

THE
SAINT'S SPIRITUAL DELIGHT
AND
A CHRISTIAN ON THE MOUNT.

WITH AN APPENDIX,
A CHRISTIAN ON EARTH STILL IN HEAVEN.

BY REV. THOMAS WATSON,
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THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

TO
MY LOVING FRIENDS,
THE ALDERMEN, THE ESQUIRES, AND
THE REST OF THE INHABITANTS
OF THE
PARISH OF STEPHEN'S WALBROOK,
IN THE CITY OF LONDON.

HONOURED, and BELOVED,

My heart's desire for you is that you may be saved. It has been a long time in my thoughts, after the many signal demonstrations of your love to me, to show my gratefulness in return; such as I have, I give you. I dedicate this manual to you, as a standing testimonial of that real respect, and zealous affection which I bear towards you.

The subject of it you will find to be a Christian's delight and meditation in God's law. I have purposely for your sakes laid down several heads, or particulars, for your meditations to dilate and run upon, such as the attributes, the promises, the love of Christ, etc. If someone at last grew sober by looking often at a ring with a death's head,¹ who knows whether by often meditating on these things, your hearts may be brought into a more serious and heavenly frame?

Meditation is a holy kind of usury; it is putting out sermons to use, which brings in no small profit at the year's end. Meditation is a duty which carries meat in the mouth of it; "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, while I meditate on you," Psa 63.5-6.

There is little written, so far as I know, upon this subject. Most discourses of this nature digress into ejaculations.² I have, with the help of God, cut my way through the rock, not finding any path that others had gone in before me; so that I have not offered to you that which cost me nothing (2Sam 24.24). For the style of it, it is plain. But truth, when it is in the plainest dress, is most lovely. The star shines brightest in its native lustre. Divinity has so much intrinsic beauty, that it needs no art of wit or fancy to set it off. Who goes to embroider a pearl? or paint over gold? This would only debase and eclipse it. It is a sign of a wanton Christian to look most at the fringing and garnishing of a truth. I wish it were not the sin of many in this city; they like the dressing, but loathe the food. The blue flowers which grow among the corn make a fine show, and are pleasing to the eye, yet they are prejudicial to the harvest. Rhetorical flourishes may please the fancies of men, but I greatly question whether they will not lessen Christ's spiritual harvest at the end of the world. When men preach words rather than matter, they catch people's ears, not their souls; they court, but do not convert. If the patient's wound bleeds — no, *rankles* — it is better for him to have a deep incision made in the flesh, than to bind it with silk, or dress it with aromatic ointments.

¹ That is, a *skull and crossbones*, warning of poison or death.

² An abrupt, emphatic, and emotional interjection.

Dedicatory

It is true, ministers ought to clothe the truths they preach in decent expressions to preserve them from contempt. Though they must come in plain speech, let it not be rude speech. But let them take heed, lest with their affected new-coined phrases, unsuitable to that gravity which the apostle speaks of in Tit 2.7,³ they adulterate and corrupt the simplicity of the word. It is like some kinds of sauces and compounds which take away the natural taste and savour of the meat. As for you, my friends, I hope the Lord has given at least some of you a spiritual palate, to relish and thirst after the sincere milk of the word, 1Pet 2.2. A savoury heart is for wholesome doctrine.

How glad I would be, dear friends, if I might, either by preaching or writing, become savingly instrumental for your good; and before I die, that I might help to make a happy marriage between Christ and you, 2Cor 11.2.⁴ I bless God that I see some of you walking in the truth, 2Joh 1.4, when so many in the world are marching apace towards hell. But O that I might see an increase of holiness among you, that more converts might be brought in, and as so many jewels, make the crown of Christ shine the brighter! Do not hearken to the siren songs of the world: the sins you commit in haste, you will repent at leisure. Sugared poisons go down pleasantly, but afterwards they wring and torment the body.

Let me earnestly beseech you to put a bill of divorce into the hand of your sins; do not let error turn gangrene, nor lust burn, malice boil, pride swell, intemperance overflow, or covetousness take root in any of your souls. Purge out the old leaven; and if you ever expect to go to the New Jerusalem when you die, become new creatures while you live.

Do not rest in baptismal privileges: all are not Israel who are of Israel, Rom 9.6. How is a man better to have Christ's name upon him, if he still retains Satan's image? How is he advantaged to have the *oracles* of God, and lack the *Spirit* of God? Do not think that an empty profession will save; millions will be sent to hell in Christ's uniform,⁵ Mat 7.22-27.⁶ O labour to "know the grace of God in truth!" Col 1.6.

The Lord has been at great cost, and charges you to bring yourself near to him; do not let God be a loser by you. Pindar ⁷ says, it was an opinion of the people in ancient times, that Jupiter rained down gold upon the city of Rhodes — give me leave to apply that to you. God has rained down golden showers upon you. What mercies he has enriched you with! What talents he has entrusted you with!

Your estate is a talent, your health (in these sickly times especially) is a talent, your sanctuary blessings are talents, every motion of the Spirit, every opportunity for heaven is a talent, and nothing is more sure than that you will be called to give account shortly, Mat 25.19-20. Now if you have let your talents lie rusting, and done no good with them, hiding your

³ **Tit 2.7** in all things showing yourself *to be* a pattern of good works; in doctrine *showing* integrity, reverence, incorruptibility;

⁴ **2Cor 11.2** For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as a chaste virgin* to Christ.

⁵ Originally "livery" — the outward identifying dress of a servant.

⁶ **Mat 7.22** "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' etc.,

⁷ Pindar: a Greek lyric poet remembered for his odes (518?-438? BC)

Dedicatory

talents will not hide your sin — expect a heavy doom. Do not think these things are impertinences. Do not be so evil, as to be too good to be advised.

I confess, with Ignatius, that I am the least of all who labour in God's vineyard; but though I am with you in weakness, yet, as the apostle says, "in much tremblings," 1Cor 2.3. I tremble to think how sad it will be if any of you were to perish in these days of the gospel, even though you have been placed under a trumpet that is less shrill and powerful. It will be my prayer for you all, that you may be fruit-bearing trees — that when the great vine-dresser removes you from here by death, he may transplant you into the celestial paradise.

Be pleased to accept these few notes which, some years ago, you seemed to hear with much affection. I will only desire two things of you: that you would thoroughly peruse them, and then copy them out in your daily practice. Get up into your tower of meditation, and look often with Moses, upon Him who is invisible, Heb 11.27. But I will not hold you any longer. I remember St. Paul at the close of his Epistle, craves the Thessalonians' prayers, 1The 5.25. "And so I will end my epistle, begging a contribution of your prayers for me, that the Lord would give me the *strength* of Heaven to do the *work* of Heaven; that he would help me to take heed to myself and my doctrine; that he would make me not only *faithful*, but *successful* in my ministry among you — so that, "when the chief Shepherd appears I may receive a crown of glory which does not fade away," 1Pet 5.4. I will not further enlarge, unless in my affections towards you.

"Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight,"⁸ which shall be the earnest prayer of him who is,

Your friend and servant,
for Jesus' sake,

THOMAS WATSON.

⁸ Heb 13.20-21.

Dedictory

THE EPISTLE TO THE READER

CHRISTIAN READER,

There are some exercises of religion which stand only in a form of godliness — when men draw near with their mouth and honour God with their lips, and bestow a little bodily exercise and attendance upon him — yet in the meantime their hearts are far from him, running after other objects, Isa 29.13; Eze 33.31. There are other duties which are more spiritual, and in which the life and power of godliness consist. Among these is heavenly meditation, when (as the apostle says of the blessed angels, 1Pet 1.12.) the heart desires to look into the mysteries of salvation.

Ever since the fall of Adam, sinful men have had the disposition of Adam to fly away, and to hide from the presence of the Lord. Natural men are without God in the world: he is not in all their thoughts; they could be well enough content to have him “cease from before them,” Isa 30.11. He is to be found everywhere else — only shut out of the hearts of wicked men. The heart never willingly fixes on God, till he is the treasure of it; for where a man’s treasure is, there will his heart be also (Luk 12.34). It cannot easily meditate, except where it delights, Psa 119.97. Love is the weight of the soul; it readily moves to the object which it loves. Mary will not move from the empty sepulchre where her Lord had lain, a little before. Every good man is of David’s mind, Psa 16.8,⁹ to set the Lord always before him, that he may be in his fear all the day long.

There is nothing of a more unstable and roving temper than the mind of man. Some have prescribed the study of mathematics to stabilize the volatile agility of it; but certainly the more serious the soul is, the more settled it is. Nothing, therefore, will so balance and compose it, as true holiness, which of all other things makes it the most serious, the most willing “to acquaint itself with God, that it may be at peace,” Job 22.21. He is the soul’s *rest*. The more it knows of him, the more desirous it is to stay with him, that it may know more. The more it tastes of his favour, the more it longs after his glory, as Moses did, Exo 33.17, 18. What the philosopher says about all knowledge is indeed true *only* of the knowledge of God and Christ: that it is *quies intellectus*, quiet understanding. And therefore our Saviour calls knowledge of God “eternal life,” Joh 17.3, in which alone the soul rests.

Now, one excellent means of fixing the heart on God, is meditation, whereby a man calls together “all that is within him to bless His name,” Psa 103.1. Meditation is the wing of the soul which carries its affections to things above. By this, as with Moses, it goes up to the top of Pisgah to take a view of the promised land. It is, as Clemens Alexandrinus says of prayer, a conversing with God. As Chrysostom says of faith, so may we say of meditation: it makes God, and Christ, and precepts, and promises *ours*, by giving us a fuller possession of them. Hereby we hold fast the things which we have learned; we awaken our faith, inflame our love, strengthen our hope, revive our desires, increase our joys in God; we furnish our hearts, and fill our mouths with materials of prayer; we loosen our affections from the world; we acquaint ourselves beforehand with those glories which we yet only hope for, and get some knowledge

⁹ Psa 16.8 I have set the LORD always before me; Because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved.

To the Reader

of that love of Christ which passes knowledge. Meditation is the palate of the soul whereby we taste the goodness of God — the eye of the soul whereby we view the beauties of holiness; whereby our spiritual senses are exercised, Act 24.16; Heb 5.14.¹⁰ It is the key to the wine-cellar, to the banqueting-house, to the garden of spices, which lets us in to Him whom our soul loves. It is the arm whereby we embrace the promises at a distance, and bring Christ and our souls together.

Though some learned men of former times have written a few things on this subject, yet from our age, and in our language, I do not remember any who have purposely handled it, except our *Christian Seneca*: the learned and reverend bishop Hall. His one small tract in the midst of a voluminous work may perhaps not be in every man's hand to peruse. The reverend author of this book has elegantly described the necessity, excellence, and usefulness of this Christian duty. It is therefore worthy of the perusal of those who desire to acquaint and furnish themselves with so excellent a part of Christian skill, whereby time may be redeemed and improved for the prepossession of eternity. May the Lord so fill us with the love of Him, and with all the fulness of God, that we may be able to continually say, "My heart is fixed O Lord, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise."

Yours in the Lord,
EDW. REYNOLDS.¹¹

¹⁰ **Act 24.16** "This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. **Heb 5.14** But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

¹¹ This was written Nov 7, 1657. Afterwards, Reynolds was bishop of Norwich.

Chapter 1. Showing that Negative Goodness Is but a broken Title To Heaven.

Just as the book of the Canticles is called the *Song of Songs* by a Hebraism (being the most excellent of songs), so Psalm 1 may not unfitly be entitled, the *Psalm of Psalms*, for it contains in it the very pith and quintessence of Christianity. What Jerome says of Paul's epistles I may say of this psalm: *it is short for the composition, but full of length and strength for the matter*. This psalm carries blessedness in the frontispiece; it begins where we all hope to end. It may well be called *A Christian's Guide*, for it reveals the quicksands where the wicked sink down in perdition, verse 1; and the firm ground on which the saints tread to glory, verse 2. The text is an epitome and breviary of religion:

*But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and in His law he meditates day and night." Psa 1.2*

Every word has its emphasis; I begin with the first word, *But*. This *But* is full of spiritual wine; we will broach it and taste a little, then proceed. *But* is a term of opposition. The godly man is described in verse 1,

1. By way of negation, in three particulars.

(1) "He does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly;" he is *none* of their council; he neither gives bad counsel, nor takes it.

(2) "He does not stand in the way of sinners." He will not stand among those who will not be able to "stand in the judgment," verse 5.

(3) "He does not sit in the seat of the scornful." Let it be a chair of state, he will not sit in it; he knows it will prove very uneasy at the last. The word *sitting* implies,

a. *A habit* in sin, Psa 50.20. "You sit and speak against your brother."

b. *Familiarity* with sinners. "I have not sat with vain persons" (Psa 26.4); ¹² that is, I do not haunt their company. The godly man shakes off all intimacy with the wicked. He may traffic with them, but not associate; he may be civil to them as neighbours, but not twist into a cord of friendship. Diamonds and stones may lie together, but they will not solder and cement together.

2. In verse 2, the godly man is described by way of position, or rather opposition, "But his delight is in the law of the Lord." From this word *But*, observe that negative goodness is not sufficient to entitle us to heaven. To be no scorner, is good, but it is not enough. There are some in the world whose religion runs all upon negatives; they are *not* drunkards, they are *not* swearers, and for this they bless themselves. See how that Pharisee speaks in Luk 18.11: "God, I thank you that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers," etc. Alas, *not* being scandalous will no more make a good Christian than a number will make a sum. The godly man goes further, "he does not sit in the seat of the scorner, but his delight is in the

¹² The Hebrew *shav* means empty, vain, or false.

law of the Lord.” We are bid not only to “*cease from evil, but to do good,*” Psa 34.14. It will be a poor plea at the last, to say, ‘Lord, I kept myself from being spotted with gross sin. I did no hurt.’ But what *good* is there in you? It is not enough for the servant of the vineyard that he does no harm there, that he does not break the trees or destroy the hedges. If he does not *work* in the vineyard, he loses his pay. It is not enough for us to say at the last day, that we have done no hurt, that we have not lived in gross sin. But what *good* have we done in the vineyard? Where is the grace we have gotten? If we cannot show this, we shall lose our pay, and miss salvation.

USE. Do not content yourselves with the negative part of religion; many build their hopes for heaven on this cracked foundation: they are given to no vice; none can charge them with any foul miscarriages. These are the credentials they have to show. To such persons I say three things.

1. You may not be outwardly bad, and yet you are not inwardly good. You may be as far from grace as you are from vice. Though none can say your *eye* is black, yet your *soul* may be dyed black. Though your hands are not working iniquity, your heads may be plotting it. Though you do not hang out your bush,¹³ yet you may *secretly* vend your commodity. A tree may be full of vermin, and yet the fair leaves may cover them so they are not seen — so too, the fair leaves of civility may hide you from the eye of man, but God sees the vermin of pride, unbelief, and covetousness in your heart. “You are those,” says Christ, “who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts,” Luk 16.15. A man may not be morally evil, and yet not be spiritually good. He may be free from gross enormity, and yet full of secret enmity against God — like the snake which, though it has a fine colour, yet it has its fangs.

2. If you are only *negatively* good, God takes no account of you. You are like so many numbers in God’s Arithmetic, and he writes down no numbers in the Book of Life. Take a piece of brass: though it is not as bad a metal as lead or iron, yet not being as good as silver, there is little reckoning made of it; it will not pass for current coin. Even if you are not profane, not being of the right metal, lacking the stamp of holiness upon you, you will never pass current¹⁴: God slights you, because you are but a brass Christian.

3. A man may go to hell for *not doing good, as well as for doing evil.* The one who does not bear good fruit is as much fuel for hell, as the one who bears bad fruit. Mat 3.10. “Every tree which does not bear good fruit, is cut down and thrown into the fire.” One may die as well from not eating food, as eating poison; a ground may be spoiled as well for lack of good seed as for having tares sown in it. Those who were not active in works of charity, were sadly sentenced: “Depart from me you cursed, etc. for I was hungry, and you gave me no food,” Mat 25. 41, 42. It does not say, “You *took away* my food from me,” but “you *gave me* no food.” Why were the foolish virgins shut out? They had done no harm; they had not broken their lamps — true, but they “took no oil in their lamps,” Mat 25.3. Lacking oil was their indictment. Therefore do not let any man build his hope for heaven on negatives. This is building upon the sand. The sand is bad to build on; it won’t hold together. But suppose a man were to finish a house on it; what is the issue? The flood comes, namely *persecution*, and the force of this

¹³ When fresh ale or spirits were available at a tavern, they would “hang out the bush” to let customers know.

¹⁴ “Pass current” means “be acceptable.” By faith in Christ, we and our works are made acceptable to God.

flood will drive away the sand and make the house fall. And the wind blows, the breath of the Lord like a mighty wind — it will blow such a sandy building into hell. Be afraid then, to rest in the *privative*¹⁵ part of religion; launch forth further, and be eminently holy.

So I come to the next words, “but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night.”

Chapter 2.

What is meant by the Law of God, by Delight in the Law, and the resulting Proposition.

The words give us a twofold description of a godly man.

First, he DELIGHTS in God's law.

Secondly, he MEDITATES on God's law.

I begin with the first, “His delight is in the law of the Lord.” The great God has grafted the affection of delight in every creature. It has, by the instinct of nature, something to delight itself in. Now the true saint, not by intuition but by divine inspiration, makes the law of God his delight. This is the badge of a Christian: “His delight is in the law of the Lord.” A man may work in his trade, and not delight in it, either because of the difficulty of the work, or the smallness of his wages. But a godly man serves God with delight; it is his food and drink to do His will. For the explication of the words, it will be inquired,

1. What is meant by “the law of the Lord”? This word “law” may be taken either more strictly or more largely. More strictly it is taken for the Decalogue or Ten Commandments. More largely, it is taken for the whole written word of God; that is, for those truths which are deduced from the word, and converge in it. In this larger sense, it is taken for the whole business of religion which is the counterpart of God's law, and agrees with it, as a transcript agrees with the original. The word is a *setting forth*, and religion¹⁶ is a *showing forth* of God's law. I will take this word in its full latitude and extent.

2. What is meant by *delight in God's law*? The Hebrew and Septuagint both render it, “his will is in the law of the Lord;” and that which is voluntary is delightful. A gracious heart serves God from a principle of ingenuousness. He makes God's law not only his task, but his recreation. Upon this scripture stock I will graft this proposition:

Doctrine. That a child of God, though he cannot serve the Lord perfectly, yet he serves him willingly. His will is in the law of the Lord. He is not a *pressed soldier*, but a *volunteer*. By the beating of this pulse we may judge whether there is spiritual life in us or not. David professes that God's law was his delight, Psa 119.77. He had his crown to delight in; he had his music to cheer him; but the love he had for God's law drowned all other delights — just as the joy of harvest and vintage exceeds the joy of gleaning. “I delight in the law of God,” says St. Paul, “in the inner man,” Rom 7.22. The Greek word is, *I take pleasure*. The law of God is my recreation, and it was a heart delight; it was in the inner man. A wicked man may have joy in

¹⁵ That is, the absence, lack, or deprivation of something — not only sins of omission, but of inaction.

¹⁶ Here, religion means piety or godliness — living in conformity to God's word.

his *face*, 2Cor 5.12,¹⁷ like honey-dew that wets the leaf; but the wine of God's Spirit cheers the *heart*. Paul delighted in the law, in the inner man.

Chapter 3. **Where the Saint's Spiritual Delight springs from.**

THE saint's delight in the law of God proceeds,

1. *From soundness of judgment.* The mind apprehends a beauty in God's law; now the judgment draws the affections, like so many orbs after it; "The law of God is perfect," Psa 19.7. It does not need be eked out with traditions. The Hebrew word for *perfect*, seems to allude to a perfect, entire body that lacks none of the members or lineaments.¹⁸ God's law must necessarily be perfect, for it is able to make us wise to salvation, 2Tim 3.15. The Septuagint renders it, "the law of the Lord is pure," like beauty that has no stain, or wine that is clarified and refined. The soul that looks into this law, seeing so much lustre and perfection cannot help but delight in it; the middle lamp of the sanctuary being lighted from the fire of the altar, gave light to all the other lamps: So the judgment being lighted from the word, it sets on fire the lamps of the affections.

2. This holy delight arises *from the predominance of grace*. When grace comes with authority and majesty upon the heart, it fills it with delight. Naturally, we have no delight in God: "Therefore they say to God, depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of your ways" (Job 21.14). Indeed, there is not only a dislike, but an antipathy; sinners are called *haters of God*, Rom 1.30. But when grace comes into the heart, O what a change there is! Grace preponderates; it files off the rebellion of the will; it makes a man of another spirit, Num 14.24.¹⁹ It turns the lion-like fierceness into a dove-like sweetness; it changes hatred into delight. Grace puts a new bias into the will; it works a willingness and cheerfulness in God's service. "Your people shall be a *willing* people in the day of your power," Psa 110.8.

3. This holy delight in religion is *from the sweetness of the end*. Well may we with cheerfulness let down the net of our endeavour, when we have so excellent a draught. Heaven at the *end of duty* causes delight in the *way of duty*.

Chapter 4. **Showing a characteristic Difference between a Child of God and a Hypocrite**

A discriminating difference is shown between a child of God and a hypocrite: the one serves God from a principle of delight, the other does not. "The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver," Psa 119.72. With what delight a covetous man tells about his thousands! But God's law was better to David than thousands; a child of God looks upon

¹⁷ **2Cor 5.12** ...that you may have *an answer* for those who boast in appearance and not in heart.

¹⁸ A characteristic property that defines the apparent individual nature of something.

¹⁹ **Num 14.24** But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.

The Saint's Spiritual Delight

the service of God, not only as his duty, but his privilege. A gracious heart loves everything that has the stamp of God on it:

The *Word* is his delight — “Your words were found and I ate them, and your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart,” Jer 15.16.

The *Sabbath* is his delight — “If you turn away your foot from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight,” Isa 58.13.

Prayer is his delight — “I will make them joyful in my house of prayer,” Isa 56.7.

Hearing is his delight — “Who are these that fly like doves to their windows?” Isa 60.8. The gracious soul flies like a dove to an ordinance, upon the wings of delight.

The *Sacrament* is his delight — on this day the Lord makes “a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wines well-aged, of rich food full of marrow, of wines well refined,” Isa 25.6.

A sacrament day is a soul-festival day; here Christ takes the soul into his banqueting-house and “displays His banner of love over it,” Song 2.4. Here are heavenly delicacies set before us. Christ gives us his body and blood. This is angels' food; this is the heavenly nectar; here is a cup perfumed with the divine nature; here is wine spiced with the love of God. The Jews at their feasts poured ointment on their guests; here Christ pours the oil of gladness into the heart. This is the King's bath where we wash and are cleansed of our leprosy: the withered soul, after receiving this blessed eucharist, has been like a watered garden, Isa 58.11, or like those Egyptian fields after the overflowing of the Nile, fruitful and flourishing. And do you wonder that a child of God delights in holy things? He must be a volunteer in religion.

But it is not this way with a hypocrite. He may be forced to *do* that which is good, but not to *will* that which is good. He doesn't serve God with delight. “Will he delight himself in the Almighty?” Job 27.10. That he has none of this complacency and delight, appears thus: because he serves God grudgingly; he brings his sacrifice with a wicked mind, Pro 21.27. Such a one was Cain. It was long before he brought his offering, Gen 4.3. It was not the first-fruits. And when he did bring it, it was grudgingly; it wasn't a free-will offering, Deu 16.10. It is probable that it was the custom of his father's family to sacrifice; and perhaps conscience might check him for forbearing so long. At last the offering is brought, but how? As a *task* rather than a *duty*; as a mulct or *fine* rather than a *sacrifice*. Cain brought his *offering*, but not *himself*. What Seneca says of a gift, I may say of a sacrifice — it is not gold and silver that makes a gift, but a willing mind. If this is lacking, the gold is only parted with, not given. So too, it is not prayer and hearing that makes a sacrifice, but it is a willing mind. Cain's was not an offering, but a tax; not worship, but penance.

Chapter 5. Two Cases of Conscience resolved

BUT here are two cases to be put.

CASE 1. Whether a regenerate person may not serve God with weariness?

Ans. 1. Yes; but this delight in God is not wholly extinct. This lassitude and weariness in a child of God may arise from the in-being of corruption, Rom 7.24. It is not from the *grace* that is in him, but the *sin* — just as Peter's sinking on the water was not from his *faith* but his

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fear. Yet I still say, a regenerate person's will is for God, Rom 7.15. Paul found sometimes an indisposition to good, Rom 7.23. Yet at the same time he professes a complacency in God, "I delight in the law of God, in the inner man," verse 22. One may delight in music, or in any recreation; yet through the weariness of his body, he may be dulled for the present, and indisposed to it. A Christian may love God's law, even though sometimes, the clog of the flesh weighing him down, he finds his former vigour and agility remitted.

Ans. 2. This faintness and weariness in a regenerate person is not habitual; it is not his constant temper. When the water ebbs a while it is low water, but there is soon a spring-tide again. It is sometimes low water in a Christian's soul. He finds an indisposition and irksomeness to that which is good, but in a while there is a spring-tide of affection, and the soul is carried full sail in holy duties. It is with a Christian as it is with a man who is distempered: when he is sick, he doesn't take that delight in his food which he did formerly; indeed, sometimes the very sight of it offends him. But when he is well, he falls to his food again with delight and appetite. So it is when the soul is distempered through sadness and melancholy: it doesn't find that delight in word and prayer as it did formerly. But when the soul returns to its healthful temper again, now it has the same delectability and cheerfulness in God's service as before.

Ans. 3. This weariness in a regenerate person is involuntary. He is troubled by it; he doesn't hug his disease, but mourns under it. *He is weary of his weariness*. When he finds a heaviness in duty, he goes heavily under that heaviness. He prays, weeps, wrestles, uses all means to regain that alacrity in God's service that he usually has. David, when his chariot wheels were pulled off, and he drove on heavily in religion, how often he prayed for quickening grace! ²⁰ (Psa 119) When the saints have found their hearts fainting, their affections flagging, and a strange kind of lethargy seizing them, they are never at rest till they have recovered themselves, and have arrived at that freedom and delight in God which they once sensed.

CASE 2. Whether a hypocrite may not serve God with delight?

Ans. I answer, he may; Herod heard John the Baptist gladly, Mat 6.20. And those who fasted for strife and debate, "delighted to know God's ways," Isa, 58.2. A hypocrite may, out of some flashy hopes of heaven, show a delight in goodness. Yet it is not such a delight as is found in the regenerate, for his delight is carnal. A man may be carnal while he is doing spiritual things: It is not the holiness and strictness in religion that the hypocrite delights in, but something else. He delights in prayer, but it is the showing of gifts that he looks at, rather than the exercise of grace. He delights in hearing, but it is not the spirituality of the word that he delights in; not the savour of knowledge, 2Cor 2.14, but the lustre. When he goes to the word preached, it is so that he may feast his fancy, rather than better his heart — as if a man were to go to an apothecary's shop for a pill, only to see its gilding, not the operative virtue. The hypocrite goes to the word to see what gilding is in a sermon, and what may delight the intellect. Hypocrites come to the word as one comes into a garden, to pluck some fine flower to smell, not as a child comes to the breast for nutriment. This is curiosity rather than piety.

Such were those in Eze 33.32: You "are to them like a very lovely song of someone who has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." The prophet being eloquent, and having

²⁰ That is, *enlivening grace*.

a pleasing delivery, they were greatly taken with it, and it was as sweet to them as a refrain of music. But it was not the spirituality of the matter they liked so well, as the melody of the voice. It was a sharp, yet seasonable reproof of Chrysostom to his audience, "This is what," he says, "is likely to undo your souls: you hear your ministers like so many minstrels, to please the ear, not to pierce the conscience." You see, a hypocrite's delight in religion is carnal. It is not to be nourished in the words of faith which he minds, but the eloquence of speech, the rareness of notion, the quickness of fancy, the smoothness of style. He strives only to pluck from the tree of knowledge. Alas, poor man, you may have the star-light of knowledge, and yet it may be night in your soul.

Chapter 6. **Trial of a Christian's Delight in God.**

LET this put us on a holy scrutiny and trial, as to whether we have this delight in religion or not? It is life or death as we answer this.

Ques. How may this spiritual delight be known?

Ans. 1. He that delights in God's law, is often thinking of it. What a man delights in, his thoughts are still running upon it. He that delights in money, his mind is taken up with it — therefore the covetous man is said to *mind earthly things*, Phi 3.19. Thus if there is a delight in the things of God, the mind will be still musing upon them. O what a rare treasure is the word of God! It is the field where the pearl of great price is hidden. How precious are the promises? They are the conduit that holds the water of life. They are like those two olive branches "through which the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves," Zec 4.12. These seal up pardon, adoption, glory: "O Lord, by these things men live," Isa 38.16. Where there is a delight in the law of God, the mind is wholly busied about it.

Ans. 2. If we delight in religion, there is nothing that can keep us from it; we will be conversant in word, prayer, sacraments. He that loves gold will trade for it. The merchant will traverse sea and land to make money his proselyte. Men will not be kept from their fairs. If there is a delight in holy things, we will not be detained from an ordinance, for *there* we are trafficking for salvation. If a man were hungry, he would not stay away from the market for the aching of his finger. The ordinances are a gospel market, and those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, will not for every slight occasion stay away. "I was glad when they said, come let us go up to the house of the Lord," Psa 122.1. You who are glad when the devil helps you with an excuse to absent yourself from the house of the Lord, are far from this holy delight.

Ans. 3. Those who delight in religion are often speaking of it: "Then those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another," Mal 3.16. Where there is grace *infused*, it will be *diffused*. "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious," Ecc 10.12. David, delighting in God's testimonies, "would speak of them before kings," Psa 119.46. The spouse delighting in her beloved, could not conceal her love, but breaks forth into most emotional, and no less elegant expressions: "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand; his head is like the finest gold," etc. (Song 5.10) The disciples whose hearts were upon Christ, made him the whole subject of their discourse as they were going to Emmaus, Luk 24.19. The primitive Christians who were enflamed with love to God, spoke so much of heaven and the kingdom

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prepared, that the emperor suspected they meant to take his kingdom from him. Words are the looking-glass of the mind; they show what is in the heart. Where there is spiritual delight, like new wine, it will have its vent; “grace is poured into your lips,” Psa 45.2. “A man who is of the earth speaks of the earth,” Joh 3.31. He can hardly speak three words without two of them being about earth. His mouth, like the fish in the gospel, is full of gold, Mat 17.27. So where there is a delight in God, “our tongues will be like the pen of a ready writer.” Psa 45. This is a scripture touchstone to try men’s hearts by. Alas, it shows how little they delight in God, because they are possessed with a mute devil; they do not speak “the language of Canaan” (Isa 19.18).

Ans. 4. He that delights in God, will give Him the best in every service. The one whom we love best, shall have of the best. The spouse delighting in Christ, will give him of her pleasant fruits, Song 7.13. And if she has a cup of spiced wine, full of the juice of the pomegranate, he must drink of it, Song 8.2. He that delights in God, gives Him the strength of his affections, the cream of his duties; if he has anything better to offer, God will have it. Hypocrites do not care what they put God off with; they offer to the Lord that which costs them nothing, 2Sam 24.24; a prayer that costs them no wrestling, no pouring out of the soul, 1Sam 1.15. They put no cost in their services. Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, Gen 4.3. It is observable that the Holy Spirit does not mention anything that might commend or set off Cain’s sacrifice. When he comes to speak of Abel’s, he sets an emphasis upon it, “Abel brought of the *firstlings* of his flock, and of the *fat* of it,” verse 4. But when he speaks of Cain, he only says, “he brought of the fruit of the ground,” — some sorry thing, perhaps, pulled out of a ditch. God, who is best, will be served with the best. Domitian would not have his statue carved in wood or iron, but in gold. God will have the best of our best things, *golden* services. He who delights in God, gives him the fat of the offering; the purest of his love, the hottest of his zeal — and when he has done all, he grieves that he can do no more. He blushes to see such an infinite disproportion between Deity and duty.

Ans. 5. He that delights in God, does not much delight in anything else. The world appears in an eclipse; Paul delighted in the law of God, in the inner man, and how he was crucified to the world! Gal 6.14. It is not absolutely unlawful to delight in the things of the world, “You shall rejoice in every good thing which the Lord your God has given you.” Deu 26.11. None may better take the comfort of these things than believers. For they have the best right to them; they hold all *in capite*;²¹ and they have the dew of a blessing distilled. “Take two talents,” Naaman said to Gehazi, 2 Kings 5.23. So says God to a believer: take two talents, take your outward comforts, and take my love with them. But the children of God, though they are thankful for outward mercies, which is the yearly rent they sit at, yet they are not much taken with these things. They use them only as a convenience for their passage. They know they need them as a staff to walk with. But when they sit down in the kingdom of heaven, and rest themselves, they will have no use of this staff of Jacob. Believers do not long much for these things which are still passing, 1Joh 2.17.²² Their delight is chiefly in God and his law; and *is it*

²¹ By an authority which cannot be questioned — A tenure held immediately from the king.

²² **1Joh 2.17** And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

thus? Do we have this low opinion of all undermoon ²³ comforts? Has their price fallen? The astronomer says, if it were possible for a man to be lifted up as high as the moon, the earth would seem to him like a little point. If we could be lifted up to heaven in our affections, all earthly delights would seem like nothing. When the woman of Samaria had met with Christ, down goes the pitcher — she leaves that behind (Joh 4.28). He who delights in God, having tasted the sweetness in Him, doesn't mind the pitcher much; *he leaves the world behind*.

Ans. 6. True delight is constant. Hypocrites have their pangs of desire and flashes of joy, which are soon over. The Jews rejoiced in John's light for a season, Joh 5.35. Unsound hearts may delight in the law of the Lord for a season; but they will quickly change their note: "What a weariness it is to serve the Lord!" The Chrysolyte, which has a golden colour, is very bright to look at in the morning; but towards noon it grows dull and has lost its splendour — such are the glittering shows of hypocrites. True delight, like the fire of the altar, never goes out; affliction cannot extirpate it. "Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me, yet your commandments are my delight," Psa 119.143.

Chapter 7.

A Persuasive to this holy Delight in Religion.

LET me persuade Christians to *labour* for this holy delight. Think upon the text, "Let your delight be in the law of the Lord." So that I may better enforce the exhortation, I will lay before you several weighty considerations.

1. In the law of God, there is that which may cause delight. This appears in two things:

(1) *Truth*. The law of God is a series of truth: "Your word is true from the beginning," Psa 119.160. The two Testaments are the two lips by which the God of truth has spoken to us. Here is a firm basis for faith.

(2) *Goodness*. "You gave them true laws, *good* statutes," Neh. 9.13.

Here is truth and goodness: the one is adequate to the understanding, the other to the will. Now, this goodness and excellence of the law of God shines forth ***in nine particulars***.

1. This blessed law of God is a letter sent to us from heaven, penned by the Holy Spirit, and sealed with the blood of Christ. See some passages in the letter: "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you," Isa 62.5. And, "I will betroth you to me forever in righteousness and in loving-kindness, and in mercies." Hos 2.19. Is it not delightful reading over this love-letter?

2. The law of God is a light "that shines in a dark place," 2Pet 1.19. It is our pole-star to guide us to heaven; it was David's candle and lantern to walk with, Psa 119.105. Now, light is *sweet*, Ecc 11.7. It is sad to lack this light; those heathens who do not have the knowledge of God's law, must stumble to hell in the dark. Jerome brings in Tully [*i.e.*, Cicero] with his oratory, and Aristotle with his syllogisms, crying out in hell. Those who leave the light of the word, following the light within them (as some speak), prefer the shining of the glow-worm, above the sun.

²³ That is, *earthly*: everything under the moon.

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3. The law of God is a spiritual mirror to dress our souls by. David often looked at himself in this mirror and got much wisdom. "Through your precepts I get understanding," Psa 119.104. This mirror both shows us our spots, and takes them away. It may be compared to the laver which was made of the women's mirrors, Exo 38.8. It was both a mirror and a laver; a mirror to look in, and a laver to wash in. So the law of God is a mirror to show us our faces, and a laver to wash away our spots.

4. This law of God contains in it our evidences for heaven. Would we know whether we are heirs of the promise, and whether our names are written in heaven? We must find it in this law book: "He has chosen us to salvation through sanctification," 2The 2.13. "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren," 1Joh 3.14. And isn't it comforting, reading over our evidences?

5. The law of God is a place of ammunition, out of which we must fetch our spiritual artillery to fight against Satan. It may be compared to the "Tower of David built for an armoury, on which there hang a thousand bucklers; all shields of mighty men," Song 4.4. It is called the "sword of the Spirit," Eph 6.17. It is observable that when the devil tempted our Saviour, he ran to scripture for armour: "it is written." Three times Christ wounded the serpent with this sword, Mat 4.3, etc. Isn't it good having our armour about us when the enemy is in the field?

6. The law of God is our spiritual medicine-book, or book of receipts. Basil ²⁴ compares the word of God to an apothecary's shop which has its *pan pharmakon*; ²⁵ when there is any disease growing in the soul, here is a recipe to take. If we find ourselves dead in duty, here is a recipe: "Your word has quickened me," Psa 119.50. If our hearts are hard, here is a recipe: "Is not my word like a fire?" Jer 23.29; this is able to melt the rock into tenderness. If we grow proud, here is a recipe: "God resists the proud," 1Pet 5.5. If any fresh guilt is contracted, here we have a sovereign medicine to take: "Sanctify them through your truth," Joh 17.17. The law of God is like a medicinal-garden where we may walk and gather any herb to expel the poison of sin.

7. The law of God is a divine treasury to enrich us. Here the riches of knowledge and the riches of assurance are to be found, Col 2.2. In this law of God are scattered many truths, like precious diamonds to adorn the hidden man of the heart. David took the law of God as his heritage, Psa 119.111. In this blessed mine is hidden the true pearl; here we dig till we find heaven.

8. The law of God is our cordial ²⁶ in those times in which we grow faint. And it is a *strong* cordial, "That we might have strong consolation," Heb 6.18. They are strong consolations indeed that can sweeten affliction, that can turn water into wine, that can stand against the fiery trial. "This is my comfort in affliction, for Your word has quickened me," Psa 119.50. The comforts of the world are *weak* consolations. A man has comfort in health; but let sickness come, and where is his comfort then? He has comfort in an estate; but let poverty come, and where is his comfort then? These are *weak* consolations: they cannot bear up against trouble. But the comforts of the Word are *strong* consolations; they can sweeten the

²⁴ Basil "the Great" (329-379), one of the Cappadocian bishops.

²⁵ A book containing an account of remedies for all diseases.

²⁶ Strong highly flavored sweet liquor that warms, comforts, and stimulates.

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waters of Marah.²⁷ Let sickness come, the comforts of the word can allay and support it; “the inhabitant of the land will not say I am sick,” Isa 33.24. Let death come, a Christian can outbrave it: “O death, where is your sting?” 1 Cor. 15.55. And isn't it comforting to have such a jalap²⁸ lying by, that it can expel the venom of death?

9. The law of God is manna — a heavenly manna that suits itself to every Christian's palate. What does the soul desire? Quickening? Strengthening? He may find all in this manna.

2. Delight in religion crowns all our services. Therefore David counsels his son Solomon, not only to serve God, but to serve him “with a willing mind,” 1Chr 28.9. Delight in duty is better than duty itself; just as it is worse for a man to delight in sin than to commit it, because there is more of the will in sin. So delight in duty is to be preferred before duty: “O how love I your law!” Psa 119.97. It is not how much we *do*, but how much we *love*. Hypocrites may *obey* God's law, but the saints *love* his law; this carries away the garland.²⁹

3. Delight in spiritual things evidences grace. It is a sign that we have received the spirit of adoption. An innocent³⁰ child delights to obey his father. He that is born of God is ennobled by grace, and acts from a principle of innocence. Grace alters the bias of the heart, and turns it from unwilling, to willing. The Spirit of grace is called a *free* spirit, Psa 51.12, not only because it works freely, but because it makes the heart free and cheerful in obedience. A gracious heart does not act by pure constraint, but by free consent.

4. Delight in religion makes the business of religion easier for us. Delight makes everything easy; there is nothing hard to a willing mind. Delight turns religion into recreation. It is like fire to the sacrifice, like oil to the wheels. Like wind to the sails, it carries us full sail in our duty. He that delights in God's way will never complain of the ruggedness of the way. A child that is going to his father's house, does not complain of a bad way. A Christian is going to heaven in the way of duty: with every prayer, every sacrament, he is a step nearer his Father's house. Surely he is so full of joy in going home, that he will not complain of a bad way. *Get this holy delight then.* Beloved, we do not have many miles to go; death will shorten our way, let delight sweeten it.

5. All the duties in religion are for our good. We will have the benefit. “If you are wise, you will be wise for yourself,” Pro 9.12. God has wrapped his glory and our good together. “I gave them my statutes, which if a man does them, he shall even live in them,” Eze 20.11. There is nothing the Lord requires that does not tend to self-preservation. God bids us, read his word, and why? This word is his *Will and Testament* in which He conveys a fair estate to be settled upon us, Col 1.12; “And this is the promise that He has promised us, even eternal life;” 1Joh 2.25. He bids us pray, and this duty carries meat in its mouth. “This is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.” 1Joh 5.14. Ask what you will, he will sign your petitions. If you had a friend that were to say, “Come to me when you will, I will furnish you with money,” would you not delight to visit that friend? God will give up to half his kingdom, (Mar 6.23); and will we not delight in prayer? God bids us believe;

²⁷ Exo 15.23-25 – where the bitter undrinkable waters were made sweet.

²⁸ A purging medicine.

²⁹ That is, the trophy.

³⁰ Originally, “ingenuous” meaning honest, genuine, artless; not devious or deceitful.

and there is a honey-comb to be found in this precept: “Believe *and you shall be saved.*” Salvation is the crown that is set upon the head of faith. Well may the apostle say, “His commandments are not grievous.” (1Joh 5.3) O then, if religion is so beneficial, if there is such gold to be dug out of this mine, then it should make us delight in the ways of God! What will tempt, if not self-interest?

6. How Christ delighted in the work of our redemption! “Lo, I come, I delight to do your will, O my God,” Psa 40.7, 8. It is agreed by expositors that it is spoken mystically of Christ. When he came into the world to sacrifice his life for us, it was a free-will offering. “I have a baptism to be baptised with,” Luk 12.50. Christ was to be, as it were, baptised in his own blood; and how he thirsted for that time! “How I am distressed till it is accomplished!” If Christ so delighted in the work of our redemption, shall we not delight in his service? If he suffered willingly, do we pray unwillingly? If he so cheerfully laid down his life for us, shall we not surrender our lives to him? Certainly if anything could make Christ repent of shedding his blood, it would be this: to see Christians come off so reluctant in their duty, bringing it as a penance rather than a sacrifice.

7. Delight in God's service makes us resemble the angels in heaven. They serve God with cheerfulness. As soon as God speaks the word, they are ambitious to obey. How they are ravished with delight while they are praising God! In heaven we will be like the angels (Mat 22.30); spiritual delight would make us like them *here*. To serve God by constraint, is to be like the devil — all the devils in hell obey God, but it is against their will; they yield a passive obedience. But service which comes off with delight is angelic. This is what we pray for, that “God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mat 6.10) and isn't it done with delight there?

8. This delight in God's law will not cause a surfeit.³¹ Carnal objects often cause loathing and nausea; we soon grow weary of our delights. This is why we change from one sense to another; from colours to music, from music to smell, etc. Too much pleasure is a pain. But spiritual objects do not overfeed or tire the soul; the more we study in the law of God, the more delight we find. And in this regard, David might say the words of God's mouth were “sweeter to his taste than honey,” Psa 119.103 — because one may soon surfeit upon honey, but he can never surfeit with the word of God. Once someone has, like Jeremiah, “found the word and ate it,” Jer 15.16, he will not be overfed with it. There is that savouriness in the word that makes a Christian cry out, “Lord, give me this bread evermore,” Joh. 6.34. There is that sweetness in communion with God, that the soul says, “O that it might always be thus; O that what I now feel, I might ever feel!” He that delights in God, does not complain that he has too much of God, but rather too little. He opens and spreads the sails of his soul to take in more of those heavenly gales. He longs for that time when he will be ever-delighting himself in the sweet and blessed vision of God.

9. Without this holy delight, we weary ourselves, and we weary God too. “Will you weary my God also?” Isa 7.13. Our delighting in God would make him delight in us; but when we begin to say “what a weariness it is to serve the Lord,” Mal 1.13, then God is as weary as we are; he is even sick of such services. When duties are a burden to us, they are a burden to

³¹ Filled to excess; over-indulgence.

God, and what should we do with them? When a man is weary of a burden, he will cast it off. Let all this quicken our delight in God's service.

Chapter 8.

Showing how a Christian may arrive at this Delight in God's Law

Three things are requisite for attaining this blessed delight in the law of God.

Direction 1. Set a high estimate upon the word; what the judgment prizes, the affections embrace. He that values gold, will delight in it. We are apt, through a principle of Atheism, to entertain slight thoughts of religion, and therefore our affections are also slight. David highly prized God's statutes: "They are more to be desired than gold, yes, than much fine gold," Psa 19.10. And from this grew that enflamed love for them; "I will delight myself in your statutes," Psa 119.16.

Direction 2. Pray for a spiritual heart; an earthly heart will not delight in spiritual mysteries; the earth puts out the fire. Earthliness destroys holy delight. Get a spiritual palate, so that you may relish the sweetness of the word. He that tastes the sweetness of honey, will delight in it: "If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious," 1Pet 2.3. It is not enough to *hear* a sermon, but you must *taste* a sermon; it is not enough to *read* a promise, but you must *taste* a promise. When you have gotten this spiritual palate, then God's word will be to you "the joy and rejoicing of your heart," Jer 15.16.

Direction 3. If you would delight in the law of God, then purge out the delight of sin: sin will poison this spiritual delight. If you would have God's law be sweet, do not let "wickedness be sweet in your mouth," Job 20.12. When sin is your burden, Christ will be your delight.

Chapter 9.

Holy Delight should cause Thankfulness

What cause they have to be thankful, who can find this spiritual delight in God! How David blessed God that He gave the people hearts to offer so cheerfully to the building of the temple: "Who am I, and what are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly in this way?" 2Chr 29.14. Their willingness was more than their offering. So a Christian should say, 'Lord, when there are so many pressed soldiers,³² who am I, that I should be able to offer so willingly? Who am I that I should have your free Spirit, and should serve you out of choice rather than constraint!' It is a great blessing to have this promptitude and alacrity in God's service. Delight animates us to duty; now we act with a purpose in religion. Christians are never drawn so powerfully and sweetly, as when the chain of delight is fastened to their heart. Without this, all is lost; our praying and hearing are like water spilled upon the ground. It loses both its beauty and its reward. Then bless God, Christian, who has oiled the wheels of your soul with delight, and now you can "run and not be weary." (Isa 40.31) For your comfort, be assured that you shall not lack anything your heart can desire, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he shall give you the desires of your heart," Psa 37.4.

³² Conscripted: forced into military service.

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A CHRISTIAN ON THE MOUNT

or

A TREATISE CONCERNING MEDITATION.

And in His law he meditates day and night, Psa 1.2.

*Having led you through the chamber of delight,
I will now bring you into the withdrawing room of meditation.*

Chapter 1.

The opening of the words and the Proposition asserted

GRACE produces delight in God, and delight produces meditation. This is a duty which consists in the essentials of religion, and which nourishes the very life-blood of it. And that the psalmist may show how much the godly man is habituated and inured to this blessed work of meditation, he subjoins, “In His law he meditates day and night.” It is not that there may be no intermission sometimes. God allows time for our calling; he grants some relaxation.

But when it is said that the godly man meditates day and night, the meaning is, frequently, that he is very conversant in the duty. It is a command of God to pray without ceasing, 1The 5.17. The meaning is not that we should be always praying, as the Euchites held,³³ but that every day we should set some time apart for prayer; so Drusius³⁴ and others interpret it. We read in the old law of the *continual* sacrifice, Num 28.24 — it is not that the people of Israel did nothing else but sacrifice, but because they had their stated hours for it. Every morning and evening they offered; and therefore it was called the continual sacrifice. And thus the godly man is said to meditate day and night; that is, he is often at this work; he is no stranger to meditation.

Doctrine. The proposition that results out of the text is this: that a good Christian is a meditating Christian. “I will meditate on your precepts,” Psa 119.15. “Meditate on these things,” 1Tim 4.15. Meditation is chewing on the truths we have heard. The beasts in the old law that did not chew the cud, were unclean; and the Christian that does not “chew the cud” by meditation, is to be considered unclean. Meditation is like watering the seed: it makes the fruits of grace flourish.

To illustrate the point, here are several things to be discussed.

1. I will show you what meditation is (Chapter 2).
2. That meditation is a duty (Chapter 3).
3. The difference between meditation and memory (Chapter 4).
4. The difference between meditation and study (Chapter 5).
5. The subject of meditation (Chapter 6).
6. The necessity of meditation (Chapter 7).

Chapter 2.

Showing the Nature of Meditation

If it is inquired what meditation is, I answer, meditation is the soul’s retiring by itself, so that by a serious and solemn thinking upon God, the heart may be raised up to heavenly affections. This description thus has three branches.

1. Meditation is the soul’s retiring by itself.

A Christian, when he goes to meditate, must lock himself away from the world. The world spoils meditation; “Christ went apart into the mount to pray,” Mat 14.23. So go apart when

³³ At the end of the 4th cent, fanatics made their appearance in Syria, who were known as Messalians, praying people.

³⁴ Drusius – Johannes van den Driesche (1550-1616); Flemish exegete.

you are to meditate; “Isaac went out to meditate in the field,” Gen 24.63. He sequestered and retired himself so that he might take a walk with God by meditation. Zaccheus had a mind to see Christ, and he got out of the crowd; “He ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him,” Luk 19.3, 4. So, when we would see God, we must get out of the crowd of worldly business. We must climb up into the tree by retiring into meditation, and there we will have the best prospect of heaven. The world’s music will either play us to sleep, or distract us in our meditations. When a speck has gotten into the eye, it hinders the sight; when worldly thoughts, like specks, have gotten into the mind, which is the eye of the soul, it cannot look up so steadfastly to heaven by contemplation. Therefore, as when Abraham went to sacrifice, “he left his servant and the ass at the bottom of the hill,” Gen 22.5. So when a Christian is going up the hill of meditation, he should leave all secular cares at the bottom of the hill, that he may be alone and take a turn (a short walk) in heaven. If the wings of the bird are full of lime, she cannot fly. Meditation is the wing of the soul. When a Christian is ensnared with earth, he cannot fly to God upon this wing. Bernard, when he came to the church door, used to say, *Stay here all my worldly thoughts, that I may converse with God in the temple. So say to yourself, I am going now to meditate. O all you vain thoughts stay behind, do not come near!* When you are going up the mount of meditation, take heed that the world does not follow you, and throw you down from the top of this pinnacle. This is the first thing: the soul’s retiring by itself — lock and bolt the door against the world.

2. Meditation is a serious and solemn thinking upon God.

The Hebrew word *to meditate*, signifies to recollect and gather together the thoughts with intenseness. Meditation is not a cursory work, to have a few transient thoughts of religion — like the dogs of Nilus that lap and run away.³⁵ Rather, in meditation there must be a fixing of the heart upon the object, a steeping of the thoughts. Carnal Christians are like quicksilver which cannot be made to fix; their thoughts are roving up and down, and will not fix — like the bird that hops from one bough to another, and stays nowhere. David was a man fit to meditate, “O God, my heart is fixed,” Psa 108.1. In meditation there must be a staying of the thoughts upon the object. A man who rides post through a town or village, minds nothing there; but an artist or portrait painter who is looking at an elaborate piece, views the whole draft and portraiture of it. He observes the symmetry and proportion; he minds every shadow and colour. A carnal, flitting Christian is like the traveller: his thoughts ride post;³⁶ he minds nothing of God. A wise Christian is like the artist: he views with seriousness and *ponders* the things of religion; “But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” Luk 2.19.

3. Meditation is the raising of the heart to holy affections.

A Christian enters into meditation as a man enters into the bath,³⁷ so that he may be healed. Meditation heals the soul of its deadness and earthliness. But more of this afterwards.

³⁵ “The dogs by the river Nilus’ side, being thirsty, lap hastily as they run along the shore.” Sir Kenelm Digby, *The Nature of Bodies* (1644).

³⁶ Ride post: mail delivery on horseback, rapidly going from one house to the next.

³⁷ **Joh 5.2-3** Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. ³ In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water.

Chapter 3. Proving Meditation is a Duty

Meditation is the duty of every Christian, and there is no disputing our duty. Meditation is a duty that is 1. Imposed, and 2. Opposed.

1. Meditation is a duty *imposed*.

Meditation is not arbitrary. The same God who bid us to believe, has bid us to meditate: “This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night,” Jos 1.8. These words, though spoken to the person of Joshua, concern everyone; just as the promise made to Joshua concerned all believers (Jos 1.5 compared with Heb 13.5).³⁸ So this precept made to the person of Joshua, *you shall meditate on this book of the law*, takes in all Christians.

It is the part of a hypocrite to enlarge the promise, and to narrow the precept. You shall meditate on this book of the law; the word *you* is indefinite, and reaches every Christian. As God’s word directs, so his will must enforce obedience to it.

2. Meditation is a duty *opposed*.

We may conclude it is a *good* duty, because it is against the stream of corrupt nature. Just as it was once said, “You may know *that* religion is right, which Nero persecutes;” so you may know *that* duty is good which the heart opposes. We will find, naturally, a strange averseness to meditation. We are swift to hear, but slow to meditate.

To think about the world, if it were all day long, is delightful. But as for holy meditation, how the heart wrangles and quarrels with this duty! It is like doing penance. Now truly, no other reason is needed to prove a duty is good, than the reluctance of a carnal heart to do it — for instance, in the duty of self-denial. “Let a man deny himself,” Mat 16.24. Self-denial is as necessary as heaven; but what disputes are raised in the heart against it! What! To deny my reason, and become a fool that I may be wise? No, not only deny my *reason*, but my *righteousness*! What! To cast it overboard, and swim to heaven upon the plank of Christ’s merits? This is such a duty that the heart naturally opposes and enters its dissent against it. Yet this is an argument to prove that the duty of self-denial is *good*. It is just so with this duty of meditation: the secret antipathy the heart has against it, shows it to be good; and this is reason enough to enforce meditation.

Chapter 4. Showing how Meditation differs from Memory

The memory, a glorious faculty, which Aristotle calls the soul’s scribe, sits and pens all things that are done. Whatever we read or hear, the memory registers. Therefore, God does all his

³⁸ **Jos 1.5** “No man shall *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. **Heb 13.5** *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

works of wonder so that they may be held in remembrance.³⁹ There seems to be some analogy and resemblance between meditation and memory. But I conceive there is a *double difference*.

1. Meditation about a thing has more sweetness in it than the bare remembrance of it. The memory is the chest or cupboard to lock up a truth, while meditation is the palate to feed on it. The memory is like the ark in which the manna was *laid up*, (Exo 16.33) while meditation is like Israel's *eating* the manna (Exo 16.35). When David began to meditate on God, it was "sweet to him as marrow," Psa 63.5, 6. There is as much difference between a truth remembered, and a truth meditated on, as between a cordial in a glass, and a cordial that has been drunk down.

2. Remembrance of a truth without serious meditation on it, will only create a matter of sorrow another day. What comfort can it be to a man when he comes to die, to think that he remembered many excellent notions about Christ, but never had the grace to meditate on them so as to be transformed into them? A sermon remembered, but not meditated on, will only serve to increase our condemnation.

Chapter 5. **Showing how Meditation differs from Study**

The student's life *looks like* meditation, but it varies from it. Meditation and study differ in three ways.

1. *They differ in their nature.* Study is a work of the *brain*, meditation of the *heart*; study sets the *imagination* on work, meditation sets the *affection* on work.

2. *They differ in their design.* The design of study is *concept*, the design of meditation is *piety* — the design of study is to *discover* a truth; the design of meditation is *spiritual improvement* by a truth — the one *searches for* the vein of gold; the other *digs it out*.

3. *They differ in the product and result.* Study never leaves a man one whit the better; it is like a winter sun that has little warmth and influence: meditation leaves one in a more holy frame; it melts the heart when it is frozen, and it makes it drip into tears of love.

Chapter 6. **Showing the Subject of Meditation**

The next particular to be discussed is the subject-matter of meditation: what a Christian should meditate on. I have now entered on a large field, but I will only glance at things. I will only do as the disciples did: pluck some ears of corn as I pass along.

Some may say, Alas, I am so barren I don't know what to meditate on. To help Christians therefore in this blessed work, I will show you some choice select matter for meditation. There are *fifteen* things in the law of God which we should principally meditate on.

³⁹ **Deu 5.15** And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Sec. 1. Meditate on God's Attributes.

The attributes of God are the several beams by which the divine nature shines forth to us; and there are six special attributes which we should fix our meditations upon.

1. Meditate on God's Omniscience. His eye is continually upon us. He has a window open into the conscience; our thoughts are unveiled before him. He can tell the words we speak "in our bedroom," 2Kng 6.12. He is described with seven eyes, to show his Omniscience, Rev 5.6. "You number my steps," Job 14.16. The Hebrew word signifies to take an exact account. God is said to number our steps when he makes a particular and critical observation of our actions. God sets down every passage of our lives, and keeps, as it were, a daybook of all we do, and enters it into the book. Meditate much on this Omniscience.

The effects of meditating on God's Omniscience:

(1) It would act as a curb to check and restrain us from sin. Will the thief steal when the judge looks on?

(2) It would be a good means to make the heart sincere. God has set a window at every man's breast: "Does he not see all my ways?" Job 31.4. If I harbour proud, malicious thoughts, if I look at my own interest more than Christ's, if I dissemble in my repentance, the God of heaven takes notice. The meditation of this omniscience would make a Christian *sincere* in both his actions and his aims. *One cannot be a hypocrite without being a fool.*

2. Meditate on the Holiness of God. Holiness is the embroidered robe that God wears. It is the glory of the Godhead: "Glorious in holiness," Exo 15.11. It is the most orient ⁴⁰ pearl of the crown of heaven. God is the exemplar and pattern of holiness. It is primarily and originally in God, as light is in the sun. You may as well separate weight from lead, or heat from fire, as to separate holiness from the divine nature. God's holiness is that by which His heart rises against any sin, as being most diametrically opposite to his essence: "You are of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," Hab 1.13. Meditate much on this attribute.

The effect of meditating on God's holiness:

It would be a means to transform us into the similitude and likeness of God. God ever loves us, till we are like him. By meditation we are looking at the beams of holiness which are gloriously transparent in God. As we do, we grow like him, and become holy as he is holy. Holiness is a *beautiful* thing, Psa 110.3. It puts a kind of angelic brightness upon us; it is the only coin that will pass current ⁴¹ in heaven. By frequent meditation on this attribute, we are changed into God's image.

3. Meditate on the Wisdom of God. He is called "the only wise God," 1Tim 1.17. His wisdom shines forth in the works of providence. He sits at the helm, guiding all things regularly and harmoniously. He brings light out of darkness; he can strike a straight stroke with a crooked stick; he can make use of the injustice of men to do what is just; he is infinitely

⁴⁰ Rising like the sun.

⁴¹ "Pass current" means "be acceptable."

wise. He breaks us by afflictions, and upon these broken pieces of the ship, he brings us safely to shore. Meditate on the wisdom of God.

The effects of meditating on the wisdom of God:

(1) *It would sweetly calm our hearts:*

a. When we see things go awry in *public*, the wise God holds the reins of government in his hand. And whoever would rule, God over-rules. He knows how to turn all to good. His work will be beautiful in its season.

b. When things go ill with us in our *private* concerns, the meditation of God's wisdom would rock our hearts quiet. The wise God has set me in this condition, and whether health or sickness, His wisdom will order it for the best. God will make a medicine of poison. All things will be useful to me: either the Lord will expel some sin, or he will exercise some grace.

(2) *It would silence murmuring.*

4. Meditate on the Power of God. This power is visible in the creation. "He hangs the earth upon nothing," Job 26.7. What cannot God do, when he can create? Nothing can stand before a creating power. He needs no pre-existent matter to work upon; he needs no instruments to work with; he can work without tools. He is the one before whom the angels veil their faces, and the kings of the earth cast their crowns.

He is the one who "shakes the earth out of its place," Job 9.6. An earthquake makes the earth tremble upon her pillars; but God can shake it out of its place. God can, with a word, unpin the wheels and break the axletree⁴² of the creation. He can suspend natural agents, stop the lion's mouth, cause the sun to stand still, make the fire not burn. Xerxes, the Persian monarch, threw fetters into the sea, as if he would have chained up the unruly waters. But when *God* commands, "the winds and sea obey him," Mat 8.27. If he speaks the word, an army of stars appears, Jdg 5.20. If he stamps with his foot, a host of angels are quickly in battle array. If he lifts up an ensign and but whistles, his very enemies shall be up in arms to revenge His quarrel, Isa 5.26. Who would provoke this God?! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb 10.31. Like a lion "he tears in pieces the adversaries," Psa 50.22. O meditate on this power of God!

The effect of meditating on the power of God:

It would be a great buttress to faith. A Christian's faith may anchor safely upon the rock of God's power. It was Samson's riddle, "Out of the strong came forth sweetness," Jdg 14.14. While we are meditating on the power of God, out of this strong comes forth sweetness. Is the church of God low? He can "create Jerusalem as a praise," Isa 65.18. Is your corruption strong? God can break the head of this leviathan. Is the heart hard, is there a stone there? God can dissolve it. "The Almighty makes my heart soft," Job 23.16. Faith triumphs in the power of God: out of this strong comes forth sweetness. Abraham, meditating on God's

⁴² A dead axle on a carriage or wagon that has terminal spindles on which the wheels revolve.

power, did not stagger through unbelief, Rom 4.20. He knew God could perform his promise, even contrary to the usual course of nature.⁴³

5. Meditate on the Mercy of God. Mercy is an innate disposition in God to do good, just as the sun has an innate property to shine: “You Lord are good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all those who call upon you,” Psa 86.5. God’s mercy is so sweet, that it makes all his other attributes sweet. Holiness without mercy, and justice without mercy, would be dreadful. Though the children of God are under some clouds of affliction, yet the sun of mercy is never completely out of sight. God’s justice reaches to the clouds; his mercy reaches above the clouds. How slow is God to anger! He was longer in destroying Jericho, than in making the world: he made the world in six days; but he was seven days in demolishing the walls of Jericho. How many warning rounds God shot against Jerusalem, before he shot his destroying round! Justice goes by foot, Gen 18.21, but mercy has wings, Psa 57.1. The sword of justice often lies a long time in the scabbard and rusts, till sin draws it out and whets it against a nation. God’s justice is like the widow’s oil which ran a while, and ceased, 2Kng 4.6, But God’s mercy is like Aaron’s oil, which did not rest on his head, but ran down to the skirts of his garment, Psa 133.2. So the golden oil of God’s mercy does not rest upon the head of a good parent, but it is poured on his children, and so it runs down “to the third and fourth generation,” even the borders of a religious seed. Often meditate on the mercy of God.

The effects of meditating upon God’s mercy:

(1) It would be a powerful loadstone to draw sinners to God by repentance, Rom 2.4. It would be like a cork is to the net, to keep the heart from sinking in despair. Behold a city of refuge to fly to: “God is the Father of mercies,” 2Cor 1.3. Mercy as naturally issues from Him, as the child issues from the parent. God “delights in mercy,” Mic 7.18. Mercy finds out the worst sinner; mercy comes not only with salvation in its hand, but with healing under its wings (Mal 4.2).

(2) It would melt a sinner into tears. A prisoner reading a pardon sent to him from the king, fell weeping, and burst out into these words: “A pardon has done that which death could not do; it has made my heart relent.”

6. Meditate on the Truth of God. Mercy *makes* the promise, and truth *performs* it: “I will not allow my faithfulness to fail,” Psa 89.33. God might as well deny himself as to deny his word. He is “abundant in truth,” Exo 34.6. What is that? If God has made a promise of mercy to his people, he will be so far from *coming short* of his word, that he will be *better than* his word. God often does *more than* he has said, never *less*; he often shoots beyond the mark of the promise he has set, never short of it. He is *abundant* in truth. God may sometimes delay a promise, but he will not deny it. The promise may lie a long time, like seed hidden underground; but all the while it is ripening. The promise of Israel’s deliverance lay four hundred and thirty years hidden underground; but when the time had come, the promise did

⁴³ **Heb 11.17-19** By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” ¹⁹ concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

not go a day beyond its reckoning, Exo 12.41. “The strength of Israel will not lie,” 1Sam 15.29. Meditate on the truth of God.

The effects of meditating on the truth of God:

- (1) It would be a pillar of support for faith. The world hangs upon God’s power, and faith hangs upon his truth.
- (2) It would make us ambitious to imitate Him. We should be true in our words, true in our dealings. Pythagoras was asked, “What makes men like God?” He answered, “When they speak truth.”

Sec. 2. Meditate on the *Promises* of God.

The promises are flowers growing in the paradise of scripture; meditation, like the bee, sucks the sweetness from them. The promises are of no use or comfort to us till they are meditated upon. Roses hanging in the garden may give a fragrant perfume, yet their sweet water is distilled only by fire. So too, the promises are sweet in reading them over, but the water of these roses, the spirit and quintessence of the promises, are distilled into the soul only by meditation. Incense smells sweetest when it is pounded and beaten. Meditating on a promise, like the beating of incense, makes it most odoriferous and pleasant. The promises may be compared to a gold mine which only enriches when the gold is dug out of it. By holy meditation, we dig out that spiritual gold which lies hidden in the mine of the promise, and so we come to be enriched. Cardan ⁴⁴ says there is no precious stone that does not have some hidden virtue in it. They are called *precious* promises, 2Pet 1.4. When they are applied by meditation, then their virtue appears, and they become precious indeed. There are three sorts of promises which we should chiefly meditate on:

1. Meditate on promises of Remission. “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins,” Isa 43.25 — whereas the poor sinner may say, “Alas! I am deep in arrears with God. I fear I have not filled his bottle with my tears, but I have filled his book with my debts.” Well, only meditate on His promise, “I am he that blots out,” etc. The word there in the original, *to blot out*, is a metaphor alluding to a merchant that, when his debtor has paid him, blots out the debt, and gives him an acquittance. So God says: “I will blot out your sin; I will cross out the debt-book.” Ah, but (the poor soul may say) it may be a great while before then. I may be a long time under the convulsions of conscience. I may even pine away, and “my life draw near to the grave,” Psa 88.3. Indeed, in the Hebrew it is, “I am *blotting out* your transgressions.” I have taken my pen, and I am crossing out your score. Oh, but (the sinner may say) there is no reason why God should do this for me. Well, acts of grace do not go by reason: I will blot out your sins “for My name’s sake.” Oh, but (says the sinner) will the Lord not call my sins to remembrance again? No, He promises an act of oblivion; I will not upbraid you with your sins, nor sue you with a bond that is cancelled: “I will remember your sins no more” (Isa 43.25). Here is a sweet promise to meditate on; it is a hive full of the honey of the gospel.

⁴⁴ Jerome Cardan (1501-1576) *De Subtilitate*. Gerolamo Cardano was an Italian mathematician, physician, astrologer, philosopher and gambler. He wrote more than 200 works on various subjects.

2. Meditate on promises of Sanctification. The earth is not so apt to be overgrown with weeds and thorns, as the heart is to be overgrown with lusts: now, God has made many promises of healing, Hos 14.4; and purging, Jer 33.8; promises of sending his Spirit, Isa 44.3. For its sanctifying nature, sanctification is compared sometimes to water which cleanses the vessel; sometimes to wind, which is the fan to winnow and purify the air; sometimes to fire, which refines the metals. Meditate often on that promise: “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow,” Isa 1.18. Scarlet is so deep a dye, that all the art of man cannot take it out. But behold here a promise: God will set the soul to whitening. He will make of a scarlet sinner, a milk-white saint. By virtue of this refining and consecrating work, a Christian is made partaker of the divine nature, 2Pet 1.4. He has a fitness to have communion with God forever. Meditate much on this promise.

3. Meditate on promises of Remuneration. “The haven of rest,” Heb 4.9. “The beatific sight of God,” Mat 5.8. The glorious mansions, Joh 14.2. Meditation on these promises will keep us from fainting under our sins and sorrows.

Sec. 3. Meditate on the *Love* of Christ.

Christ is as full of love, as he is of merit. What was it but love, that He should save us, and not the angels? Among the rarities of the loadstone, this is not the least: that ignoring the gold and pearl, it should draw iron to itself, which is a baser kind of metal. Thus the rarity that Christ should ignore the angels, those more noble spirits — the gold and pearl — and draw mankind to himself. How this proclaims his love! Love was the wing on which he flew to take our nature upon himself.

1. How transcendent is Christ’s love to the saints! The apostle calls it a love that passes knowledge,” Eph 3.19. It is such a love as God the Father bears to Christ; it is the same for quality, even though not equality: “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you,” Joh 15.9. A believer’s heart is the garden where Christ has planted this sweet flower of his love. It is the channel through which the golden stream of his affection runs.

2. How distinguishing is Christ’s love! “Not many wise, not many noble are called,” 1Cor 1.26. In the old law, God passed by the lion and the eagle, and took the dove for a sacrifice. Oh the depth of divine love, that God should pass by so many of noble birth and position, and that the lot of free grace should fall upon you!

3. How invincible is the love of Christ! “It is strong as death,” Song 8.6. Death might take away His life, but not this love. And just as death could not wholly quench that divine flame of love, so neither could sin. The church had her infirmities, her sleepy fits, Song 5.2. But though blackened and sullied, it is still a dove. Christ could see the faith, and overlook the failing. The artist who drew Alexander while there was a scar on his face, drew him with his finger on the scar.⁴⁵ Christ puts the finger of mercy on the scars of the saints. He will not throw away his pearls for every speck of dirt. And what makes this love of Christ even more

⁴⁵ A distinguished painter was anxious to sketch Alexander the Great of Macedon. Alexander had a scar on his right brow, which he received in battle. The painter was at a loss how to sketch a precise likeness and yet avoid this repulsive scar. He had Alexander sit on his throne in a musing attitude, with his finger placed on the scar, and his elbow resting on the side of the throne. Rev Dr. Cumming, *The Christian Witness*, (London 1845), vol 2, p. 297.

stupendous, is that there was nothing in us to excite or attract his love. He did not love us because we were worthy; but by loving us, he *made us* worthy.

4. How immutable is Christ's love! "Having loved his own, he loved them to the end," Joh 13.1. The saints are like letters of gold, engraven upon Christ's heart, which cannot be razed out. Meditate much upon the love of Christ.

The effects of serious meditation upon the love of Christ:

(1) It would make us love Him back. "Can one tread on hot coals, and his feet not be burnt? Pro 6.28. Who can tread, by meditation, upon these hot coals of Christ's love, and his heart not be burnt with love for Christ?"

(2) It would cause our eyes to flow with tears for our gospel unkindnesses. Oh that we should sin against so sweet a Saviour! Did we have none to abuse but our friend? Did we have nothing to kick against but His love? Did Christ not suffer enough upon the cross, without us making him suffer more? Oh, if anything can dissolve the heart into mourning, it is ingratitude and unkindness offered to Christ! When Peter thought of Christ's love to him, Christ could deny Peter nothing.⁴⁶ Yet, that Peter should deny Christ, *this* made his eyes water: "Peter went out and wept bitterly," Mat 26.75.

(3) It would make us love our enemies. Jesus Christ showed love to his enemies. We read of "the fire licking up the water," 1Kng 18.38. It is usual for water to quench fire, but for fire to dry up and consume the water, which was not capable of burning, this was miraculous! Christ showed such a miracle: his love burned where there was no fit matter to work upon, nothing but sin and enmity. He loved his enemies: the fire of his love consumed and licked up the water of their sins. He prayed for his enemies, "Father forgive them." He shed tears for those who shed his blood. Those who gave Christ gall and vinegar to drink, to them he gave his blood to drink. The meditation of this love should melt our hearts in love to our enemies. Austin ⁴⁷ says Christ made a pulpit of the cross; and the great lesson he taught Christians was to love their enemies.

(4) It would be a means to support us, in case of Christ's absence. Sometimes he is pleased to withdraw himself, Song 5.6. Yet, when we consider how entire and immutable his love is (Joh 13.1), the love of Christ will make us wait with patience till he sweetly manifests himself to us again. He is love (1Joh 4.16), and he cannot forsake his people overly long. He may take his leave, but not his last farewell, Mic 7.19. The sun may be gone awhile from us, but in due time it returns. The meditation of Christ's love may make us wait for the return of this Sun of righteousness. "For yet a little while, and he that *shall* come, *will* come," Heb 10.37. He is truth, and therefore He *shall* come. He is love, and therefore he *will* come.

⁴⁶ Joh 21.15-19.

⁴⁷ Augustine of Hippo (354-430).

Sec. 4. Meditate on Sin.

1. Meditate on the guilt of sin. We are in Adam as in a common head or root. In his sinning, we become guilty: “in whom all have sinned,” Rom 5.12. By his treason, our blood is tainted; and this guilt brings shame with it, Rom 6.21.

2. Meditate on the defiling nature of sin. Not only is the guilt of Adam’s sin imputed to us; but the poison of his nature is disseminated to us as well. Our virgin nature is defiled; the heart is spotted, 1Kng 8.38. How then can the actions be pure? If the water is foul in the well, it cannot be clean in the bucket. “We are all like an unclean thing,” Isa 64.6. We are like a patient under the physician’s hand, who has no sound part in him: his head is bruised, his liver swelled, his lungs decayed, his blood inflamed, his feet gangrened. Thus it is with us before grace comes: darkness in the mind; slipperiness in the memory; hardness in the heart; stubbornness in the will — “from the sole of the foot, to the crown of the head, there is no soundness; only wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores,” Isa 1.6. A sinner filthied with sin is no better than a devil in man’s shape. Also, what is sadly to be laid to heart, is the adherence of this sin. Sin is naturalized to us; the apostle calls it an encompassing sin, Heb 12.1, a sin that will not be put away easily. A man may as well shake off the skin of his body, as the sin of his soul; it sticks fast, like ivy sticks to the wall. There is no shaking off this viper till death. O meditate often on this *contagion* of sin. How strong is that poison, a drop of which is able to poison a whole sea! How venomous and malignant was that apple, a taste of which poisoned all mankind! Meditate seriously on this.

The effect of meditating upon sin:

It would make the plumes of pride fall. If our knowledge makes us proud, then we have sin enough to make us humble. The best saint alive who is taken out of the grave of sin, still has the smell of the grave-clothes on him.

3. Meditate on the curse of sin. “Cursed be everyone who does not continue in all things written in the book of the law,” Gal 3.10. This curse is like a blight on fruit, which keeps it from thriving. Sin is not only a defiling, but a damning thing. It is not only a spot in the face, but a stab at the heart. Sin betrays us into the devil’s hands, who like Draco,⁴⁸ writes all his laws in blood. Sin binds us over to the wrath of God; and then what are all our earthly enjoyments if not like Damocles’ banquets, with a sword hanging over the head? ⁴⁹ Sin brings forth the “roll written with curses” against the sinner, Zec 5.1-3. It is a “*flying* roll,” ver. 2. It comes swiftly, unless mercy stops it. “You are cursed with a curse,” Mal 3.9. Thus it is, till the entail of this curse is cut off by Christ. O meditate on this curse due to sin.

The effects of meditating on the curse of sin:

(1) *It would make us afraid to retain or entertain sin:*

⁴⁸ An Athenian lawmaker whose code of laws prescribed death for almost every offense (c. 7th century BC)

⁴⁹ Damocles was a flatterer in the court of Dionysius II of Syracuse. To teach him a lesson, Dionysius offered to switch places with Damocles for a day. A banquet was held where Damocles enjoyed being treated like a king. Only at the end of the meal did he look up and notice a sharpened sword hanging directly above his head, held by a single horse-hair. He lost his appetite and no longer wanted to be so fortunate. *A metaphor of living in fear of impending doom.*

a. **Of retaining sin.** When Micah had stolen his mother's money, and heard her curse him, he dared not keep it any longer, but restores it, Jdg 17.2. He was afraid of his mother's curse. What then is God's curse?

b. **Of entertaining sin.** We would not willingly entertain someone in our house who had the plague. Sin brings a curse along with it, which is the plague of God that clings to a sinner. Sin is like the water of jealousy which made "the belly swell, and the thigh rot," Num 5.22.

(2) It would make us flee from sin. While we sit under the shadow of this bramble, fire will come out of the bramble to devour us eternally, Jdg 9.15.

Sec. 5. Meditate on the *Vanity* of the creature.

When you have sifted out the finest flour that the creature affords, you will find something either to dissatisfy, or to nauseate. The best wine has its froth, the sweetest rose its prickles, and the purest comforts their dregs. The creature cannot be said to be full unless it is of vanity, as a bladder may be filled with wind. "In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits," Job 20.22. Those who think to find happiness here are sure to be deceived. Meditate on this vanity. The world is like a mirror which represents that face which is not really in it.

The effects of meditating on our vanity:

(1) It would loosen our grip on earthly things. The meditation of this vanity would be like digging around the roots of a tree to loosen it from the earth. It would much loosen our hearts from the world, and it would be an excellent preservative against a surfeit. Let a Christian think this way to himself: Why am I so serious about vanity? If the whole earth were changed into a globe of gold, it could not fill my heart.

(2) It would make us seek more solid comforts: the favour of God, the blood of Christ, the influences of the Spirit. When I see that the life which I fetch from the *cistern* is vain, I will go more to the *spring*. In Christ there is an inexhaustible treasury. When a man finds the bough is beginning to break, he lets go of the bough, and catches hold of the main tree. So too, when we find the creature is but a rotten bough, then by faith we will catch hold on Christ, the Tree of Life, Rev 2.7. The creature is but a reed; God is the rock of ages.

Sec. 6. Meditate on the excellence of *Grace*.

1. Grace is precious in itself. It is precious *in faith*, 2Pet 1.1. Grace is precious *in its origin*: it comes from above, Jas 3.17; and precious *in its nature* — it is *the seed of God*, 1Joh 3.9. Grace is the spiritual enamel and embroidery of the soul. It is the very signature and engraving of the Holy Spirit. Grace does not lose its colour: it is such a commodity that the longer we keep it, the better it is; it changes into glory. Just as grace is precious in itself,

2. Grace makes us precious to God, as a rich diamond adorns those who wear it: "Since you were precious in my sight, you have been honourable," Isa 43.4. The saints who are invested with grace are God's jewels, Mal 3.17 — though sullied with reproach, though smeared with blood, yet they are jewels; all the world besides is but lumber. These are the jewels, and heaven is the golden cabinet where they shall be locked up safe. A gracious man

is the glory of the age he lives in, like Melanchthon, who was called *the phoenix of Germany*.⁵⁰ So illustrious in God's eye is a soul bespangled with grace, that he doesn't think the world is worthy of him: "Of whom the world was not worthy," Heb 11.38. Therefore God calls his people home so fast, because they are too good to live in the world: "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour," Pro 12.26.

3. Grace is the best blessing. It has a transcendency above all other things. There are two things that sparkle much in our eyes; but grace infinitely outshines them both:

(1) **Gold.** The sun does not shine so bright in our eyes as gold; It is the mirror of beauty; "money answers all things," Ecc 10.19. But grace weighs heavier than gold. Gold draws the heart *from God*; grace draws the heart *to God*. Gold enriches only the *mortal* part, grace the *angelic*. Gold *perishes*, 1Pet 1.7; grace *perseveres*. With the rose, the fuller it blooms, the sooner it sheds. It is an emblem of all other things besides grace.

(2) **Gifts.** These are nature's pride. Gifts and parts, like Rachel, are fair to look at, but grace excels them. I would rather be holy than eloquent. A heart full of grace is better than a head full of notions. Gifts commend no man to God. It is not the paring of the apple that we esteem, however vermilion its colour, but the fruit. We do not judge better of a horse for his trappings and ornaments, unless he has good mettle. What are the most glorious parts, if there is not the mettle of grace in the heart? Gifts may be bestowed upon one for the good of others; but grace is bestowed for a man's own eternal advantage. God may send away reprobates with gifts, as Abraham sent away the sons of the concubines, Gen 25.6. But he bestows the inheritance only upon grace. Oh, often meditate on the excellence of grace!

The effects of meditating upon the beauty of grace:

(1) It would make us fall in love with grace. He that meditates on the worth of a diamond, grows in love with it. Damascene ⁵¹ calls the graces of the spirit the very characters and impressions of the divine nature. Grace is that flower of delight which, like the vine in the parable, "cheers the heart of God and man," Jdg 9.13.

(2) It would make us earnest in the pursuit of grace. We dig for gold in the mine; we labour for it in the furnace. If we meditate on the worth of grace, we would dig in the mine of ordinances for it! What labour and wrestling we would have in prayer! We would put on a modest boldness and not take a denial. "What will you give me" asks Abraham, "seeing that I go graceless?" (Gen 15.2) So your soul would say, "Lord, what will you give me, seeing that I go graceless; who will grant me to drink of the "water of the well of life!" (Joh 4.14)

(3) It would make us endeavour to be instrumental to convey grace to others. Is grace so transcendently precious, and yet I have a child who lacks grace? O that I might be a means to convey this treasure into his soul! I have read of a rich Florentine, who being about to die, called all his sons together, and said these words to them, "It greatly rejoices me, now upon my death-bed, that I will leave you all wealthy." But a parent's ambition should rather

⁵⁰ German theologian and Luther's successor as leader of the Reformation in Germany (1497-1560).

⁵¹ Perhaps John Demascene of Damascus (676-754?).

be to convey *sanctity*, so that he may say, “O my children, it rejoices me that I will leave you gracious; it comforts me that, before I die, I will see Jesus Christ live in you.”

Sec. 7. Meditate on your *Spiritual Estate*.

Enter into a serious meditation on the state of your souls; while you are meditating on other things, do not forget *yourselves*: the great work lies at home. It was Solomon’s advice, “know the state of your flock,” Pro 27.23. Much more should you know the state of your *soul*. For lack of this meditation, men are like travellers, skilled in other countries, but ignorant of their own. So they may know other things, but they do not know how it goes with their souls, whether they are in a good or bad state. There are few who, by holy meditation, enter within themselves.

There are two reasons why so few meditate on the state of their souls:

1. *Self-guiltiness*. Men are loth to look into their hearts by meditation, lest they find that which would trouble them. The cup is in their sack (Gen 44.12). Most are like tradesmen in this, who being ready to fail in their estates, are loth to look into their account books lest they find their estate is low. But would it not be better for you to enter into your heart by meditation, than to have God, in a sad manner, enter into judgment with you?

2. *Presumption*. Men hope all is well. They will not take their land upon trust, but will have it surveyed. Yet they will take their spiritual estate upon trust, without any surveying. They are confident that their case is good, Pro 14.16; ⁵² it is not to be disputed. Yet this confidence is only conceit. How confident the foolish virgins were, even though they had no oil in their lamps! “They came knocking” (Mat 25.11) — it was a peremptory knock — they had no doubt of admittance. So too, many who are not sure of their salvation, are [falsely] secure; they presume that all is well, never seriously meditating whether they have oil or not. O Christian, meditate about your soul. See how the case stands between God and you. Do as merchants do: count up your estate so that you may see what you are worth. See if you are *rich toward God*, Luk 12.21.

Meditate about three things.

1. Meditate about your debts: see if your debts are paid or not; that is, if your sins are pardoned: see if there are no arrears, no sin in your soul left unrepented of.

2. Meditate about your will: see if your will is made up yet. Have you resigned all interest in yourself? Have you given up your love to God? Have you given up your own will? This is how to make up your will: meditate about the will. Make your spiritual will in the time of your health. If you put off making up your will till death, it may be an invalid will. Perhaps God will not accept your soul then.

3. Meditate about your evidences. These evidences are the graces of the Spirit; see whether you have any evidences. What desires do you have after Christ? What faith do you have? See whether there is no flaw in your evidences: are your desires *true*? Do you desire heavenly principles [to live by], as well as heavenly privileges? O meditate seriously upon your

⁵² Pro 14.16 A wise *man* fears and departs from evil, But a fool rages and is self-confident.

evidences! To sift our hearts in this way by meditation is very necessary. If we find that our estate is not sound, the mistake is discovered, and the danger is prevented. And if it is sound, then we will have the comfort of it. What gladness it was to Hezekiah, when he could say, "Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before you in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in your sight," Isa 38.3. So, what unspeakable comfort it will be, when a Christian, upon a serious meditation and review of his spiritual condition, can say, *I have something to show for heaven*; "I know I have passed from death to life," 1Joh 3.14. And as a holy man once said, "I am Christ's, and the devil has nothing to do with me." (Joh 14.30)

**Sec. 8. Meditate on the *Small Number* of those
who will be saved.**

"But few are chosen," Mat 20.16. Among the millions in Rome, there are but few senators; and among the swarms of people in the world, there are but few believers. We read of four sorts of ground in the parable of the sower, and only one *good* ground. Mat 13.3-8. How few in the world know Christ! How few believe in him! "Who has believed our report?" Isa 53.1. How few strike sail to Christ's sceptre! ⁵³ (Luk 19.14). The heathen idolaters and Mahometans possess almost all of Asia and Africa; in many parts of the world the devil is worshipped; Satan takes up most climates and hearts. How many formalists there are in the world, "having a form of godliness," 2Tim 3.5. They are like wool that receives a slight tint, not a deep dye; their religion is a paint which a storm of persecution will wash off; it is not an engraving. These may look like Christ's doves, but they are the serpent's brood. They hate God's image, like the panther that hates the picture of a man. O, often meditate on the small number of those who will be saved.

The effects of meditating on the small number that will be saved:

(1) It would keep us from marching along with the multitude. "You shall not follow a multitude," Exo 23.2. The multitude usually goes wrong: most men walk "after the course of the world," Eph 2.2 — that is, the lusts of their hearts, and the customs of the times. They march after the prince of the air. The meditation of this would make us turn off the common road.

(2) It would make us walk tremblingly. Few find the way; and when they *have* found it, few *walk* in the way. Thoughts of this would work holy fear, Heb 4.1 — not a despairing fear, but a jealous and cautious fear. This fear is what the eminent saints of God have had. Austin says of himself, that he knocked at heaven's gate with a trembling hand. This fear is joined with hope. "The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his mercy," Psa 147.11. A child of God *fears*, because the gate is narrow; but he *hopes*, because the gate is open.

⁵³ To lower the sails of your boat, as in saluting, or when taken in tow; hence, to bow or submit to.

(3) It would be a whetstone ⁵⁴ to industry. It would put us upon working out our salvation (Phi 2.12); if there are so few who will be crowned, then it would make us all the swifter in the race. This meditation would be an alarm to sleepy Christians.

Sec. 9. Meditate on *Final Apostasy*.

Think what a sad thing it is to begin to build in religion, and not be able to finish (Luk 14.30). Joash was good while his uncle Jehoida lived. But after he died, Joash grew wicked, and all his religion was buried in his uncle's grave. We live in the fall of the leaf; how many have fallen to damnable heresies! (2Pet 2.1). Meditate seriously on that scripture, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they should fall away, to renew them again unto repentance," Heb 6.4-6. A man may be enlightened, and that may be from a double lamp — the word and Spirit — but these beams, even though they are irradiating, yet they are not penetrating. It is possible that he may have a taste of the heavenly gift; he may taste but not concoct it; or as one says, a cook may taste the food he prepares, but not be nourished by it. This taste may not only illuminate, but refresh; it may carry some sweetness in it; there may be a kind of delight in spiritual things. A man may go even this far, and yet fell away finally. Now this will be very sad, because it is such a God-affronting and Christ-reproaching sin: "Know therefore that it is an evil and bitter thing, that you have forsaken the Lord," Jer 2.19. Meditate on final relapses.

The effects of meditation upon apostasy and fallen hypocrites:

(1) It would make us earnest in prayer to God for a sound heart. "Make my heart sound in your statutes," Psa 119.80. Lord, let me not be an alchemy Christian; ⁵⁵ work a thorough work of grace upon me. Though I am not washed perfectly, let me be washed thoroughly, Psa 51.2. That which begins in hypocrisy, ends in apostasy.

(2) It would make us earnest in prayer for perseverance. "Uphold my steps in your paths, that my footsteps not slip," Psa 17.5. Lord, hold me up, that I may hold out. You have set the crown at the end of the race; let me run the race, that I may wear the crown. It was Beza's ⁵⁶ prayer, and let it be ours, "Lord perfect what you have begun in me, that I may not suffer shipwreck when I am almost at the haven."

Sec. 10. Meditate on *Death*.

We say we must all die, but who is the one that seriously meditates upon it?

1. Meditate on the certainty of death. "It is appointed for all once to die," Heb 9.27. There is a statute issued.

2. Meditate on the proximity of death. It is near to us. We are almost setting our feet on the dark entry of death. The poets painted time with wings: it not only rides post, but it flies, and it carries us upon its wings. The race is short between the cradle and the grave. The

⁵⁴ That is, a sharpening stone — here it means an incentive to prepare the heart.

⁵⁵ A made-up Christian who may look like gold, but is made of another substance entirely.

⁵⁶ Theodore Beza (1519-1605) French Protestant theologian; disciple of John Calvin.

sentence of death is already passed; “to dust you shall return,” Gen 3.19. So our life is but a short reprieve from the death granted to a condemned man. “My age is as nothing,” Psa 39.5. Indeed, if it were possible to take something out of nothing, our life is less than nothing when reckoned with eternity.

3. Meditate on the uncertainty of the time. We have no lease, but may be turned out in the next hour. There are so many casualties, that it is a wonder if life is *not* cut off by untimely death. How soon God may seal to us an eviction notice! Our grave may be dug before night. Today we may lie upon a pillow of down, and tomorrow we may be laid upon a pillow of dust. Today the sermon bell sounds, and tomorrow our passing bell may sound.

4. Think seriously that dying is done but once, and after death there is nothing to be done. If you die in your impenitency there is no repenting in the grave. If you leave your work at death half-done, there is no finishing it in the grave. “There is no work, nor device, nor wisdom in the grave where you are going,” Ecc 9.10. If a garrison surrenders at the first summons, there is mercy; but if it stays till the red flag is hung out, and the garrison is stormed, there is no mercy then. *Now* it is a day of grace, and God holds out the white flag of mercy to the penitent; but if we stay till God holds out the red flag, and storms us by *death*, then there is no mercy. There is nothing to be done for our souls after death. O meditate on death! It is reported about Seleucus ⁵⁷ that the first piece of household stuff he brought to Babylon was a tombstone. Think often of your tombstone.

The admirable effects of meditation on death:

(1) It would pull down the plumes of pride. You are but animated dust; shall dust and ashes be proud? You have a grassy body, and will shortly be mowed down, Isa 37.2. “I have said you are gods,” Psa 82.6; but lest they grow proud, he adds a corrective: “you shall die like men,” ver. 7. You are *dying gods*.

(2) It would be a means to give a death’s wound to sin. There is no stronger antidote against sin, says Austin, than frequent meditation upon death. I am now sinning, and tomorrow I may be dying; what if death should take me doing the devil’s work? Wouldn’t it send me to him to receive double pay? Carry thoughts of death about with you always, like a table-book; and when sin tempts you, pull out this table-book and read in it, and you will see sin vanish. We should look at sin in two mirrors: the mirror of Christ’s blood, and the mirror of death.

(3) It would be a bridle for intemperance. Shall I pamper the body which must lie down in the house of rottenness? (Job 13.28) Our Saviour at a feast breaks into the mention of his burial, Mat 26.12. Feeding on thoughts of death would be an excellent preservative against a surfeit.

(4) It would make us manage time better, and pack much work into a little space. Many meet in taverns to while away the time; the apostle bids us to redeem it: “redeeming the time,” Eph 5.16. Our life should be like jewels: though little in bulk, they are great in worth. Some die young, yet with gray hairs upon them. We must be like the grass of the field, *useful*

⁵⁷ Seleucus I Nicator (358-281 BC); infantry general under Alexander the Great; founded the Seleucid Empire.

— not like grass on the house-top, which withers before it grows up, Psa 129.6. To live and not be serviceable, is not *life*, but *time*.

(5) It would make us lay in provision against such a time. It would spur us on in the pursuit after holiness. Death is the great plunderer; it will shortly plunder us of all our outward comforts. Our feathers of beauty and honour must be laid in the dust, but death cannot plunder us of our graces. The commonwealth of Venice have this inscription in their armoury: “Happy is he that in time of peace, thinks of war.” He that often meditates on death, will prepare for its coming.

Sec. 11. Meditate on the *Day of Judgment*.

“God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world.” Act 17.31.

1. Meditate on the solemnity of this trial. The trumpet shall sound to summon all the world before the judge, 1The 4.16; and Jesus Christ shall “come in the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels,” Mat 16.27.

2. Meditate on the universality of this trial. “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,” 2Cor 5.10. Kings and nobles, all must come to the bar; there is no exemption. I have read of a wicked king who on his death-bed fell a-weeping. His brother asked him why he wept “To think,” he says, “that I, who have judged others, am now going to be judged myself.”

3. Meditate on the impartiality of the trial. Christ will do justice; “He will judge the world in righteousness,” Act 17.31. There are no bribes taken in this court; no relations take precedence here. The Thebans pictured their judges blind, and without hands; blind, that they might not respect persons; without hands, that they might take no bribes. Christ’s sceptre is a “sceptre of righteousness,” Heb 1.8. It is not nearness of blood that avails; nor will he be bribed with a tear.

4. Meditate on the exactness of the trial. It will be very critical; “He will thoroughly purge his threshing floor,” without a grace or a sin that Christ’s fan will not discover, Mat 3.12; he will judge the heart as well as the fact.

5. Meditate on the outcome and consequence of this trial. There will be a discrimination made. He will separate the good from the bad, Mat 25.32. The wheat and the chaff may both grow together, but they shall not lie together (Mat 13.30).

Meditate often on this court of judicature, from which there is no appeal. Feathers swim upon the water, but gold sinks in it; light feathery Christians float in vanity — they do not bear in mind the Day of Judgment — but serious spirits sink deep into the meditation of it. Most men put far away from them the evil day, Amos 6.3. They report of the Italians, that in a great thunderstorm they used to ring their bells, and shoot off their cannons, so that the sound of their bells and the roaring of their cannons might drown out the noise of the thunder. So too, the devil delights men with the music of the world, so that the noise of this should drown the noise of the Day of Judgment, and make them forget the sound of the last trumpet (1Cor 15.52).

Most men are guilty, and therefore they do not love to hear of the courts. When Paul preached of judgment, Felix trembled, Act 24.25, for he had a bad conscience. Josephus tells

us of Felix, that he was a wicked man: he had enticed the woman that lived with him (Drusilla by name) away from her husband; and when he heard of judgment, he fell trembling. O, I beseech you, meditate on this last and solemn day! While others are thinking how they may get riches, let us think to ourselves how we may abide the day of Christ's coming.

The effects of meditating on the Day of Judgment:

(1) It would make us examine all our actions. Christ will come with his fan and his sieve: will this action of mine abide the test at that great day?

(2) It would make us labour to approve our hearts to God, the great judge and umpire of the world. It is no matter what men think of us, but what is our Judge's opinion of us? To *Him* we must stand or fall. The meditation of the Day of Judgment would make us endeavour to be like Moses, who was "fair" to God, as the original has it, Act 7.20. The galaxy, or Milky Way, as the astronomers call it, is a bright circle in the heavens containing many stars; but they are so small that they have no name, nor are they taken notice of by the astronomers. Give me leave to apply that: possibly others may take no notice of us — we are so small as to have no name in the world — and yet if we are *true* stars, and can approve our hearts to God, then we will hold up our heads with boldness when we come to stand before our Judge.

(3) It would make us labour after an interest in Christ. There is no standing *before* Christ, except by being *in* Christ. If Christ is yours, then all is well — no matter what is charged — if all is discharged, Rom 8.33-34. There is no way in the world to stand in the Day of Judgment, except by making Christ a party to your case. Make him your friend, and then your Judge will be your advocate, 1Joh 2.1.

(4) It would make Christians less censorious; they would not reprobate ⁵⁸ others so fast; who are you to judge another? Do you take Christ's sceptre into your hand? Dare you sit in judgment of your brother? Perhaps when the critical day comes, he may be found gold, and you chaff. It is true, we may judge men's *way*, but not their *persons*, Rom 14.10. But why do you judge your brother? We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

(5) It would yield much comfort to a Christian, and that would be in two cases:

a. *In case of weakness of grace.* A poor Christian, when he sees his grace so defective, is ready to be discouraged. But at the Day of Judgment, if Christ finds but a drachm ⁵⁹ of sincerity, it will be accepted. If yours is *true* gold, even though it may be light, Christ will put his merits into the scales, and make it current. If you have no sin of allowance, (Rom 7.15) you shall have grains of allowance. I may allude to that passage in Amos 9.9. "Yet not the least grain shall fall to the earth." He that has but a grain of grace, not the least grain shall fall to hell.

b. *In case of censures and slanders.* The saints arrive here through strange reports, 2Cor 6.8.⁶⁰ There is no walking in the world nowadays, however warily we tread, without catching some specks of dirt. John the Baptist's head on a platter is a common dish in this

⁵⁸ To abandon to eternal damnation; to reject or condemn.

⁵⁹ Or dram: an eighth ounce; a pinch.

⁶⁰ **2Cor 6.8** by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and *yet* true;

age. It is ordinary now to bring in a saint beheaded of his good name. But at the Day of Judgment, Christ will unload his people of all their calumnies and reproaches. He will at that day wash his spouse so white, that she will not only be guiltless, but spotless; her black spots of reproach shall be taken away, “He will present his church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle,” Eph 5.27.

Sec. 12. Meditate on *Hell*.

1. Meditate on the pain of loss; “and the door was shut,” Mat 25.10. To have Christ’s face veiled over, and a perpetual eclipse and midnight in the soul — to be cast out of God’s presence, in whose presence is fulness of joy — this aggravates and embitters the condition of the damned; it is like mingling gall with wormwood (Jer 9.15).

2. Meditate on the pain of sense. The Photinians ⁶¹ hold that there is no hell, but they speak in a dream — “The wicked shall be turned in to hell,” Psa 9.17. And here meditate on two things: (1) The place of hell; (2) The company.

(1) *Meditate on the place of hell.* It is called “a place of torment,” Luk 16.28. There are two things especially in hell that torment.

a. **The Fire.** It is called a lake of burning fire, Rev 20.15. Austin, Peter Lombard, Gregory the Great, say this fire of hell is a material fire, though they say it is infinitely hotter than any culinary fire which is but painted fire compared to this. I wish none of us may know what kind of fire it is; but I rather think the fire of hell is partly material, and partly spiritual; the material fire is to work upon the body, the spiritual to torture the soul. This is the wrath of God, which is both fire and bellows; “Who knows the power of Your anger?” Psa 90.11.

Obj: But, it may be objected, if there is any material fire in hell, it will consume the bodies there.

Ans: I answer, it will burn without consuming, as Moses’ bush did, Exo 3.2. The power of God silences all disputes: If God, by his infinite power, could make the fire of the three children not consume them (Dan 3.27) can he not make the fire of hell burn and not consume? Austin tells of a strange salt in Sicily which swims if it is put in the fire; that same God who can make salt swim in the fire, contrary to its nature, can make the bodies of the damned not consumed in the fire.

b. **The worm.** “Where the worm never dies,” Mar 19.48. Homer, in his *Odyssey*, imagines that Tityos’ liver was gnawed by two vultures in hell. This never-dying worm which Christ speaks of, is the gnawing of a guilty conscience.

Melanchthon calls it a hellish fury: those who will not hear their conscience preaching, will feel their conscience gnawing. And so great is the extremity of these two, the fire which burns, and the worm which bites, that there will follow “gnashing of teeth,” Mat 8.12. The damned will gnash their teeth out of horror and anguish. That must be a sad cheer, as

⁶¹ Followers of Photinus (Serbian bishop and heretic, d. 376) who also denied the deity of Christ.

Latimer says, where weeping is served up for the first course, and gnashing of teeth for the second. To endure this will be intolerable, and to avoid it will be impossible.

(2) *Meditate about the **company** in hell:* the devil and his angels, Mat 25.41. Job complains that he was a companion to owls, Job 30.29. What will it be like to be a companion to devils? Consider 1. Their ghastly deformity; they make hell look blacker. 2. Their deadly antipathy; they are fired up with rage against mankind: first they become tempters, and then tormentors.

Meditate much on hell. Let us go into hell by *contemplation*, so that we may not go into hell by *condemnation*. How restless is the condition of the damned! The ancients pretend of Endymion, that he got leave of Jupiter to always sleep.⁶² What would the damned in hell give for such a license! In their pains is neither intermission nor mitigation.

The effects of serious meditation on hell:

(1) It would make us fear sin as hellish. Sin is hell's fuel. Sin, like Samson's foxes, Jdg 15.5, carries devouring fire in its tail.

(2) It would cause rejoicing in a child of God. The saint's fear of hell is like the two Marys' fear: "They departed from the sepulchre with fear and great joy," Mat 28.8. A believer may fear to think of the place of torment, but rejoice to think he will not come into this place. When a man stands upon a high rock, he trembles to look down into the sea; yet he rejoices that he is not there struggling with the waves. A child of God, when he thinks of hell, rejoices with trembling. A prison is not made for the king's sons to be put in. A great naturalist observes that nothing will quench fire as quickly as salt and blood. Whether it is so or not, I am sure that the salt-brinish tears of repentance, and the blood of Christ, will quench the fire of hell for a believer. Christ himself has felt the pains of hell for you — the Lamb of God being roasted in the fire of God's wrath. By this burnt-offering, the Lord is now appeased towards his people. Oh how the godly may rejoice! "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ," Rom 8.1. When the Son of God was in the furnace, Dan 3.25, the fire did the three children no hurt; so Christ being for a time in the fiery furnace of God's wrath, that fire can do a believer no hurt. The saints have the garment of Christ's righteousness upon them, and the fire of hell can never singe this garment.

Sec. 13. Meditate on Heaven.

From the mount of meditation, as from mount Nebo, we may take a view and prospect of the land of promise. Christ has taken possession of heaven in the name of all believers; "Where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus," Heb 6.20. Heaven must be a glorious city, which has God both for its builder and inhabitant. Heaven is the extract and quintessence of all blessedness. There the saints shall have their wish. Austin wished that he might have seen three things before he died: Rome in its glory, Paul in the pulpit, and Christ in the flesh. But the saints will see a better sight: they will not see Rome, but heaven in its glory; they will not see Paul in the pulpit, but on the throne, and they will sit with him. They will not see Christ's

⁶² (Gr. myth.) It is often told the other way around: Selene, the Titan goddess of the moon, loved the mortal Endymion. She believed him to be so beautiful that she asked Endymion's father, Zeus, to grant him eternal youth so he would never leave her. Zeus granted her wish and put him into an eternal sleep.

flesh veiled over with infirmities and disgraces, but in its spiritual embroidery — not a crucified, but a *glorified* body. They will “behold the King in his beauty,” Isa 33.17. What a glorious place this will be! In heaven “God will be all in all,” 1Cor 15.28. Beauty to the eye, music to the ears, joy to the heart; and he will be this for the poorest saint, as well as the richest. O Christian, you who are now at your hard labour, perhaps following the plough, you will sit on the throne of glory, Rev 3.21. Quintus Curtius ⁶³ writes of one who was digging in his garden, and all of a sudden he was made king; and a purple garment, richly embroidered with gold, was put upon him. So shall it be done to the poorest believer: he shall be taken from his labouring work, and set at the right hand of God, having the crown of righteousness upon his head.

Meditate often on this Jerusalem above.

The effects of meditation on heaven:

- (1) It would excite and quicken obedience. It would put spurs to our sluggish hearts, and make us “abound in the work of God, knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord,” 1Cor 15.58. The weight of glory would not hinder us in our race, but cause us to run faster: this weight would add wings to our duty.
- (2) It would make us strive after purity of heart, because only the “pure in heart shall see God,” Mat 5.8. It is only a clear eye that can look upon a bright transparent object.
- (3) It would be a pillar of support under our sufferings; heaven will make amends for all. One hour’s abode in heaven will make us forget all our sorrows. As the sun dries up the water, so one beam of God’s glorious face will dry up all our tears.

Sec. 14. Meditate on *Eternity*.

Some of the ancients compared eternity to an intellectual sphere, whose centre is everywhere, and circumference nowhere. Eternity to the godly is a day which has no sun-setting, and to the wicked it is a night which has no sun-rising. Eternity is a gulf which may swallow up all our thoughts. Meditate on that scripture, “And these shall go away into ever-lasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal,” Mat 25.46.

1. Meditate on eternal punishment. The bitter cup out of which the damned drink, shall never pass away from them. The sinner and the furnace shall never be parted. God’s vial of wrath will always be dripping upon a wicked man. When you have reckoned up as many myriads and millions of years, indeed, as many *ages* as to pass the bounds of all arithmetic, eternity has not yet begun. This word *ever* breaks the heart: if the tree falls hell-ward, so it lies to all eternity. Now is the time of God’s long-suffering, 2Pet 3.9. After death will be the time of the sinner’s suffering long, when he shall “suffer the vengeance of eternal fire,” Jude 1.7.

2. Meditate on life eternal. Once the soul has landed on the heavenly shore, it is past all storms. The glorified soul shall be forever bathing itself in the rivers of pleasure, Psa 16.11. This is what makes heaven to be heaven: “We shall be ever with the Lord,” 1The 4.17. Austin

⁶³ Quintus Curtius Rufus, a 1st century Roman historian. His only known work is “Histories of Alexander the Great.”

says, “Lord, I am content to suffer any pains and torments in this world, if I might see your face just one day.” But alas! If it were only for a day, then to be ejected from heaven would rather be an aggravation of misery; but this phrase, “ever with the Lord,” is cumulative, and it makes up the garland of glory — a state of *eternity* is a state of *security*.⁶⁴

The effects of meditating on eternity:

(1) It would make us very serious in what we do. Zeuxis⁶⁵ being asked why he took so long with a picture, answered, “I paint for eternity.” The thoughts of an irreversible condition after this life, would make us pray and hear as for eternity.

(2) It would make us overlook present things, as flitting and fading. What is the world to one who has eternity in his eye? It is but the smallest part of a point which, as mathematicians say, is just nothing. He that thinks of eternity will despise “the pleasures of sin for a season.” (Heb 11.25)

(3) It would be a means to keep us from envying the prosperity of the wicked. Here they ruffle in their silks, but what is this to eternity?

As long as there is such a thing as eternity, God has time enough to reckon with all his enemies.

Sec. 15. Meditate on your *Experiences*.

The last subject of meditation is your experiences. *Look over your receipts*.

1. Hasn't God provided liberally for you, and granted you those mercies which he has denied to others who are better than you? Here is an experience: “The God who has fed me all my days,” Gen 48.15. You never feed without mercy carving for you; you never go to bed without mercy drawing the curtain, and setting a guard of angels around you. Whatever you have is out of the treasury of free grace. Here is an experience to *meditate on!*

2. Hasn't God prevented many dangers? Hasn't He kept watch and ward about you?

(1) What *temporal* dangers God has screened off from you! Your neighbour's house is on fire, and it has not kindled your dwelling. Another is infected, and you are free. *Behold* the golden feathers of protection covering you (Psa 91.4).

(2) What *spiritual* dangers God has prevented! When others have been poisoned with error, you have been preserved. God has sounded a retreat to you; you have heard “a voice behind you saying, This is the way, walk in it,” Isa 30.21. When you have enlisted yourself, and taken pay on the devil's side, that God should “pluck you as a brand out of the fire” — that he should turn your heart; and now you espouse Christ's quarrel against sin. *Behold* preventing grace!

Here is an experience to *meditate on*.

⁶⁴ That is, the garland placed on the victor's head is forever: the race is now over and the victory is won. In the same way, to enter heaven, is to enter into eternal security: none can *ever* pluck us from Christ's hand, Joh 10.28. And so, to have heaven “only for a day” would be impossible — to have it even for a day is to have it for eternity.

⁶⁵ Greek painter, born at Heraclea in southern Italy, fifth century BC.

3. Hasn't God spared you a long time? Why is it that others are struck dead in the act of sin — such as Ananias and Sapphira, Act 5.5, 10 — and yet you are preserved as a monument of God's patience? Here is an experience: God has done more for you than for the angels. He never waited for their repentance, but he has waited for you year after year. Therefore “the Lord will wait, that he may be gracious,” Isa 30.18. He has not only knocked at your heart in the ministry of the word, but he has waited at the door, (Rev 3.20). How long his Spirit has striven with you, like an importunate suitor that has received many denials; yet He will not give up his suit. I think I see justice with a sword in its hand ready to strike, and mercy steps in for the sinner saying, “Lord, have patience with him a while longer.” I think I hear the angels say to God, as the king of Israel once said to the prophet Elisha, “Shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?” 2Kng 6.21. So too I think I hear the angels say, “Shall we take off the head of such a drunkard, swearer, blasphemer?” And mercy seems to answer as the vinedresser did, “Let him alone this year,” Luk 13.8; see if he will repent first. Isn't this an experience worth meditating upon? Mercy turns justice into a rainbow; the rainbow is a bow indeed, but it has no arrow in it — that justice has been like the rainbow without an arrow, that it has not shot you to death. Here is a receipt of patience to read over, and to meditate on.

4. Hasn't God often come in with assisting grace? When he has bid you to mortify such a lust, and you have said as Jehoshaphat did, “I have no might against this great army,” 2Chr 20.12, then God has come in with auxiliary forces: “His grace has been sufficient,” (2Cor 12.9). When God has bid you to pray for such a mercy, and you have found yourself unfit for it, your heart was at first dead and flat — but all of a sudden you are carried above your own strength. Your tears drop, your love flames — *God* has come in with assisting grace. If the heart burns in prayer, *God* has ignited that fire! The *Spirit* has been tuning your soul. And now you make a sweet melody in prayer. Here is an experience to meditate on.

5. Hasn't God vanquished Satan for you? When the devil has tempted you to infidelity, to self-murder — when he would make you believe either that your graces were but a fiction, or that God's promise was but a counterfeit bond — now that you have *not* been foiled by the tempter, it is *God* who has kept the garrison of your heart. Otherwise the devil's fiery darts would have entered. Here is an experience to meditate on.

6. Haven't you had many remarkable deliverances? When you have been even at the gates of death, God has miraculously restored you, and renewed your strength like the eagle — may you not write it down as Hezekiah did? “The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick and recovered from his sickness,” Isa 38.9. You thought the sun of your life was completely setting; but God made this sun turn back many degrees. Here is an experience for meditation to feed upon. When you have been imprisoned, your foot taken in the snare, and the Lord has broken the snare, indeed, when he has made those break it who were the instruments of laying it for you: *behold*, this is an experience to meditate on. O let us often revolve in our mind our experiences! If a man had *medicinal* receipts, he would often look them over. You who have rare receipts of *mercy*, often look over those receipts, by meditation.

The effects of meditating on our experiences:

- (1) It would raise us to thankfulness. Considering that God has set a hedge of providence about us, he has strewed our way with roses. This would make us take the harp and viol,

and praise the Lord, and not only praise, but record it, 1Chr 16.4.⁶⁶ The meditating Christian keeps a register or chronicle of God's mercies, so that the memory of them does not decay. God would have the manna kept in the ark many hundreds of years, so that the remembrance of that miracle might be preserved. A meditating soul takes care that the spiritual manna of an experience be kept safe.

(2) It would engage our hearts to God in obedience. Mercy would be a needle to sew us to him. We would cry out like Bernard, "I have, Lord, two mites — a soul and a body — and I give them both to you."

(3) It would serve to convince us that God is no hard master. We might bring in our experiences as a sufficient confutation of that slander. When we have been failing, hasn't God taken us by the hand? "When I said my foot slips, your goodness, O Lord, held me up," Psa 94.18. How often has God held our head and heart when we have been fainting! And is he a hard master? Is there any master besides God who will wait upon his servants? Christians, summon your experiences. What vails⁶⁷ you have had! Psa 19.11.⁶⁸ What inward serenity and peace, which neither the world can give, nor death take away! A Christian's own experiences may plead for God against those who desire to censure his ways, rather than test them, and to object to them, rather than walk in them.

(4) It would make us communicative to others. We should be willing to tell our children and acquaintances "what God has done for our souls," Psa 44.1. At such a time we were brought low, and God raised us up; at such a time in desertion, and God brought a promise to remembrance which dripped with comfort. Meditation on God's gracious dealing with us would make us transmit and propagate our experience to others, so that the mercies of God shown to us may bear a plentiful crop of praise when we are dead and gone.

Chapter 7.

Showing the Necessity of Meditation

It is not enough to carry the book of God's law about with us, but we must meditate on it. The necessity of meditation will appear in three particulars.

1. It makes us fruitful.

The reason why God has given us his word, written and preached, is not only to know it, but that we should meditate on it. The word is the letter of the great God written to us. Now, we must not run over it in haste, but meditate on God's wisdom in authoring it, and his love in sending it to us. Why does the physician give his patient a prescription? Is it that he should only read it over and know the prescription, or that he should *apply* it? The reason God communicates his gospel prescriptions to us, is that we should apply them by fruitful meditation. Would God, do we think, ever have gone to all the pains of writing his law with his own finger, if it were only that we should have the theory and notion of it? Isn't it that we

⁶⁶ **1Ch 16.4** And he appointed *certain* of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, and to record, and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel:

⁶⁷ Benefits and presents given to servants.

⁶⁸ **Psa 19.11** Moreover by them Your servant is warned, *And* in keeping them *there is* great reward.

should meditate on it? Would he ever have paid the cost to send abroad his ministers into the world, to furnish them with gifts, Eph 4.11, 12, and that they must be near to death for the work of Christ, Phi 2.30, if it was only that Christians should have an empty knowledge of the truths that are published? Is it only *speculation*, or is it *meditation* that God aims at?

2. It helps us retain God's Word.

The necessity of meditation appears in this: because without it we can never be good Christians. A Christian without meditation is like a soldier without arms, or a workman without tools.

(1) Without meditation, the truths of God will not stay with us. The heart is hard, and the memory slippery. Without meditation, all is lost. Meditation imprints and fastens a truth in the mind, like the selvedge⁶⁹ which keeps the cloth from raveling. Serious meditation is like engraving letters in gold or marble, which will endure. Without this all our preaching to you is like writing in sand; like pouring water into a sieve; like throwing a bur on a crystal, which glides off and doesn't stay. Reading and hearing without meditation is like weak medicine which will not work. Lack of meditation has made so many sermons in this age miscarry.

(2) Without meditation, the truths which we know, will never affect our hearts: "These words which I command you this day shall be in your heart." Deu 6.6. How can the word be in your heart, unless it is worked in by meditation? As a hammer drives a nail to the head, so meditation drives a truth to the heart. It is not taking in food, but the stomach digesting it, which turns it into blood and energy. So too, it is not taking in a truth at the ear, but meditating on it, which digests it in the mind, and makes it nourish. Without meditation, the word preached may increase our ideas, but not our affections. There is as much difference between the knowledge of a truth, and the meditation on a truth, as there is between the light of a torch, and the light of the sun. Set up a lamp or torch in the garden, and it has no influence. But the sun has a *sweet* influence; it makes the plants grow and the herbs flourish. So knowledge is only like a torch lit in the understanding, which has little or no influence; it doesn't make a man any the better. But meditation is like the shining of the sun; it operates on the affections; it warms the heart and makes it more holy. Meditation gives *life* to a truth. There are many truths that lie dead in the heart, as it were, which when we meditate on them, they begin to have life and heat in them. Meditation on a truth is like rubbing a man fallen in a swoon; it fetches life for him. *It is meditation that makes a Christian.*

3. It values God's Word.

Without meditation we make ourselves guilty of slighting God and his word. If a man lays something aside and never minds it, it is a sign that he slights it. God's word is the book of life — not to meditate on it, is to undervalue it. If a king issues an edict or a proclamation, and his subjects never mind it, it is a slighting of the king's authority. God issues his law as a royal edict. If we do not meditate on it, it is a slighting of his authority, and this amounts to nothing less than contempt for the Divine majesty.

⁶⁹ The edge of a fabric that is woven so that it will not ravel or fray.

Chapter 8.

Showing the reason why there are so few Good Christians

USE 1. Information. It gives us a true account why there are so few good Christians in the world; namely, because there are so few meditating Christians. We have many who have bible ears — they are swift to hear, but slow to meditate. This duty has almost grown out of fashion: people are so much in the shop, that they are seldom on the mount with God. Where is the meditating Christian? Diogenes,⁷⁰ in a full market, was seeking up and down. And being asked what he sought, he says, “I seek a man,” that is to say, “a *wise man*, a philosopher.” Among the crowd of those who profess Christ, I might search for a Christian, namely, a *meditating* Christian. Where is the one who meditates on sin, hell, eternity, the recompense of reward? Who takes a prospect of heaven every day? Where is the *meditating* Christian? It is to be lamented in our times that so many who go under the name of professors, have banished good discourse from their tables, and meditation from their closets. Surely the hand of Joab is in this! (1Kng 2.32)

The devil is an enemy to meditation. He doesn't care how much people read and hear, nor how little they meditate. But he knows that meditation is a means to compose the heart, and bring it into a gracious frame. Now, the devil is *against* that. Satan is content that you should be hearing and praying Christians, just so you are not meditating Christians. He can withstand your small shot, provided you do not put *this* bullet in [the chamber].

Chapter 9.

A Reproof to those who do not meditate on God's Law

USE 2. Reproof. It serves to reprove those who meditate indeed, but not in the law of God. They turn all their meditations the wrong way; like a man who lets out the water of his mill, which should be used to grind his corn, into the highway where it does no good. So too, there are many who let out their meditations on other fruitless things, which are in no way beneficial to their souls.

The farmer may meditate on his acres of land, and not upon his soul. His meditation is how he may improve a barren piece of ground, not how he may improve a barren mind. He will not let his ground lie fallow, and yet he lets his heart lie fallow. There is no spiritual cultivation; not one seed of grace is sown there.

The physician meditates on his prescriptions, but seldom on those prescriptions which the gospel gives for his salvation — faith and repentance. Commonly the devil is physician to the physician, having given him such stupefying medicine that, for the most part, the physician dies of lethargy.

The lawyer meditates on the common law; but as for God's law, he seldom meditates on it, either day or night. While the lawyer is meditating on his client's evidences, he often forgets his own. Most wearing this robe are still *seeking* their spiritual evidences, when they should *have* them to show.

⁷⁰ (c. 400-325 BC) Greek philosopher and Cynic.

The tradesman is for the most part meditating on his wares and drugs. His study is how he may increase his estate, and make the ten talents into a hundred. He is “distracted about many things,” (Luk 10.40). He doesn’t meditate on the book of God’s law, but in his account-book day and night. In the long run, you will see these were fruitless meditations. You will find that you are but golden beggars, and have gotten but the fool’s purchase when you die (Luk 12.20).⁷¹

There is another sort that meditate only on mischief, “who devise iniquity,” Mic 2.1. They meditate on how to defame and defraud; “they make the ephah small, and the shekel great,” Amo 8.5. The ephah was a measure used in buying, the shekel a weight used in selling. They know how to collude and sophisticate.⁷² Christians, who should support one another, too often supplant. And how many meditate on revenge! It is as sweet to them as dripping honey, as Homer puts it.⁷³ “Their hearts will meditate on terror,” Isa 33.18. The sinner is a *felon* to himself, and God will make him a *terror* to himself, Jer 20.4.

Chapter 10. A holy Persuasive to Meditation

USE 3. Of exhortation. In the next place, I would exhort Christians to this so necessary duty of meditation. If there was ever a duty I would press upon you with more earnestness and zeal, it would be this one, because so much of the vitality and spirit of religion lies in it. The plant may as well bear fruit without watering, the meat may as well nourish without digesting, as [to think] we can be fruitful in holiness without meditation. God provides the meat, and ministers can but cook and dress it for you. Meditation must make the concoction.⁷⁴ For lack of this, you may cry out with the prophet, “My leanness, my leanness! ⁷⁵ Woe to me!” Isa 24.16.

O let me persuade those who fear God, to seriously set about this duty. If you have formerly neglected it, bewail your neglect, and now begin to do it conscientiously. Lock yourselves up with God, at least once a day, by holy meditation. Ascend this hill, and when you have arrived at the top of it, you will see a fair prospect: Christ and heaven before you. Let me put you in mind of that sweet saying of Bernard, “O saint, don’t you know that your husband Christ is bashful, and will not be familiar with you in company? Retire yourself by meditation into the chamber or the field, and there you will have Christ’s embraces.” “Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; ...there I will give you my love,” Song 7.11-12. O that I could persuade Christians to this rare duty! Why is it that you don’t meditate on God’s law? Let me expostulate the case with you: what is the reason? I think I hear some say, *We are indeed convinced of the necessity of the duty, but alas, there are many things that hinder us.* There

⁷¹ **Luk 10.40** But Martha was distracted with much serving **Luk 12.20** But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’

⁷² Sophisticate: to alter and make impure, as with the intention to deceive.

⁷³ “...that gall of anger that swarms like smoke inside of a man’s heart and becomes a thing sweeter to him by far than the dripping of honey.” – Homer, *The Iliad*, book 18, 78-147.

⁷⁴ Any foodstuff made by combining different ingredients, preferably into a tasty, nourishing dish.

⁷⁵ Or “My ruin!”

are two great objections that lie in the way. I will first remove them, and then hope to better persuade you to this duty.

Chapter 11. Answering Objections

Obj. 1: *I have so much business in the world that I have no time to meditate.*

Ans: The world indeed is a great enemy to meditation. It is easy to lose one's purse in a crowd; and in a crowd of worldly employments, it is easy to lose all thoughts of God. So long as the heart is an exchange, I don't expect it to be a temple. But to answer the objection, do you truly have so much business that you have no time for meditation? That is like saying religion is only incidental to you, a thing fit only for your idle hours.

What! No time to meditate! What is the business of your life *except* meditation? God never sent us into the world to get riches. I don't speak against labour in a calling; but I say this is not the *end* of our coming here. The errand for which God sent us into the world is *salvation*. And that we may attain this *end*, we must use the *means*: namely, *holy meditation*. Now, do you have no time to meditate? That is like a farmer saying that, truly, he has so much business that he has no time to plough or sow! Why, what is his occupation *except* ploughing and sowing?

What a madness it is to hear Christians say they have no time to meditate! What is the business of their lives *except* meditation? O take heed, lest by growing rich you grow to be worth nothing in the end. Take heed that God does not sue you into bankruptcy, and disgrace you before men and angels. No time for meditation! You will observe that others in former ages have had just as much business as you, and public affairs to look after; and yet they too were called upon to meditate: "You shall meditate on this book of the law," Jos 1.8. Joshua might have pleaded an excuse: he was a soldier, a commander, and the care of marshalling his army lay chiefly upon him. Yet this must not take him away from religion; Joshua *must* meditate on the book of God's law. God never intended that the great business of religion should give way to a shop, or to a farm; or that a *particular* calling would jostle out the *general* calling.

Obj. 2. *But this duty of meditation is hard.* To set time apart every day to get the heart into a meditating frame is very difficult. Gerson ⁷⁶ reports of himself that he was sometimes three or four hours before he could work his heart into a spiritual frame.

Ans: *Does this truly hinder?* To this I will give a threefold reply.

1. *The price that God has set for heaven, is labour,* Our salvation cost Christ's blood; it may well cost us our labour. "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence," Mat 11.12. It is like a garrison that holds out, and the duties of religion are to take it by storm. A good Christian must offer violence to himself; though not to his natural self, yet still to his sinful self. *Self* is nothing but the *flesh*, Gal 5.17,⁷⁷ as Basil, Jerome, Theophylact, and Chrysostom, all expound it. The flesh cries out for *ease*; it is a *libertine*; it is loth to take pains, loth to pray, to repent,

⁷⁶ John Gerson (1363-1429), reformer and mystic; Chancellor of the University of Paris.

⁷⁷ Gal 5.17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

loth to put its neck under Christ's yoke. Now, a Christian must hate himself;⁷⁸ and no man has ever yet hated his own flesh, Eph 5.29. Yes, in this sense he *must hate his own flesh*: "the lusts of the flesh," Rom 8.13.⁷⁹ He must offer violence to himself by mortification and meditation. Don't say it is hard to meditate; isn't it harder to lie in hell?

2. *We don't argue this way about other things.* "Riches are *hard* to come by, therefore I will sit still and go without them." No, difficulty is the whetstone of industry.⁸⁰ How men will venture for gold! And will we not spend and be spent for that which is more precious than the gold of Ophir? By meditation we suck out the quintessence of a promise.

3. *When we first enter upon meditation it may seem hard; yet once we have entered, it is sweet and pleasant.* When first putting on Christ's yoke, it may seem heavy; but once it is on, it becomes easy — it is not a yoke, but a *crown*. "Lord," says Austin, "the more I meditate on you, the sweeter you are to me." According to holy David, "My meditation of you will be sweet," Psa 104.34. The poets say the top of Olympus was always quiet and serene. It is hard climbing up the rocky hill of meditation; but once we get to the top, there is a pleasant view, and we sometimes think we are even in heaven. By holy meditation, the soul as it were, breakfasts with God every morning; and to be sure, his breakfast is better than his dinner. When a Christian is upon the Mount of Meditation, he is like Peter on the mount when Christ was transfigured. He cries out, "Lord, it is good to be here," Mat 17.4; he is loth to go down the mount again. If you come to him and ask him to exchange it, he would think you ask him to take a loss.⁸¹ What hidden manna the soul tastes now! How sweet are the visits of God's Spirit!

When Christ was alone in the wilderness, the angel came to comfort him; when the soul is alone in holy meditations and emotional outpourings, then it is not an angel, but God's own Spirit that comes to comfort him. A Christian who meets with God on the mount, would not exchange his hours of meditation for the most orient ⁸² pearls or sparkling beauties that the world can afford. No wonder David spent the whole day in meditation, Psa 119.97. Indeed, as if the day had been too short, he borrows a part of the night too: "When I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the night watches," Psa 63.6. When others were sleeping, David was meditating. The one greatly given to meditation will, with Samson, find a honeycomb in this duty. Therefore, don't let the difficulty discourage you. The pleasantness will infinitely countervail the pains.

⁷⁸ **Luk 14.26** "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

⁷⁹ **Rom 8.13** For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death [i.e., *mortify*] the deeds of the body, you will live.

⁸⁰ The sharpening stone, or incentive — whatever incites or induces us to action.

⁸¹ **Phi 3.8** Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

⁸² In appearance, like the sun rising.

Chapter 12. Concerning Occasional Meditations

Having removed these two objections out of the way, let me again revive the exhortation to “meditate on God’s law day and night,” (Jos 1.8). There are two sorts of meditation which I would persuade you to practice: 1. *Occasional*, and 2. *Deliberate*.

1. Occasional meditations. *These are taken up on any sudden occasion.* There is hardly anything that occurs that we may not quickly raise some meditation upon it. As a good herbalist extracts the spirits and quintessence out of every herb, so a Christian may from every emergence and occurrence, extract some matter for meditation. *A gracious heart, like fire, turns all objects into fuel for meditation.* I will give you some instances. When you look up to the heavens, and see them richly embroidered with light, you may raise this meditation: If the footstool is so glorious, what about the throne where God himself sits? When you see the firmament glittering with stars, think about Christ as the bright Morning Star! Rev 22.16. Monica, Austin’s mother, was standing there one day seeing the sun shine; she raised this meditation: “Oh! If the sun is so bright, then what is the light of God’s presence!” When you hear music that delights the senses, quickly raise this meditation: What music is like a good conscience? This is the bird of paradise within, whose chirping melody enchants and ravishes the soul with joy. He that has this music all day, may take David’s pillow at night, and say with that sweet singer, “I will lay me down in peace and sleep,” Psa 4.8. How blessed is he who can find heaven in his own bosom!

When you get dressed in the morning, *awaken your meditation.* Ask yourself, But have I been dressing the hidden man of the heart? (1Pet 3.4). Have I looked at my face in the mirror of God’s word? I have put on my *clothes*, but have I put on *Christ*? (Gal 3.27) It is reported of Pambo,⁸³ that seeing a gentlewoman dressing herself all morning by her mirror, he fell to weeping. “Oh,” he says, “this woman has spent the morning dressing her body, and I sometimes spend scarcely an hour in dressing my soul!” When you sit down to dinner, let your meditation feed upon this first course: How blessed are those who will eat bread in the kingdom of God! What a royal feast that will be, which has God for its founder! What a love-feast, where none will be admitted but friends!

When you go to bed at night, imagine this: Shortly I will put off the earthly clothes of my body, and make my bed in the grave. When you see the judge going to the courts, and hear the trumpet blow, think to yourselves, as Jerome did, that you are hearing that shrill trumpet sounding in your ears, Arise you dead, and come to judgment. When you see a poor man going about in the streets, raise this meditation: Here is a walking picture of Christ who “had no place to lay his head,” Mat 8.20. My Saviour became poor that I, through his poverty, might be made rich. When you go to church, think this: I am now going to hear God speak; let me not close my ear; if I refuse to hear him speaking in his word, I will next hear him speaking in his wrath, Psa 2.5. When you walk abroad in your orchard, and see the plants bearing fruit and the herbs flourishing, think how pleasing a sight it is to God to see a thriving Christian. How beautiful are the trees of righteousness when they are hung full of fruit, Phi 1.11, when they abound in faith, humility, and knowledge! When you pluck a rosebud in your garden,

⁸³ Pambo (d. c.375): a founder of the Nitrian Desert monastery in Egypt, and a famed disciple of Anthony the Great.

raise this contemplation: How lovely are the early outputs of grace! God prizes a Christian in the bud; he likes the bloomings of youth, rather than the sheddings of old age. When you eat a grape from the tree, think of Christ, the true vine, and how precious is the blood of that grape!

Such rare clusters grow there, that the angels themselves delight to taste them. It is said of Austin, that he was much in these extemporaneous meditations. A gracious heart, like the philosopher's stone, turns all into gold. It is stilling time all year with a Christian; he stills out heavenly meditations from earthly occurrences. The mythical alchemist, when several metals are mingled together, can by his skill extract the gold and silver from the baser metals. So a Christian, by a divine alchemy,⁸⁴ can extract golden meditations from the various objects he beholds. Indeed it argues for a spiritual heart, to be able to turn everything to a spiritual use; and we have Christ's own example for these occasional meditations, Joh 4.7, 10, 13, 14. While he sat at Jacob's well, he quickly meditates on that, and breaks forth into a most excellent discourse concerning *the water of life*. So much for occasional meditations.

2. Deliberate meditations. *These are the chief meditations that I exhort you to.* Set some time apart every day so that you may, in a serious and solemn manner, converse with God on the mount. A godly man is a man set apart, Psa 4.3. As God sets him apart by election, so he sets himself apart by meditation.

Chapter 13. For the right timing of Meditations

Ques. 1. What is the fittest time for meditation?

Ans: For the timing of it, it is hard to prescribe, because of men's various callings and employments. But if I may freely speak my thoughts, *the morning* is the fittest time for meditation. The best time to converse with God is when we may be most private; that is, before worldly occasions stand knocking like so many suitors at the door, to be let in. The morning is, as it were, the cream of the day; let the cream be taken off the top, and let God have it. In distilling strong water, the first water drawn from the still is more full of spirits; the second drawing is weaker. So too, the first meditations that are distilled from the mind in the morning are the best, and we will find they are the most full of life and spirits. The morning is the golden hour. God loved the first-fruits; "The first of the first-fruits you shall bring into the house of the Lord," Exo 23.19. Let God have the first-fruits of the day — our first thoughts must be set upon heaven. The student takes the morning for his study; the usurer gets up in the morning and looks over his books of account; but a Christian must begin with God in the morning. David was with God before break of day; "I preceded the dawning of the morning," Psa 119.147.

Ques. 2. But why the morning for meditation?

Ans. 1. Because in the morning the mind is the fittest for holy duties; a Christian is most himself then. What weary devotion there will be at night, when a man is completely tired out with the business of the day; he will be fitter to sleep than to meditate. The morning is the

⁸⁴ That is transformation, Rom 12.2.

queen of the day: then the fancy is quickest, the memory strongest, the spirits freshest, the organ of the body most disposed, having been recreated by sleep. It is a sure rule that the best time to serve God is when we find ourselves most in tune. In the morning the heart is like a viol that is strung and tuned, and then it makes the sweetest melody.

Ans. 2. The morning thoughts stay longest with us the day afterward. Wool takes the first dye best, and it is not easily rubbed out. When the mind receives the impression of good thoughts in the morning, it holds this sacred dye better; and like the colour in grain, it will not easily be lost. The heart keeps the relish of morning meditations like a vessel that receives a tincture and savour of the wine that is first put into it; or as a chest of sweet linen that keeps the scent a great while after. Perfume your mind with heavenly thoughts in the morning, and it will not lose its spiritual fragrance. Wind up your heart towards heaven in the beginning of the day, and it will go better the whole day after. Receiving thoughts into the mind, is like receiving guests into an inn: the guests who come first fill the best rooms in the house — if others come afterward, worse rooms will serve them. So it is when the mind entertains holy meditations for its morning-guests. If afterwards earthly thoughts come, they are put into some of the worst rooms — they lodge lowest in the affections. The best rooms are taken up in the morning for Christ. The one who loses his heart to the world in the morning, will hardly find it again the whole rest of the day.

Ans. 3. It is a part of that solemn respect and honour which we give to God, to let him have the first thoughts of the day. We give persons of quality precedence; we let them take the first place. If we honour God, whose name is reverend and holy, then we will let thoughts of God take place above all others. When the world has the first of our thoughts, it is a sign that the world lies uppermost in our heart — that we love it most. The first thing a covetous man meditates on in the morning is his money; it is a sign that his gold lies nearest to his heart. O Christians, let God have your morning meditations! It displeases God to have the world served before him. Suppose a king and a yeoman were to dine in the same room, and sat at two tables. If the yeoman were to have his food brought and he was served first, the king might well be displeased, and look at it as contempt of his person. When the world is served first, all our morning thoughts attend it, and the Lord is put off with the dregs of the day,⁸⁵ when our thoughts begin to run low. Isn't this contempt of the God of glory?

Ans. 4. Equity requires it. God *deserves* the first of our thoughts. We had a being in his thoughts before we had a being. He thought upon us “before the foundations of the world,” Eph 1.4. Before we fell, he was thinking how to raise us up again. We had the morning of his thoughts. Oh! What thoughts of free grace, what thoughts of peace he has had towards us! We have taken up his thoughts from eternity. If we had some of God's first thoughts, then well may He have our first thoughts.

Ans. 5. This imitates the pattern of the saints. Job rose early in the morning and offered [sacrifices], Job 1.5. When he awoke, David was with God, Psa 139.18. And indeed, this is the way to have a morning blessing. “In the morning the dew fell,” Exo 16.13. The dew of a blessing falls early; that is when we are most likely to have God's company. If you would meet with a friend, you go timely in the morning, before he has gone out. We read how the Holy Spirit

⁸⁵ The remnants or left-overs.

came down upon the apostles, Act 2.3-4. And it was in the morning, as may be gathered from Peter's sermon: it was only "the third hour of the day," Act 2.15. The morning is the time for fruitfulness: "In the morning you will make your seed flourish," Isa 17.11. By morning meditation, we make the seed of grace flourish.

Evening Meditation

I would not wholly exclude evening meditation by this. Isaac went out to meditate in the evening, Gen 24.63. When business is over, and everything is calm, it is good to take a turn with God in the evening. God had his evening sacrifice, as well as his morning, Exo 29.39. As the cream at the top is sweet, so likewise is the sugar at the bottom.

Evening meditation does well in two cases:

1. In case the urgency of business has been such that you have time only for reading and prayer; then recompense the lack of morning meditation, with evening meditation.
2. In case you find yourself more inclined to good thoughts in the evening. For sometimes there is a greater *impetus*⁸⁶ upon the heart then, a greater aptitude and tuneableness of the mind. You dare not neglect meditation at such a time — who knows but that it may quench the Spirit! Do not drive this blessed dove from the ark of your soul.

In these two cases, evening meditation is seasonable. But I say, if I may toss in my verdict, *the morning is to be preferred*. As the flower of the sun opens in the morning to take in the sweet beams of the sun, so open your soul in the morning to take in sweet thoughts of God. And so much for the timing of meditation.

Chapter 14. How long Christians should be conversant with this Duty

Ques: But how long should I meditate?

Ans: If we consider how much of our time is given to the world, it is hard if we cannot give God at least one half hour every day. I will only say this for a general rule. *Meditate till you find your heart grow warm in this duty.*

If a man is cold, do you ask how long he should stand by the fire? Surely, till he is thoroughly warm, and made fit for his work. So Christian, if your heart is cold, there is never a day, no, not the hottest day in summer, that it will freeze there. Now, stand at the fire of meditation till you find your affections warmed, and you are made more fit for spiritual service. David mused till his heart grew hot within him, Psa 39.3. I will conclude this with that excellent saying of Bernard, "Lord, I will never come away from you, *without* you." Let this be a Christian's resolution: not to leave off his meditations of God, till he finds something of God *in him* — some ardent desires after God, Song 5.4; some "flamings of love," Song 5.8.

Chapter 15. Concerning the Usefulness of Meditation

⁸⁶ Desire, ardour, force.

Having answered these questions, I will next show the benefit and usefulness of meditation.

I don't know any duty that brings in greater income and revenue than this. It is reported about Thales,⁸⁷ that he left the affairs of state to become a contemplating philosopher. O! If we knew the advantage which is gained by this duty, we would often retire from the noise and hurry of the world, so that we might give ourselves to meditation.

The benefit of meditation appears in *seven particulars*.

1. Meditation is an excellent means to profit by the word. Reading may bring a truth into the head, but meditation brings it into the heart. It is better to meditate on one sermon than hear five. I observe many put up their protests in our congregations, complaining that they cannot profit; may not *this* be the chief reason: they don't *chew the cud* — they don't *meditate* on what they have heard. If an angel were to come from heaven and preach to men — no, if Jesus Christ himself were their preacher — they would never profit without meditation. It is the settling of the milk that makes it turn to cream; and it is the settling of a truth in the mind, that makes it turn to spiritual aliment.⁸⁸ The bee sucks the flower, and then works it in the hive, and makes honey from it. Hearing a truth preached is the sucking of a flower; it must be worked in the hive of the heart by meditation, before it will turn to honey. There is a disease in children called *rickets* — when they have large heads, but their lower parts are small and do not thrive. I wish many of the professors in London didn't have *spiritual* rickets. For they have great heads and much knowledge, yet they don't thrive in godliness. Their heart is faint, and their feet feeble; they don't work vigorously in the ways of God. And the cause of this disease is *lack of meditation*. Illumination without meditation makes us no better than devils. Satan is an angel of light, and yet he is black enough.

2. Meditation makes the heart serious, and then it is ever best. Meditation ballasts the heart. When the ship is ballasted, it isn't so quickly overturned by the wind. And when the heart is ballasted with meditation, it is not so quickly overturned with vanity. Some Christians have light hearts: "his prophets are light," Zep 3.4. A light Christian will be blown into any opinion or vice. You may blow a feather any which way; well, there are many feathery Christians. The devil no sooner comes with a temptation, than they are ready to catch fire. Now, meditation makes the heart *serious*. And God says of a serious Christian, as David said of Goliath's sword, "There is none like that, give it to me," (1Sam 21.9). Meditation consolidates a Christian. Solid gold is best; and the solid Christian is the only metal that will be acceptable with God. The more serious the heart grows, the more spiritual it becomes; and the more spiritual, the more it resembles the Father of spirits. When a man is serious, he is fittest for employment. The serious Christian is fittest for service, and it is meditation that brings the heart into this blessed frame.

3. Meditation is the bellows of the affections. Meditation hatches good affections, just as the hen hatches her young ones, by sitting on them. We light our affection at this fire of meditation: "While I was musing, the fire burned," Psa 39.3. David was meditating on mortality, and see how his heart was affected by it, ver. 4: "Lord, make me to know my end and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am." The reason our

⁸⁷ Greek philosopher and astronomer (624-546 BC) who was said by Aristotle to be the founder of physical science.

⁸⁸ What needs to be eaten to sustain a person's body; necessary food for nourishment.

affections are so chilled and cold in spiritual things, is because we don't warm ourselves more at the fire of meditation. Illumination makes us *shining lamps*, but meditation makes us *burning lamps*. What is it to know Christ only by speculation, and not by affection? It is the proper work of meditation to excite and inflame *holy passions*. What sparklings of love are in such a soul! When David had meditated on God's law, he could not fail to love it: "Oh how love I your law! It is my meditation all day long," Psa 119.97. When the spouse by meditation had viewed those singular beauties in her beloved, white and ruddy, she grew love-sick, Song 5.8. Galeatius Caraocialus, that famous marquis of Vico who had been much engaged in the contemplation of Christ, breaks out into a holy pathos: *Let their money perish with them, who esteem all the gold in the world worth one hour's communion with Jesus Christ!*

4. Meditation fits us for holy duties. The musician first puts his instrument in tune, and then he plays a lesson. Meditation tunes the heart, and then it is fit for any holy service. As the sails are to the ship, so meditation is to our duty. It carries on the soul more swiftly.

(1) *Meditation fits us for hearing.* When the ground is softened by meditation, then it is fit for the plough and the seed. When the heart is softened by meditation, then is a fit time for the seed of the word to be sown in it.

(2) *Meditation fits us for prayer.* Prayer is the spiritual pulse of the soul, by which it beats strongly after God. There is no living without prayer. A man cannot live unless he breathes; no more can the soul live unless it breathes out its desires to God. Prayer *ushers in* mercy, and prayer *sanctifies* mercy, 1Tim 4.5. It makes mercy *be* mercy. Prayer has power over God, Hos 12.4.⁸⁹ Prayer comes with *letters of mandamus*⁹⁰ to heaven, Isa 45.11. Prayer is the spiritual leech that sucks the poison of sin out of the soul. What a blessed duty, or shall I say *privilege* is prayer! Now, meditation is a help to prayer. Gerson calls it the *nurse* of prayer.

Meditation is like oil to the lamp; the lamp of prayer will soon go out unless meditation cherishes and supports it. Meditation and prayer are like two turtles; if you separate one, the other dies. A cunning angler observes the time and season when the fish bite best, and that is when he throws in his angle. When the heart is warmed by meditation, that is the best season to throw in the angle of prayer, and fish for mercy. After Isaac had been in the field meditating, he was fit for prayer when he came home. When the gun is full of powder, it is fittest to discharge. So when the mind is full of good thoughts, a Christian is fittest to discharge by prayer. That is when he sends up whole volleys of sighs and groans to heaven.

Meditation has a double benefit in it: it pours in, and it pours out. First it pours good thoughts into the mind, and then it pours those thoughts out again in prayer. Meditation first furnishes us with *matter* to pray, and then it furnishes us with a *heart* to pray,. "I was musing," says David, and the very next words are a prayer: "Lord make me know my end," (Psa 39.3-4). And, "I muse on the works of your hands, I stretch out my hands to you," Psa 143.5-6. The musing of his head made way for stretching out his hands in prayer. When Christ was upon the mount, then he prayed. So too, when the soul is on the mount of

⁸⁹ **Hos 12.4** Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed;

⁹⁰ Law: an extraordinary writ commanding an official to perform a ministerial act that the law recognizes as an absolute duty and not a matter for the official's discretion; used only when all other judicial remedies fail.

meditation, it is then in tune for prayer. Prayer is the child of meditation. Meditation leads the van,⁹¹ and prayer brings up the rear.

(3) *Meditation fits us for humiliation.* When David contemplated the works of creation — their splendour, harmony, motion, and influence — he lets the plumes of pride fall, and begins to have self-abasing thoughts: “When I consider the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have ordained, What is man that you are mindful of him?” Psa 8.3-4.

5. Meditation is a strong antidote against sin. Most sin is committed for lack of meditation. Men sin through thoughtlessness and passion. Would they be so brutishly sensual as they are, if they seriously meditated on what sin is? Would they take this viper in their hand if they but considered the sting before? Sin puts a worm into the conscience, a sting into death, a fire into hell. If men meditated on this, that after all their dainty dishes, death will bring in the reckoning, and they must pay the reckoning in hell, then they would say as David did in another sense: “Let me not eat of their delicacies,” Psa 141.4. The devil’s apple has a bitter core in it. If men thought about this, surely it would put them into a cold sweat, and it would be like the angel’s drawn sword to frighten them. Meditation is a golden shield to beat back sin. When Joseph’s mistress tempted him to wickedness, meditation preserved him: “Why would I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen 39.9) Meditation makes the heart like wet tinder: it will not take the devil’s fire.

6. Meditation is a cure for covetousness. The covetous man is called an idolater, Col 3.5. Though he will not bow down to an idol, yet he worships graven images in another coin. Now, meditation is an excellent means to lessen our esteem of the world. Great things seem little to the one who stands high. If he could live among the stars, the earth would seem like nothing. For a Christian who stands high on the pinnacle of meditation, how all worldly things disappear and seem like nothing to him! He doesn’t see in them what men of the world see. He has gotten into his tower, and *heaven* is his prospect. What is said of God, I may allude to with reverence: “He dwells on high; He humbles himself to behold the things done on the earth,” Psa 113.5-6. The Christian who dwells on high by meditation, considers it humbling and abasing himself to look down upon the earth and behold things done in this lower region. Paul, whose meditations were sublime and seraphic, looked at things which were not seen, 2Cor 4.18. How he trampled upon the world! How he scorned it! “I am crucified to the world,” Gal 6.14. It is as if he had said, *It is too far below me to pay it any mind.* He who is catching at a crown, will not fish for bait,⁹² as Cleopatra once said to Mark Antony. A Christian who is elevated by holy meditation, will not set his *heart* where his *feet* should be — upon the earth.

7. Holy meditation banishes vain and sinful thoughts. It purifies the fancy: “How long will vain thoughts lodge within you?” Jer 4.14. The mind is the shop or workhouse where sin is first framed. Sin begins at the thoughts. The thoughts are the first plotters and contrivers of evil. The mind and imagination is a stage where sin is first acted on. The malicious man mulls over sin in his thoughts; he contemplates revenge. The impure person mulls over concupiscence in his thoughts; he contemplates lust. The Lord humbles us for our

⁹¹ The leading units moving at the head of an army.

⁹² Originally, “fish for gudgeons.”

contemplative wickedness: “If you have thought evil, lay your hand upon your mouth,” Pro 30.32. How much sin men commit in the chamber of their imagination! Now, meditating on God’s law would be a good means to banish these sinful thoughts. If David had carried the book of the law about with him, and meditated on it, he would not have looked on Bathsheba with a lascivious eye, 2Sam 11.2. Holy meditation would have quenched that wild-fire of lust.

The word of God is pure, Psa 119.140. It is not only subjective, but effective. It is not only pure in itself, but it makes those pure who meditate on it. Christ whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, Joh 2.15. Holy meditation would whip out idle and vagrant thoughts, and not allow them to lodge in the mind. What is the reason the angels in heaven don’t have a vain thought? They have sight of God; their eye is never off Him. If the eye of the soul were fixed on God by meditation, how [quickly] vain and impure thoughts would vanish! When that woman was in the tower, Jdg 9.53, and Abimelech came near the tower to enter it, she threw a millstone out of the tower upon him, and killed him. So too, when we have entered into the high tower of meditation, and sinful thoughts would come near to enter, we may throw a millstone upon them from this tower, and destroy them.

And thus you have seen the benefit of meditation.

Chapter 16.

Setting forth the Excellence of Meditation

Aristotle places felicity⁹³ in the contemplation of the mind. Meditation is highly commended by Austin, Chrysostom, and Cyprian, as the *nursery* of piety. Jerome calls it his *paradise*. With what words should I present it? Other duties have done excellently, but “you excel them all” (Pro 31.29). Meditation is a friend to the graces; it helps to water the plantation. I may call it, in Basil’s expression, *the treasury where all the graces are locked up*; and with Theophylact, *the very gate and portal by which we enter into glory*. By meditation the spirits are raised and heightened to a kind of angelic frame. Meditation sweetly anticipates happiness; it puts us in heaven before our time. Meditation brings God and the soul together, 1Joh 3.2.⁹⁴

Meditation is the saints’ perspective glass,⁹⁵ by which they see invisible things. It is the golden ladder by which they ascend paradise. It is the spy they send abroad to search the land of promise, and it brings a bunch of grapes back with it. It is the dove they send out, and it brings back an olive branch of peace in its mouth. But who can tell how sweet honey is, except those who taste it? The excellence of meditation I leave to experienced Christians, who will say its comfort may be better *felt* than *expressed*. To excite every believer to this pancreston,⁹⁶ to this so useful, excellent (I almost said angelic) duty, let me lay down some divine motives to meditation. And how glad I would be if I could revive this duty among Christians.

⁹³ State of well-being characterized by emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy.

⁹⁴ **1Joh 3.2** Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

⁹⁵ An early telescope.

⁹⁶ This universal remedy that is precious for all.

Chapter 17. Containing seven divine Motives to Meditation

Motive 1. Meditation distinguishes and characterizes a man. By this he may take a measure of his heart, whether it is good or bad. Let me allude to that verse, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he,” Pro 23.7. As the meditation is, so is the man. Meditation is the touchstone of a Christian; it shows what mettle he is made of. It is a spiritual index. Just as an index shows what is in the book, so meditation shows what is in the heart. If all a man’s meditations are how he may get power against sin, how he may grow in grace, how he may have more communion with God, then it will show what is in his heart. The frame of his heart is *spiritual*. Judge the health of your soul by the beating of this pulse. It is the character of a godly man that he fears God “and thinks of His name,” Mal 3.16. Whereas, if the thoughts are taken up with pride and lust, then as the thoughts are, so is the heart: “their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity,” Isa 59.7. When vain sinful thoughts come, men make much of them. They make room for them; they diet and lodge with them. If a good thought were by chance to come into their mind, it is soon turned out of doors as an unwelcome guest. What further witness do we need? This argues for much unsoundness of heart. Let this provoke us to holy meditation.

Motive 2. Thoughts of God, just as they bring delight with them, so they leave peace behind. Those hours are the best which are spent with God. Conscience, like the bee, gives honey. It will not grieve us when we come to die, that we have spent our time in holy soliloquies and exclamations. But what honour will the sinner have when he asks his conscience, as Joram asked Jehu (2Kng 9.22), “Is it peace, my conscience? Is it peace?” And conscience will say, as Jehu did, “What peace, so long as the whoredoms of your mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts, are so many?” Oh how sad it will be for a man at such a time! Christians, as you tender your peace, “meditate on God’s law day and night,” (Psa 1.2).

This duty of meditation being neglected, the heart will run wild; it will not be a vineyard, but a wilderness.

Motive 3. Meditation keeps the heart in good decorum. It plucks up the weeds of sin; it prunes the luxuriant branches; it waters the flowers of grace; it sweeps all the walks in the heart, so that Christ may walk there with delight. For lack of holy meditation, the heart lies like the sluggard’s field, “all overgrown with thorns and briars,” Pro 24.31, with unclean earthly thoughts. It is the devil’s hog sty, rather than Christ’s garden. It is like a house fallen to ruin, fit only for unclean spirits to inhabit.

Motive 4. The fruitlessness of all other meditations. One man lays out his thoughts about laying up his goods (Luk 12.19); his meditations are how to raise himself in the world. And when he has arrived at an estate, God often blows it away, Hag 1.9. His care is for his child, and perhaps God takes it away; or if it lives, it proves to be a cross. Another meditates on how to satisfy his ambition. “Honour Me before the people,” 1Sam 15.30. Alas, what is honour but a meteor in the air, a torch lit by the breath of people and blown out by the least puff! How many live to see their *names* buried before *them*! When this sun is in the meridian, it soon sets in a cloud.

Thus, those meditations which do not centre upon God are fruitless — like carrying dust against the wind. But especially at death, a man will see that all those thoughts which were

not spent on God, were fruitless. “In that very day his thoughts will perish,” Psa 146.4. I may allude to it in this sense: all worldly, vain thoughts will perish and come to nothing in that day of death. What good will the whole globe of the world be at such a time? Those who have revelled in their thoughts and impertinences, will only be disquieted more. It will cut them to the heart to think how they have spun a fool’s thread. A Scythian captain having yielded the city for a draught of water, cried out, “What have I lost? What have I betrayed?” So it will be with that man, when he comes to die, who has spent all his meditations upon the world. He too will say, ‘What have I lost? What have I betrayed? I have lost heaven; I have betrayed my soul.’ And shouldn’t the consideration of this fix our minds upon thoughts of God and glory? All other meditations are fruitless — like a piece of ground for which much has been laid out, and yet it yields no crop.

Motive 5. Holy meditation is not lost. God has a pen to write down all our good thoughts. “A book of remembrance was written for those who thought upon his name,” Mal 3.16. As God has all our members, so he has all our meditations written in his book. God pens our private devotion.

Motive 6. The sixth motive is in the text, namely, the blessedness affixed to the meditating Christian: “Blessed is the man,” etc., Psa 1.1. *Do not say it is hard to meditate. What do you think of blessedness?* Lycurgus ⁹⁷ could draw the Lacedemonians ⁹⁸ to anything by rewards. If men can meditate with delight on what will make them *curse*d, shouldn’t we meditate on what will make us *bless*ed? Indeed, in the Hebrew it is in the plural, *blessednesses* — we will have one blessedness upon another.

Motive 7. *Lastly*, delightful meditation in God’s law is the best way for a man to prosper in his estate. “This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it; for then you will make your way prosperous,” Jos 1.8. I leave this to the consideration of those who desire to thrive in the world; and let this serve as a motive to meditation.

The next thing remaining is to lay down some rules about meditation.

Chapter 18.

Prescribing Six Rules About Meditation

Rule 1. When you go to meditate, be very serious in the work. Let there be a deep impression upon your soul. And so that you may be serious in mentation,⁹⁹ do these two things:

1. Get yourself into a posture of holy reverence. Overawe your heart with thoughts of God, and the incomprehensibility of His majesty. When you are at the work of meditation, remember that you are now to deal with God. If an angel from heaven was appointed to meet you at such an hour, wouldn’t you address yourself to meet him with all seriousness and solemnity? Behold, one greater than an angel is here: the God of glory is present. He has an eye upon you; he sees the carriage of your heart when you are alone. Think to

⁹⁷ Creator of Sparta’s Constitution.

⁹⁸ The ancient name of Sparta.

⁹⁹ The process of using your mind to consider something carefully.

yourself, O Christian, when you go to meditate, you are dealing in private with the one whom angels adore, and before whom devils tremble. Think to yourself that you are now in the presence of the one before whom you must shortly stand, and all the world with you, to receive their doom. You must be removed from the closet to the tribunal, and you don't know how soon.

2. So that your heart may be serious in meditation, labour to possess your thoughts with the solemnity and greatness of the work that you are now going about doing. As David said concerning his building a house for God, "the work is great," 1Chr 29.1. So it may be said of meditation, that the work is great. And we need to gather and rally together all the powers of the soul to the work. If you were to set about a business in which your *life* was concerned, how serious you would be in thoughts of it! In the business of meditation, your *soul* is concerned — eternity depends upon it. If you neglect or slight it, you run a hazard of your salvation. If Archimedes was so serious in drawing his mathematical line, that he didn't pay attention to the sacking of the city, oh how serious a Christian should be when he is drawing a line for eternity! When you go to meditate, you are going about the greatest work in the world.

Rule 2. Read before you meditate. "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it," Jos 1.8. The law must be in Joshua's mouth; he was first to read, and then to meditate. "Give attendance to reading," 1Tim 4.13. Then it follows, "*meditate* on these things," ver. 15. Reading furnishes with matter; it is the oil that feeds the lamp of meditation. *Reading helps to rectify meditation.* Austin says well that meditation without reading will be erroneous. By nature, the mind is defiled as well as the conscience, Tit 1.15. And so the mind will be minting ¹⁰⁰ thoughts, and how many untruths it mints! Therefore, first read in the book of the law, and then meditate on it. Be sure your meditations are grounded upon scripture. There is a strange Utopia in the imaginations of some men. They take for *true* principles, those which are *false*; and if they mistake their principles, they will necessarily be wrong in their meditations. Someone who is of the Sadducees' opinion that there is no resurrection, mistakes a principle. Now, while he is meditating on this, he is carried to direct atheism in the end. Someone who is of the Antinomians' opinion that there is no law for a justified person, mistakes a principle. And while he is meditating on this, he falls into scandal in the end. Thus the mind having lain in wrong principles, and taking for a truth that which is not true, the meditation will necessarily be erroneous. And so a man goes to hell in the end, based upon a mistake.

Therefore, be sure you *read* before you meditate, so that you may say, *it is written*. Meditate on nothing except what you believe to be a truth; and believe nothing to be a truth, except what can show its letters of credence from the word. Observe this rule: let reading usher in meditation. *Reading without meditation is unfruitful; meditation without reading is dangerous.*

Rule 3. Do not multiply the subjects of meditation. That is, do not meditate on too many things at once, like the bird that hops from one bough to another, and stays nowhere. Rather, single out some head, one at a time, which you will meditate on. Too much variety

¹⁰⁰ Coining – which is to make up or invent something.

distracts. One truth driven home by meditation will most kindly affect the heart. A man who is to shoot, sets up one target that he aims to hit. When you shoot your mind above the world by meditation, set one thing before you to hit. If you are to meditate on the passion of Christ, then let that take up all your thoughts. If it is on death, confine your thoughts to that. One subject at a time is enough. Martha, while she was distracted about many things, neglected the one thing (Luk 10.42). So while our meditations are taken up about many things, we lose that one thing which should affect our hearts and do us more good. Drive only one wedge of meditation at a time, and be sure you drive it home to the heart. Those who aim at a whole flock of birds hit none. When several medicines are applied together, the one hinders the virtue of the others; whereas a single medicine might do good.

Rule. 4. To meditation join self-examination. When you have been meditating on any spiritual subject, put a query to your soul, and even if it is short, let it be serious: ‘O my soul! Is it this way with you or not?’ When you have been meditating about the fear of God, that it is the “beginning of wisdom,” Pro 1.7, put a query to it: ‘O my soul! Is this fear planted in your heart? You have almost come to the end of your days. Have you come to the beginning of wisdom yet?’ When you have been meditating on Christ – his virtues, his privileges – put a query: ‘O my soul! Do you love Him who is so lovely?’ (Song 5.16) ‘Are you grafted into Him?’ (Rom 11.17) ‘Are you a living branch of this living vine?’ (Joh 15.5) When you have been meditating on the graces of the Spirit, put a query: ‘O my soul! Are you adorned as the bride of Christ with this chain of pearl?’ (Isa 61.10) ‘Do you have your certificate for heaven ready?’ (Phi 3.20) Will you still be seeking your graces, when you should already have them to show? A Christian in his retirements should parley often with his heart in this way.

For lack of this examination, meditation evaporates and comes to nothing. For lack of examination joined with meditation, many are strangers to their own hearts. Though they live as known to others, they die unknown to themselves. Meditation is like a perspective glass by which we contemplate heavenly objects; but self-examination is like a looking-glass ¹⁰¹ by which we see into our own souls, and can judge how it is with us. Meditation joined with examination, is like the sun on the dial, which shows how the day goes. It shows us how our hearts stand affected toward spiritual things.

Rule 5. Close your meditation with prayer. Pray over your meditations. Prayer sanctifies everything (1Tim 4.5). Without it, they are but unhallowed meditations. Prayer fastens meditation upon the soul. Prayer is tying a knot at the end of meditation, so that it doesn’t slip. Pray that God will keep those holy meditations in your mind forever, that the savour of them may abide in your hearts. “O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of your people,” 1Chr 29.18. So let us pray that when we have been musing on heavenly things, and our hearts have grown hot within us, we may not cool into a sinful tepidness and lukewarmness; but rather that our affections may be like the lamp of the sanctuary, *always burning*.

Rule 6. The last rule is, let meditation be reduced to practice. *Live out your meditation.* “You shall meditate on this book, so that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it,” Jos 1.8. Meditation and practice, like two sisters, must go hand in hand.

¹⁰¹ A mirror.

Cassian¹⁰² says that the contemplative life cannot be perfected without the practice. We read that the angels had wings, and *hands under their wings*, Eze 1.8. It may be a hieroglyphic emblem of this truth: Christians must not only fly on the wing of meditation, but they must be active in obedience. They must have “hands under their wings.” The end of meditation is *action*. We must not only *meditate on* God’s law, but *walk* in his law, Deu 28.9.¹⁰³ Without this, we are like those gnostics of whom Epiphanius¹⁰⁴ complains: they had much knowledge, but were licentious in their lives. Christians must be like the sun, which not only sends out heat, but makes its circuit round the world. It is not enough that the affections are heated by meditation, but we must make our circuit too — that is, move regularly in the sphere of obedience. After warming at the fire of meditation, we must be fitter for work. *Meditation is the life of religion, and practice is the life of meditation*. It is said to the honour of Nazianzen,¹⁰⁵ that he lived out his own sermons. So a good Christian must live out his own meditations.

For instance:

1. When you have been meditating on sin — which for its bitterness is compared to grapes of gall, and for its damnableness is compared to the poison of asps — and you begin to burn in a holy indignation against sin, now put your meditations into practice: give sin a bill of divorce. “If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away, and do not let wickedness dwell in your tabernacles,” Job 11.14.

2. When you have been meditating on the graces of the Spirit, let the verdure¹⁰⁶ and lustre of these graces be seen in you. *Live* these graces. Meditate, “that you may observe and do.” This was Paul’s counsel to Timothy: “exercise yourself unto godliness,” 1Tim 4.7. Meditation and practice are like a pair of compasses; the one part of the compass fixes upon the centre, and the other part goes round the circumference. A Christian by meditation fixes upon God as the centre, and by practice he goes round the circumference of the commandments. A man who has let his thoughts run off upon riches, will not only have the *idea* of them, but he will endeavour to *get* those riches. Let your meditations be practical. When you have been meditating upon a promise, live upon that promise. When you have been meditating on a good conscience, never leave till you can say as Paul did, “In this I exercise myself, to have a good conscience,” Act 24.16. Beloved, here lies the very essence of religion.

That this rule may be well observed, consider,

1. It is only the practical part of religion that will make a man blessed. Meditation is a beautiful flower, but Rachel said to her husband, “Give me children, or I die,” Gen 30.1. So, if meditation is barren and doesn’t bring forth the child of obedience, then it will die and come to nothing.

¹⁰² Cassian, John (360-435), or John the Ascetic; a Roman monk noted for his mystical writings.

¹⁰³ **Deu 28.9** “The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways.”

¹⁰⁴ Epiphanius of Salamis (c.310–403) bishop of Salamis, Cyprus; best known for composing the *Panarion*, a very large compendium of the heresies up to his own time.

¹⁰⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus (c.329- 390), Archbishop of Constantinople.

¹⁰⁶ Lush and flourishing vegetation – fruitfulness.

2. If when you have meditated on God's law, you don't obey His law, then you will come short of those who have come short of heaven. It is said of Herod, that "he did many things," Mar 6.20. He was in many things a practiser of John's ministry. Those who meditate in God's law, and do not observe *to do it*, are not even as good as Herod. Indeed, they are no better than the devil; for he knows much, but he is still a devil.

3. Meditation without practice will increase a man's condemnation. If a father writes a letter to his son, and the son reads over this letter, studies it, and yet will not observe to do as his father writes, that would be an aggravation of his fault, and it would only provoke his father that much more against him.

Thus we have meditated on the evil of sin, and the beauty of holiness. Yet, if we don't avoid the one, or espouse the other, it will only incense the Divine Majesty that much more against us, and we will "be beaten with many stripes." (Luk 12.47)

APPENDIX TO THE FORMER DISCOURSE.

A CHRISTIAN ON EARTH STILL IN HEAVEN.

When I awake, I am still with You. Psa 139.18.

The usefulness of the Psalms.

The scripture is a spiritual paradise: the book of Psalms is placed as the Tree of Life in the midst of this paradise. The Psalms are not only for delight, but usefulness. They are like the pomegranate tree, which is not only for savour, but also for fruit; or they are like those trees of the sanctuary in Eze 47.12, which are both for food and medicine. The Psalms are enriched with variety, and suited to every Christian's estate and condition. They are a spiritual panoply and storehouse. If he finds his heart dead, here he may fetch fire; if he is weak in grace, here he may fetch armour; if he is ready to faint, here are cordials lying by. *There is no condition you can name that there is not a psalm suited to that condition.*

1. *In case of sickness.* "You will make all his bed in his sickness," Psa 41.3; and you may be sure that bed must be soft which God will make. And there is a parallel psalm to this, "My flesh fails," Psa 73.26. My health is declining, "but the Lord is the strength of my heart;" or as the Septuagint renders it, "He is the God of my heart."¹⁰⁷

2. *In case of reproach.* "I was a reproach among my enemies," Psa 31.11. "But I trusted in you O Lord; I said, you are my God," ver. 14. "Blessed be the Lord, for he has shown me his marvellous loving-kindness in a strong city," ver. 21. Here was some sunshine breaking forth out of those black clouds.

3. *In case of unkind treatment from friends.* "It was not an enemy, for then I could have borne it; but it was you, my equal, my guide, and my acquaintance; we took sweet counsel together," Psa 55.12, 13 — here was the malady. "Cast your burden upon the Lord," ver. 22 — there was the cure. The Chaldee reads it, *Cast your hope*; the Septuagint, *Cast your care*. God is power, and therefore he is *able* to help; God is mercy, and therefore he is *willing* to help. "He shall sustain you" — here is God's promise, which is his bond to secure us.

4. *In case we are closely surrounded with enemies.* There is a psalm suited to this condition: "Lord, how they have increased, who trouble me! They are many who rise up against me," Psa 3.1. "I laid myself down and slept," ver. 5. David, when beset all around with enemies, could lie down and sleep on the soft pillow of a good conscience. And Psa 27.3, "Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;" ver. 5, "He shall hide me in his pavilion; in the shelter of his tabernacle he shall hide me." He will hide me so safe, it will be as if I were in the holy place of the sanctuary, where none but the priest was to enter.

5. *In case of poverty.* If a Christian's state is brought so low, that like the widow in 1Kng 17.12, he has nothing but a handful of meal, and a little oil left in the cruse, there is a psalm of consolation: "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me," Psa 40.17. "I will bless her provision, I will satisfy her poor with bread," Psa 132.15. Here is the dew of a blessing distilled: "You are my portion, O Lord," Psa 119.57. Behold riches in poverty! What does it matter if the water in the bottle is spent, if this well is at hand?

¹⁰⁷ Douay-Rheims Psa 72.26.

6. *In case sin prevails.* If through the power of temptation, sin prevails against a child of God, there is a consolatory psalm: “Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, You shall purge them away,” Psa 65.3. In the Hebrew it is, *You will hide them*. It alludes to the mercy-seat which was covered with the wings of the cherubim. So too, the sins of the godly, when repented of, are covered with the wings of mercy and favour.

7. *In case of prayer, and no speedy reply.* “I am weary of my crying, my eyes fail while I wait for my God,” Psa 69.3. But in the same psalm he yet obtained comfort: “The Lord hears the poor, and He does not despise his prisoners,” ver. 33. Would we have fruit before it is ripe? When mercy is ripe, we shall have it; and besides, there is nothing lost by waiting. We send out the golden fleet of prayer to heaven, and the longer this fleet stays out, the greater return it will bring with it. David found it so. Therefore he pulls off his sackcloth, and puts on the garments of praise: “I will praise the name of God with a song,” ver. 30.

8. *In case of desertion.* This is the poisoned arrow that wounds the heart. But still there is a psalm to turn to: “The Lord will not cast off his people, nor will he forsake his inheritance,” Psa 94.14. This is like a star on a dark night, or like the plank and broken pieces of the ship on which Paul and the rest came safely to shore, Act 27.44. God may conceal his love from his children, but he will not take it away, 2Sam 7.15. He may change his providence towards them, but he will not alter his purpose.

9. *In case of death,* there is a psalm which revives: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,” Psa 23.4. The sting and poison of this serpent is taken away. You are with me: with your power to support; with your grace to sanctify; with your love to sweeten. “Your rod and your staff comfort me.” I have the staff of Your promise in the hand of my faith, and with this I can walk through the dark entry of death.

Thus in every condition, David’s psalms, like David’s harp, may serve to drive away the evil spirit of sadness and uncheerfulness from a Christian. So much concerning the psalms in general.

The Portrait of a Godly Man

I come now to the words of the text, “When I awake, I am still with You.”

Here you have the very effigy and portraiture of a godly man drawn out: he is one who is still with God. It was David’s happiness that he lived above the common rate of men, not only as he was higher in power and dignity, being a king, but higher in sublimity of affection, having his heart and hope raised above the world: “I am still with You.” Divines give many reasons why David was called a man after God’s heart, but surely this is not the least: because the frame of his heart was so heavenly, this being most agreeable to God’s nature and will. David was a man who, as Ambrose ¹⁰⁸ says, *lived in the world, above the world*. As soon as he awoke, he stepped into heaven. David was a seraphic saint, a mortal angel. Like a true bird of paradise, he seldom touched the earth with his feet. He was least alone when he was most alone. When he awoke he was with God.

Nor was this only when the fit was upon him — having a thought of God and then away. Rather, it was a fixed temper of heart. *I am still with You*. The pulse of his soul was still beating

¹⁰⁸ Bishop of Milan (340?-397); the first Church Father born and raised in the Christian faith. This is taken from his letter to Horontianus, *Letters* (1881). pp. 269-324. Letter 44 (AD 389).

after God. The hypocrite may have a blush of godliness, which is quickly over, Job 27.10;¹⁰⁹ but the constitution of David's soul was heavenly: "I am still with You."

Caution. It is not that David had no diversions of mind. To have the eye always fixed upon God, will be the state of the blessed in heaven; but David was *still* with God.

1. Because the bias and bent of his spirit was towards God. His heart, like the needle in the compass, pointed heavenward.
2. Because he was more with God than he was anywhere else. As we used to say, *a man lives at his house*. It is not that urgent occasions won't draw him abroad sometimes, but he is said to live there, because he resides there *most*.

The words hold forth this proposition:

Doctrine. That it is the sweet temper of a gracious heart to be still with God. "I am still with You." David awoke in heaven. He was ever above. We read in the old law, that those creatures which crept on all fours were to be held an abomination; but those which had wings to fly, and legs to leap with, were accounted clean, Lev 11.20-21. Among the unclean and abominable to God, are those whose souls creep upon the earth. But those who have the legs and wings of grace to mount up with, who are *still with God*, these are pure and precious in God's eyes.

To illustrate this point, there are three things to be explained and amplified.

1. What it means to be still with God
2. In what sense the *soul* is still with God
3. Why a *gracious heart* is still with God

1. What it means to be still with God.

In general, it means to have a sweet intercourse and communion with God; "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus," 1Joh 1.3. In prayer we speak to God; in the sacrament He kisses us with the kisses of his lips — he gives us a private *seal* of his love.

2. In what sense is the soul said to be still with God?

I answer that the soul is still with God in five manners or ways.

1. *By contemplation.* So Ainsworth ¹¹⁰ understands the text. *I am still with You* — that is, by divine contemplation. David's thoughts were ever and again running upon God. So Psa 139.17, "How precious are your thoughts to me, O God!" David's mind was a spiritual mint, and he coined gold most, for most of his thoughts were heavenly. Thoughts are like travellers and passengers in the soul. David's thoughts were still travelling towards the Jerusalem above. In David's dangers, God was still with him; in David's contemplations, he was still with God. Anaxagoras ¹¹¹ said he was born to contemplate heaven. Thus a Christian is still with God: he is *viewing glory* — his thoughts are all packed up and have gone there.

¹⁰⁹ **Job 27.10** Will he *delight* himself in the Almighty? Will he *always* call on God?

¹¹⁰ Henry Ainsworth (1571–1622).

¹¹¹ An Athenian philosopher who maintained that everything is composed of very small particles that were arranged by some eternal intelligence (500-428 BC).

2. *The soul is still with God by desire.* His anchor is cast in heaven, Heb 6.19,¹¹² and he is carried there with the sails of desire. David shot his heart into heaven by desire. He had strong pantings after God: “Whom do I have in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth I desire besides You,” Psa 73.25. He doesn’t say he had *nothing* upon earth, for he had his crown and sceptre. But he had nothing he desired like he desired God. “As the hart pants after the water brooks, so my soul pants after You, O God,” Psa 42.1. The hart, as historians observe, is a dry, thirsty creature, especially when chased by the hunter. Then its nature is on fire, and it must have water to quench it. Thus the pious soul pants after the refreshing streams of Christ’s blood. And these desires of a Christian are rightly terminated: he desires conformity to Christ in grace, as well as communion with him in glory. He desires the Sun of righteousness, not only for its refreshing beams, but also for His healing wings. He desires not only Christ’s presence, but also his image. ‘Lord give me yourself, that I may be more holy; what would I do in heaven with this unholy heart? What converse could I have with God or angels?’ Thus the soul is still with God by desire; and he desires not only mercy, but grace.

3. *The soul is still with God by love.* Where a man’s love is, there *he* is. What an egress and expansion of heart there is toward that which we love. Bonaventure¹¹³ calls love *the wing of the soul*; on this wing David flew to heaven. “I am still with You.” Love has this property: it unites at a distance; it fixes the heart upon the object. Thus the love-sick spouse, when she could not see Christ, she embraced him in her affections. When her *eye* was not upon him, her *love* was still upon him: “Have you seen him whom my soul loves?” Song 3.3. Christ, my love, is crucified, said Ignatius.¹¹⁴ As Christ was fastened to the cross, so he is fastened to a Christian’s heart. A true saint is like the tribe of Manasseh: half of the tribe was on this side of the Jordan, and half on the other side, in the holy land, Jos 1.14. So it is with a saint: half of him is on this side, and half in the holy land. His flesh is on earth, his heart is in heaven. As it was said by Paul, “Whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell,” 2Cor 12.2. So it may be said of a good Christian, that it is hard to tell whether he is in the body or out of it. His love is in heaven; he is lodged in the tree of life. The fire of love boils the heart as high as heaven.

4. *The soul is still with God by faith.* Unbelief is called “drawing back from God,” Heb 10.39; and faith is called “drawing near to God,” Heb 10.22. By an eye of faith, through the perspective glass of a promise, we look into heaven. The people of Israel stood in the outer court of the temple, but the high priest “entered within the veil,” into the holy of holies. Thus the senses stand in the outer court of the body, but faith enters within the veil (Heb 6.19). It sees Christ clothed with the robe of our human nature, and sitting down in glory above the angels. Faith embraces Christ. Austin asks the question, *How shall I put out a long arm to reach Christ in heaven?* Believe, he says, and you have laid hold on him. Faith is the golden clasp that knits us to Christ. By faith we put on Christ as a garment, Rom 13.14. By faith we

¹¹² **Heb 6.19** This *hope* we have is an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil;

¹¹³ Bonaventure (1221-1274); born Giovanni di Fidanza, Italian scholastic theologian.

¹¹⁴ Bishop of Antioch who was martyred under the Roman Emperor Trajan (died 110).

receive and conceive him as food, Col 2.6.¹¹⁵ By faith we are ingrafted into him like scions grafted into the stock, Joh 15.5. Indeed a believer's life is outside of himself. He lives more in Christ than he lives in himself, just as the beam lives in the sun, and as the branch in the root, Col 3.3.¹¹⁶ Even as Judah said concerning Jacob, "his life is bound up in the lad's life," Gen 44.30, so a believer's life is bound up in Christ. And thus the gracious soul is ever with God, by faith.

5. *A Christian is still with God in the whole course and tenor of his life.* Not only is his heart in heaven, but his conversation too, Phi 3.20.¹¹⁷ Our deportment and carriage is in heaven; we walk as citizens of that city. It is said of Christ, "his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem," Luk 9.53. A good Christian should be known by his face. His outward carriage and demeanour should show that he is going to the Jerusalem above. Socrates being asked what country he was from, answered that he was a citizen of the world. A true saint is a citizen of heaven. It is known what place he belongs to by his speech, habit, and gesture. There is a kind of angelic brightness on him. He shines in holiness, as Moses' face shone when he had been with God on the mount. He is still doing angels' work; his life is a veritable heaven on earth. "Noah walked with God," Gen 6.9. And in this sense, the pious soul is still with God: he walks unweariedly with God. Though he meets with some rubs and difficulties on the way, yet he still keeps his walk.

And thus we have seen in what sense a gracious Soul is still with God. The eagle may sometimes sit on a low bough, but her nest is built high, Job 39.27. A Christian walks on the surface of the earth, but his nest is built upon the Rock, Christ. The moon is seen in the water, yet it is seated in the firmament. So too, a Christian is seen here below, but he is above — "he is still with God."

3. Why a gracious heart is still with God.

There are five reasons why it is so.

1. *From the nature of grace.* Grace carries the soul up towards God. Grace is like fire; it is the nature of fire to ascend. You who lie grovelling on the earth, feeding like the serpent on dust, or like eels wrapping yourselves in the mud and slime of the world, if you had that new and holy principle of grace infused, your souls would spark upwards, you would "mount up to heaven like eagles," Isa 40.31. If you had the sharp eye of faith to see Christ, you would soon have the swift wing of desire to fly to him.

2. *From the magnetic power of God's Spirit.* The Spirit has not only a soul-purifying, but a soul-elevating power. As the sun exhales and draws the vapours up from the earth, so the Spirit draws the heart up to God; "The Spirit lifted me up," Eze 3.14. Though there is grace in the heart which would still be mounting upward, yet there is much corruption to pull us down.

¹¹⁵ Col 2.6 As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him; Joh 6.55-56 "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. ⁵⁶ "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him." Joh 15.10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love.

¹¹⁶ Col 3.3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

¹¹⁷ Phil 3.20 For our citizenship [or *conversation* – the conduct of our life] is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

A Christian in this life is both checked and spurred; grace spurs him forward in his way to heaven, and then corruption checks him. Now, here the Spirit comes in and draws the heart up to God — which is as mighty a power as if you saw a millstone drawn up into the sun

3. *Because God is the centre of the soul*; and where should the heart ever be but at its centre? While the heart is on the earth it shakes and trembles — like the needle in a compass — till it turns to God. God is the proper orb where the soul fixes. A Christian rests in God as the bee rests in the hive, and the bird rests in the nest. “Return to your rest, O my soul,” Psa 116.7. Noah’s dove was never well, till it was in the ark. The ark was a type of Christ.

4. *Because of those dear relations the soul has to God*. There are all the terms of consanguinity.¹¹⁸ God is our Father, Joh 20.17; and where should the child be but with its father? He is our husband, Isa 54.5; and where should the wife be but with her husband? He is our friend, Joh 15.15; now, friends desire to still be together. God is our rock, 2Sam 22.2; and where should Christ’s doves be but in the clefts of this blessed rock? God is the saint’s treasure, and “where their treasure is, there their hearts will be also.” (Mat 6.21)

5. *Because of those rare excellencies which are in God*.

(1) FULNESS. Everyone desires to be at a full fountain. “For it pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell,” Col 1.19. Observe, Christ is not only said to be fulness in the concrete, but fulness in the abstract; indeed, in him is *all* fulness. A vessel may be full of water, but that is not *all* fulness: it is not full of wine. A chest may be full of silver, but that is not *all* fulness: it is not full of pearl. But in Christ is *all* fulness. He is bread to strengthen, Joh 6.48, wine to comfort, Joh 15.1, and gold to enrich, Rev 3.18. He is all, and in all, Col 3.11.¹¹⁹

Thus there is a variety of fulness in the Lord Jesus. O Christian, what is it you need? Do you want quickening grace? Christ is the prince of life, Act 3.15. Do you want healing grace? Christ has made a medicine of his own body to cure you, Isa 53.5. Do you want cleansing grace? There is the bath of his blood to wash you: “The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all our sin,” 1Joh 1.7. Let not the poets tell us of their Aonia and Kastalia, fountains in which they supposed their nymphs had washed; for these waters distilled out of Christ’s side are infinitely more pure. Pliny says that the watercourses of Rome are the world’s wonder. Oh, if he had known these sacred water-courses in Christ’s blood, he would have been struck with admiration! And do you wonder that the soul is still with Christ, when there is all fulness in him?

No, but that all is not all. The apostle goes further. “It pleased the Father that in him all fulness should *dwell*,” (Col 1.19). To note the duration of this fulness; it is not *transient*, but *immanent*. This fulness is not in Christ, like water in the pipe or spout. The spout may be full of water, but it doesn’t continue there; water doesn’t *dwell* in the spout. But this fulness is in Christ, as light is in the sun — it *dwells* there. Christ’s fulness is a never-failing fulness. What more can be said?

¹¹⁸ A blood relation.

¹¹⁹ Alluding to **Psa 104.14-15** He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the service of man, That he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine *that* makes glad the heart of man, Oil to make *his* face shine, And bread *which* strengthens man’s heart.

Indeed, but the apostle carries it yet higher. “In him dwells *all the fulness of the Godhead*,” (Col 2.9). If Christ had all the fulness of the creation, the treasures of the earth, the holiness of the angels, this still could not satisfy the soul. In him there is the fulness of the *Godhead*: the riches of the Deity are in him. And the communication of this blessed fulness, Eph 3.19,¹²⁰ — so far as there is a capacity to receive it — is what satisfies the soul and fills it brim-full. If there is such a plenitude and fulness in God, no wonder a gracious heart desires to be still with God!

(2) SWEETNESS. God is love, 1Joh 4.8. Everyone desires to be with those from whom they receive the most love. The Lord often makes himself known to the soul in an ordinance, as he did to the disciples in the breaking of bread [on the road to Emmaus], Luk 24.35. He manifests himself in the comforts of his Spirit, which are so sweet and ravishing, that they surpass all understanding, Gal 5.22.¹²¹ And do you wonder that the soul is so strongly carried after God? Truly, if the soul is still with God, to speak with reverence, it is *owing* to God. He gives those jewels and bracelets, those love-tokens, so that the soul cannot help but desire to be still with God.

USE 1. To show us an art of how to be in heaven before our time; namely, by being still with God. A good Christian begins his heaven *here*. Grace translates him into the paradise of God. Elijah left his mantle behind, but he was taken up in a fiery chariot. So it is with a saint: the mantle of the flesh is left behind, but his soul is carried up in a fiery chariot of love.

USE 2. For reproof; and this consists of two branches.

Branch 1. It reproves those who are never with God: they live “without God in the world,” Eph 2.12. It is the characteristic mark of a wicked man that God is not in all his thoughts, Psa 10.4. He never thinks of God, unless it is with horror and amazement — like the prisoner thinks of the judge and the courts. And here, two sorts of sinners are indicted:

(1) *Those who are still with their sins.* A child of God, though sin is with him, yet *he* is not with sin; his will is against sin. “That which I do, I do not allow,” Rom 7.15. He would gladly shake off this viper into the fire (Act 28.5). He forsakes sin, but sin will not forsake him. So that, although sin is with him, he is not with sin. But a wicked man and sin are together, like two lovers mutually solacing and embracing. A wicked man is “a worker of iniquity,” Luk 13.27, like a workman who follows his trade in his shop.

(2) *Those who are still with the world.* It is considered almost a miracle to find a diamond in a vein of gold. And it is just as great a miracle to find Christ, that precious stone, in an earthly heart. The world is men’s Diana: “they mind earthly things,” Phi 3.19. Like the ostrich, which cannot fly high (though she has wings) because her body is so heavy, most men are so weighed down with thick clay (Hab 2.6)¹²² that they cannot soar aloft. They are like Saul, hidden among the stuff, 1Sam 10.22; or like Sisera, who had his head nailed to the earth, Jdg 4.21 — so their hearts are nailed to the earth. Absalom’s beauty stole away the

¹²⁰ Eph 3.19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

¹²¹ The gifts of the Spirit include the peace of God, which surpasses understanding, Phi 4.7.

¹²² The KJV uses “thick clay”; other translations use *heavy debt* or *pledges*. Drusius notes that gold was called “yellow earth” (sticky clay), and that the Romans cursed a greedy man by wishing he be buried under heavy clay at death.

hearts of Israel from their king, 2Sam 15.6. And the world's bewitching beauty steals men's hearts away from God. It is sad when the husband sends his wife a jewel, and she falls so in love with the jewel, that she forgets her husband. An estate should be a loadstone to draw men nearer to God; but it is often a millstone to sink them to hell.

There can be a moderate use of these things, but there is danger in excess use. The bee may suck a little honey from the leaf, but put it in a barrel of honey, and it dies. Christians must stave off the world, so that it doesn't get into their hearts, Psa 62.10.¹²³ Water is useful to the ship, and helps it sail better to the haven. But if water gets *into* the ship, and it is not pumped out at the leak, it drowns the ship. So too, riches are useful and convenient for our passage; we sail more comfortably with them through the troubles of this world. But if water gets into the ship — if the love of riches gets into the heart — then we are drowned by them, 1Tim 6.9.¹²⁴

Branch 2. It reproves those who are seldom with God. They are *sometimes* with God, but not *still* with God. The shell-fish, as naturalists observe, has so little life in it, and moves so slowly, that it is hard to determine if it lives a vegetative or a sensitive life. The same may be said of many Christians: their motion heavenward is so slow and inconstant, that we can hardly know if the life of grace is in them or not — they are seldom with God. “You have left your first love, Rev 2.4. Many professors have almost lost their acquaintance with God. There was a time when they could weep at a sermon — but now these wells are stopped up. There was a time when they were tender about sin; the least hair of it would make their eye weep; the least sin would afflict their conscience — but now they can *digest* this poison. There was a time when they trembled at the threatenings of the word — but now, with the leviathan, they can “laugh at the shaking of a spear,” Job 41.29. There was a time when they “called the sabbath a delight,” Isa 58.13; it was the queen of days. How they waited with joy for the rising of the Sun of Righteousness on that day! What pantings of their soul after God! What a mounting up of affections! But now the case is altered: “What a weariness it is to serve the Lord!” Mal 1.13.

There was a time when they delighted in the word (indeed it is a mirror that mends the eyes of those who look into it). But now they have laid it aside; they seldom look in this mirror. There was a time when they could offer up strong cries in prayer, Heb 5.7. But now the wings of prayer are clipped. They come like cold suitors to God, with their petitions cooling between their lips, as if they would teach God to deny them. Oh why have you quit your communion with God?! “What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they have gone far from me?” Jer 2.5. Let Christians lay this sadly to heart: “Remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do your first works,” Rev 2.5. You are in a spiritual lethargy: O never leave till your hearts are wound up to such a heavenly frame as David had here: “When I awake, I am still with You.” And that brings me to the next use.

USE 3. The third use is exhortation. To persuade all those who profess they are Christians, to imitate this blessed pattern in the text: “be still with God.” You will never go to heaven when you die, unless you begin heaven *here*. The church in the Revelation has a crown

¹²³ **Psa 62.10** Do not trust in oppression, Nor vainly hope in robbery; If riches increase, Do not set *your* heart on *them*.

¹²⁴ **1Tim 6.9** But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

of stars on her head, and the moon under her feet, Rev 12.1. Christ is not to be found in the furrows, but on the pinnacle.

Now, so that you may get your hearts loosened from these things below, and be still with God, I will propound only *two arguments*.

The first argument is to consider how unworthy it is for a Christian to have his heart set upon the world.

(1) It is unworthy of his SOUL. The soul is dignified with honour. It is a noble coin that has a divine impress stamped on it: it is capable of communion with God and angels. Now, it is too far below a man to spend the affections and operations of this heaven-born soul on worthless things. It is as if one were to embroider sackcloth with gold, or set a diamond in clay.

(2) It is unworthy of his PROFESSION. “Do you seek great things for yourself?” Jer 45.5. What! Baruch! You who are a godly man! A Levite! Oh how sordid it is for someone who has his *hope* in heaven, to have his *heart* set upon the earth! It is as if a king were to leave his throne to follow the plough; or as if a man were to leave a gold-mine to dig in a gravel-pit. The lapwing has a crown on her head, and yet it feeds on dung. This is a fit emblem for those who have a crown of profession shining on their head, and yet feed with eagerness on these things below. Christians should *deny* themselves, but not *undervalue* themselves; they should be *humble*, but not *base*. If Alexander would not exercise at the Olympics because it was too far below him (kings do not usually run races), shall those then who are the holy seed, the heirs of glory, disparage themselves by too eager a pursuit of these contemptible things?

The second argument to persuade us to be still with God, is to consider what a rare and excellent life this is. This will appear in *four particulars*.

(1) To be still with God is the most NOBLE life. It is as much above the life of reason, as reason is above the life of a plant. The true Christian is like a star in the highest orb: he looks no lower than a crown. Grace puts high thoughts, princely affections, and a kind of heavenly ambition into the soul. Grace raises a Christian above himself; it makes him like Caleb, a man of another spirit, Num 14.24. He lives in the altitudes; his thoughts are lodged among angels and the “spirits of just men made perfect,” (Heb 12.23). And so, isn’t this the most noble life — to be still with God? The academics compare the soul of man to a fowl mounting up with her wings in the air. Thus with the wings of grace, the soul flies aloft, and takes a prospect ¹²⁵ of heaven.

(2) To be still with God is the most SATISFYING life; nothing else will be so. “All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full,” Ecc 1.7. Let all the golden streams of worldly delights run into the heart of man, yet the heart is not full. Strain out the quintessence of the creature, and it turns to froth, “Vanity of vanities,” Ecc 1.2. But in God there is sweet satisfaction and contentment. My soul will be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, Psa 63.5. Here is a hive of sweetness, a mirror of beauty, a magazine of riches. Here is the river

¹²⁵ A prospect is a distant view of a wide area, esp. one that is pleasant to look at.

of pleasure, where the soul bathes with infinite delight, Psa 36.8. And this river has a fountain at the bottom: “For with you is the fountain of life,” ver. 9. And is this not most satisfactory? It is a wise observation of Picus Mirandula,¹²⁶ that in the creation of the world, God gave the water to the fish, the earth to the beasts, and the air to the fowls. Afterward, He made man in his own image, so that man might say, “Lord, there is nothing on earth to be desired besides You.” What can satisfy my soul, but to be still with You?

(3) To be still with God is the most COMFORTABLE life. What sweet harmony and music is in such a soul! The bird, the higher it takes flight, the sweeter it sings. So too, the higher the soul is raised above the world, the sweeter joy it has. How the heart is inflamed in prayer! How is it ravished in holy meditation! What joy and peace there are in believing! (Rom 15.13). And these joys are those honey-streams which flow out of the rock, Christ. Tell me, is it not comfortable to be in heaven? The one who is still with God, carries heaven about with him. He has those prelibations and tastes of God’s love, which are the beginnings of heaven, Rom 8.23.¹²⁷ So sweet is this kind of life, that it can drip sweetness into the troubles and disquiets of the world, such that we are scarcely sensible of them. It can turn the prison into a paradise; the furnace into a festival. It can sweeten death. A soul elevated by grace can rejoice to think of dying: death will but cut the string, and the soul — that bird of paradise — will fly away and be at rest.

(4) To be still with God is the most DURABLE life. The life of sense will fail. We must shortly bid farewell to all our outward comforts; these blossoms will drop off. We read of a “sea of glass mingled with fire,” Rev 15.2. Bullinger,¹²⁸ and other learned expositors, understand “sea of glass” to mean the world. Indeed it is a fit emblem for it. The world is a sea, and it is seldom calm. It is a sea of glass, slippery; and this glass is mingled with fire, to show that it has a perishable and consuming nature. Riches take wings, and relations take wings. But for you — who by the wings of grace are still soaring aloft — this life shall never have an end. It is the beginning of an eternal life. Happiness is but the cream of holiness. You who are still with God, shall ever be with the Lord, 1The 4.17. You shall see God in all His embroidered robes of majesty. “We shall see him as he is,” 1Joh 3.2. And this sight will be ravishing, and full of glory. O then, is this not the best kind of life? He who is still with God when he awakes, shall ever be with the Lord when he goes to sleep at death.

Ques: But how will I arrive at this blessed frame of heart, to be still with God?

Ans. 1. Get a right judgment. It is a great matter to have the judgment set right. Get a right judgment of sin, and you will never be with sin. Get a right judgment of God, and you will be still with him. In God are combined all excellences. How sweet is his love! How satisfying is his presence! But as the painter drew a veil over Agamemnon’s face, because the greatness of his grief for his daughter Iphigenia could not be expressed, so when I speak of the glorious

¹²⁶ Count Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) an Italian Renaissance philosopher. At the age of 23, he proposed to defend 900 theses on religion, philosophy, natural philosophy, and magic against all comers, for which he wrote the famous *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, which has been called the “Manifesto of the Renaissance.”

¹²⁷ **Rom 8.23** Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

¹²⁸ Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575); Swiss reformer, successor to Huldrych Zwingli at Zurich.

perfections in God, I must draw a veil. Neither pen nor pencil can set them forth in their orient lustre; the angels must be silent here.

Ans. 2. If you would be still with God, then watch over your hearts every day. Lock up your hearts with God every morning, and give him the key. Otherwise the heart will be sneaking out to vanity. *Lord*, says Bernard, *there is nothing more flitting than my heart*. Keep watch and ward there. Christians, look to your hearts especially after an ordinance: when you have been with God in duty, then expect a temptation. Physicians say that the body must be more carefully looked after when it comes out of a hot bath; for the pores being open, it is in more danger of catching cold. After your spiritual bathing in an ordinance, when you have been at a sermon or a sacrament, then take heed that you don't catch cold.

Ans. 3. Beware of being remiss in duty. When you begin to slacken the reins, and abate your former heat and vigour in religion, a deadness sneaks insensibly upon the heart; and by degrees, a sad estrangement between God and the soul arises. And brethren, how hard a work you will find it to get your hearts up again, once they are down! A weighty stone that has been rolled up to the top of a steep hill, and then falls down to the bottom, how hard it is to get it up again! ¹²⁹ O take heed of a dull, lazy temper in God's service. We are bid to be "fervent in spirit," Rom 12.11. The Athenians inquired at the oracle of Apollo, why their plagues continued for so long. The oracle answered them that they must double their sacrifices: those who would hold constant communion with God, must double their devotion. They must be much in prayer, and mighty in prayer. We read that the *coals were to be put to the incense*, Lev 16.13. Incense was a type of prayer; and putting the coals to the incense was to show that the heart of a Christian ought to be inflamed in holy services. Nothing is more dangerous than a plodding formality.

Ans. 4. If you would be still with God, then be much in the communion of saints. Many Christians live as if this article were blotted out of their creed. How one saint whets and sharpens another! Just as vain company cools good affections, so by being in the communion of saints, we are warmed and quickened. Be often among the spices, and you will smell of them.

These directions being observed, we will be able to keep our acquaintance with God, and may arrive at this same blessed frame, as David had here:

"When I awake, I am still with You."

¹²⁹ In Greek mythology Sisyphus was a king of Corinth. He was punished for chronic deceitfulness by being compelled to roll an immense boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll back down, and to repeat this action forever.