughts and good will to poor sinners. Therefore do not, poor souls, entertain any hard thoughts concerning Jesus Christ, as if He was less mindful, less pitiful, and less merciful to poor souls now He is in heaven, than He was when His abode was in the world.

And thus I have gone over those six things that you must know concerning Christ, if ever you would be good betimes. When Pope Leo lay upon his death-bed, Cardinal Bembus, citing a text of Scripture to comfort him, he replied, "*Apoge has nugas de Christo,*" "Away with these baubles concerning Christ." But I hope better things of you, and do desire that you would say of all things, below this knowledge of Christ that I have opened to you, as that devout pilgrim, who, travelling to Jerusalem, and, by the way, visiting many brave cities, with their rare monuments, and meeting with many friendly entertainments, would often say, "I must not stay here; this is not Jerusalem." Ah! so do you, young men and women, in the midst of all your worldly delights and contents, cry out, Oh, we must not stay here; this is not Jerusalem; this is not that knowledge of Christ that I must have, if ever I am happy here, and blessed hereafter.

IV. If you would be good betimes, then you must acquaint yourselves with those that are good betimes.

1. If you would be gracious in the spring and morning of your youth, then you must begin to be much in with them who are much in with Christ, who lie near His heart, and know much of His mind: "He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed," Prov. xiii. 20; or as the Hebrew hath it, "shall be broken in pieces," as when an army is broken and routed by an enemy. "*Holech*," from "*halech*," "Walking with the wise, he shall be wise;" for so the original hath it. It is not talking with the wise, but walking with the wise, that will make you wise. It is not your commending and praising of the wise, but your walking with the wise, that will make you wise. It is not your taking a few turns with the wise, but your walking with the wise, that will make you wise. There is no getting much good by them that are good, but by making them your ordinary and constant companions.

Ah! friends, you should do as Joseph in Egypt, of whom the Scripture saith, Psal. cv. 22, according to the Hebrew phrase, that "he tied the princes of Pharaoh's court about his heart." If ever you would gain by the saints, you must bind them upon your souls, you must labour to have very near, close, and intimate communion with them.

The Jews had a proverb, that two dry sticks put to a green one would kindle it. The best way to be in a flame God-ward, Christ-ward, heaven-ward, and holiness-ward, is to be among the dry sticks, the kindled coals, the saints; for as live coals kindle those that are dead, so lively Christians will heat and enliven those that are dead God-wards, Christ-wards, heaven-wards, and holiness-wards: "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the face of a man his friend."

Men's wits, parts, and gifts, and industry, commonly grow more strong, vigorous, and quick by friendly conference and communion.

And as he that comes where sweet spices and ointments are stirring, carries away a sweet savour with him; so he that converseth with those that are good, shall carry away that goodness and sweetness with him, that shall render him sweet, desirable, and delectable to others. Poleman, that St. Augustine speaks of, who was all for wine and play, became a brave man when he became acquainted with the philosopher's school. So many young men that have been all for wine and women, for playing and toying, for vanity and folly, have become brave men, precious men, by the company, counsel, and example of those who were gracious. Doctor Taylor, the martyr, rejoiced that ever he came into prison, because he came thither to have acquaintance with that angel of God, John Bradford, as he calls him.

So, doubtless, many young persons there be that have much cause to rejoice, and for ever to bless the Lord, that ever they became acquainted with such and such, who fear the Lord, and who walk in His ways, for the good that they have received from them.

Algerius, an Italian martyr, said, he had rather be in a prison with Cato, than with Cæsar in the senate house.

Ah! young men, you had better be with the people of God, when they are in the lowest and most contemptible condition, than with the great wicked ones of the world, when they are in their royalty and glory. In the day of account you will find that they have made the best market who have rather chosen to keep company with Lazarus, though in his rags, than they would, with others, keep company with Dives, though in purple robes.

Well, young men, remember this, clothes and company do oftentimes tell tales in a mute but significant language.

“Tell me with whom thou goest, and I will tell thee who thou art,” saith the Spanish proverb. Cicero, though a heathen, had rather have no companion than a bad one. The Lord grant that this heathen, and others among them that were of the same mind with him, may never rise up in judgment against any of you into whose hands this treatise shall fall.

And thus I have despatched those four things

that you must be acquainted with betimes, viz, the Scripture, your own hearts and conditions, the Lord Jesus Christ, and them that fear Him, if ever you would be good betimes.

2. If you would be good betimes, if you would seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days, then you must shun the occasions of sin betimes. A man will never begin to be good, till he begin to decline those occasions that have made him bad: 1 Thess. v. 22, "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

You must shun and be shy of the very appearance of sin, of the very shows and shadows of sin. The word *eidos*, which is ordinarily rendered appearances, signifies kind or sort; and so the meaning of the apostle seems to be this, "Abstain from all sort, or the whole kind of evil;" from all that is truly so, be it ever so small.

The least sin is dangerous. Cæsar was stabbed with bodkins; and many have been eaten up of mice and lice.

The least spark may consume the greatest house; the least leak may sink the greatest ship; the least sin is enough to undo thy soul; and, therefore, shun all the occasions that lead unto it.

Job made a covenant with his eyes; Joseph would not be in the room where his mistress was; and David (when himself) would not sit with vain persons. As long as there is fuel in our hearts for

a temptation, we cannot be secure. He that hath gunpowder about him, had need keep far enough off from sparks. He that is either tender of his credit abroad, or comfort at home, had need shun and be shy of the very show and shadow of sin. He that would neither wound conscience nor credit, God nor gospel, hath need hate the garments spotted with the flesh.

In the law, God commanded His people, not only that they should worship no idol, but that they should demolish all the monuments of them; and that they should make no covenant nor affinity with those who worshipped them; and all, lest they should be drawn by these occasions to commit idolatry with them. He that would not taste of the forbidden fruit, must not so much as gaze at it; and he that would not be bit by the serpent, must not so much as parley with the serpent.

It is very observable, that in the law, the Nazarite was not only commanded to abstain from wine and strong drink, but also he might not eat grapes, whether moist or dry, or anything that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. But why not these small things, in which there could be no danger of drunkenness? Surely lest by the contentment of these, he might be drawn to desire the wine, and so be brought on to sin, to break his vow, and so make work for hell, or for the Physician of souls. God hereby forbidding the most remote

occasions, shows how wary and exactly careful men should be, to shun and avoid all occasions, provocations, and appearances of evil; and indeed we had need to keep off from slippery places, who can hardly stand fast on dry ground. He that ventures upon the occasion of sin, and then prays, "Lead me not into temptation," is like him that thrusts his finger into the fire, and then prays that it may not be burnt; or like him that is resolved to quench the fire with oil, which, instead of quenching it, is a fuel to feed and increase it.

It was a notable saying of one, "*Majus est miraculum inter vehementes occasiones non cadere quam mortuus suscitare*," "It is a greater miracle not to fall, being among strong occasions, than it is to raise up the dead." He that would not be defiled, must not touch pitch; he that would not be burnt, must not carry fire in his bosom; he that would not eat the meat, must not meddle with the broth; he that would not fall into the pit, must not dance upon the brink; he that would not feel the blow, must keep off from the train: "Keep thee far from a false matter," Exod. xxiii. 7.

He that will not flee from the occasions and allurements of sin, though they may seem ever so pleasant to the eye or sweet to the taste, shall find them in the end to be more sharp than vinegar, more bitter than wormwood, more deadly than poison.

There is a great truth in that saying of the son of Syrach, "He that loveth danger shall perish therein ; he that will not decline danger, shall not be able to decline destruction."

Socrates speaks of two young men, that flung away their belts, when being in an idol's temple the lustrating waters fell upon them, detesting, saith the historian, the garments spotted with the flesh ; and will you, O young men, play and toy with the occasions of sin ? The Lord forbid.

There are stories of several heathens that have shunned and avoided the occasions of sin ; and will you dare to venture upon the occasions of sin ?

Alexander would not see the woman after whom he might have lusted.

Scipio Africanus, warring in Spain, took New Carthage by storm, at which time a beautiful and noble virgin fled unto him for succour, to preserve her chastity, being but twenty-four years old, and so in the heat of youth. He, hearing of it, would not suffer her to come into his sight, for fear of temptation, but caused her to be restored in safety to her father.

Livia counselled her husband Augustus, not only not to do wrong, but not to seem to do so.

Cæsar would not search Pompey's cabinet, lest he should find new matter of revenge.

Plato mounted upon his horse, and judging himself a little moved with pride, did presently light

from his horse, lest he should be overtaken with loftiness in riding.

Theseus is said to cut off his golden locks, lest his enemies should take advantage by taking hold of them.

Ah! young men, shall the very heathens thus shun and flee from the occasions of sin, and will not you? Will not you who sit under the sunshine of the Gospel? These will, in the great day of account, be sad and sore witnesses against those that dally and play with the occasions of sin.

To prevent carnal carefulness, Christ sends his disciples to school to the irrational creatures, Matth. vi. 26. And to prevent your closing with the occasion of sin, let me send you to school to the like creatures, that you may learn by them to shun and avoid the occasions of sin.

The Sepiæ, certain kind of fish, perceiving themselves in danger of being taken, by an instinct which they have, they do darken the water, and so many times escape the net which is laid for them.

Geese, they say, when they flee over Taurus, keep stones in their mouths, lest by gagling they should discover themselves to the eagles which are among the mountains waiting for them. Now, if all these considerations put together, will not work you to decline the occasions of sin, I know not what will. There is a truth in that old saying,

“He that will no evil do,
Must do nothing belongs thereto.”

The Israelites must have no leaven in their houses till the passover be done, lest they should be tempted to eat of it.

3. If you would be good betimes, then you must remember the eye of God betimes.

If you would seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of your days, then you must study God's omnipotence betimes: Job xxxi. 4, "Doth not He see my ways, and count all my steps?" "For his eyes are upon the way of man, and He seeth all his goings. There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves," Job xxxiv. 21, 22.

I have read that Paphnutius converted two famous young strumpets, Thais and Ephron, from uncleanness, only with this argument, that God seeth all things in the dark, when the doors are fast, the windows shut, and the curtains drawn. By this very argument Solomon labours to take off his young man from carnal and sinful courses: Prov. v. 20, 21, "And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He pondereth all his goings." Thou mayest deceive all the world, like that counterfeit Alexander in Josephus's story; but Augustus will not be deceived, he hath quicker and sharper eyes.

Ah! young man, thou mayest deceive this man and

that, and as easily deceive thyself, but thou canst not deceive him who is *Panopthalmos, totus oculus*, all eye. As the eyes of a well-drawn picture are fastened upon thee, which way soever thou turnest, so are the eyes of the Lord.

Ah! friends, His eyes, which are ten thousand times brighter than the sun, compass thy words, thy ways, thy works, thy thoughts, thy bed, thy board, thy bench. The Egyptian hieroglyphic for God, was an eye on a sceptre, showing that He sees and rules all things.

Ah! friends, all thoughts, words, hopes, and hearts are naked, opened, dissected, and quartered before that God with whom we have to do. God is very curious and exact in marking and observing what is done by men, that He may render to every man according to his works.

St. Austin speaks of an old comedian, who, having no other spectators, went usually into the theatre, and acted before the statues of the gods.

Ah! young men and women, the eye of God should be more to you than all the world besides; O that this scripture might be written with the pen of a diamond on your hearts! "Fear ye not Me? saith the Lord: and will ye not tremble at My presence?" Jer. v. 22. There is a great truth in that saying of his, "*Magna ex hoc indita est probitatis necessitas, quia omnia ante oculos judicis facimus cuncta cernentis,*" "A great necessity of goodness is from hence

put into us, because we do all things before the eyes of a Judge that sees all things."

4. If you would be good betimes, then you must hearken to the voice of conscience.

A man will never begin to be good, till he begins to hearken to what conscience speaks. So long as a man turns a deaf ear to conscience, he is a sure prisoner to Satan, and a sure enemy to God.

Ah, how good might many have been, had they but begun to hearken to conscience!

Ah! young men, do not dally with conscience, do not play, do not trifle with conscience, do not stop your ears against conscience. He that will not in his youth give conscience audience, shall at last be forced to hear such lectures from conscience, as shall make his life a very hell. A sleepy conscience is like a sleepy lion; when he awakes, he roars and tears. So will conscience. Conscience is a thousand witnesses for or against a man. He that hath long turned the deaf ear to conscience, shall at last find his conscience, like Prometheus's vulture, that lies ever a-gnawing. Judas found it so; and Spira found it so; and Blair, a great councillor of Scotland, found it so.

I have read of one John Hofmeister, that fell sick in an inn, as he was travelling towards Ausburge in Germany, and grew to that horror of conscience, that they were fain to bind him in his bed with chains, where he cried out, that "he was for

ever cast off by God; and that the promises that were set before him would do him no good; and all because he had wounded his conscience, and turned a deaf ear to conscience." O the joys and comforts that many worthies have experienced upon the review of a good conscience!

Well, young man, if thou wilt not betimes hearken to conscience, thou shalt at last hear conscience saying to thee, as the probationer disciple did to Christ, Matth. viii. 19, "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever thou goest." So saith conscience, "Sinner, I have called upon thee many a thousand times, and told thee, that I must by commission be thy best friend, or thy worst enemy, but thou wouldst not hear; and therefore now I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. Fast, and I will follow thee, and fill thee with horrors and terrors. Feast, and I will follow thee, and show thee such a handwriting upon the wall, as shall cause thy countenance to change, thy thoughts to be troubled, the joints of thy loins to be loosed, and thy knees to dash one against another! Stay at home, and I will follow thee from bed to board. Go abroad, and I will follow thee into all places and companies; and thou shalt know that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast so long and so often neglected my calls and disobeyed my voice, and walked contrary to me. Now thou shalt find a truth in that saying of Luther, '*Una guttula malæ conscientia totum mare,*'

‘One drop of an evil conscience swallows up the whole sea of worldly joy.’”

Well, young men, there is a day a-coming, wherein a good conscience will be better than a good purse; for then the Judge will not be put off with a suit of compliments or fair words, nor drawn aside with hope of reward. And therefore, as you would be able to hold up your heads in that day, make conscience of hearkening to the voice of conscience in this your day.

5. If you would be good betimes, then you must know betimes wherein true happiness lies. For a man will never begin to be good, till he begins to understand wherein his happiness consists.

The philosophers, speaking of happiness, were divided into two hundred and eighty-eight opinions, every one intending something, and yet resolving nothing. Therefore the man in Plutarch, hearing them wrangle about man's (*summum bonum*) chiefest good; one placing it in this, and another in that; he went to the market, and bought up all that was good, hoping among all he should not miss it; but he did. Many look for happiness in sin, others look for it in the creatures, but they must all say, “It is not in us.” “*Nil dat quod non habet,*” “Nothing can give what it hath not.” If the conduit pipe hath no water, it can give no water; if a man hath no money, he can give no money; if the creatures have no happiness, they can give no happiness.

Now this jewel, this pearl happiness, is not to be found in the breast, in the bosom of creatures. In a word, because I must hasten to a close, man's happiness lies,

(1.) In his communion with God, as experience and Scripture demonstrate: "Happy is, that people that is in such a case (but give me that word again); yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord," Psal. cxliv. 15.

A man whose soul is in communion with God, shall find more pleasure in a desert, in a dungeon, in a den, yea, in death, than in the palace of a prince, than in all worldly delights and contents.

(2.) In pardon of sin: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile," Psal. xxxii. 1, 2. It is not, Blessed is the honourable man; but, Blessed is the pardoned man. It is not, Blessed is the rich man; but, Blessed is the pardoned man. It is not, Blessed is the learned man; but, Blessed is the pardoned man. It is not, Blessed is the politic man; but, Blessed is the pardoned man. It is not, Blessed is the victorious man; but, Blessed is the pardoned man. "Do with me what thou wilt, since thou hast pardoned my sins," saith Luther.

(3.) In a complete fruition and enjoyment of God, when we shall be here no more: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," Matth.

8. Now they see Him but darkly; but in heaven they shall see Him face to face, they shall know as they are known. But of these things I have spoken largely elsewhere, and therefore shall satisfy myself with these hints.

6. If you would be good betimes, then you must break your covenant with sin betimes.

You must fall out with your lusts, you must arm and fence yourselves against sin. A man never begins to fall in with Christ, till he begins to fall out with his sins. Till sin and the soul be two, Christ and the soul cannot be one. Now, to work your hearts to this, you should always look upon sin under these notions:

(1.) If you would have the league dissolved between sin and your souls betimes, then look upon it under the notion of an enemy.

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul,” 1 Pet. ii. 11. As the viper is killed by her young ones in her belly, so are poor sinners betrayed and killed by their own lusts, that are nourished in their bosoms.

Pittacus, a philosopher, challenging Phylon, the Athenian captain (in their wars against them) to single combat, carried a net privily, and so caught him, and overcame him. So doth sin with poor sinners. The dangerous, pernicious, malignant nature of sin, you may see in the story of the Italian, who

first made his enemy deny God, and then him to the heart, and so at once murder body and soul. Sin betrays us into the the devil, as Delilah did Samson into the the Philistines.

Sugared poisons go down pleasantly. when they are down, they gall and gnaw, & the very heart-strings asunder. It is so v Ah! poor souls, have you not often found it

When Phocas the murderer thought to himself by building high walls, he heard from heaven telling him, that though he bulwarks ever so high, yet the sin within w stroy all.

St. Ambrose reports of one Theotimus, tha a disease upon his body, the physician told h except he did abstain from intemperance, c ness, and uncleanness, he would lose his ey heart was so desperately set upon his sins, cries out, "Then (*Vale lumen amicum,*) sweet light!"

Ah! how did his lusts war both again

The oracle told the Cyrreans, "*Noctesque diesque bella gerendum*," "They could not be happy, unless they waged war night and day." No more can we, except we live and die fighting our lusts.

Ah! young men, can you look upon sin under the notion of an enemy, and not break with it, and not arm against it?

Well, remember this, the pleasure and sweetness that follows victory over sin, is a thousand times beyond that seeming sweetness that is in sin. And as victory over sin is the sweetest victory, so it is the greatest victory. There is no conquest to that which is gotten over a man's own corruptions. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city."

It is noble to overcome an enemy without, but it is more noble to overcome an enemy within. It is honourable to overcome fiery flames; but it is far more honourable to overcome fiery lusts.

When Valentinian the emperor was upon his dying-bed, among all his victories only one comforted him, and that was the victory over his worst enemy, viz., his own naughty heart.

Ah! young man, thy worst enemies are within thee; and their plots, designs, and assaults are upon thy soul, thy most noble parts; they know if that fort-royal be won, all is their own, and thou art undone, and shalt be their slave for ever. And therefore it stands thee upon to arm thyself against these

inbred enemies; and if thou engagest Christ quarrel, thou wilt carry the day, and when shalt lie upon a dying-bed, thou wilt then find there is no comfort to that which ariseth from conquest of thy own heart, thy own lusts.

(2.) If you would break covenant with sin, would arm and fence yourselves against sin look upon sin as the soul's bonds.

For as bonds tie things together, so doth the sinner and the curse together, it binds the sinner and wrath together, it links the sinner and together: Acts viii. 23, "I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity is a chain, a bond. Now, bonds and gall the body, and so doth sin the soul. A poor captives are held fast in their chains, sinners in their sins; they cannot redeem them by price nor by power.

Ah! young men, no bondage to soul but no slavery to soul slavery. The Israelites' bondage under Pharaoh, and the Christians' bondage to the Turks, is but the bondage of the body,

those chains of iron and brass, those chains of lusts, with which you are bound. Ah! who can thus look upon his chains, his sins, and not loathe them, and not labour for freedom from them! Justinus the emperor's motto was, "*Libertas res inestimabilis*," "Liberty is invaluable." If civil liberty be, surely spiritual liberty is much more. If you ask souls that were once in a state of bondage, but are now Christ's freemen, they will tell you so.

It was a good observation of Chrysostom, that Joseph was the freeman, and his mistress was the servant, when she was at the beck of her own lusts, when she tempted and he refused. Such as live lost above sin and temptation, are the greatest freemen; others that live under the power of their lusts, are but slaves, and in bonds, though they dream and talk of freedom.

(3.) If you would break league with sin, and arm and fence yourselves against it, then always look on in under the notion of fire.

"And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." Oh! snatch them out of their sins, as you would snatch a child, a friend, out of the fire! Or as the angel snatched Lot out of Sodom, hastily and with a holy violence. Natural fire may burn the house, the goods, the treasure, the servant, the child, the wife, the body; but this fire burns the soul, it destroys and consumes that noble part, which is more worth than all the treasures of a thousand

worlds. Every man hath a hand and a heart to quench that fire that burns in his neighbour's house; but few men have either hands or hearts to quench the fire that burns their neighbours' souls. This is and this shall be for a lamentation.

I have read of one, who, upon the violence of any temptation to sin, would lay his hands on burning coals, and being not able to abide it, would say to himself, "Oh! how unable shall I be to endure the pains of hell!" And this restrained him from evil. But what is the fire of hell to the fire of sin!

Now, to provoke you to look on sin under the notion of fire, consider the sundry resemblances between material and immaterial fire, between corporeal common fire, and between this spiritual fire, sin; as,

a. Fire is terrible and dreadful. A ship on fire, an house on fire,—oh, how dreadful is it! So sin set home upon the conscience, is exceeding terrible and dreadful. "Mine iniquity (so the Hebrew) is greater than I can bear." Sin or iniquity is often put for the punishment of sin, by metonymy of the efficient for the effect; for sin is the natural parent of punishment. "Mine iniquity," saith Cain, "is so great, and lies so heavy, so terrible, and dreadful upon my conscience, that it cannot be forgiven." And thus by his diffidence, he stabs two at once, the mercy of God and his own soul. So Judas: *Matth. xxvii. 4, 5*, "I have sinned, in that I have

betrayed the innocent blood. And he went and hanged himself."

As there is no fighting with a mighty fire, so there is no bearing up where God sets home sin upon the conscience. A man will then choose strangling or hanging, rather than live under such wounds and lashes of conscience. Histories abound with instances of this nature.

b. Fire is most dangerous and pernicious when it breaks forth of the chimney, or of the house. So it is with sin. Sin is bad in the eye, worse in the tongue, worse in the heart, but worst of all in the life. Fire, when out of its proper place, may do much hurt in the house; but when it flames abroad, then it doth much mischief to others.

Sin in the heart may undo a man; but sin in the life may undo others, as well as a man's self. Set a guard upon the eye, a greater upon thy heart, but the greatest of all upon thy life.

Salvian relates how the heathen did reproach some Christians, who, by their lewd lives, made the Gospel of Christ to be a reproach: "Where," said they, "is that good law which they do believe?" Where are those rules of godliness which they do learn? They read the Holy Gospel, and yet are unclean; they hear the apostles' writings, and yet are drunk; they follow Christ, and yet disobey Christ; they profess a holy law, and yet do lead impure lives."

But the lives of other Christians have been so holy, that the very heathens observing them, have said, "Surely this is a good God, whose servants are so good."

It is brave when the life of a Christian is a commentary upon Christ's life.

One speaking of the Scripture, saith, "*Verba vivenda, non legenda,*" "They are words to be lived and practised, not read only."

A heathen adviseth us to demean ourselves so circumspectly, as if our enemies did always behold us. And said another, "For shame! Either live as Stoics, or leave off the name of Stoics." Sirs, live as Christians, or lay down the name of Christians.

c. Fire hardens; it makes the weak and limber clay to become stiff and strong for the potter's use. So sin hardens; it hardens the heart against the commands of God, the calls of Christ, and the wrestlings of the Spirit; as you see in Pharaoh, the Jews, and most that are under the sound of the Gospel.

Ah, how many hath this fire (sin) hardened in these days, by working them to slight soul-softening means, and by drawing them to entertain hardening thoughts of God, and to fall in with soul-hardening company, and soul-hardening principles, and soul-hardening examples, or hardened and insensible sinners! One long since complained, "That they did more calmly pass by the injuries done to Christ,

than those which are done unto themselves." This age is full of such hardened insensible souls.

d. Fire is a lively, active element; so is sin.

Ah, how lively and active was the fire in Abraham, David, Job, Peter, Paul, and other saints! Though Christ by His death hath given it its mortal wound, yet it lives, and is and will be active in the dearest saints. Though sin and grace were not born together, neither shall they die together; yet whilst believers live in this world, they must live together. There is a history that speaks of a fig-tree that grew in a stone wall, and all means were used to kill it. They cut off the branches, and it grew again; they cut down the body, and it grew again; they cut it up by the root, and still it lived, and grew, until they pulled down the stone wall. Till death shall pull down our stone walls, sin will live, this fire will burn.

We may say of sin, as some say of cats, that they have many lives. Kill them, and they will live again; kill them again, and they will live again. So kill sin once, and it will live again; kill it again, and it will live again. Sin oftentimes is like that monster Hydra; cut off one head, and many more will rise up in its room.

e. Fire is of a penetrating nature; it pierceth and windeth itself into every corner and chink. And so doth sin wind itself into our thoughts, words, and works. It will wind itself into our understandings, to darken them; into our judgments, to pervert

them; into our wills, to poison them; into our affections, to disorder them; into our consciences, to corrupt them; and into our carriages, to debase them. Sin will wind itself into every duty and every mercy; it will wind itself into every one of our enjoyments and concernments.

Hannibal, having overcome the Romans, put their armour on his soldiers; and so by that policy, they, being taken for Romans, won a city. But what are Hannibal's wiles to sin's wiles, or Satan's wiles! If you have a mind to be acquainted with their wiles, look over my treatise, called, "Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices."

f. Fire is a devouring, a consuming element; it turns all fuel into ashes, it is a wolf that eats up all. So sin is a fire that devours and consumes all. It turned Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes; it destroyed the Chaldean, Persian, and Grecian kingdoms; and will at last destroy the Roman kingdom also. This wolf ate up Samson's strength, Absalom's beauty, Ahithophel's policy, and Herod's glory. It hath drowned one world already, and will at last burn another, even this. Oh! the hopes, the hearts, the happiness, the joys, the comforts, the souls that this fire (sin) hath consumed and destroyed!

Peter Camois, a bishop of Barre in France, in his "Draught of Eternity," tells us, that some devout personages caused those words of the prophet to be written in letters of gold upon their chimney-pieces:

Isa. xxxiii. 14, "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

Ah! young men and women, I desire that you would always look on sin under the notion of fire, yea, as such fire as lays the foundation for everlasting fire, for everlasting burnings; and this may work when others will not.

I have read of a grave and chaste matron, who being moved to commit folly with a lewd ruffian, after some discourse she called for a pan of burning coals, requesting him for her sake to hold his finger in them but an hour. He answered, "This is an unkind request." To whom she replied, "That seeing he would not do so much as to put one finger on the coals for an hour, she would not yield to that, for which she would be tormented, both body and soul, in hell fire for ever." The application is easy.

4. If you would break with sin, if you would arm against sin, in the spring and morning of your days, then you should look upon sin under the notion of a thief.

And indeed, sin is the greatest thief, the greatest robber in the world. It robbed the angels of all their glory; it robbed Adam of his paradise and felicity; and it hath robbed all the sons of Adam of five precious jewels, the least of which was more worth than heaven and earth.

(1.) It hath robbed them of the holy and glorious

image of God, which would have been fairly engraven upon them had Adam stood.

(2.) It hath robbed them of their sonship, and of sons hath made them slaves.

(3.) It hath robbed them of their friendship, and made them enemies.

(4.) It hath robbed them of their communion and fellowship with Father, Son, and Spirit, and made them strangers and aliens.

(5.) It hath robbed them of their glory, and made them vile and miserable. It hath robbed many a nation of the gospel, and many a parish of many a happy guide, and many a Christian of the favour of God, the joys of the Spirit, and the peace of conscience.

Oh! the health, the wealth, the honour, the friends, the relations that sin hath robbed thousands of: Nay, it hath robbed many of their gifts, their arts, their parts, their memory, their judgments; yea, their very reason, as you may see in Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Ahithophel, Haman, Herod, and those Babylonish princes that accused Daniel. And so in Menippus of Phenicia, who, having lost his goods, strangled himself. And so Dinarchus Phidon, at a certain loss, cut his own throat to save the charge of a cord. And so Augustus Cæsar, in whose time Christ was born, was so troubled and astonished at the relation of an overthrow from *Varus*, that for certain months together he let the

hair of his head and beard grow still, and wore it long; yea, and other whiles would run his head against the doors, crying out, "Quintillius Varus, deliver up my legions again!" By all which it is most apparent, that sin is the greatest thief in all the world. Oh, then, who would not break league and covenant with it, and be still pressing God to do justice on it!

5. If you would break with sin, and arm and fence yourselves against it, then look on sin under the notion of a burden.

And indeed, sin of all burdens is the heaviest burden in all the world: Psal. xl. 12, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me." And again, Psal. xxxviii. 4, "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me to bear." Sin is a weight that easily besets poor souls; it is a burden that so troubles them, and puzzles them; that so curbs them, and girds them; that so presses and oppresses them; as that it wrings many bitter tears from their eyes, and many sad and grievous sighs and groans from their hearts.

Again, as sin is as a burden to Christians, so it is a burden to heaven. It made heaven weary to bear the angels that fell. No sooner had they sinned, but heaven groans to be eased of them; and it never

left groaning till justice had turned them a-groaning to hell.

Again, as sin is a burden to heaven, so sin is a burden to the earth. Witness her swallowing up Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, their wives, children, goods, servants, &c. Ah! sinners, your sins make the very earth to groan; they make the earth weary of bearing you. Oh! how doth the earth groan and long to swallow up these earthly wretches, whose hopes, whose hearts are buried in the earth! These shall have little of heaven, but enough of earth, when they come to die.

Cornelius, a Lapide, tells a story, that he heard of a famous preacher, who, showing the bondage of the creature, brings in the creatures complaining thus: "Oh! that we could serve such as are godly! Oh! that our substance and our flesh might be incorporated into godly people, that so we might rise into glory with them! Oh! that our flesh might not be incorporated into the flesh of sinners; for if it be, we shall go to hell! And would any creature go to hell? Oh, we are weary of bearing sinners, we are weary of serving sinners." Thus the creatures groan, thus the creatures complain, the sinners' sins forcing them to it.

Again, sin is a burden to God: Amos ii. 13, "Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." By this plain, pithy, country comparison, God shows how sadly He is pressed

and oppressed; how sorely He is wearied and tried with those peoples' sins. Divine patience is even worn out; Justice hath lifted up her hand, and will bear with them no longer. God seems to groan under the pressure of their sins, as a cart seems to do under a heavy load. Of this God complains by the prophet, Isa. xliii. 24, "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." "I am as weary of your sins, as a trailing woman is weary of her pains," saith God. Sin was such a burden to God, that he sweeps it off with a sweeping flood, Gen. vii.

Again, sin is a burden to Christ. It made Him sweat as never man sweat; it made Him sweat great drops of clotted or congealed blood. Sin put Christ's whole body into a bloody sweat; it made Him groan piteously when He bare our sins on His body on the tree. Sin made His soul heavy even to the death; and had He not been One that was mighty, yea, that was almighty, He had fainted and failed under His burden. And thus you see what a burden sin is to man, to the creatures, to heaven, to earth, to God, to Christ; and, therefore, as you would break with sin, look always on it as a burden, yea, as the greatest and heaviest burden in all the world.

6. If you would break covenant with sin, and arm and fence yourselves against it, then you must look on it under the notion of a tyrant.

And indeed, sin is the worst and greatest tyrant

in the world. Other tyrants can but tyrannize over our bodies ; but sin is a tyrant that tyrannizes over both body and soul, as you may see in Rom. vi. Sin is a tyrant that hath a kind of jurisdiction in most men's hearts ; it sets up the law of pride, the law of passion, the law of oppression, the law of formality, the law of hypocrisy, the law of carnality, the law of self-love, the law of carnal reason, the law of unbelief ; and strictly commands subjection to them, and proclaims fire and sword to all that stand out. This, saints and sinners, good men and bad men, do sufficiently experience.

Sin is a tyrant of many thousand years' standing ; and though it had many a wound, and many a foil, and received much opposition, yet still it plays the tyrant all the world over. Oh, the hearts that this tyrant makes to ache, the souls that this tyrant makes to bleed !

Pharaoh's tyranny was nothing to sin's tyranny. This tyrant will not so much as suffer his slaves to sleep : "They sleep not, except they have done mischief ; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall," Prov. iv. 16. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God," Isa. lvii. 20, 21. Other tyrants have been brought down, and brought under by human power ; but this tyrant cannot but by a *Divine*. The power of man hath brought down many

of the tyrants of this world; but it is only the power of Christ that can bring down this tyrant, that can cast down his strongholds, 2 Cor. x. 4; therefore, engage Christ in the conflict, draw Him into the battle, and in the end the conquest will be yours.

CHAPTER VIII.

*The young man's objections and the old man's s
answered.*

AND thus much for the directions that you must follow, if they would be good betimes, I would seek and serve the Lord in the spring morning of their days.

I shall now give some brief answers to the man's objections and the old man's scruples, I close up this discourse.

I. But some young men may object and say, "You would have us to be good betimes, and to seek and serve the Lord in the primrose of our day; but it may be time enough hereafter to follow your counsel." We are young, and it may be time enough for us to mind these things hereafter, when we are satisfied the flesh so and so; or when we have laid up enough for the world, and laid up somethin' that will stand us in stead, and that may oil our wheels when we are old."

To this objection I answer:

1. That it is the greatest folly and madness to put off God and the great things

eternity with *may-be's*. What tradesman, what merchant, what mariner, so mad, so foolish, so blockish, as to put off a present season, a present opportunity of profit and advantage, upon the account of a *may-be*? "It may be I may have a good season; it may be I shall have as golden an opportunity to get and to enrich myself as this is; and therefore, farewell to this." No men that are in their right minds will argue thus; and why then should you, especially in the things that are of an everlasting concernment to you?

I have read of one Monarcho, a frantic Italian, who thought that all the kings of the earth were his vassals; and as frantics are they who wilfully neglect present seasons of grace, upon the account of a future *may-be*.

2. I answer, It may be, if thou neglect this present season and opportunity of grace, thou mayest never have another; it may be, mercy may never knock more, if thou dost not now open; it may be, Christ shall never be offered to thee more, if now thou dost not close with Him and accept of Him; it may be, the Spirit will never strive more with thee, if now thou dost resist Him, and withstand Him; it may be, a pardon will never be offered to thee more, if now thou wilt not take it; it may be, the Gospel shall never sound more in thy ears, if now thou wilt not hear it. Now, set one *may-be* against another *may-be*, set God's *may-be* against thine own *may-be*.

so much of the world, I will return, and seek serve the Lord. But before ever this season of opportunity come, Justice hath cut the thread of lives, and they are now miserable for ever; and they are still accursing themselves, because have slipped their golden opportunities upon account of a *may-be*.

4. This putting off God and the present season of grace with a *may-be*, is very provoking to as you may see, if you will but read from the to the 33rd verse of the first chapter of Prov Nothing stirs and provokes a master more, than servants putting off his service or his command with a *may-be*: It may be I will; it may be, I do this or that. Nothing puts a master sooner to a heat, a flame, than this; and nothing puts more into a flame than this, as you may see by reading Deuteronomy 6 to the end with Hebrews 10

galleys of Francis I., King of France. But this practice of theirs did so incense and provoke the king, that he sent them both to the gallows.

II. If I should begin to be good betimes, and to seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of my days, I should lose my friends, I should lose their favour, for they are carnal and worldly, and had rather I should seek after gold than God, the creature than Christ, earth than heaven.

To this I answer, Surely you are out; for,

1. This is the high way, the readiest way to gain the best, the surest, and soundest friends. When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. When a man falls in with God, God will make the creatures to fall in with him. Joseph found it so, and Jacob found it so, and Job found it so, the three children found it so, and Daniel found it so, as you all know that have read but one scripture, and many in this age (as bad as it is) have found that the best way to make friends, is first to make God our Friend.

Ah! young man, thou shalt not lose thy friends by seeking and serving the Lord in the spring and morning of thy days; but only exchange bad ones for good ones, the worst for the best. He that gives up himself betimes to the Lord shall have God for his Friend, and Christ for his Friend, and the angels for his friends, and the saints for his friends; Christ will be to such,

- (1.) An omnipotent Friend.
- (2.) An omniscient Friend.
- (3.) An omnipresent Friend.
- (4.) An indeficient Friend.
- (5.) An independent Friend.
- (6.) An immutable Friend.
- (7.) A watchful Friend.
- (8.) A loving Friend.
- (9.) A faithful Friend.

(10.) A compassionate Friend.

(11.) A close Friend: "There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," Prov. xviii. 24. Such a Friend is Christ, and such a Friend is as one's soul, and a rare happiness, hardly to be matched.

(12.) An universal Friend, a Friend in all cases, a Friend in all places. Christ is such a Friend to every one of His, as if He were a Friend to none besides. Hence it is that they say, not only, "Our Lord, and our God," but "My Lord, and My God." Christ is such an universal Friend, as that He supplies the place, and acts the part of every friend.

(13.) He is our best Friend, Psal. xc. 1; before we had a friend in all the world, he was our Friend, Prov. viii. 22.

Lastly, He is a constant Friend. Whom He loves, He loves to the end.

Augustus Cæsar would not suddenly entertain a league of friendship with any, but was a constant friend to them he loved: "*Amare nec cito desisto,*

nec temere incipio," "Late ere I love, as long ere I leave." Where Christ begins to love, He always loves: Jer. xxxi. 3, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Who then would not venture the loss of all the friends in the world to gain such a Friend as this is?

Ah! young men and women, let me say to you, what Seneca said to his friend Polybius, "*Fas tibi non est fortuna conqueri, salvo Cæsare*," "Never complain of thy hard fortune, so long as Cæsar is thy friend." So say I, Never complain of thy loss of friends, so long as, by losing them, you gain Christ to be your Friend.

2. Thou wert better be without their friendship and favour than to enjoy it upon any sinful and unworthy accounts; thou wert better run the hazard of losing thy friends, and their favour, by seeking and serving the Lord in the primrose of thy days, than to run the hazard of losing God, Christ, heaven, eternity, and thy soul for ever, by neglecting the things of thy peace. It was a gallant return which the noble Sutilius made his friend, requesting of him an unlawful favour, in such language as this: "I had as good be without such a friend, as with him who will not let me speed in what I ask." To whom he replied, "I can want such a friend as you, if for your sake I must do that which is not honest." The application is easy.

Well! young men, remember this, the torment of

a thousand hells, were there so many, comes far short of this one voice, to be turned out of God's presence with a "*Non novi vos,*" "I know you not"

Ah! young man, thou wert better ten thousand times be cast out of the thoughts and hearts of thy carnal friends and relations, than to be cast out of God's presence with cursed Cain for ever, than to be excommunicated out of the general assembly of the saints, and congregation of the first-born, which are written in heaven; and, therefore, away with this objection.

3. The favour and friendship of such carnal persons is very fickle and inconstant, it is very fading and withering. Now they stroke, and anon they strike; now they lift up, and anon they cast down; now they smile, and anon they frown; now they kiss, and anon they kill; now they cry, "*Hosanna, hosanna!*" and anon they cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Haman is one day feasted with the king, and the next day made a feast for crows; the princes of Babylon were highly in Darius's favour one day, and cast into the lion's den the next; the Scribes and Pharisees that cried up Judas one day, did, in effect, bid him go and hang himself the next.

Such men's favours and friendship are as Venice glasses, quickly broken, and therefore not much to be prized or minded. History abounds with instances of this nature; but I must hasten, only remembering *this, that every day's experience tells us, that wicked*

men can soon turn tables, and cross their books; their favour and friendship is usually like to a morning cloud, or like to Jonah's gourd, one hour flourishing, and the next hour withering; and why then shouldst thou set thy heart upon that which is more changeable than the moon?

4. And lastly, Who but a madman would adventure the loss of the king's favour to gain the favour of his page? Who but a stark bedlamite would run the hazard of losing the judge's favour upon the bench, to purchase the good will of the prisoner at the bar?

Socrates preferred the king's countenance before his coin; and so must thou prefer the favour of God, the countenance of Christ, and the things of eternity, above all the favour and friendship of all the men in the world. When thy nearest friends and dearest relations stand in competition with Christ, or the things above, thou must shake them off; thou must turn thy back upon them, and welcome Christ and the things of thy peace. He that forsakes all relations for Christ shall certainly find all relations in Christ; He will be Father, Friend, Husband, Child; He will be everything to thee who takest Him for thy great All.

III. Ay, but I shall meet with many reproaches from one and another, if I should labour to be good betimes, if I should seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of my youth.

To this I answer,

1. What are reproaches to the great things that others have suffered for Christ, His gospel, and the maintaining of a good conscience? What is the prick of a pin to a stab at the heart? What is a chiding to a hanging, a whipping to a burning? No more all the reproaches thou canst meet with, to the great things that others have suffered for Christ's sake.

Ah! young men, you should be like the Scythian, that went naked in the snow, and when Alexander wondered how he could endure it, answered, "I am not ashamed, for I am all forehead." So should you, in the cause and way of Christ. You should not be ashamed, you should be all forehead, you should be stout and bold.

Colonus, the Dutch martyr, under all his reproaches, called to the judge that had sentenced him to death, and desired him to lay his hand upon his heart, and then asked him whose heart did most beat, his or the judge's. All the reproaches in the world should not so much as make a Christian's heart beat, they should not in the least trouble him nor disturb him.

2. I answer, that all the reproaches thou meetest with in the way of Christ, and for the sake of Christ, do but add pearls to thy crown, they are all additions to thy happiness and blessedness.

"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ,

happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified," 1 Pet. iv. 14. The more you are reproached for Christ's sake on earth, the greater shall be your reward in heaven: they that are most loaded with reproaches here, shall be most loaded with glory hereafter. Christ hath written their names in golden letters in His Book of Life, that are written in black letters of reproach for His sake on earth. It was a good saying of one, "A reproacher," saith he, "is beneath a man, but the reproached, that bear it well, are equal to angels." Of all crowns, the reproached man's crown will weigh heaviest in heaven.

3. I answer, The best men have been most reproached; David was: Psal. xxxi. 11; xlii. 10; lxxxix. 50; cix. 25; and cxix. 22. And Job was: Job xix. 5, and xx. 3. And Jeremiah was: Jer. xx. 7, 10. Yea, this hath been the common portion of God's people in all ages of the world. In Nehemiah's time it was so: Neh. i. 3, "And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity are in great affliction and reproach." In David's time it was so: Psal. xliv. 13, 14, and lxxix. 4. And in Jeremiah's time it was so: Lam. v. 1, "Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach." And in Daniel's time it was so: Dan. ix. 16, "Thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us." And so it was in the

apostles' time: Rom. iii. 8, "And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose dāmnation is just." 2 Cor. vi. 8, "By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true." So in that, 1 Tim. iv. 10, "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God." So was Joseph, Mephibosheth, Naboth, and, in latter times, Luther, who, they said, died despairing, when he was alive to confute it; and that Beza ran away with another man's wife; and that Calvin was branded on the shoulder for a rogue. But there would be no end of these, if I said all that might be said.

And it was so in the primitive times; for when the Christians met together before the sun to pray, the heathens reported of them, that they worshipped the sun, and aspired after monarchy, and committed adulteries and unnatural uncleanness. Now, who is troubled, who complains of that which is a common lot, as cold, winter, sickness, death? No more should any complain of reproaches, it being the common lot of God's people in all ages; yea, Christ himself was sadly reproached, falsely accused, and strangely traduced, disgraced, and scandalized; He was called a glutton, a drunkard, a friend of publicans and sinners, and judged to use the black art, casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. *Christ hath* suffered the greatest and worst re-

proaches. Why then should you be afraid to wear that crown of thorns that Christ wore before you? There is a great truth in what he said, "*Non potest qui pati timet, ejus esse, qui passus est,*" "He that is afraid to suffer, cannot be his disciple who suffered much; if the master had been marked with a black coal, let not the servant think to go free." "I am heartily angry," saith Luther, "with those that speak of my sufferings, which, if compared with that which Christ suffered for me, are not once to be mentioned in the same day."

4. I answer, that all reproachers shall at last be arraigned at the highest bar of justice, for all the reproaches that they have cast upon the people of God: "They think it strange, (or they think it a new world), that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you; who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead," 1 Pet. iv. 4, 5.

"I am in ecstasy," saith Picus Mirandula, "to think how profane men rail upon these now, whom one day they will wish they had imitated." It was excellent counsel that the heathen orator gave his hearers, "*Ita vivamus, ut rationem nobis reddendam arbitremur,*" "Let us live as those that must give an account at last."

St. Chrysostom brings in Christ comforting His disciples against reproaches, speaking thus unto them: "What, is the wrong grievous unto you, that

now they call you seducers and conjurers? It will not be long before they shall openly call you the saviours and blessings of the whole world; that time that shall declare all things that are now hid, shall rebuke them for their lying words against you, and shall kindle the splendour of your virtue, so that they shall be found liars, evil speakers, false accusers of others; but you shall be more clear and illustrious than the sun, and you shall have all men witnesses of your glory." Such as wisely and humbly bear reproaches now, shall judge reproachers at last.

5. I answer, that God doth many times, even in this life, bear sad witness and testimony against the reproachers of His people: "I will bless them that bless thee, and I will curse them that curse thee." God will even in this life curse them with a witness who curse them that He blesseth: Pharaoh found it so, and Saul found it so, and Jezebel found it so, and Haman found it so, and the princes of Babylon found it so, and the Jews find it so to this very day.

And oh! the dreadful judgments and curses that God hath poured out on the reproachers of His name, of His Son, of His Spirit, of His Word, of His ordinances, and of His people, in these days wherein we live! I might give you many sad instances of such in our days, whose feet justice hath taken in the snare, men of abstracted conceits and sublime speculations, and indeed such usually prove *the great wise fools*, who, like the lark, soaring

higher and higher, peering and peering, till at length they fall into the net of the fowler; and no wonder, for such persons usually are as censorious as they are curious.

6. I answer, St. Paul rejoiced more in his suffering reproaches for Christ's sake, than he did in his being wrapt up in the third heaven: 2 Cor. xii. 10, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." And therefore you have him often singing this song, "I Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ;" not "I Paul, wrapped up into the third heaven." He looked on all his sufferings as God's love-tokens; he looked on all reproaches as pledges and badges of son-ship, and therefore joys and glories under all. Christ showed His love to him in wrapping him up in the third heaven; and he showed his love to Christ in his joyful bearing of reproaches for His sake. "St. Paul rattles his chain which he bears for the Gospel, and was proud of it, as a woman of her ornaments," saith Chrysostom.

Now, why should that be matter of trouble and discouragement to you, that was matter of joy and rejoicing to Him? Shall He look on reproaches as a crown of honour, and will you look on reproaches as a crown of thorns? Oh! look on reproach as a royal diadem, look on it as Christ's livery, and count it your highest ambition in the world to wear this

livery for His sake, who once wore a crown of thorns for your sakes. When Babilas was to die, he required this favour, to have his chains buried with him, as the ensigns of his honour.

7. I answer, that by a wise and gracious behaviour under the reproaches thou meetest with for Christ's sake, thou mayest be instrumental to win others to Christ. It was a notable saying of Luther, "*Ecclesia totum mundum convertit, sanguine et oratione,*" "The church converteth the whole world by blood and prayer."

Divers have been won to Christ by beholding the gracious carriages of Christians under their sufferings and reproaches for Christ. We read of Cecilia, a poor virgin, who by her gracious behaviour under all her sufferings and reproaches for Christ, was the means of converting four hundred to Christ. Adrian, beholding the gracious, cheerful carriages of the martyrs under their sufferings and reproaches, was converted to Christ, and afterwards suffered martyrdom for Christ. Justin Martyr was also converted by observing the holy and cheerful behaviour of the saints under all their sufferings and reproaches for Christ. During the cruel persecutions of the heathen emperors, the Christian faith was spread through all places of the empire, because the oftener they were mown down, saith Tertullian, the more they grew. And St. Austin observed, *that though there were many thousands put to death*

for professing Christ, yet they were never the fewer for being slain. Ah! young men, you may, by a wise and gracious bearing of reproaches for Christ, be instrumental to win others to Christ; and therefore never plead there is a lion in the way. But I must hasten, and therefore, in the

Last, place, consider how bravely several of the heathens have borne reproaches, and let that provoke you, in the face of all reproaches, to seek and serve the Lord in the morning of your youth.

When Demosthenes was reproached by one: "I will not," saith he, "strive with thee in this kind of fighting, in which he that is overcome is the better man." When one came and reproached Xenophon, saith he, "You have learned how to reproach, and I have learned how to bear reproach."

Aristippus said, "You are fit to cast reproaches, and I am fit to bear reproaches."

Demochares, an Athenian orator, was sent to King Philip as an ambassador. Philip asked him how he might please the Athenians. "Forsooth," said he, "if you will hang yourself." The prince patiently sent him home again, and bid him ask whether were more noble, the patient hearer or venter of such unseemly language.

When one wondered at the patience of Socrates towards one who reviled and reproached him: "If we should meet one," saith he, "whose body was more unsound than ours, should we be angry with

him, and not rather pity him?" Why, then, should we not do the like to him whose soul is more diseased than others?

Augustus Cæsar (in whose time Christ was born) bid Catullus, the railing poet, to supper, to show that he had forgiven him. It is a notable example that we find of Pericles, who, as he was sitting with others in a great meeting, a foul-mouthed fellow bitterly reproached him, and railed all the day long at him, and at night, when it was dark, and the meeting up, the fellow followed him, and railed at him, even to his door, and he took no notice of him, but when he came home, this is all he said, "Friend, it is dark, I pray let my man light you home."

Josephus reports of that Herod that is made mention of in Acts xxii. 13, that when one Simon, a lawyer, had grievously reproached and scandalized him before the people, he sent for him, and caused him to sit down next to him, and in a kind manner he spoke thus to him, "Tell me, I pray thee, what thing thou seest fault-worthy or contrary to the law in me?" Simon not having anything to answer, besought him to pardon him, which the king did, and was friends with him, and dismissed, and bestowed gifts on him.

Ah! young men, young men, shall the very heathens make nothing of reproaches, shall they bear up so prudently and bravely under the greatest *load of reproaches*, and will not you? Will not you,

who, in your light, in your mercies, and in all Gospel, engagements, are so highly advanced above them? Oh! that none of them may be called to the bar in the great day, to witness against any of you into whose hands this treatise shall fall! And so much by way of answer to the third objection.

IV. The young man objects and says, You press us to be good betimes, and to seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of our days; but we observe that most men mind not these things, but rather give liberty to themselves, to walk in ways that are most pleasing to the flesh. And why then should we be singular and nice? We were better do as the most do, &c. Now, to this I make answer:

1. That though bad examples are dangerous to all, yet usually they prove most dangerous and pernicious to young persons, who are more easily drawn to follow examples than precepts, especially those examples that tend most to undo them. It is said of Zechariah the king of Israel, 2 Kings xv. 9, "He did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done; he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam." He would be as his father was, and do as his father did, whatever comes on it.

So the Samaritans, of whom it is said, 2 Kings xvii. 41, "These nations feared the Lord, (that is, they made some kind of profession of the true religion, as the ten tribes had done,) and served their

graven images, too; both their children and their children's children did thus; as did their fathers, so do they unto this day." By evil examples they were both drawn to idolatry, and rooted and confirmed in it; so the main reason why the kingdom and church of Judah were so settled in their idolatry, that there was no hope of reclaiming them, was this, that their children remembered their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills, Jer. ii. 20. Tinder is not apter to take fire, nor wax the impression of the seal, nor paper ink, than youth is to follow ill example.

You may see in Radbod, king of Phrysia, who, coming to the font to be baptized, asked what was become of his ancestors. Answer was made, that they died in a fearful state, unbaptized. He replied, that he would rather perish with the multitude, than go to heaven with a few.

I remember the heathen brings in a young man, who, hearing of the adulteries and wickednesses of the gods, said, "What! do they so, and shall I stick at it? No, I will not." Sinful examples are very drawing and very encouraging, many have found it so to their eternal undoing; those that have no ears to hear what you say, have many eyes to see what you do. Bad princes make bad subjects, bad masters make bad servants, bad parents make bad children, and bad husbands make bad wives. It is *easier for the bad to corrupt the good, than for the*

good to convert the bad; it is easier to run down the hill with company, than to run up the hill alone.

I would desire all young men often to remember that saying of Lactantius, "*Qui malum imitatur bonis esse non potest*," "He who imitates the bad, cannot be good." Young men in these professing times, stand between good and bad examples, as Hercules in his dream stood between virtue and vice, solicited by both; choose you must who to follow. Oh, that you were all so wise as to follow the best! As a woman who hath many suitors is very careful to take the best, so should you; life, heaven, happiness, eternity hangs upon it.

But before I come to the second answer, let me leave this note, or notion, with those who make no conscience of undoing others by their examples, viz., That a more grievous punishment is reserved for them who cause others to offend, than for them which sin by their occasion and example. Thus the serpent was punished more than Eve, and Eve more than Adam. So Jezebel felt a greater and sorer judgment than Ahab. "To sin," saith one, "hath not so much perdition in it, as to cause others to sin." Friends, you have sins enough of your own, to make you for ever miserable; why should you, by giving bad examples to others, make yourselves more miserable? The lowest, the darkest, the hottest place in hell will be for them that have drawn others thither.

by their example. Dives knew, that if his brethren were damned, he should be doubly damned, because he had largely contributed to the bringing of them to hell by his wicked example; and therefore he desires that they might be kept out of hell, not out of any love or good will to them, but because their coming thither would have made his hell more hot, his torments more insufferable.

2. I answer, If you sin with others, you will suffer with others. If you will partake of other men's sins, you shall also partake of other men's plagues. They that have been (like Simeon and Levi) brethren in iniquity, they shall be brethren in misery; they that have sinned together impenitently, shall be sent to hell jointly, they shall perish together eternally. If you will needs be companions with others in their sins, you shall be sure to be companions with them in their sorrows. The old world sinned together, and were drowned together. The Sodomites, burning with lusts together, were burnt with fire and brimstone together. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, they sin together, they murmur and provoke the Lord together, and the earth opens her mouth and swallows them up together. Pharaoh and his host pursue Israel together, and they are drowned in the sea together. Zimri and Cozbi committed folly, uncleanness together, and Phinehas stabs them together, Numb. xxv. The Hebrew doctors have a pretty parable to this purpose: "A man

planted an orchard, and going from home, was careful to leave such watchmen as might both keep it from strangers and not deceive him themselves; therefore he appointed one blind, but strong of his limbs, and the other seeing, but a cripple. These two, in their master's absence, conspired together, and the blind took the lame on his shoulders, and so gathered the fruit; their master returning, and finding out their subtilty, punished them both together." So will Justice deal with you at last, who sin with others. Therefore take heed, young men, of doing as others do.

3. I answer, You must not live by examples, but by precepts; you are not to look so much at what others do, as at what God requires you to do: Exod. xxiii. 2, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment." Rom. xii. 2, "Fashion not yourselves like unto this world;" that is, do not fashion and conform yourselves to the corrupt customs and courses of wretched worldlings, who have made gold their god and gain their glory; the running cross to a Divine command, cost the young prophet his life, though he did it under pretence of revelation from God, as you may see in that sad story, 1 Kings xiii. The command of God must outweigh all authority and example of men.

And we must be as careful in the keeping of a light commandment, as an heavy commandment,

saith a Rabbi; Divine commands must be obeyed against all contrary reasonings, wranglings, and examples. St. Austin brings in some excusing their compliance with the sinful customs and examples of those times in drinking healths, thus: "Great personages urged it, and it was at the king's banquet, where they judged of loyalty by luxury, and puts us upon this election, Drink, or die! The not drinking of a health hath been our death." He gives this answer, "That God who sees that for love to Him and His commands, thou wouldest not conform to their drunken customs, will give thee favour in their eyes who thus threatened thee to drink."

Ah! young men, you that detest so much on examples now, will find that a stinging, terrifying question, when put home by God or conscience, "Who hath required these things at your hands?" Isaiah i. 12.

4. I answer, Company and allurements to sin will be found no sufficient excuse for sin.

If Eve lay her fault on the serpent, and Adam lay his on Eve, God will take it off, and lay the curse on both. Saul's provocation by his people, and by Samuel's long stay, to offer sacrifice, would not bear him out; but for his disobedience he must lose both his crown and life. The young man in the Proverbs, though tempted and solicited by the harlot, yet he hath a dart struck through his heart. Though Jonah did plead God's gracious inclinations to show mercy,

and his fear of being disproved; yea, and though he might have pleaded his fear of cruel and savage usage from the Ninevites, whose hearts were desperately set upon wickedness, and his despair of ever doing good upon a people so blinded and hardened; and that they were Gentiles, and he a Jew; and why should he then be sent with so strange, so terrible a message, to such a people, nothing being more hateful and distasteful to a Jewish palate. But all these pleas and excuses will not bear off the blow; Jonah must into the sea for all this, yea, he must to the bottom of hell, as himself phrases it. It is in vain for the bird to complain, that it saw the corn but not the pit-fall, or for a fish to plead it saw the bait but not the hook. So it will be in vain, for sinners at last, when they are taken in an eternal pit-fall, to plead company and allurements by which they have been enticed to undo their souls for ever.

Dionysius, the Sicilian king, to excuse himself from the present delivery of the golden garment that he took from his god Apollo, answered, that "such a robe as that was could not be at any season of the year useful to his god, for it would not keep him warm in the winter, and it was too heavy for the summer;" and so put off his idol god. But the God of spirits, the God of all flesh, will not be put off with any excuses or pretences, when He shall try and judge the children of men.

5. And lastly, I answer, that it is a very great judgment to be given up to follow evil examples. A man given up to evil example, is a man sadly left of God, woefully blinded by Satan, and desperately hardened in sin; it speaks a man ripe for wrath, for ruin, for hell: Jer. vi. 21, "Behold, I will lay stumblingblocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish." Oh! it is a dreadful thing, when God shall make the sinful examples of others to be stumblingblocks to a people, at which they shall stumble and fall, and perish for ever. Good had it been for such persons that they had never been born, as Christ once spake concerning Judas. The Rhodians and Lydians enacted several laws, that those sons which followed not their fathers in their virtues, but followed vicious examples, should be disinherited, and their land given to the most virtuous of that race, not admitting any impious heir whatsoever to inherit. And do you think that God will not disinherit all those of heaven and happiness, who follow vicious examples? Doubtless He will.

V. The fifth objection is this: God is a God of mercy; in Him are bowels of mercy, yea, a sea, an ocean of mercy; He loves mercy, He delights in mercy, and He is ready to show mercy to poor sinners, when they are even at the last cast, when there is *but a short stride* between them and the grave, be-

tween them and eternity, as we see in His extending mercy to the thief, and in His giving pardon into his hand, and the assurance of paradise into his bosom, when he was ready to be turned off the ladder of life; and therefore I may spend the primrose of my days in following sin and the delights, profits, vanities, and contents of this world, and, at last cast, I may have mercy as well as the thief. God is a God made up of mercy, and surely He will not deny some crumbs of mercy to poor sinners in misery!

Now, to this objection, I shall give these following answers:

1. God is as just as He is merciful: witness His casting the angels out of heaven, and Adam out of paradise; witness all the threatenings, the curses, the woes that the Bible is filled with from one end to the other; witness the hell, the horror, the terror, and amazement that He raiseth in the consciences of sinners; witness the devastations that He hath made of the most stately, flourishing towns, cities, countries, and kingdoms, that have been in all the world; witness the variety of diseases, calamities, dangers, deaths, and hell, that always attend the inhabitants of the world; but, above all, witness Christ's treading the wine-press of His Father's wrath; witness His hiding His face from Him, and the pouring out of all His displeasure and vengeance on Him!

Zeleucus, the Locrocension lawgiver, thrust out one of his own sons' eyes, for his transgressing a wholesome law which he had enacted; but God the Father thrust out both Christ's eyes for our transgressing His royal law. Oh! the justice and severity of God!

2. I answer, that there is not a greater evidence of blindness, profaneness, hard-heartedness, spiritual madness, and hellish desperateness in all the world, than to make that an argument, an encouragement to sin, viz., the mercy of God, which should be the greatest argument under heaven to keep a man from sin, as all know that have but read the Scripture: neither are there any sinners in the world that God delights to rain hell out of heaven upon, as upon such who, by their abuse of mercy, turn the God of mercy into a God of clouts, and go on out-daring justice itself, Deut. xxix. 19, 20, "And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, (God is a God of mercy), though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: the Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord and His jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven." In these words you may observe that God is absolute in *threatening*, to show that he will be resolute in

punishing, Psal. xi. 5, 6: "The wicked, and him that loveth iniquity, doth His soul hate. Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."

Ah! that all poor sinners would make these two scriptures their companions, their constant bed-fellows, till they are got above that sad temptation of turning the mercy of God into an encouragement to sin.

Whilst Milo Crotoniates was tearing asunder the stock of an oak, his strength failing him, the cleft suddenly closing, he was held so fast by the hands that he became a prey to the beasts of the field. All the abusers of mercy will certainly and suddenly become a prey to the justice of God, that will rend and tear them in pieces, as the Psalmist speaks, Psal. l. 22. Woe, woe to the soul that fights against God with His own mercies; that will be bad because He is good; that will be sinful because He is merciful; that will turn all the kindnesses of God (that should be as so many silver cords to tie him to love and obedience) into arrows, and so shoot them back into the heart of God. Abused mercy will at last turn into a lion, a fierce lion, and then woe to the abusers and despisers of it.

3. In answer to that part of the objection, concerning the thief on the cross, I offer these things briefly to your thoughts:

(1.) That as one was saved to teach sinners not to despair, so another was damned, to teach them not to presume.

A pardon is sometimes given to one on the gallows; but whoso trusts to that, the rope may be his hire. "It is not good," saith one, "to put it upon the Psalm of Miserere, and the neck verse, for sometimes he proves no clerk, and so hangs for it."

(2.) It is an example without a promise. Here is an example of late repentance; but where is there a promise of late repentance?

Oh, let not his late and sudden conversion be to thee a temptation, till thou hast found a promise for late and sudden conversion; it is not examples, but promises, that are foundations for faith to rest on. He that walks by an example of mercy without a precept to guide him and promise to support him, walks but by a dark lanthorn that deceives him. Well, young man, remember this, examples of mercy increase wrath, when the heart is not bettered by them.

(3.) This was a rare miracle of mercy, with the glory whereof Christ did honour the ignominy of His cross; and therefore we may as well look for another crucifying of Christ, as look for a sinner's conversion, when he hath scarce time enough to reckon up all those particular duties which make up the integrity of its constitution.

(4.) I answer, This thief knew not Christ before;

he had not refused, neglected, or slighted Christ before; the sermon on the cross was the first sermon ever he heard Christ preach, and Christ's prayer on the cross was the first prayer ever he heard Christ make; he knew not Christ till he met with Him on the cross (which proved to him a happy meeting); his case was as if a Turk or heathen should now be converted to the faith; and therefore thou hast little reason, O young man, to plead this example to keep Christ and thy soul asunder, who art every day under the call, the entreaties, and wooings of Christ.

(5.) I answer, The circumstances of time and place are rightly to be considered. Now, when Christ was triumphing on the cross over sin, Satan, and the world; when He had made the devils a public spectacle of scorn and derision, when He was taking His leave of the world, and entering into His glory, now He puts a pardon into the thief's hand, and crowds other favours and kindnesses upon him.

As in the Roman triumphs, the victor, being ascended up to the Capitol in a chariot of state, used to cast certain pieces of coin among the people, for them to pick up, which he used not to do at other times: so our Lord Jesus Christ, in the day of His triumph and solemn inauguration into His heavenly kingdom, scatters some heavenly jewels, that this thief might pick up, which he doth not, nor will not do every day. Or as in these days it

is usual for princes to save some notorious malefactors at their coronation, when they enter upon their kingdoms in triumph, which they did not use to do afterward: so did Jesus Christ carry it towards the thief. But this is not His ordinary way of saving and bringing souls to glory; and therefore do not, O young man, let not the thief's late conversion prove a temptation or an occasion of thy delaying repentance, and trifling away the primrose of thy days in vanity and folly.

And thus much may suffice to have been spoken by way of answer to the young man's objections.

I shall now speak a few words to old men, and so close up.

CHAPTER IX.

The old man's doubts resolved.

Now, is it so commendable, so desirable, and so necessary for young men to be good betimes, to seek and serve the Lord in the spring and morning of their youths, as hath been sufficiently demonstrated in this treatise? Oh, then, that I could so woo aged persons, as to win them, who yet have put off this great work, to seek and serve the Lord before their glass be out, their sun set, and their souls lost for ever!

Oh! that that counsel of the prophet might take hold upon your hearts: "Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness," Jer. xiii. 16.

Ay, but aged sinners may reply, Is there any hope and help for us? Is there any probability, is there any possibility, that ever such as we are should return, and find mercy and favour with the Lord? —we who have lived so long without Him, we that have sinned so much against Him, we that to this

day are strangers to Him, yea, in arms against Him; is there any hope that we white-headed sinners, who have withstood so many thousand offers of grace, and so many thousand motions of the Spirit, and so many thousand checks of conscience, and so many thousand tenders of Christ and heaven, that ever we should obtain mercy, that ever we should have our old hearts turned, our millions of sins pardoned, our vile natures changed, and our poor souls saved?

I answer, that there is hope even for such as you are. All the angels in heaven and all the men on earth cannot tell but you, even you, may obtain mercy and favour, that your souls die not. With the Lord nothing is impossible, and for the grace of the Gospel nothing is too hard. Now, this I make evident by an induction of particulars; thus:

I. All were not called nor sent to work in the vineyard at the first hour; some were called at the third hour, others at the sixth, others at the ninth, and some at the eleventh; God hath his several times of calling souls to Himself. The eleventh hour was about five in the afternoon, an hour before sun-set, when it was even time to leave work; and yet at this hour some were called, employed, and rewarded with the rest.

Some of the fathers, by the several hours mentioned in this parable, do understand the several

ages of man, viz., childhood, youth, middle age, and old age, wherein poor souls are called and converted to Christ. The scope of the parable is to signify the free grace of God in the calling of some in the spring and morning of their days, and in the calling of others in their old age, and in the evening of their days.

II. Abraham, in the Old Testament, and Nicodemus, in the New, were called and converted in their old age, when there were but few steps between them and the grave, between them and eternity.

I have read of one Caius Neriarius Victorius, who was an old man three hundred years after the apostles' time, and had been a Pagan all his days; and in his old age he inquired and hearkened after Christ, and said he would be a Christian. Simplicanus, hearing him say so, would not believe him; but when the church saw a work of grace indeed upon him, there was shouting and dancing for gladness, and psalms were sung in every church, "Caius Neriarius Victorius is become a Christian!" And this was written for a wonder, that he in his old age, and in his gray hairs, should become a gracious Christian.

Areteus also speaks of a certain man in his time. "It is not a feigned story," saith he, "for I saw the man with mine own eyes, he was one that had been a most vile and desperate sinner, a drunkard,

a swearer, a wanton, a gamester, and so he continued to his gray hairs; but at last, it pleased God to set his sins in order before him; and the man was so troubled in conscience that he threw himself down upon the ground, calling upon Satan to take him away, provoking Satan to take him away, 'Devil take thine own; I am thine own, devil take thine own!' whereupon," saith Areteus, "prayer was made for him; Christians prayed, they fasted and prayed night and day; and it pleased God at last, that this poor aged sinner revived, was converted to God, lived a godly life afterwards, and died comfortably."

Therefore, let not the gray-headed sinner despair, though his spring be past, his summer overpast, and he arrived at the fall of the leaf.

III. Divine promises shall be made good to returning souls, to repenting souls, to believing souls, be they young or old: 2 Chron. xxx. 9, "The Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away His face from you, if you return unto Him." Joel ii. 13, "And rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil." Isa. lv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon," or

He will multiply to pardon. More of this you will see by reading the Scriptures. All sorts of sins shall be pardoned to all sorts of believing and repenting sinners.

The new Jerusalem hath twelve gates, to show that there is every way of access for all sorts and ranks of sinners to come to Christ. He was born in an inn, to show that he receives all comers, young and old, poor and rich.

IV. The Lord hath declared by oath, a greater delight in the conversion and salvation of poor sinners, whether they are young or old, than in the destruction and damnation of such: Ezek. xxxiii. 11, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Two things make a thing more credible: 1. The quality or dignity of the person speaking. 2. The manner of the speech. Now, here you have the great God, not only speaking, promising, but solemnly swearing, that He had rather poor sinners should live than die, be happy than miserable; therefore, despair not, O aged sinner, but return unto the Lord, and thou shalt be happy for ever!

V. There is virtue enough in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, to wash and cleanse away all sin: not only to cleanse away the young man's sins, but also to cleanse away the old man's sins: not only

to cleanse a sinner of twenty years old, but to cleanse a sinner of fifty, sixty, yea, a hundred years old: 1 John i. 7, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin;" not simply from sin, but from *all* sin. There is such a power and efficacy in the blood of Christ, as is sufficient to cleanse all sorts of sinners from all sorts of sins; there is virtue in the blood of the Lamb to wash out all the spots that are in the oldest sinners' hearts; and, therefore, let not old sinners despair, let not them say, there is no hope, there is no help, as long as this fountain of the blood of Jesus Christ is open for all sorts of sinners to wash in.

VI. The calls and invitations of Christ in the Gospel are general and indefinite, excluding no sort of sinners: Rev. iii. 20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any (mark the indefiniteness of personal admittance) man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Let the sinner be old or young, a green head or a gray head, if he will but open the door, Christ will come in, and have communion and fellowship with him. So in Matth. xi. 28. Turn to these scriptures, and dwell on them; they all clearly evidence the call and gracious invitations of Christ to be to all sinners, to every sinner; He excepts not a man, no, though ever so old; nothing shall hinder the sinner, any sinner, the worst and *most aged sinner*, from obtaining mercy, if he be

willing to open to Christ, and to receive Him as his Lord and King.

VII. Christ's pathetic lamentation over all sorts and ranks of sinners, declares His willingness to show mercy to them: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," saith Christ, weeping over it, "if thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace!" Luke xix. 42, "O that my people had hearkened unto Me!" Christ weeps over Jerusalem; so did Titus, and so did Marcellus over Syracuse; and so did Scipio over Carthage; but they shed tears for them whose blood they were to shed; but Christ weeps over the necks of those young and old sinners who were to shed His blood. As a tender-hearted father weeps over his rebellious children, when neither smiles nor frowns, neither counsels nor entreaties will win them, or turn them from their evil ways; so doth Jesus Christ over those rebellious Jews, upon whom nothing would work.

VIII. Though aged sinners have given Christ many thousand denials, yet He hath not taken them; but after all, and in the face of all denials, He still reinforces His suit, and continues to beseech them by His Spirit, by His Word, by His wounds, by His blood, by His messengers, and by His rebukes, to turn home to Him, to embrace Him, to believe in Him, and to watch with Him, that they may be saved eternally by Him: all which bespeaks gray-

headed sinners not to despair, nor dispute, but to repent, return, and believe, that it may go well with them for ever. Consider seriously what hath been spoken, and the Lord make you wise for eternity.

THE END.

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