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THE CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN

A Handbook for Christian Living

by William Secker (1660)

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The Consistent Christian – Rev. Matthew Wilkes’ edition (published 1867, London) gives the title as *The Nonesuch Professor in His Meridian Splendor; or, the Singular Actions of Sanctified Christians*, indicating it was “Laid Open in Seven Sermons, at All-Hallows Church, London-Wall.” The terms “nonesuch” and “singular” indicate “unequaled in excellence.”

Outline

DOCTRINE: That singular¹ Christians will perform singular actions.

1. Overview

Chapter I

A. The Context and the Text

B. Four Sorts of Things in the World

2. Doctrine

A. Eight Reasons Why a Christian Should Do More than Others

Chapter II

1. Because more is done for him than for others.
2. Because he is more nearly related to God than others.
3. Because he professes more than others.
4. Because he is inwardly conformed to the Redeemer more than others.
5. Because he is watched more than others.
6. Because if he does no more than others, it will appear that he is no more than others.
7. Because he is appointed to be a judge of others.
8. Because he expects more than others.

B. What the Christian Does More than Others

Chapter III

1. He does much good and makes but little noise.
2. He brings up the bottom of his life to the top of his light.
3. He prefers the duty he owes to God to the danger he fears from man.
4. He seeks the public good of others above the private good of himself.
5. He has the most beautiful life among the vilest people.
6. He chooses the worst of sorrows rather than commit the least sin.
7. He becomes a father to all in charity and a servant to all in humility.
8. He mourns most before God for those lusts which appear least before men.
9. He keeps his heart lowest when God raises his estate highest.
10. He seeks to be better inwardly in his substance² than outwardly in appearance.
11. He is grieved more at the distresses of the Church than affected at his own happiness.
12. He renders the greatest good for the greatest evil.
13. He takes those reproofs best which he needs most.
14. He takes up duty in point of performance and lays it down in point of dependence.
15. He takes up his contentment in God's appointment.
16. He is more in love with the employment of holiness than with the enjoyment of happiness.
17. He is more employed in searching his own heart than in censuring³ other men's states.

Chapter IV

¹ **singular** – that which marks something as distinct from others; uncommon.

² **substance** – what one is; character.

18. He sets out for God at his beginning and holds out with Him to the end.
19. He takes all the shame of his sins to himself and gives all the glory of his services to Christ.
20. He values his heavenly inheritance above all earthly possessions.

3. Applications

A. Twenty Principles that a Believer Should Walk by

1. That whatever is transacted by men on earth is eyed by the Lord in heaven. *Chapter V*
2. That after all his present receivings he will be brought to his future reckonings.
3. That God bears a greater respect to his heart than to his works.
4. That there is more final bitterness in reflecting on sin than there can be present sweetness in the commission of sin.
5. That there is the greatest vanity in all created excellency.
6. That duties can never have too much attention paid to them nor too little confidence placed in them.
7. That those precious promises, which are given to insure his happiness, do not supersede those directions laid down for him to seek after happiness.
8. That it is dangerous to dress himself for another world at the looking-glass of this world.
9. That where sin proves hateful it shall not prove hurtful.
10. That inward purity is the ready road to outward plenty.
11. That all the time which God allows him is *Chapter VI*
but enough for the work which He allots him.
12. That there can never be too great an estrangement from defilement.
13. That whatever is temporarily enjoyed should be spiritually improved.⁴
14. That he should speak well of God whatever trials he receives from God.
15. That the longer God forbears with the unrelenting sinner in life, the sorer He strikes him in the Judgment Day.
16. That there is no judging of the inward conditions of men by the outward dispensations⁵ of God.
17. That it is safest to cleave to that good which is the choicest.
18. That no present worldly business should interrupt his pursuit of future blessedness.
19. That gospel integrity towards God is the best security against wicked men.
20. That the richness of the crown which shall be received shall more than compensate for the bitterness of the cross which may here be endured.

B. Seven Directions to Those Who Wish to Do More than Others

Chapter VII

1. You must deny yourself more than others.
2. You must pray more than others.
3. You must resolve more than others.
4. You must love more than others.
5. You must believe more than others.
6. You must know more than others.
7. God must reveal Himself more to you than He does to others.

³ **censuring** – judging; condemning.

⁴ **improved** – made good use of.

⁵ **dispensations** – arrangements of events by divine providence.

Preface

Christian Reader,

To serve man's necessity is *charitable*; to serve his convenience is *warrantable*;⁶ to serve his iniquity is *blamable*; but to serve his purity is *honorable*!

The design of this piece is not the ostentation⁷ of the author but the edification of the reader. The works enjoined in it are weighty, and the blessings annexed⁸ to it are many. Christianity is here dressed in the white linen of purity. As grace begins in God's love to us, so it ends in our love to Him. Grace both makes our comforts greater and our crowns brighter. Those children of God who are found moving in the orbits of obedience shall enjoy the clearest sunshine of their Father's countenance!

Beloved, be sure to raise your superstructure⁹ upon an immovable foundation, and enter into such a business as has an immediate tendency to blessedness. It is an unparalleled mercy to be preserved from corruption in the midst of general infection. But it is far better to be innocent than penitent, to prevent the malady than invent the remedy!

Remember, Reader, that we can call no time our own but the present.¹⁰ How carefully should we shoot who have but one arrow to direct at the mark! The more you enjoy the smiles of God, the more you will shine in the eyes of those saints who judge of the trees of righteousness by the *fruits* of righteousness. The enjoyment of this world is neither an evidence of divine favor nor of divine anger. Do not judge yourself, therefore, by the gold in your bags, but by the grace of God in your heart; not by your *wealth*, but by your *works*. If Christianity is your vineyard to labor in, eternity shall be your bed to rest upon. Every grace that is here exercised shall there be glorified!

It is an unseemly thing to put on the fair suit of profession¹¹ and to do the foul work of corruption. The time is approaching when God will burn up those vines that bear only sour grapes. The gospel not only requires *diligence*, but it also requires *excellence*—that by the singularity of your actions you may prove the sincerity of your disposition!

Christian, the race is short in which you run, but the prize is great for which you run. I wish this gale of divinity may speed your vessel to the haven of felicity!¹² And when God gives *in* more to me, I shall give *out* more to you. In the meantime, I shall deem it my highest honor to be instrumental to others' conversion; and in this relation I beg to subscribe myself, yours in the Lord,

—William Secker, 1660

⁶ **warrantable** – defensible; justifiable.

⁷ **ostentation** – display intended to impress and attract; show off.

⁸ **annexed** – connected or associated with.

⁹ **superstructure** – that which is built on top of something else.

¹⁰ **no time our own but the present** – that is, we may not live another moment.

¹¹ **fair suit of profession** – expression of faith in Jesus Christ, which though having a good outward appearance, may yet be insincere.

¹² **felicity** – happiness.

I. Overview

*“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?
do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your
brethren only, what do ye more than others?
do not even the publicans so?”*

—Matthew 5:46-47

A. The Context and the Text

1. The Context

In a mountain, the Law was propounded to Moses, and in a mountain, the Law was expounded by Jesus; the former to a man of God, the latter by the Son of God; the one to a prophet of the Lord, the other by the Lord of the prophets.

As the works of Christ were miraculous, so the words of Christ were mysterious. They were such a depth that none could sound but those whom God had furnished with the plummet¹ of an enlightened understanding. Before anyone can peruse the Scriptures to profit, the Lamb of God must open the “seven seals.”²

In this chapter, the *soul*-justifying Savior condemns the *self*-justifying Scribes and Pharisees. Never did men make more boast in the Law, but never had men less cause. They knew but little as to the letter, but even less of its spirit (2Co 3:6). They were better acquainted with the customs of nature than the canons³ of Scripture. Alas! How shall the blind see when the seers⁴ are blind! They who should have put the eyes of others in had put their own out!

The righteous laws of God cannot connive⁵ at the unrighteous lives of men; they not only require truth without, but also within. The rays of this sun enter the most secret chambers of the heart, therefore he who lusts after, and he who lies with a woman, are both adulterers. He is a murderer whose heart is full of hatred, though his hands are free from violence. Thus, the lusts of men may be predominant when the lives of men are not inordinate—as guests may be in the house when they look not out of the windows. He who begins religion where it should end, will end religion where it should be begun!

2. The Text

But as the suburbs direct to the city, and the portal leads to the palace, so the *context* will guide us to the *text*.

“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?” (Mat 5:46). As an echo returns the voice it receives, so many will show kindness where kindness is shown; but shall tax collectors be as godly as the Lord’s disciples? Shall the sons of men equal the sons of God? Shall the law of nature swell to so high a tide as the law of grace? This were for the dribbling rivulet to vie with the swelling ocean; this were for royalty to degenerate into beggary; and for the meridian⁶ sun to yield no more light than midnight shadows.

¹ **plummet** – a piece of lead attached to a line, used in measuring the depth of water; hence, something used for measuring things.

² **seven seals** – reference to that which kept the book of life closed (Rev 5:1-5); hence, that which obscures and holds shut.

³ **canons** – laws, rules, principles.

⁴ **seers** – prophets (1Sa 9:9); in this context, religious teachers.

⁵ **connive** – to cooperate secretly; to feign ignorance of or fail to take measures against a wrong and so enable or encourage.

⁶ **meridian** – mid-day; the time when the sun is directly overhead, hence the time when the sun’s power is the strongest.

“And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?” (Mat 5:47). I shall not meticulously dissect these words, lest I should present to your view a frightful skeleton; nor shall I lavishly paint these windows, lest my deep colors should shut out the light. The native loveliness of Scripture scorns the unnatural color of a bewitching Jezebel (1Ki 19:2). One rough diamond is of more value than many smooth counterfeits.

My subject treats not of oratory but divinity;⁷ and my design in it is rather to express affections,⁸ than to affect⁹ expressions. Though the sweetness of the sauce may yield pleasure to the palate, yet it is only the soundness of the meat that can administer nourishment to the blood.

“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?”—Matthew 5:46-47

This text is like a precious jewel: small in quantity, but great in quality. The words contain two parts: 1) an action propounded, and 2) a question proposed.

1. An action propounded, touching that which is lawful: “If ye love them which love you” (Mat 5:46). “And if ye salute your brethren only” (Mat 5:47); this means to greet with kisses and affection. Therefore, what one verse calls *greeting*, the other calls *loving*; because greeting is a pledge of affection, it is the overflowing of the heart at the lips. There is a kiss of subjection and obedience that is the *subject’s* kiss; there is a kiss of wantonness and temptation that is the *harlot’s* kiss; there is a kiss of deception that is the *traitor’s* kiss; there is also a kiss of tenderness and affection, and that is the *brother’s* kiss.

Now this Scripture enjoins you not only to greet your friends, but your enemies also. Party esteem¹⁰ is but withered fruit, and falls rather from Sodom’s vines than Zion’s trees. There is therefore a kiss of pity and forgiveness, and that is the Christian’s kiss. If this is lacking, the others are vain. For if you greet your brethren only, then observe what follows:

2. A question proposed: “what do ye more than others?” (Mat 5:47). What great or singular¹¹ thing do you do? The words thus understood contain this golden head of instruction, that

Singular Christians will perform singular actions.

This is the well from which I shall draw the water, and the foundation upon which I shall raise the superstructure. You cannot rationally imagine that you will be supplied with bitter streams from so sweet a spring; or that I should make a crooked wall or tottering fence with such choice materials. Those who collect pearls from this spot will leave as many behind them as they carry with them.

As the disciples of Christ *are* more than others, so the disciples of Christ *do* more than others. A religious hypocrite may move beyond a Sodomite, but a true Christian moves beyond them both. Though the naturally dead can do nothing, yet the spiritually dead may do something. Though they can do nothing to merit the grace of life, yet they may do something as to using the means¹² of life.¹³

Cicero¹⁴ complains of Homer¹⁵ that “he taught the gods to live like men”; but grace teaches men to live like gods.¹⁶ It is lamentable that we should live so long in the world and do so little for God; or that we should live so short a time in the world and do so much for Satan. Other creatures are not more below a sinner than a saint is above a sinner. *Man* is the excellency of the creation, the *saint* is the excellency of man, *grace* is the excellency of the saint, and *glory* is the excellency of grace!

⁷ **divinity** – theology; study of God and His Word.

⁸ **affection** – fondness.

⁹ **affect** – pretend.

¹⁰ **party esteem** – approving others because they are part of our group without reference to moral or spiritual principle.

¹¹ **singular** – that which marks something as distinct from others; uncommon; distinctive.

¹² **means** – income, resource, revenue, substance considered as the instrument of effecting any purpose; as in “the means to an end.”

¹³ “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2Ti 3:15). “Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes” (Psa 119:155).

¹⁴ **Cicero (106-43 BC)** – Roman philosopher, statesman, lawyer, political theorist, and constitutionalist. He is widely considered one of Rome’s greatest orators and prose stylists.

¹⁵ **Homer** – author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; revered as the greatest ancient Greek epic poet. When he lived is estimated to be either around 850 BC or early 12th century BC.

¹⁶ **live like gods** – that is, to live godly: “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world...” (Ti 2:11-12).

Believers are, among others, as Saul was among the Israelites: the tallest by the head and shoulders (1Sa 9:2). Their birth is truly low who are not born from above. What are such earthly shrubs compared with heavenly cedars? Those trees that have their top branches of hope in heaven will have their lower boughs of activity on earth. Those who look for a heaven made ready will live as though they were already in heaven.

Grace not only makes a man more of a man, but it also makes him more *than* a man. The primitive Christians were the best of men. None were more lowly in their dispositions or more lovely in their conversation.¹⁷ Noah was a just man and perfect¹⁸ in his generation. He was not a sinner among saints, but he was a saint among sinners. Who would have looked for so fair a bird in so foul a nest! Though he once acted as the sons of men do,¹⁹ yet he was numbered with the sons of God. A field of wheat may be good and yet have a weed in it. A saint is not free *from* sin—that is his burden; a saint is not free *to* sin—that is his blessing. Sin is *in* him—that is his lamentation; his soul is *not in* sin—that is his consolation.

Mark how an immaculate²⁰ Savior glories in one of these singular saints: “And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job?” Why, what is there in him so considerable? “There is none like him in the earth” (Job 1:8). Though there were none in heaven so bad as Job, yet there were none on earth so good as Job. He was a man so like unto God that there was no man like him.

A gracious person, once hearing how far a hypocrite might go, said, “Let hypocrites proceed as far as they can in that which is laudable;²¹ and when they can advance no further, I will go beyond them.” A true Christian not only does more than others *will* do, but he also does more than others *can* do. Whatever is not above the top of nature, is below the bottom of grace. There are some who pretend to believe but work not; there are others who work but believe not. But a saint does both: he so obeys the Law, as if there were no gospel to be believed; and so believes the gospel, as though there were no Law to be obeyed. True religion consists not singly in believing or doing, but in both.

B. There Are Four Sorts of Things in the World.

1. *Neither good nor pleasant*

There are some things which are *neither good nor pleasant*, such as envy and slander. The eclipsing of another's sun will not make your own shine with brighter beams. O pare off those envious nails,²² which are ever disfiguring the face that is fairer than your own. Why do you wound yourself with that plaster²³ which is laid upon your brother's sore? Why do you weep at every shower that falls beside your own field? Who would envy an ox the pasture that only fits it for the slaughter? Who would envy the malefactor²⁴ the carriage that only conveys him to the place of execution? You have no less because others have much; nor have they much because you have little. Another's wealth is no more the cause of your need than Leah's fruitfulness was the cause of Rachel's barrenness (Gen 29:31). O never pine²⁵ at your neighbor's prosperity, and you shall never pine away through your own scarcity. He enjoys much who is thankful for a little. A *grateful* mind is a *great* mind.

2. *Pleasant but not good*

There are some things that are *pleasant but not good*, such as youthful lusts and worldly delights. These bees carry honey in their mouths, but they have a sting in their tails! When this Jael brings forth her milk and her butter, then beware of the nail and the hammer (Jdg 4:17-21)! Death is in the pot while you are tasting the soup

¹⁷ **conversation** – conduct; behavior.

¹⁸ **perfect** – complete; sound; having integrity.

¹⁹ “And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: and he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent” (Gen 9:20-21).

²⁰ **immaculate** – free from sin.

²¹ **laudable** – commendable.

²² **pare...nails** – of trimming fingernails.

²³ **plaster** – paste-like mixture applied to a part of the body for healing.

²⁴ **malefactor** – criminal.

²⁵ **pine** – to mourn; to grieve.

(cf. 2Ki 4:40)! The world always presents a deadly potion in the gilded²⁶ cup of worldly pleasure. If the cup is sinful, do not taste it; if it is lawful, do not carouse²⁷ over it. Reason forbids you either to taste known poison or to be intoxicated with pleasant wine. The fish is caught upon the hook by leaping at the bait. Sin is like a river that begins in a quiet spring, but ends in a tumultuous sea. “Flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace” (2Ti 2:22).

3. *Good but not pleasant*

There are some things *good but not pleasant*, such as sorrow and affection.²⁸ Sin is pleasant but unprofitable; affliction is unpleasant but profitable. “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word” (Psa 119:67). “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes” (Psa 119:71). By affliction the Lord separates the *sin that He hates* from the *soul that He loves*. He sends affliction to take the dirt of the world out of the hearts of His children. It is not sent to take down the tabernacle of nature, but to rear up the temple of grace within you. As waters are purest when they are in motion, so saints are generally holiest when in affliction. Some Christians resemble those doltish²⁹ children who will learn their lessons, but no longer than while the rod is on their backs! It is well known that by the greatest affliction the Lord has sealed³⁰ the sweetest instruction. Many are not bettered by the judgments they see, when they have been bettered by the judgments they have felt. The purest gold is the most pliable by being in the furnace. That is the best blade which bends well without retaining its crooked figure.

4. *Both good and pleasant*

There are some things both *good and pleasant*, and those are gracious operations on the soul. A believer’s bed of graces is more fragrant than the most precious bed of spices. He who freely gives His image to us, must of necessity love His image in us. How illustrious do the heavens appear while the sun is radiating them with his beams! “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phi 4:8).

²⁶ **gilded** – thinly covered with gold.

²⁷ **carouse** – drink heavily.

²⁸ **affection** – disease; any particular morbid state of the body.

²⁹ **doltish** – dull in intellect; stupid.

³⁰ **sealed** – secured against loss.

II. Doctrine:

Why a Christian Does More than Others

As you cannot see so well by a candle under a bushel as upon a table, I shall therefore hold up the subject to your view in the following light: firstly, I shall touch upon the explanation of that which is *doctrinal*; secondly, upon the application of that which is *practical*. The former is like cutting the garment out; the latter is like putting the garment on.

I am first to treat of that which is doctrinal. And here I shall show, first, *why* a Christian does more than others; secondly, *what* a Christian does more than others.

The first reason why Christians do more than others is,

1. Because more is done for them than is done for others.

There is that done for Christians which none but He Who made them could do. They are loved; they are atoned for; they are prayed for; and they are provided for more than others. Now where there is an overabundance of privilege, there should be an overabundance of practice. We naturally expect more splendor from the beaming of the sun than from the burning of a candle; and we look for more moisture from the drops from a cloud than from the drops from a bucket. The same heat that melts the wax will harden the clay! The dew that distills into a rose is returned in a sweet perfume; but that which drops upon a nettle is returned in an ill savor. If the mercies of God are not lodestones¹ to draw us to heaven, they will be millstones to draw or sink us to hell! “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom 2:4-5).

“For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luk 12:48). The blessings we enjoy are not the fruit of our merit but the fruit of God’s mercy. By how much the more grace we have received, by so much the more glory we are obliged to return to the Giver. He does not exact much where little is bestowed; nor does He accept little where much is received. A drop of praise is an unsuitable acknowledgment for an ocean of mercy! “Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amo 3:1-2). But was their return according to the benefit? Surely not, otherwise He would not have added, “Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amo 3:2) They were more loved by God than others; therefore, they should have acknowledged Him more than others.

Those who have tasted the goodness of God can never speak good enough of God. Reason teaches that those should bless most who are most blessed. What are carnal² men compared to Christian men? The power of God appears in the formation of the carnal man, but the stupendous grace of God shines illustriously in the transformation of the Christian man. In creation God has given the productions of the earth for our bodies, but in redemption He has given *Himself* for our souls! Thus, it is a greater favor to be converted than to be created; yes, it were better for us to have *no* being than not to have a *new* being.

When you were sailing to destruction before sin’s dangerous blast, then the most blessed gales of mercy sprang up and changed your course! When you lay in the blood of your transgression, then God beheld you with affections of His compassion. His heart pitied you and His hand helped you! Now where there is distinguishing mercy there ought to be distinguishing duty. The gardener who holds the largest farms will pay the greatest rent;³ and he who sows the most precious seed will expect the choicest crop. Now read the Great Gardener’s complaint against His vineyard: “Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard.

¹ **lodestones** – naturally magnetized piece of the mineral magnetite.

² **carnal** – fleshly; sensual, as opposed to spiritual.

³ **greatest rent** – great salvation brings great obligation—not for payment, but unto praise (cf. 1Co 6:19-20).

My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein” (Isa 5:1-2).

Here is an inventory of God’s goodness to His vineyard. Now what follows? “He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes” (Isa 5:2). God looked that they should be better to Him than others, because He had been better to them than He had been to others. God had made them flowers of His paradise, while others were left as the weeds of Satan’s wilderness. While others were Satan’s thoroughfare, they were God’s choice enclosed garden. God has made you His own dials⁴ on which the beams of the Sun of righteousness shines! He has made you gems for His crown, while others are stools for His feet! “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” (Joh 14:22). As if he had said: “Lord, what are we more than others that You should show Yourself to us, when You might have shown Yourself to them and not to us?”

Reader! has God made you a vessel unto honor out of the same lump as another unto dishonor? Has He shown Himself to you, and not to the world; and will you not show yourself for God, and not for the world? Remember that it lay as a great blotch on Hezekiah’s escutcheon,⁵ that he “rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him” (2Ch 32:25).

Another reason why Christians do more than others is,

2. Because they stand in a nearer relation to God than others.

The nearer the relation, the stronger are the ties of obligation. In this view, believers on earth are superior to angels in heaven. Christ is related to the angels as a master to his servants, but He is united to believers as a head to its members. In this Head there are no glazed eyes, nor are there any withered or dead members in this body. While others are *made* of God, believers are *born* of God. While others stand before Him as prisoners before their judge, believers appear before Him as children before their father, and as a bride before a bridegroom. There are no stillborn children in the family of grace! God is the living Father, and therefore all His children live by Him. He is also the everlasting Father, and therefore He will have due honor paid Him. “A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?” (Mal 1:6). As a father, He will be revered for His goodness; and as a master, He will be feared for His greatness.

If honor is not the Lord’s due, let Him not have it; if it is His due, let Him not be denied it. As man was born to serve God, he had better never have been born than to refuse God that service. This is the language of God to His children: I did not give you bodies and souls to serve sin with, but to serve Me with. Our bodies were not formed to be the instruments of unrighteous actions, nor our souls the gloomy abodes of foul spirits.

The everlasting Father cannot endure the ungrateful behavior of His own children. Therefore, attend to the great complaint He makes against them: “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me” (Isa 1:2). Where the relation is the nearest, there the provocation is the greatest. It is far more pleasing to behold rebels becoming children, than to behold children becoming rebels.

When Caesar⁶ was wounded by the senators of Rome, Brutus, a Roman of an illustrious family, also made a thrust at him. With that Caesar gave him a wistful look, saying, “And you too, my son Brutus!” How can that tender mother endure to feel those lips sucking her blood, which used to draw her maternal breast? The unkindness of a friend is more sensibly felt than that of an enemy.

The Roman censors took such an utter dislike to the debauched son of Africanus, that they refused to let him wear a ring on which his father’s likeness was engraved, alleging, “That he who was so unlike the father was unworthy to wear the father’s picture.” Thus God will never grant any to enjoy the love of Christ in heaven, who are destitute of the likeness of Christ on earth.

⁴ dials – sundials.

⁵ blotch on Hezekiah’s escutcheon – stain on his honor.

⁶ Gaius Julius Caesar (100-44 BC) – Roman general and statesman and a distinguished writer of Latin prose. He played a critical role in the gradual transformation of the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire, but was murdered in the Roman senate.

Alexander,⁷ who was reported to be an exceeding swift runner, was once solicited to run in the Olympic games. He answered “I will, if kings are my competitors.” Give me such a saint who will pursue nothing on earth that may be unsuitable to his birth from heaven. What! Shall he walk in darkness whose Father is light? Shall those lips be found broaching falsehood that were found breathing out prayers? Shall those eyes be found gazing on sinful objects that were found reading the living Word of God?

The remembrance of our dignity should engage us to our heavenly duty. “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink” (Pro 31:4). Such a sin is detestable in a sovereign who has the eyes of his subjects upon him; but it is aggravated in a saint who has the eyes of his Savior upon him. A spot in scarlet is worse than a stain in cotton (cf. Luk 12:48)!

Another reason why Christians do more than others is,

3. Because they profess more than others.

Though there are many professors⁸ who are not true believers, yet there are no true believers who are not professors. As trees are known by their fruits, so believers are known by their works. Such as have received Christ’s bounty are unwilling to fight under Satan’s banner.

There are many who “profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Ti 1:16). Man is not what he says, but what he does.⁹ For a man to say what he does, and not to do what he says, is to resemble those trees which are full of leaves but void of fruits; or those barns wherein there is much chaff but no wheat. “What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD” (Jer 23:28).

Ah, how intolerable will the punishment of those professors be who have appeared as burnished gold to men, and are found only base metal in the sight of God! What will it profit to put off the old *manners*, and not put off the old *man* (Eph 4:22)? A snake may change its skin and yet preserve its sting. The gospel *professed* may lift a man unto heaven,¹⁰ but it is only the gospel *possessed* that brings a man into heaven. To profess piety and yet to practice impiety will be so far from advancing a man’s commendation, that it will assuredly heighten his condemnation!

“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luk 6:46). As if He had said, “Either keep My words more or else call Me Lord no more! Either take Me into your lives or cast Me out of your lips!” As princes disdain to have their images on base counterfeits, so the Lord Jesus cannot delight to see His name on rotten hypocrites. Therefore He says, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2Ti 2:19). If godliness is evil, why is it so much professed? If godliness is good, why is it so little practiced?

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling” (2Ti 2:19). Now, a holy calling will be attended with a holy carriage. Many may be found who can *talk* of grace, but very few can be found who *taste* of grace. It is not everyone who looks like a Christian [that] lives like a Christian. For there are some who make their boast of the Law, and yet through breaking the Law, they dishonor God. It is a greater glory to us that we are allowed to serve God, than it is to Him that we offer Him that service. He is not rendered happy by us, but we are made happy by Him. He can do without such earthly servants, but we cannot do without such a heavenly master.

It is unnatural for a Christian’s tongue to be larger than his hand. It is lamentable for him to hold a lamp to others and yet to walk in darkness himself. There are more infected by the undue conduct of some than there are instructed by the righteous doctrines of others. He who gives proper precepts, and then sets improper examples, resembles that foolish person who labors hard to kindle a fire, and when he has done it, throws cold water upon it to quench it. Though such a physician may administer the reviving cordial¹¹ to some fainting disciple, yet he is in danger himself of dying in a swoon.¹² I may say of such professors, as was once said of a certain preacher, that

⁷ **Alexander III of Macedon (356-323 BC)** – commonly known as Alexander the Great, a Greek king of Macedon, a state in northern ancient Greece. Before his death at age 33, he had conquered most of the known world.

⁸ **professors** – those who profess belief in the Christian faith.

⁹ “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom 16:17-18).

¹⁰ **unto heaven** – that is, toward heaven; improving his conduct, but without spiritual value.

¹¹ **cordial** – liquor or medicine.

¹² **swoon** – faint.

“when he was in the pulpit, it was a pity he should ever leave it, for he was so excellent an instructor. But when he was out of the pulpit, it was a pity he should ever ascend it again, for he was so wretched a liver!”

Many people are offended with the profession of religion, because all are not truly pious who make a profession. A little consideration will correct this error. Does the sheep despise its fleece because the wolf has worn it? Who blames a crystal river because some melancholy¹³ men have drowned themselves in its streams? Will you refuse medicine because some have wantonly poisoned themselves with it? He is a bad steward who, having a spot in his garment, cuts off the cloth instead of rubbing off the dirt. God rejects all religion but His own.

Another reason why Christians do more than others is,

4. Because they are inwardly conformed to the image of their Redeemer more than others.

As Jesus Christ is the fountain of all excellency to which all must come, so He is the pattern of excellency to which all must conform. As He is the root on which a saint grows, so He is the rule by which a saint walks. God has made one Son in the image of us all, that He might make all His sons in the image of that One. Jesus Christ lived to teach us how to live, and died to teach us how to die. Therefore He commands us, saying, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Mat 11:29). O Reader, if the life of Christ is not your pattern, the death of Christ will never be your pardon! Though the Lord Jesus was a man of many sorrows, yet He was not a man of the least sin. No man can equalize Him in holiness; yet every man ought to imitate Him in holiness!

As the sun is the glory of creation, so is Christ the glory of redemption. The summit of true religion consists in imitating God. Without this, your religion will be found a tekel when it is weighed in the balance: it will be wanting.¹⁴ It would be well if there were as great a similarity between the life of Christ and the life of Christians, as there is between a copy and the original. What He was by nature, that we should be by grace. As face answers to face in water, so should life answer to life in Scripture. He Who was a way to others never went out of the way Himself.

A truly pious life is a looking-glass wherein Christ sees His own likeness. In our sacramental participations,¹⁵ we show forth the death of Christ; and in our evangelical conversation, we show forth the life of Christ. An excellent Christ calls for excellent Christians. As He was never unemployed, He was never ill-employed. For he “went about doing good” (Act 10:38). As our happiness lay near His heart, so His honor should lie near our hearts.

Jesus Christ even submits His person to be judged by His actions: “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not” (Joh 10:37). It is as if He had said, “Never take Me for a Savior if I act contrary to a Savior.” Thus should it be with a professor: “Never take me for a Christian if I live contrary to the life of a Christian.” If professors do no more than others, it might be said, “Those are professors, but not Christians.”

Man is naturally an aspiring being and loves to be nearest to those who are highest. Why does he not therefore take as much delight in those precepts that enjoin holiness, as in those promises that ensure happiness? All those who are conformed to the image of the Redeemer are as willing to be ruled by Christ as they are to be esteemed by Him.

By David’s language, there were many singular saints in his day: “To the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight” (Psa 16:3). Was it so then, and should it not be so now? We know the New Testament outshines the Old as much as the sun outshines the moon.¹⁶ If we then live in a more glorious dispensation,¹⁷ should we not maintain a more glorious conversation?¹⁸

How blessed would it be for us to have that blessed Scripture fulfilled in us, “As he is, so are we in this world” (1Jo 4:17). Now, if we are in this world as He was, we shall be in heaven as He is! If there be no likeness between Christ and you on earth, there can be no friendship between Christ and you in heaven!

Another reason why Christians do more than others, is,

¹³ **melancholy** – depressed.

¹⁴ **tekell...wanting** – *tekell* is Chaldee for “he hath weighed”; the allusion here is to Daniel 5:24-28.

¹⁵ **sacramental participations** – participating in the sacraments; in this case, keeping the Lord’s Supper.

¹⁶ **New Testament...Old** – that is, the Old and New Covenants. The temple worship of the Old depicted realities fulfilled by Christ (cf. Heb 8:7, 13).

¹⁷ **dispensation** – age; period.

¹⁸ **conversation** – experience.

5. *Because they are watched more than others.*

If once a man commences to be a professor, the eyes of all are upon him; and well they may, for his profession *in* the world is a separation *from* the world. Believers by their lives condemn those who by their lips condemn believers! Righteous David saw many who were waiting to triumph in his mistakes. Hence, the more they watched, the more he prayed: “Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine *enemies*” (Psa 27:11). It may be rendered, “...because of my *observers*.”

Christian, if you dwell in the open tent of licentiousness,¹⁹ the wicked will not walk backward (like modest Shem and Japheth) to cover your shame; but they will walk forward (like cursed Ham) to publish it (Gen 9:22-23). Thus they make use of your weakness as a plea for their wickedness.

Men are merciless in their censures of Christians! They have no sympathy for their infirmity. But God weighs them in more equal scales, and says, “The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak” (Mar 14:38). While the saint is a dove in the eyes of God, he is only a raven in the estimation of sinners. Consider, Christian, that an unholy life strips off the rich ornamental jewels from the neck of the bride, the Lamb’s wife (Rev 21:1-10)! Sin, indulged in [by] a believer, is like a tear in a richly embroidered garment or like a crack in a golden bell. A foul spot is soonest discerned in the fairest cloth. The world will sooner make an excuse for its own enormities than for your infirmities!

The behavior of some professors has often given the wicked an opportunity to reproach religion. Lactantius²⁰ reports that the heathens were accustomed to say, “The Master could not be good when His disciples were so bad.” The malice of sinners is such that they will reproach the rectitude²¹ of God’s Word for the blemishes of the lives of professors who swerve from it. O that your pure life did but hang a padlock upon their impure lips! Such will ever be throwing the dirt of professors upon the face of profession!

If the sun is eclipsed one day, it attracts more spectators than if it shone a whole year! So if you commit one sin, it will cause you many sorrows and the world many triumphs. Dr. Whitaker,²² on reading the Sermon on the Mount, broke out, saying, “either this is not the gospel, or we are not of the gospel.” The cruelty of the Spaniards to the Indians made them refuse Christian baptism, “For,” said they, “He must be a wicked God, Who has such wicked servants!” O that God’s jewels would sparkle more in this benighted²³ world!

That was a glorious eulogy given to Zacharias and Elizabeth: “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Luk 1:6). God made them both righteous, and then men saw them righteous. Their religion was undefiled before God; their lives were unspotted from the world.

Reader! would you be righteous in God’s sight? Then you must be righteous in God’s Son. Would you be unspotted from the world? Then remember, you are not of the world. When the godly are left to fall, then the envious sinner will exclaim, “So that is your religion!” No wonder if a barbarian gives the alarm when the leprosy is in an Israelitish house (cf. Lev 14:34).

Another reason why Christians do more than others is,

6. *Because if they do no more, it will appear that they are no more than others.*

As there is no man so vicious but some good may be performed by him to man, so there is no one so religious but some evil may be committed by him against God. As one bird does not prove the approach of summer, neither does one good action prove a man to be a believer. There is in every being a natural tendency to some center.²⁴ God is the center of the saints, and glory is the center of grace. Now, where we do not discover that bias towards grace, we may deny the Being of grace.

Reader! would you be thought more than tax collectors and sinners? Then beware of living as tax collectors and sinners! Jesus Christ gives you an excellent mirror in His memorable Sermon upon the Mount for you to

¹⁹ **licentiousness** – disregard for morality; preoccupation with lustful desires.

²⁰ **Lactantius** (Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius, c. AD 240-320) – early Christian author who became an advisor to the first Christian Roman emperor, Constantine I, guiding his religious policy as it developed.

²¹ **rectitude** – uprightness.

²² **Dr. William Whitaker (1548-1595)** – gifted Cambridge Puritan theologian; author of *Disputations on Holy Scripture* and a contributor to the *Lambeth Articles*; born in Holme, Lancashire.

²³ **benighted** – involved in moral darkness.

²⁴ **center** – object of attention; interest.

behold your own likeness in: “Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Mat 7:16). There is no ascertaining the quality of a tree but by its fruits. When the wheels of a clock move within, the hand on the dial will move without. When the heart of a man is sound in conversion, then the life will be fair in profession. How shall we judge of the well but by the waters which run through the pipes?

As a sinner will reveal the good he *desires*, so a saint will show the good he *enjoys*. When the sun dawns upon the earth, it is presently known; and when the Sun of righteousness arises upon the heart, it cannot be hidden. It is said of the Savior that “he could not be hid” (Mar 7:24). As it is with the Head, so it is with the members: “Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works” (Mat 5:14, 16). When Saul was made a sovereign, he had another spirit poured out upon him: a spirit of government for a place of government. And when a sinner is made a saint, he has also another spirit poured out upon him. As he *is* what he was not, so he *does* what he did not.

It is reported of a harlot that when she saw a certain person with whom she had committed immorality, she renewed her enticements; to whom he replied, “I am not now what I once was!” Though she was the same woman that she was before, yet he was not the same man that he was before.

Were the sun to give no more light than a star, you could not believe he was the regent of the day; were he to transmit no more heat than a glow-worm, you would question his being the source of earthly heat. Were God to do no more than a creature, where would His Godhead²⁵ be? Were a man to do no more than a brute, where would his manhood be? Were not a saint to excel the sinner, where would his sanctity²⁶ be?

Professor, if you live and walk as a worldling, you subject yourself to that apostolic rebuke, “Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (1Co 3:3). If men debase themselves as beasts, the Lord will denominate them beasts. If professors live like other men, God will call them unregenerate men. There is no passing for current coin²⁷ in heaven without the stamp and signature of heaven.

Another reason why the disciples of Christ do more than others is,

7. Because they are appointed to be judges of others.

If you consult the Holy Scriptures, you will find that the Father, the Son, and the saints are to judge the world. The ordination is the Father’s, the execution is the Son’s, and the approbation²⁸ is the saints’. This shall no more derogate²⁹ from the honor of Christ than the sessions of the justices derogate from the authority of the judges.

When the apostle Paul would quash³⁰ the sinful suits among the believing Corinthians, he informed them that they did not so much require men of eminence to terminate their controversy as men of godliness.³¹ “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?” (1Co 6:2). If you are to judge in causes between God and man, how much more in controversies between man and man? If about matters that are eternal, why not in affairs that are temporal?

Felons may be jovial in the prison and bold at the bar, but they will tremble at the hangman’s halter.³² When wicked men come like miserable captives out of their holes, the godly shall rise like an unclouded sun above the horizon of the grave.

There is a cloud of witnesses to prove the Christian’s judicial process. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints” (Jude 1:14). Again He says, “When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mat 19:28). Now the world judges the godly; but then the godly shall judge the world. The act of the Head is imputed to the members, and the act of the members is acknowledged by the Head.

Reader, in the great day there will be no distinction made between him who now sits on the bench and him who stands at the bar! Tell me how will you be capable of passing a righteous sentence on others, for those evils

²⁵ **Godhead** – God’s divinity, His Godhood, His Nature.

²⁶ **sanctity** – holiness.

²⁷ **current coin** – coins used in exchange, passing from hand to hand; circulating coinage.

²⁸ **approbation** – official approval.

²⁹ **derogate** – detract.

³⁰ **quash** – to put an end to.

³¹ **men of godliness** – that is, they needed godly men more than men of rank to settle disputes among them.

³² **halter** – a rope with a noose.

which you have lived in the constant commission of? The true Christian can cordially subscribe to that ancient maxim, "Because I enjoy the greatest share of religious majesty, I am therefore entitled to the least share of licentious liberty." It was once said to Caesar, "Seeing all things are lawful to Caesar, therefore it is the less lawful for Caesar to do them."

"By faith Noah, being warned of God...prepared an ark...by the which he condemned the world" (Heb 11:7). Noah's believing set him to building. Thus the consistent Christian judges the world, both by his faith *and* his practice.

Christian Reader, remember that the gospel purity of your life shows to worldlings the impurity of theirs! The usual prejudice that the world has against religion is that it makes no man better, though it may make some men stricter.

We too frequently behold that those who exclaim against the pride of others are as proud as others. As they so constantly meet together [in religious services], they are expected to be more godly, but they are not more godly for their meeting together. Take away their profession, and you take away their religion. They have nothing belonging to the sheep but its skin!

Mark how the God of Israel expostulates³³ with the professing Israel of God: "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit" (Jer 2:11). Here is a professing people outdone by a people who made no profession. If heathens take up their gods, they will zealously keep up their gods. They were true to the false gods, while Israel was false to the true God! "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth" (Isa 1:2). Why, what is the matter? "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isa 1:3). God does not call in a jury of angels to condemn them, but He calls a jury of oxen and donkeys to pass sentence upon them. Alas that oxen and donkeys should be more religious than men who professed religion! In their kind they are more kind. If their owners feed them, they readily own their owners.

And lastly, the disciples of Christ do more than others,

8. Because they expect more than others.

A true hope of heaven excites an utter dislike to the earth. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1Jo 3:3). Hope is too pure a plant to flourish or grow in an impure soil.

Reader, you must not expect to toil for the prince of darkness all the long day of your life, and then sup with the Prince of light at the evening of death! There is no going from Delilah's lap to Abraham's bosom. It is not the tyrannic reign of sin in your mortal body that makes way for the triumphant reign of your soul in eternal glory. Grace is such a pilot as without its steerage, you will certainly suffer shipwreck in your voyage to everlasting tranquility.

There is no gaining admittance into the King of heaven's privy³⁴ chamber of felicity, without passing through the strait³⁵ gate of purity. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Mat 5:8). A dirty looking-glass will not clearly represent the face. To look for a Muslim paradise where they expect to bathe themselves in carnal pleasures is to conceive the heaven of purity as a house of impurity. True believers look to be the chaste and happy spouse of the Lamb!

The Lord's gratuitous bestowments on saints awaken the grateful sentiments of saints. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col 1:12). Men commonly season the vessel with water³⁶ before they trust it with costly wine; thus God will season the vessel of your heart with His grace, before He pours into it the wine of His glory. It is hard to say whether God discovers more love in preparing heavenly mansions for the soul, than in preparing the soul for heavenly mansions.

Reader, if the Lord has made you a true believer, you earnestly desire that your present deportment may be suitable to your future preferment. You know there is no living a wicked life and dying a righteous death. As divine justice crushes none on earth before they are corrupted, so divine mercy crowns none in heaven before they are converted.

³³ **expostulates** – communicates strong disagreement.

³⁴ **privy** – private.

³⁵ **strait** – narrow.

³⁶ **season the vessel with water** – to swell the wood lest wine leak out.

Holiness and happiness are so wisely joined together that God will never allow them to be put asunder: “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Though holiness is that which a sinner scorns, yet it is that which a Savior crowns.

The soul of man is the Lord’s casket,³⁷ and grace the jewel. Now, wherever the jewel is not found, the casket will be thrown away. Though the wheat is for the garner,³⁸ yet the chaff is for the fire. The Scripture presents you not only with an account of what God will do for a Christian, but also *what a Christian will do for God*.

The high prize of heavenly bliss is at the end of the gospel race: “So run, that ye may obtain” (1Co 9:24). To neglect the race of holiness is to reject the prize of happiness. He who made you without your assistance, will not crown you until He has saved you from your disobedience.

It would be well for fruitless sinners were they seriously to consider that fearful Scripture: “Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Mat 3:10). If you are not fruit-bearing plants, you must be burning brands³⁹. There is no *making out*⁴⁰ your salvation where there is no *working out* your salvation (Phi 2:12-13). Men are condemned not only for their profaneness but also for their slothfulness. Men may perish for being unprofitable servants, as well as for being abominable servants (Mat 25:30).

The Lord binds none in the bundle of life but such as are heirs of life (1Sa 25:29). “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1Co 15:58). How cheerfully should those cast in their net, who are sure to enclose so excellent a catch of fishes!

Reader, why do you expect more than others in heaven, if grace has not made you more than others on earth? “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?” (Mat 5:46). It is but natural that love should be returned to those from whom it has been received. Now, natural works shall have only natural wages; if you would not have God put you off with a Pharisee’s portion, how can you put Him off with a Pharisee’s performance?

The Lord hangs the bait of duty upon the hook of mercy. He sets the promises of the gospel in the galleries of His ordinances.⁴¹ The hardy soldier will undergo a bloody seed time to enjoy a happy harvest. He pursues nothing more than earthly mammon, but the saint pursues nothing less than heavenly mansions.

³⁷ **casket** – small chest or box for jewels or other small articles.

³⁸ **garner** – granary; a building where grain is stored.

³⁹ **brands** – charred wood.

⁴⁰ **making out** – recognizing.

⁴¹ **bait of duty...galleries of His ordinances** – we are saved apart from works, unto good works—both are part of the Christian life (cf. Eph 2:8-10).

III. Doctrine:

What a Christian Does More than Others

Principles 1-10

Thus have I dispatched the first general head,¹ namely: *why* the disciples of Christ do more than others. I therefore come secondly to consider, *what* a Christian does more than others.

And here I shall form a golden chain of ten links for believers to wear about their necks.

The first singular action of a consistent Christian is,

1. To do much good and make but little noise.

Some people say much and do nothing, but Christians do much and say nothing. To deserve praise where none is obtained is better than to obtain praise where none is deserved. The old maxim is worthy to be revived: he who desires honor is not worthy of honor.

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven” (Mat 6:1). A saint may be seen doing more works than any, and yet he does not do any of the works to be seen. An alms which is seen is by no means unpleasant to God, provided it be not given with a design to *have* it seen (cf. Mat 5:16; 6:2). Though good ends do not make bad actions lawful, yet bad ends make good actions sinful. The harp sounds sweetly, yet it hears not its own melody. Moses had more glory by his veil than he had by his face (Exo 34:35). It is truly pleasant to behold those living in the dust of humility, who have raised others from the dust by their liberality.

That ancient caution of our Savior is very suitable to modern times: “Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward” (Mat 6:2). What the first verse calls doing to be seen by men, this calls doing to receive glory from men.

Hypocrites would never be anxious for men to see them, but that by seeing them men should praise them; the indigent² are more indebted to their vanity than their charity! They give alms, not so much for the poor to live upon, as for the rich to look upon. This is employing the master’s coin for the servant’s gain. Hypocrites are more zealous for the market than for the closet; they can pray better in the corners of the streets than in the corners of their houses.

It is both food and drink to a formalist to fast if others do but see it. It is reported that the nightingale never sings so sweetly as when others stand by to hear its melody. “Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD!” (2Ki 10:16), when there was no zeal *for the Lord* to be seen; Jehu only made religion a stirrup to mount upon the saddle of popularity. Sounding souls are seldom souls that are sound. The boast of a Jehu is always linked to the heart of a Judas. Some people are like hens that no sooner drop their eggs than they begin to cluck. If such bestow a little money on a church’s repairs, it must be recorded upon a church plaque!

How frequently do the enemies of grace lurk under the praises of nature. While a hypocrite is extolled, grace is injured. By how much we arrogate³ to our honor, we derogate from God’s honor. What are the acclamations of man compared to the approbation⁴ of God? Of what real advantage is it to be praised on earth by those about us, and damned in heaven by Him Who is above us? One flaw in a diamond diminishes both its splendor and value. Where *self* is the end of our actions, there Satan is the rewarder of them!

¹ **dispatched the first general head** – that is, finished the first general section of this book.

² **indigent** – poor.

³ **arrogate** – to claim for one’s self without right.

⁴ **approbation** – approval.

“But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth” (Mat 6:3). Acts of mercy are right hand acts, but the left hand must not know them, because it will make them known. It is a singular thing for Christians to do much in secret, and to keep it secret when it is done. God is nearer to us than we are to ourselves. We need not sound a trumpet for any acts of righteousness; for when the great trumpet shall sound, every work shall be revealed (1Co 3:13).

Where the river is the deepest, the water glides the smoothest. Empty containers sound most, whereas the well-fraught⁵ vessel silences its own sound. As the shadow cast of the sun is longest when its beams are lowest, so we are always least when we make ourselves the greatest. Wicked Saul would rather resign his crown than his honor: “Honour me now...before the...people” (1Sa 15:30). There is little worth in outward splendor if grace yield it not an inward luster.

When the sun of worldly grandeur is in its meridian, it may be masked with a cloud. By climbing too high on the bough of honor, you may hang yourselves on the tree of dishonor. Some would rather suffer the agony of the cross than the infamy of the cross. It is worse, in their esteem, to be dispraised than it is to be destroyed. Thus Abimelech conceived of it: “And a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech’s head, and all to brake his skull. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died” (Jdg 9:53-54). Poor man: he dies, but his pride does not die!

How frequently does God reject those as reprobate⁶ silver whom men esteem as fine gold! “But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom 2:29). The praise of a hypocrite is not of God but of man; the praise of a true Israelite is not of man but of God. The former desires to appear good that he may be admired; the latter desires to be good that God may be honored. The self-abased saint on earth imitates the holy angels in heaven, while the self-admired sinner on earth imitates the fallen angels in hell!

The cherubim in Ezekiel’s vision “had the hands of a man under their wings” (Eze 1:8). They had not their wings under their hands, but their hands under their wings. Their hands denote skill; their wings denote celerity;⁷ their hands under their wings denote the secrecy of their actions.⁸ They would not have others fall down and worship them, who were only around the throne; but they fell down themselves to worship Him, Who is upon the throne!

It was foretold of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who did the most excellent works that ever were done, that “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street” (Isa 42:2). That is, He would not be contentious; He would not be vain-glorious.

How repugnant to this was the conduct of the boasting Pharisee: “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican” (Luk 18:11). Hypocrites are better in setting forth their own worth than their own wants; in displaying the banners of their perfections than in revealing the heinousness of their own transgressions. “I am not as other men are!” Because he was not so bad as most, he thought himself as good as the best. Ambition is so great a planet that it must have a whole orbit to move in. Ambition is envious of its equals.

A sunburned face seems fair compared with [that of] an Ethiopian, but ciphers⁹ can never constitute a sum. This Pharisee was as far from being religious as he was from being scandalous. But upon what foundation did he rear his superstructure? “I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess” (Luk 18:12). He proclaims all out of doors that was done within doors. He hid his sins, which he should have confessed; and he published his good deeds, which he should have concealed!

What victory a formalist seemingly obtains over one lust, he loses by being overcome by another. He trades not for God’s glory, but for his own vain-glory. If a tear is shed or a prayer is made, as it is performed by him so it

⁵ **well-fraught** – abundantly filled.

⁶ **reprobate** – literally, “failing to meet the test”; therefore, worthless or corrupted.

⁷ **celerity** – speed.

⁸ The reader is cautioned against accepting assertions of any uninspired writer not demonstrated from Scripture. As profitable as our author is, he cannot be wholly vindicated in this regard.

⁹ **ciphers** – symbols denoting absence of quantity; zero.

is divulged by him. He who traffics¹⁰ in God's service, to freight¹¹ himself with man's praises, shall suffer shipwreck in the haven!

It is reported of Alexander's footman that he ran so swiftly upon the sand that the prints of his footsteps were not to be seen. Thus may it be with Christians. Nothing is more pleasing to God than a hand liberally opened and a tongue strictly silent!

Most people are like Themistocles,¹² who never found himself to be so much contented as when he heard himself praised. I will not say a gracious heart never lifts up itself in pride, but I will say that *grace* in the heart never lifts it up. Grace in the heart constantly acts like itself, but a gracious heart does not always do so.

Saints should resemble a spire steeple, which is smallest where it is highest; or those orient¹³ stars, which the higher they are seated, the less they are seen. Usually the greatest boasters are the smallest workers. The deep rivers pay a larger tribute to the sea than shallow brooks, and yet empty themselves with less noise. What will a hypocrite not do so he might but see his own signet¹⁴ upon it when it is done!

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

2. To bring up the bottom of his life to the top of his light.

By how far our hearts are set upon God's precepts, to love them, by so far are God's ears set upon our prayers to answer them. David knew this when he said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psa 66:18). Since the tree of knowledge has been tasted, the key of knowledge has been rusted (Luk 11:52).

Therefore, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1Co 2:14). Spiritual truths oppose the wickedness of human reason because they are against it—and therefore natural man cannot receive them. Spiritual truths also exceed the weakness of human reason because they are above it—therefore the natural man cannot perceive them. It is better to be a toe in the foot and that be sound, than to be an eye in the head and that be blind.

There is a great propriety in the exhortation of Peter: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Pe 3:18). No knowledge can equal that of Christ; no growth can equal that of grace. Without grace there may be *seeming* knowledge, but without grace there can be no *saving* knowledge.

There were more enlightened than enlivened in the days of Christ; hence He said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (Joh 13:17). To obey the truth and not know it is impossible; to know the truth and not obey it is unprofitable. For, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Mat 7:21). Saving knowledge is not as the light of the moon to sleep by, but as the light of the sun, to work by. It is not a loiterer in the marketplace, but a laborer in the vineyard.

A man may be a great scholar and yet be a great sinner. Judas the traitor was Judas the preacher! The snake that has a pearl in its head¹⁵ has poison in its body! The tree of knowledge has often been planted and flourished where the tree of life never grew. A man may be acquainted with the grace of truth, and yet not know the truth of grace. All abilities and gifts without grace and holiness are but like Uriah's letters, which were the death warrants of him who carried them (2Sa 11)!

Mere head knowledge¹⁶ will be as unhelpful to the soul on the Judgment Day as a painted fire is unhelpful to the frozen body on a cold day. As some articles are tanned by the same sun in which others are whitened, so are some professors hardened under the same gospel by which others are softened.

I would never have that brand of Christians that was the bane of heathens: "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God" (Rom 1:21). As it is lost labor to smite the flint if it disperses no sparks, so it is fruitless toil to furnish our heads with light if it does not refine our hearts. Satan may as well put out our eyes

¹⁰ **traffics** – deals.

¹¹ **freight** – load.

¹² **Themistocles (c. 524-459 BC)** – Athenian politician and military general.

¹³ **orient** – rising or east.

¹⁴ **signet** – seal indicating personal authority over others.

¹⁵ **snake...pearl** – thought to form in a snake's body.

¹⁶ **head knowledge** – that is, understanding without faith, evident by lack of habitual love and obedience.

that we should not see the truth, as cut off our feet that we should not walk in the truth. Mere theoretical knowledge may make the head giddy, but it will never make the heart holy.

Who would wait for such a gale as would drive them farther from the desired haven, or freight their vessels with such a cargo as would ruin the owner? Shall we hold the candle of the gospel in one hand and the sword of rebellion in the other? How many professors are there who have light enough to know what should be done, but have not love enough to do what they know! Such people have no advantage from carrying a bright candle in a dark lantern. Give me the Christian who perfectly *sees* the way he should go and readily *goes* the way he sees!

That is barren ground that brings forth no fruit. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (Jam 4:17). The sins of ignorance are most *numerous*, but the sins of knowledge are most *dangerous*! That sinner’s darkness will be the greatest in hell, whose light was the clearest on earth!

Pharnaces, the Prince of Pontus, sent a crown to Caesar at the time he was in rebellion against him. Caesar refused the present, saying, “Let him first lay down his rebellion, and then I will receive his crown.” There are many who set a crown of glory upon the head of Christ by a good profession, and yet put a crown of thorns upon His head by an evil conversation.¹⁷ By the *words* of our mouth we may affect to adore religion, but it is by the *works* of our lives that we adorn religion.

It was a just saying of one, “That in the best reformed churches, there were the most deformed professors.” Look to this, Reader: all will be pulled down without you, if there be no grace set up within you. As trees without fruits are unprofitable, so knowledge without good works is abominable! Rachel and Leah (Gen 29:17-32) are fit emblems of knowledge and obedience. Knowledge, like Rachel, is beautiful; but obedience, like Leah, is fruitful. He who dislikes to do what he knows, will one day not know what to do!

“Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Mat 10:16). Be wise as serpents to guard against the wolf’s rapacity,¹⁸ and harmless as doves that you may do no man any injury; thus the serpent’s eye is an ornament when placed in the dove’s head. The lives of many professors are awfully unlike their lights. They have the light of the sun for wisdom; but lack the heat of a candle for grace and holiness.

I have read of a painter who, being reprehended¹⁹ by a [Roman Catholic] cardinal for putting too much red in the faces of St. Paul and St. Peter, answered, “It is to show how much they blush at the conduct of many who style themselves their successors!” Were Abraham the father of the faithful now on earth, how would he disclaim all relation to many who call themselves his offspring! Though there was less grace revealed to the saints of old, yet there was more grace manifested by them. They knew little and did much; we know much and do little!

John the Baptist “was a burning and a shining light” (Joh 5:35). To burn is not enough—a firebrand will do so; to shine is not enough—a glow-worm will do so. Heat without light does much harm; and light without heat does but little good. Give me those Christians who are burning lamps as well as shining lights!

The sun is as vigorous in its moving as it is illustrious in its shining. I know the *light* of nature requires grace to repel the *lusts* of nature. Will any say, “The day of hope is dawning within them” when the powers of darkness are ruling over them? How monstrous is it to see a Christian’s tongue larger than his hand—to speak so much of God, and yet act so little for God!

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

3. To prefer the duty he owes to God to the danger he fears from man!

Christians in all ages have prized their services above their safety. “The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Pro 28:1). The fearful hare trembles at every noise, but the courageous lion is unmoved by the greatest clamors. Were believers to shrink back at every contrary wind which blows, they would never make their voyage to heaven.

“My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go” (Job 27:6). Poor Job could hold nothing fast but his integrity; grace kept his heart when he could not keep his gold. Uprightness is so fair a complexion as not to be subject to any alteration by the scorching beams of persecution. The laurel preserves its verdure²⁰ amidst the

¹⁷ **conversation** – lifestyle.

¹⁸ **rapacity** – taking by greedy, selfish, forceful plunder.

¹⁹ **reprehended** – rebuked.

²⁰ **verdure** – greenness.

severest blasts of winter. Times of trouble have often been times of triumph to a believer. Suffering seasons have generally been sifting seasons, in which the Christian has lost his chaff and the hypocrite his cloak!

Dangers have frequently made the worldling²¹ leave his duties. The scythe²² of persecution cuts down the fragile grass of his devotion. Those who always refuse to carry the yoke of Christ upon their necks will also refuse to carry the cross of Christ upon their backs. Nothing less than the true enjoyment of God, Who is altogether good, can permanently support us under the suffering of that which is evil. The flesh is an enemy to suffering, because suffering is an enemy to the flesh. The flesh may make a man an earthly *courtier*,²³ but it will never make a man a Christian *martyr*.

Wicked men stumble at every straw on the way to heaven, but they climb over mountains in the way to destruction! Hang heavy weights on rotten boughs and they will suddenly break. If mere professors take up religion in a fair day, they will eagerly lay it down in a foul one. The language of such is, "Lord we are willing to serve You, but unwilling to suffer for You. We will go to sea with You, but on condition we have no storms. We have no objections to enter into the war, but upon the promise that we have no fighting!" Such would gladly be wafted to the port of felicity in such vessels as would not be tossed in the sea of calamity! They fear too much of wearing a thorn, though it is borrowed from Christ's crown of thorns!

There are some who would sacrifice a stout²⁴ heart to a stubborn will, and would rather die martyrs for their sins than servants for the truth. How shall those stand *for* Christ who never stood *in* Christ? True believers are more studious how to adorn the cross than how to avoid the cross. They deem it better to be saved in troubled water than to be drowned in a calm ocean!

Temporary professors are like hedge-hogs which have two holes, one to the north and another to the south; when the south wind chaffs them they turn to the north, and when the north wind chills them they turn to the south. Thus they lose their activity [in order] to preserve their security. That was a beggarly saying which fell from a prince's lips: "I will sail no farther in the cause of Christ than while I can preserve my safe retreat to land."

Man is a short-sighted creature; he is afraid to follow too far upon the heels of truth lest it should lead him into danger. Weak grace may *do* for God, but it must be strong grace that will *die* for God. A true Christian will lay down his lusts at the command of Christ, and his life for the cause of Christ. The more a tree of righteousness is shaken by the wind, the more it is rooted in the ground. What, are you a member of Christ and afraid to be a martyr for Christ? If those are blessed who die *in* Christ, what must they be who die *for* Christ!

What though the flesh returns to dust, so long as the spirit returns to heaven? What is the body of man for a soul to live in, compared with the bosom of Abraham for a soul to lie in? Righteous Abel, the first martyr in the church militant, was the first saint in the church triumphant. He offered up a sacrifice when the altar was sprinkled with his own blood. As his body was the first that ever went into the earth, so his soul was the first that ever went into heaven!

"Should such a man as I flee?" says Nehemiah, a man so much owned and honored by God (Neh 6:11). It is better to die a conqueror through Christ than to live a coward in religion. None are so truly courageous as those who are truly Christian. If a Christian lives, he knows by Whose might he stands; and if he dies, he knows for Whose sake he falls. Where there is no confidence *in* God, there will be no continuance *with* God. When the wind of faith ceases to fill the sails, the ship of obedience ceases to plough the seas! The taunts of Ishmael shall never make an Isaac disesteem his inheritance (Gen 21:9).

Reader, if a righteous cause brings you into sufferings, a righteous God will bring you out of sufferings! A Christian is as much indebted to his enemies as to his friends. The malicious crucifixion of Christ wrought out the glorious exaltation of Christ. The worst that men can do *against* believers is the best they can do *for* believers—the worst they can do against them is to send them out of the earth, and the best they can do for them is to send them into heaven!

That was a Christian expression of one of the martyrs to his persecutors: "You take a life from me, which I cannot keep, and bestow a life upon me, which I cannot lose! This is as if you should rob me of my pennies and

²¹ **worldling** – those given to the things of this world (cf. 1Jo 2:15-16).

²² **scythe** – tool with long curved blade on a handle used for mowing.

²³ **courtier** – attendant at a royal court.

²⁴ **stout** – determined; bold; brave.

load me with diamonds!” He who is assured of a heavenly life that has no end, need not care how soon this earthly life shall end!

Neither the persecuting hand of men, nor the chastising hand of God, relaxed ancient singular saints. “All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way” (Psa 44:17-18). Believers resemble the moon, which emerges from her eclipse by keeping her motion, and ceases not to shine because the dogs bark at her. Shall we cease to be professors because others will not cease to be persecutors?

By the seed of the serpent, the heel of the woman may be bruised; but by the seed of the woman, the head of the serpent shall be broken! A Christian may enjoy a calm of inward peace, while he sustains²⁵ the storms of outward trouble. If he enjoys the former, he may expect the latter; if he suffers the latter, he may expect the former! There is no summer without its winter.

“Many waters [may drown the world, but] cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it” (Song 8:7). The water of *affliction* cannot extinguish the fire of *affection*. If true religion goes against their lusts, formalists will quickly shut up their hearts against it. They will rather tarry out of the land of Canaan than swim to it through the Red Sea. A man will never sustain trouble for Jesus until he finds rest in Jesus.

Adventurous Peter could cry, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water” (Mat 14:28). Love to Christ can walk on the water without drowning and lie in the fire without burning. It is said of the serpent, “That it cares not to what danger it exposes its body so long as it can but secure its head.” Thus a Christian cares not to what danger he is liable, so long as Jesus is but honored thereby.

Paul, who turned the world upside-down, could not be turned upside-down by the world. “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Act 20:24). A saint is inwardly pious, [even] when he is not outwardly prosperous. The stronger the medicine is, the sounder the patient becomes for taking it. The higher the flood swells on earth, the nearer the ark mounts to heaven.

God can strike straight strokes with crooked sticks and make Satan’s dross²⁶ burnish²⁷ His choice vessels. Christians are crucified *by* the world that they might be crucified *to* the world. God makes it their enemy that He might make them enemies to it. Christianity is like the “phoenix,” which has always flourished in its own ashes.²⁸ While reprobates attack the truth with their sword, martyrs defend it with their blood. The loss of their heads hastens the reception of their crowns.

We would never land in *triumph* at the haven of rest if we were not tossed upon the sea of *trouble*. If Joseph had not been Egypt’s prisoner, he would never have been Egypt’s governor. The iron chains about his feet ushered in the golden chains about his neck. Temporal losses are only gentle breezes, but eternal losses are insupportable storms.

Reader, tell me: is not Christ with His cross for a few years, better than Dives²⁹ with his dainties for a few days? What comparison is there between the short-lived happiness of the wicked attended with everlasting misery, and the short-lived misery of the righteous attended with everlasting happiness?

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

4. To seek the public good of others above the private good of himself.

The sentiment of Plato,³⁰ a heathen, is worthy to be adopted by every Christian: “I was not born for myself alone, for my country claims a part, my relations claim a part, and my friends claim a part in me.” As we are not born by ourselves, so we are not born *for* ourselves.

Baruch, the man of God, was forbidden to make *self* the center of his wishes: “And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not” (Jer 45:5). For saints to set their hearts upon that whereon beasts set their feet, is as if a king should abdicate his throne to follow the plough, or as if a man should desert a gold mine to dig in a pit

²⁵ **sustains** – endures.

²⁶ **dross** – scum formed on surface of molten metals; worthless trash.

²⁷ **burnish** – to make smooth or glossy.

²⁸ **phoenix** – mythical bird first mentioned in fifth century BC. It builds itself a nest of twigs that ignites and, from the ashes, a new young phoenix arises—reborn anew to live again.

²⁹ **Dives** (dī'-vēz; from the Latin *Vulgate*) – rich man at whose gate Lazarus lay (Luk 16:19-31).

³⁰ **Plato (428?-347 BC)** – influential Greek philosopher.

of gravel. When we hide ourselves, it denotes that we are virtuous; but when we seek ourselves, it denotes that we are covetous.

I am unwilling to draw a defective feature in any man's picture; yet how many are there who have occupied public places with private aspirations! While they pretended to undertake everything for the good of others, it has appeared that they undertook nothing but for the good of themselves. Such suckers at the roots have drawn away the sap and nourishment from the tree. They have set kingdoms on fire, that they might roast their own venison at the flames. These drones stealing into the hive have fed upon the honey, while the laboring bees have been famished! Too many resemble ravenous birds, which at first seem to bewail the dying sheep, but at last are found picking out their eyes!

There is a proverb, though not Solomon's: "Every man for himself and God for us all." But where every man is for himself, the devil will have all. Whoever is a seeker for himself is not found of God. Though he may find himself in this life, he will lose himself in eternity (Mat 16:25).

The public spirit of Seneca³¹ is a sharp censure to many private-spirited professing Christians. "I would so live," said he, "as if I knew I received my being only for the benefit of others." How justly might that complaint be taken up that was so sadly laid down by Paul: "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phi 2:21). If some heathens excel some Christians, it is not because Christianity does not surpass heathenism.

A selfish man will not sow his seed unless he reap the whole harvest! Nor will he plant the vines unless he presses all the grapes into his own vessel. The wheel of his diligence will not move unless the oil of profit is in it. It may be said to many, as a great personage once said to his servant, "your rise has been my fall."

If Dives is tormented because he refused to impart his own goods, what shall their torment be who take that which is another's! If those fingers are cut off that so closely clasp their own property, what will become of those hands that are always grasping at other men's property!

It was Israel's lamentation that those who were once clad in scarlet now embraced the dunghill (Lam 4:5). It may now be England's lamentation that many who once embraced the dunghill are now by injustice clothed in scarlet! Every man's private interest is best secured in the public good. A drop of water will soon be dried up if alone, but in the ocean it will retain its moisture. A single beam of light is suddenly obscured, but in the body of the sun it retains its splendor.

Too many, in all ages, have turned a common weal³² into a common woe. They have spun themselves superfine suits out of the nation's fleece. When any springs have been opened, they have laid pipes to convey the water into their own cisterns. Such pretended pilots have steered the ship of plenty into their own haven, but God's justice will certainly squeeze such sponges—and leave them as dry at last as they were at first. All those moths shall be destroyed that eat into other men's garments. For a man to advance his interest out of another's property is to keep all the meat in his mouth, and starve all the body beside. Naturally, every man is his own Alpha and his own Omega; he has his beginning from himself and his ending in himself.

That was a morose³³ speech of Cain to the Almighty: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9). He thought it was not his duty to be his brother's keeper, but he did not consider that it was against his duty to be his brother's assassin. There are many who will not be their brother's keepers, and yet will be their butchers. They have riveted themselves to their possessions by the bones of their murdered brethren, and paved causeways to honor with the skulls of honest men.

Self-seeking has been so long pulling the ropes that it has rung the death-bell of many nations. It is sad to see the house in flames while the chamber is being furnished; the ship sinking while the cabin is being equipped; or the tree falling while the nest is a-building. But, better fruit cannot grow upon the trees of cruelty than wantonness and oppression. God will compel them to drink the dregs³⁴ of that cup, which they have so unjustly mingled for others.

Queen Esther was a singular saint, for she preferred the public to her private good. "If I perish, I perish. For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?" (Est 4:16; 8:6). This Israelitess was not more lovely in appearance than benevolent in her disposition. She did not prefer her own life to her people's, but her people's to her own.

³¹ **Seneca, Lucius Annaeus (c. 4 BC - AD 65)** – Roman philosopher, statesman, and orator; Rome's leading intellectual of his day.

³² **weal** – prosperity.

³³ **morose** – sullen; unhappy; annoyed; gloomy.

³⁴ **dregs** – solid particles that settle at the bottom of a wine barrel.

When Theodosius³⁵ lay on his dying pillow, he was more studious how to do his kingdom good than how to sustain his torturing pains, as appears by his counsel to his sons to whom he left it. “I counsel you to be deeply concerned for the promotion of religion and the good of man; for by this, peace will be preserved and wars no more known.”

Though the eagle is the queen of birds, yet she was not offered up in sacrifice because she lived upon the spoil of others. Grace teaches a Christian not only to act like a man to God, but also like God to man.³⁶

Our Lord Jesus Christ pleased not Himself, that thereby He might eternally profit us. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2Co 8:9). A drop of His blood is worth more than a sea of ours! And yet He died our death that we might live His life; and He suffered our hell to bring us to His heaven. He lay in the feeble arms of His mother that we might lie in the tender bosom of His Father. His love began in His eternal purposes of grace, and ends in our eternal possession of glory.

Why was the Bread of Life hungry, but to feed the hungry with the bread of life (Joh 6:35)! Why was Rest itself weary, but to give the weary rest! Why did He hang upon the cross on Mount Calvary, but that we might sit upon the throne on Mount Zion! His glorious face was covered with spittle that our disfigured faces might be enameled with glory! Why did this Jonah cast Himself into the sea of His Father’s wrath, but to save the ship of His Church from sinking! Christ is not only the vessel in which the waters of life are contained, but He is also the pipes through which they are conveyed.

If the mountains overflow with moisture, the valleys are the richer; but if the head is full of disease, the whole body is the worse. Happy are those people whom God will use as brooms to sweep out the dust from His temple; or who shall tug at an oar in the boat where Christ and His church are embarked.

David was a king who ruled in righteousness and studied, not so much to make himself great, as to make his people happy. For David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell asleep (Act 13:36). His royal services were not swallowed up in the narrow gulf of *self*. He did not draw all his lines to the ignoble center of his own ends. Such birds are bad in the nest, but worse when they fly abroad. He served his own generation—not the preceding, for they were dead before he was alive; nor the following, for he was dead before they were alive.

Every gracious person is benevolent, but not every benevolent person is gracious. An iron key may open a golden treasury, and lead pipes³⁷ convey pleasant waters. Though earthly blessings may be communicated to a spiritual man, yet spiritual blessings will not be communicated to a carnal man.

While meteors keep above in the skies, they yield a pleasing luster; but when they decline and fall to the earth, they come to nothing.

Though the name of the author of Psalm 137 is not recorded, yet his generous disposition should ever be admired: “If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy” (Psa 137:6). Good old Eli mourned more for the loss of the ark than for the loss of his relations (1Sa 4:17-18). His heart was broken before his neck!

Augustus Caesar³⁸ possessed such an entire attachment to his country that he called it his own daughter. [He] refused to be called its master, because he ruled it not by fear, but by love. After his decease, his disconsolate people lamented over him, saying, “O that he had never lived, or that he had never died!” Those whose lives deserve no praises, their deaths deserve no tears.

A self-seeker lives unrespected and dies unlamented. When once a man becomes a god to himself, he then becomes a devil to others! Such a one cares not who sinks, so long as *he* arrives safe at shore. Those execrable³⁹ wretches, whose conduct is recorded in the book of Acts, cared not whether a whole city lost their souls, so that a few shrine-makers might but preserve their gain (Act 19:24-28).

³⁵ **Theodosius** – Theodosius I (Flavius Theodosius Augustus, AD 347-395), also known as Theodosius the Great; Roman Emperor from 379 to 395.

³⁶ **God to man** – that is, to be like God (cf. Mat 5:44-45).

³⁷ **lead pipes** – used to convey waters before their toxic properties were understood.

³⁸ **Augustus Caesar (63 BC - AD 14)** – considered the first emperor of the Roman Empire, which he ruled alone from 27 BC until his death in AD 14.

³⁹ **execrable** – deserving of denunciation; abhorrent.

It is reported that Agrippina, the mother of Nero,⁴⁰ [upon] being told that if her son ever came to be an emperor he would be her murderer, made this reply: "I am content to perish, if he may be Emperor!" What she expressed vain-gloriously, that we may do righteously: "Let us perish so long as our neighbors, our relations, and our country are bettered; and the gospel and the Savior are honored." But there are many who entirely reverse this language; if not in words, yet in heart they say, "Let relations, neighbors, country, and religion perish, so long as we are benefited thereby!"

When the Lord proposed to Moses that He would destroy Israel and make a great nation of him, Moses, with such a public spirit, became intercessor for the children of Israel; yes, even when they were ready to stone him! His affections as a ruler were stronger than his affections as a father of his own great nation. Thus Joshua, his honorable successor, so far imitated him that he first divided Canaan into several allotments and portions for the tribes of Israel, before he made any provision for his own family (Jos 19:49). Give me such carvers as lay not all the meat upon their own dishes!

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

5. To have the most beautiful lives even among the vilest people.

As an ungodly man poisons the air in which he breathes, so he pollutes the age in which he lives. The putrid grape corrupts the sound cluster. Pious Joseph, by living in the court of Pharaoh, had learned to swear by the life of Pharaoh. A high priest's hall instructed Peter how to deny his suffering Master. Fresh waters lose their sweetness by gliding into the salt sea. Those who sail among the rocks are in danger of splitting their ships.

When vice runs in a single stream, it is then a fordable shallow, but when many of these meet together, they then swell into a deeper channel. The Lord has appointed from the beginning that enmity shall exist between the righteous seed of the woman and the unrighteous seed of the serpent. It is far better to have the ungodly man's enmity than his society. By his enmity he is most hateful,⁴¹ but by his society⁴² he is most hurtful. A pious man in the company of wicked men is like a green branch among dry and burning brands: they can sooner kindle him than he can quench them!

As sheep among the thorns injure their fleeces, so saints among sinners do an injury to their graces. Hence it is said, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?...Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2Co 6:14-17). To see a saint and a sinner maintaining familiar fellowship with each other is to behold the living and the dead keeping house together! The godly are more frequently corrupted by the evil deportment of the worldling, than the worldling is refined by the chaste life of the godly.

The impious lives of the wicked are as contagious as the most fearful plague which infects the air. When the pure doves of Christ lie among such filthy pots, their white feathers are sullied. You may observe that if you mix an equal portion of sour vinegar and sweet wine together, you will find that the vinegar will sooner sour the wine, than the wine sweeten the vinegar.

That is a sound body which continues healthful in a pest house.⁴³ It is a far greater wonder to see a saint maintain his purity among sinners, than it is to behold a sinner becoming pure among saints. Christians are not always like fish that retain their freshness in the salt sea, or like the rose that preserves its sweetness among the most foul weeds, or like the fire that burns the hottest when the season is coldest.

A godly man was once heard to lament that as often as he went into the company of the wicked, he returned less a man than he was before he joined with them. As it is a difficult thing to touch melting pitch and not be defiled, so it is for saints to do much good for sinners and receive no injury from them. If we cannot help them, it is their unholiness; if they hurt us, it is our unhappiness. The Lord's people, by keeping evil company, are like people who are much exposed to the sun—insensibly tanned and darkened.

⁴⁰ **Nero (AD 37-68)** – Roman emperor from 54 to 68 who clung to power with viciousness and persecuted the Christians.

⁴¹ **hateful** – full of hate; deserving to be hated.

⁴² **society** – company; social interaction.

⁴³ **pest house** – hospital for those with plague or other infectious (pestilential) disease.

Every Christian is a light in the world, though he is not the light of the world. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mat 5:16). O that Christians were more like the light that abides pure, though the air in which it dwells is corrupted! Men may defile themselves in the light, but they cannot defile the light itself. The sun shines throughout an impure world, and yet knows no impurity. Ah, how many resemble swine in the fairest meadow: [they] would break every bound to find the mire! They remind me of impious Judas, who, instead of being a disciple among devils, was a devil among disciples. Poor man, he was all precept and no example. He could attempt to reprove One, Who was innocence itself; and encourage one, who was sin itself!

Pious company brings fire to our graces, to kindle them when they are freezing; but impious company brings water, to quench them when they are flaming.

It is observed by some, "that the sweetest flowers may be found among the most offensive herbs." The poets affirm that, "Venus⁴⁴ never appeared so beautiful, as when she sat by black Vulcan's side."⁴⁵ This we are sure beyond a doubt, that Stephen's face never shone so gloriously in the church, where he was admired, as in the council, where he was abhorred. Had he been like them, they would not have disliked him. Had not God given him spiritual life, they would never have put him to an ignominious death. How will the fire consume dry fuel, when it prevailed to such a degree over the green.

That jewel must be glorious in the sun that glitters in the shade. There are many men that can match with any men; they can be professors among those that are professors, and scorners among those that are scorners. These appear good in conjunction with those that are good, but evil in conjunction with those that are evil. Every man loves to be a man that is beloved, and is apt to take pleasure in them who take pleasure in him. Take heed of ceasing to be so good a Christian, that others may think you a good companion. It is hard to be conformed to the world in the outward man *and* transformed to God in the inward man; to be an outward heathen and an inward Christian is an oxymoron.⁴⁶ It is a Spanish proverb, "Tell me but where you go and I will tell you what you do." And our English proverb well "Anglicizes" this proverb, "Birds of a feather will flock together." To be too intimate with sinners is to intimate that you are a sinner!

"And being let go, they went to their own company" (Act 4:23). To whom should believers join but to believers? There is no trusting the tamest natures; but let the lions out of their fetters and they will soon show you their bloody natures! How dare you be found lodging in that house where God Himself is not found dwelling. There is no sleeping with dogs without swarming with fleas!

It is a royal diadem⁴⁷ that Christ sets on the head of His spouse. "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters" (Song 2:2). There are many thorns that are among the lilies, but few lilies that are among the thorns.⁴⁸ How rare a spectacle it is to see a believer keep his purity in the midst of vanity; to be like Noah, a new man in an old world. If Lot had been polluted with Sodom's sins, he might have been consumed in Sodom's flames!

It is ill breathing in an infectious air. Satan's progeny⁴⁹ do not want to go to hell without society. A man may pass through Ethiopia and yet be unchanged, but if he remains there, he will be discolored.⁵⁰

Where the Roman Catholic Church is fallen away from God, there let us fall away from them. Where such worms breed in the body of a nation, they will be sure to eat out the vitals of true religion. Not to take away such traitors is to make a nest wherein to hatch their treasons.

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

6. To choose the worst of sorrows before he will commit the least of sins.

The wicked entirely reverse this, for they prefer the greatest sin to the least sufferings! This is to leap out of the hot pan into the consuming fire! By seeking to shun an external calamity, they rush into eternal misery! This

⁴⁴ **Venus** – Roman mythology: goddess of love and beauty.

⁴⁵ **Vulcan** – Roman mythology: god of fire and metalworking.

⁴⁶ **oxymoron** – figure of speech in which opposite or contradictory ideas are combined.

⁴⁷ **diadem** – crown.

⁴⁸ **lilies...thorns** – that is, it is more common to see a believer surrounded by bad men than to see the purity of such a one untarnished by their company.

⁴⁹ **progeny** – children; offspring.

⁵⁰ **discolored** – that is, having his skin tanned or darkened by the heat of that country.

is as if a man should lose his head to preserve his hat; or as if the mariner should sink the vessel to avoid the rising storm!

Above every evil, we should consider *sin* as the greatest evil. Sin is the only target at which all the arrows of divine vengeance are shot! Sinners are those spiders that weave their own webs and are afterwards entangled in them. Our own destruction is but the fruit of our own transgression!

Sin has every evil united to it. Sin is the fountain and origin of all evils⁵¹. Thus the prophet viewed it, “Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?” (Lam 3:39). When man had no evil *within* him, he had no evil *upon* him. He began to be sorrowful when he began to be sinful. When the soul shall be fully released from the guilt of iniquity, the body shall be wholly delivered from the burden of infirmity. Sorrow shall never be a visitant where sin is not an inhabitant. Sorrow would be a foreigner, if sin were not a sojourner.

God is as far from chastening His children *for* nothing, as He is from beating them *to* nothing. A hole in the ship will sink it to the bottom. A small bite from a poisonous serpent will affect the whole body. There is no way to calm the sea but by excommunicating Jonah from the ship. If the root is killed, the branches will soon be withered. If the spring is diminished, there is no doubt but the streams will soon fail. Where the fuel of corruption is removed, there the fire of affliction is extinguished.

“The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). As the works of sin are dishonorable, so the wages of sin are deadly! The corruption of nature is the cause of the dissolution of nature.⁵² The candle of our lives is blown out by the wind of our lusts! Sin is the noxious weed that chokes out the choicest grain. Sin is the offensive smoke that depresses the rising flame. Sin is the dismal cloud that overshadows the beaming sun.

Were it not for sin, death would never have had a beginning! Were it not for death, sin would never have an ending! Man, as a creature, is a debtor to the commands of God as a Sovereign; but as a sinner, he is a debtor to the severity of God as a Judge.

What is so sweet and good as Christ? And what is so great an evil as lust? Sin has brought many a believer *into* suffering, and suffering has instrumentally kept many a believer *out of* sin. It is better to be preserved in brine⁵³ than to rot in honey! The bitterest medicine is to be preferred before the sweetest poison. In the same fire wherein the dross is consumed, the precious gold is refined.

There are many thousands of souls who would never have obtained the hopes of heaven, if they had not been brought there by the gates of hell. As every mercy is a drop derived from the ocean of God’s goodness, so every misery is a grain weighed out by the supreme wisdom of God’s providence.

When Eudocia⁵⁴ angrily threatened Chrysostom⁵⁵ with banishment, he calmly replied; “Go tell her I fear nothing but sin!” He who serves God need fear nothing so much as sin!

Those who launch out into any voyage should always previously look well to their tackling⁵⁶—lest a destructive storm should drown them. A bad conscience embitters the sweetest comforts, but a good conscience sweetens the bitterest crosses. How great a wound do vices make in the conscience, yes, even in our infant years! Though the hardened sinner is not afraid to do evil, yet he will be afraid to suffer evil. They need not fear a cross on their back who feel a Christ in their heart!⁵⁷

The water outside the ship may toss it, but it is the water inside the ship that sinks it! It is better to have the body consumed to ashes for the sake of Christ, than to have the soul dwell in everlasting burnings through being ashamed of Christ! Though Christians have no warrant to expect that they shall live here without afflictions, yet, in the exercise of them, faith will teach them to live above afflictions.

⁵¹ **evils** – in this context: sufferings, afflictions, troubles, calamities.

⁵² **dissolution of nature** – death.

⁵³ **brine** – salt water.

⁵⁴ **Eudocia (Aelia Eudoxia, died 404)** – empress consort of the Byzantine Emperor Arcadius.

⁵⁵ **John Chrysostom (c. 347-407)** – Archbishop of Constantinople, an important Early Church Father, known for his eloquence in preaching. He died while enroute to his site of banishment.

⁵⁶ **tackling** – rigging and pulleys used to hoist a boat’s sails.

⁵⁷ The reader is cautioned against dependence upon feelings for assurance of salvation and is directed to the criteria of Scripture (see 1 John).

That noble servant of Christ, Ignatius,⁵⁸ gloried in reproaches for his Lord. He truly delighted to suffer for Christ: “I am not worthy to suffer for Jesus.” Every Christian’s Patmos⁵⁹ is his way to paradise.

Suppose the furnace is heated “seven times hotter” (Dan 3:19), yet God can make the sufferer seventy times happier. Those who are here persecuted for well-doing shall hereafter be crowned with well-dying. There are none more welcome to the spiritual Canaan, than those who swim to it through the red sea of their own blood.⁶⁰

Christian Reader, when you come into the world, you do but live to die again! And when you leave the world, you do but die to live again! Is the grain the worse for the fan by which it is winnowed? Is the gold the worse for the fire by which it is refined?

Pendleton, a self-confident professor, promised to fry out his fat body in the flames of martyrdom rather than betray religion. But when the trial approached, he changed his note and said, “I came not into the world burning, neither will I go out of the world flaming.”

Those who refuse to give up their lusts for Christ will never be inclined to give up their lives for Christ! Paul and Silas had their prison songs in their prison sufferings (Act 16:25). Those caged birds sang with as much melody as any which have sky liberty. Thus Ignatius, in his epistle to the persecutors of the Church, gloried, saying, “The wild beasts may grind me as corn between their teeth, but I shall by that become as choice bread in the hand of my God!”

I have read an account of a woman who was imprisoned for her Christianity, and being in travail with child, she cried out with pain. The keeper derided her, saying. “How can you endure the fire seeing you make so much noise in bringing forth a child?” “Very well,” said she, “for now I suffer as a sinner (Gen 3:16), but then I shall suffer for my Savior.”

There is more real evil in a particle of corruption,⁶¹ than in an ocean of tribulation! In suffering, the offence is offered to us; in sinning, the offence is committed against God (Psa 51:4). In suffering, there is an infringement of man’s liberty; in sinning, there is a denial of God’s authority. The evil of suffering is transient, but the evil of sin is permanent. In suffering we lose the favor of men, but in sinning we hazard the favor of God.

The rose is sweeter under the still where it drops, than upon the stalk whereon it grows.⁶² The face of godliness is never so beautiful as when it is spit upon! The best of wheat is that which sustains all the drifts of wintry snow.

That was an heroic saying of Vincentius⁶³ to his hardened persecutors: “You may rage and do your worst, but you shall find the Spirit of God administering more strength to the tormented, than is the spirit of the devil affording strength to my tormentors!” Where Christians choose that which is truly best, there let malicious persecutors do their worst. Though you may feel their might, yet you need not feel their malice. They can have no just grounds of fear, whose confidence is in God. Life is only to be desired by those to whom death would be no gain.

It is reported of Hooper,⁶⁴ the martyr that, when he was going to suffer, a certain person addressed him, saying, “O Sir, take care of yourself! Life is sweet and death is bitter!” “Ah, I know that,” he replied, “but eternal life is full of more sweetness than this mortal life! And eternal death is full of more bitterness than this fiery death!” A man may suffer without sinning, but he cannot sin without suffering.

That was animating language which dropped from the lips of the three Hebrew children, or rather of the three champions: “O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O

⁵⁸ **Ignatius of Antioch (c. 67-107)** – Apostolic Father, third bishop of Antioch and a student of John the Apostle; he was martyred for his faith.

⁵⁹ **Patmos** – small Greek island in the Aegean Sea where the Apostle John suffered exile.

⁶⁰ **None more welcome**, etc. – persecution is promised to all the people of God (2Ti 3:12). Those without it should examine themselves (2Co 13:5). Those under it may be comforted that this mark of discipleship is in them. Nevertheless, persecution will not make us more acceptable to God. All righteousness by which we are accepted is Christ’s (Phi 3:9).

⁶¹ **corruption** – sin, in this context.

⁶² **sweeter under the still...than upon the stalk** – as drops of liquor supposedly make a flower sweeter, so persecutions beautify the believer.

⁶³ **Vincentius** – possible reference to Vincent de Paul (1581-1660), Roman Catholic priest who became dedicated to serving the poor. Born in Pouy, Landes, Gascony, France. In 1605, returning to Toulouse from Marseille, he was taken captive by Turkish pirates, who brought him to Tunis and sold him into slavery. He escaped in 1607 after converting his owner to Christianity.

⁶⁴ **John Hooper (c. 1495-1555)** – Bishop of Worcester and Gloucester, burned at the stake. See *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs* for his remarkable history.

king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan 3:16-18). Either they must sin foully or suffer sadly. They must either bow to a golden image or burn in a flaming furnace; but they were as far from worshiping his gods as he was from worshiping their God!

The beloved Daniel chose rather to die in the den of lions, than shamefully desert the cause of the Lamb. Shall not we, for His sake, bear the wrath of man—for Him Who, for our sakes, bore the wrath of God? Though obedience is better than sacrifice, yet sometimes for a man to sacrifice himself is the best obedience. He who loses a base life for Christ shall hereafter find a better life in Christ.

Some attempted to turn Polycarp⁶⁵ from the faith by insinuating that, “There was no evil in calling Caesar ‘Lord’ and offering sacrifices to him.” He replied, “I have served Jesus Christ for many years, and have always found Him a good Master,” and that he would therefore “submit myself to all the tortures you should inflict rather than deny Him.”

Moses, that memorable worthy, chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb 11:25). What is a cup of medicine that removes a disease, compared with a cup of poison that takes away the life? Those who live upon God in the use of the creature,⁶⁶ can also live upon Him in the loss of the creature. That was a noble expression of a noble Christian: “Whatever I thankfully receive as a token of God’s love to me, I part with contentedly as a token of my love to Him.”

“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die” (Rom 5:7). Shall one even dare to die for a good man, and shall we refuse to die for a good God?

“Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection” (Heb 11:35). Some would have used any pick-lock⁶⁷ to have opened a passage to their liberty, but these Christians knew too much of another world to bid at so high a rate for the present.

Hormisdas, a nobleman of Persia, was degraded of all his promotions because he would not change his profession of Christ. Afterward his persecutors restored them all again, and solicited him to deny Christ [once again]. But he rent his purple robe and laid all his honors at the feet of the emperor, saying, “If you restore these honors with an intention to make me desert my Savior, I decline to accept them upon such conditions!” Good man; he thought, and that justly too, that Christ without worldly honor was better than worldly honor without Christ.

It is recorded concerning one of the martyrs that, when he was going to the stake, a nobleman besought him in a compassionate manner to take care for his soul. “So I will,” he replied, “for I give my body to be burnt rather than have my soul defiled.” How many professors are there who would rather have sinful *self* satisfied than crucified!

As the power of grace comes in at one door, the love of vice will go out at another!

The only way to have the house of Saul weakened, is to get the house of David strengthened. Those Philistines who lacked courage to meet Samson when he was in vigor, could insultingly dance round him when he was in weakness.

Reader, consider seriously that it is sin which in this life debases a person, and in the next life destroys him. Their state must be dreadful whose end is damnation, because their damnation is without end. No condition can be so intolerably doleful⁶⁸ as that which is unalterably dreadful.

A certain person, on seeing a Christian woman go cheerfully to prison, said to her, “O you have not yet tasted of the bitterness of death!” She as cheerfully answered, “No, nor shall I ever; for Christ has promised that those who keep His sayings shall never see death” (Joh 8:51).

A believer may feel the stroke of death, but he shall never feel the sting of death. The first death may bring his body to corruption, but the second death shall never bring his soul to destruction. Though he may endure the cross, yet he shall not endure the curse. There can be no condemnation to those Christians who belong to Christ (Rom 8:1)!

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

⁶⁵ **Polycarp (69-155)** – second century Christian bishop of Smyrna who died a martyr.

⁶⁶ **creature** – that which God has made, including us, friends, family, food, health, houses, lands, wealth, and other good things of this life.

⁶⁷ **pick-lock** – burglar tool to open a lock without its key.

⁶⁸ **doleful** – sorrowful; mournful; full of grief and sadness.

7. To be a father to all in charity and yet a servant to all in humility.

a. First, to be a father to all in charity

The crop that is sown in mercy shall be reaped in glory. In heaven there are riches enough, but no poor to receive them. In hell there are poor enough, but no riches to relieve them. How many of the most wealthy are deaf to the most importunate requests for mercy! They will do no good *in* the world with the goods *of* the world. They too much resemble sponges, which greedily suck up the waters, but will not yield a return of them again until they are well squeezed.

Necessity is not likely to be supplied by the hand of misery; while so many who would help cannot for lack of ability, so many who [could] help will not for lack of charity. There is not a drop of water for such a Dives in hell, who has not a crumb of bread for a poor, distressed Lazarus upon earth. Every act of charity is but an act of equity. It is not the bestowment of our gifts, but the payment of our debts (cf. Rom 13:8)!

The rich man's excess was ordained to relieve the poor man's necessity. A lady, on giving sixpence to a beggar, said thus to him, "I have now given you more than ever God gave to me." To whom he replied, "No, madam! No, madam; God has given you all your abundance." "That is your mistake," said she, "for He has but *lent* it [to] me that I might bestow it on such as you."

John, the beloved disciple of Christ, inculcates the doctrine of love to the disciples of Christ: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" (1Jo 5:1). As holiness works a likeness to Him Who begets it, so it works a love to those who enjoy it. It is impossible for anyone to love the person of Christ who does not delight in the picture of Christ. While he is out of charity⁶⁹ with his brother, he shows that God is out of charity with him. We lose more for lack of God's love than our brethren lose for lack of our love.⁷⁰

He is not a covetous man who lays up something providentially,⁷¹ but he is a covetous man who gives out nothing willingly. Men frequently manifest more willingness in laying up than in laying out. He is as prudent a man who distributes discreetly, as he who accumulates carefully.

Reader! the hope of living long on earth should not make you covetous, but the prospect of living long in heaven should make you bounteous.⁷² Though the sun of charity *rises* at home, yet it should always *set* abroad.

Seneca, the heathen, inculcates a principle worthy of the acceptance of every Christian: "I truly enjoy no more of the world's affluence than what I willingly distribute to the needy." Without your mercy, the poor cannot live on earth; and without God's mercy, you shall not live in heaven! Some men's churlishness⁷³ entirely swallows up their charitableness. Instead of *praying* one for another, they are making a *prey* of one another.

When I consider that our hearts are no softer, I wonder that the times are no harder. It is a reproach to many rich men that God should give them so much and that they should give the poor so little.

Some observe that the most barren grounds are nearest to the richest mines. In a spiritual sense, it is too often true that those whom God has made most fruitful in estates are most barren in good works. It is too generally true that the rich spend their substance wantonly while the poor give their alms willingly. A penny comes with more difficulty out of a bag that is pressing full, than a dollar out of a purse that is half empty.

Why does the Lord make your cup run over, but that other men's lips might taste the liquor?⁷⁴ The showers that fall upon the highest mountains should glide into the lowest valleys. "Give, and it shall be given unto you" (Luk 6:38) is a maxim little believed.

It is infidelity⁷⁵ that is the spring of all cruelty. Wherever you can discover the face of one, you may also hear the sound of the other's feet. If you deny relief to those who are virtuous, you kill laborious bees; if you bestow your gifts on those who are wicked, you do but support drones. But it is better to favor⁷⁶ an illegitimate child,

⁶⁹ **charity** – love.

⁷⁰ "The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (Psa 5:5).

⁷¹ **providentially** – in this context, to prepare for difficulties; to create a rainy-day fund.

⁷² **bounteous** – generous.

⁷³ **churlishness** – rude; unfriendly; unpleasant; surly; difficult to deal with.

⁷⁴ **liquor** – any liquid.

⁷⁵ **infidelity** – unbelief in God and His Word.

⁷⁶ **better to favor** – better to be kind to.

than to murder a legitimate child. God looks not so much on the merits of the beggar as upon the mercy of the giver.

The Lord “hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic 6:8). Here is a trinity of precepts from a Trinity of Persons. Pharisees more delight to plead this precept than to practice it, which is as if a man should cry up the kindness of his king, and at the same time join in rebellion against him. If all were rich, no alms need be received; if all were poor, no alms could be bestowed.

God, Who could have made all men wealthy, has made most men poor—[so] that the poor might have Christ for an example of patience, and the rich might have Him for an example of goodness. Cruelty is one of the highest scandals to piety; for instead of turning lions into lambs, it turns lambs into lions!

“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luk 6:36). Clemency⁷⁷ is one of the brightest diamonds in the crown of majesty. How cheerfully should we practice benevolence when we consider Who has set us the example! “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Mat 5:48). What one Scripture calls mercy, the other styles perfection—as if this one perfection of mercy included all. He who shows mercy when it may be best spared [according to human wisdom], will receive mercy when it shall most be needed.

It is reported of one of the dukes of Savoy that, being asked by certain ambassadors at his court what hounds he kept, he conducted them into a large room where there were a number of poor people sitting at his table. “These,” said he, “are all the hounds I have upon earth, and with whom I am in pursuit of the kingdom of heaven.” It is counted an honor to live like princes, but it is a greater honor to give like princes.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jam 1:27). The flames of piety towards God must be accompanied with the incense of charity towards man. Mercy is so good a servant that it will never allow its master to die a beggar.

Those who have drained their own wells dry, in order to fill the poor man’s cistern, shall never perish for lack of water to quench their thirst. Those who have blessed others shall be blessed themselves.

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me” (Mat 25:34-36). Mercy is the queen of beauty and the blessed offspring of the King of glory!

Scarcely any virtue in the whole Scripture has been returned with greater interest than the love of mercy. Though charity may make your purse lighter one day, yet God will make it heavier another. All who have their names registered in the book of eternity will have the poor man’s distresses recorded upon the heart of sympathy. For though they are so poor as to be unable to relieve him, yet they are so tender as to pity him. I know no better way to preserve your meal than by parting with your cake. Large springs should send forth their waters without pumping. Your benevolence should seek the poor before the poor seek your benevolence.

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness...” (Col 3:12). He who distributes in compassion has put on the badge of election. Many can love at their tongue’s end, but the godly love at their finger’s end. If a man is without proper clothing, it is easy for the miser to bid him be clothed; or if he is empty, he can easily bid him be filled—as if poor Christians were able to live upon the air. Liberality does not consist in good words, but in good works! The doubtful are to be resolved by our counsels, but the necessitous are to be relieved by our morsels. It is exceedingly lovely to behold the pictures of purity, though they be hung in the frames of poverty.

Reader, would you be covetous of anything? Let it be rather to lay out on necessity, than to lay up for posterity. Generosity is seed; and the gardener does not become wealthy by saving his seed, but by sowing of his seed!

b. Secondly, A servant to all in humility

Our first fall was by rising against God, but our best rise is by falling down before Him. The acknowledgment of our own impotence is the only stock upon which the Lord engrafts divine assistance.

⁷⁷ clemency – mercy.

A humble saint looks most like a citizen of heaven. “And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Mat 20:27). He is the most lovely Christian who is the most lowly Christian. As incense smells the sweetest when it is beaten smallest, so saints look loveliest when they lie lowest. God will not allow a weed of pride to grow in His garden without taking some course to root it up. A believer is like a vessel cast into the sea: the more it fills, the more it sinks.

“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Pro 16:18). The world can neither pull a humble man down, because God will exalt him; nor keep a proud man up, because God will debase him.

Do but mark how one of the best of saints views himself as one of the least of saints: “For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle” (1Co 15:9). In the highest heavens the beams of majesty are displayed, but to the lowest hearts the streams of mercy are discovered. “Be clothed with humility” (1Pe 5:5). Humility is a saint’s ornament, but a sinner’s torment. The garment of humility should always be worn on the back of Christianity.

God many times places a thorn in the flesh to pierce the balloon of pride. He makes us feel a sense of our misery that we may sue for His unmerited mercy. The first Adam was for self-advancement, but the second Adam is for self-abasement. The former was for having self deified; the latter is for having self crucified.

Though there may be something left by self-denial, yet there can be nothing lost by self-denial. Nay, a man can never enjoy himself until he is brought to deny himself. We live by dying to ourselves, and die by living to ourselves. There is no proud man who is not a foolish man, and scarcely is there any foolish man who is not a proud man. It is the night owl of ignorance that broods and hatches the peacock of pride.

God abhors those people worst who adore themselves most. Pride is not a Bethel, that is, a house where God dwells; but a Babel, that is, a stinking dungeon in which Satan abides! Pride is not only a most hateful evil, but it is a radical⁷⁸ evil; as all other lusts are found lodging in it, so they are found springing from it. Pride is a foul leprosy in the face of morality, and a hurtful worm gnawing at the root of humility. Pride is a cancer within and a spreading plague without.

“God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (Jam 4:6). Give me the lovely vessel of humility, which God shall preserve and fill with the wine of His grace, rather than the varnished cup of pride, which He will dash in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Where humility is the cornerstone, there glory shall be the top-stone.⁷⁹

It is impossible to have *true* thoughts of ourselves while we entertain *high* thoughts of ourselves. “Even if everyone else deserts You, I never will!”—poor Peter, he was the most impotent when he was the most arrogant. He had no doubt of standing while others were falling, but it proved at last that he fell while others stood (Mat 26:35, 75).

That was an excellent saying of one: “Where a gracious person would sit below me, I will acknowledge his dignity; but where a proud person would move above me, I would abhor his vanity!” A humble heart may meet with opposition from man, but it shall meet with approbation from God. As humility is a grace very excellent in itself, so it is very pleasing to God. He who is a subject of the former shall hereafter be an inheritor with the latter.

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

8. To mourn most before God for those lusts that appear least before men.

Others cannot mourn in secret for public sins, but we should mourn in public for our secret sins. That must be sought with repentance, which has been so long lost by disobedience. Outward acts are most scandalous among men, but inward lusts are most atrocious before God.

Reader, if you would know the heart of your sin, then you must know the sins of your heart! “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness,⁸⁰ an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mar 7:21-23). These streams of defilement that appear in your life do but show what a fountain of wickedness there is in your heart! Even the “thought of foolishness is sin!” (Pro 24:9). “Then when

⁷⁸ radical – fundamental.

⁷⁹ top-stone – stone set at the top of an arch, which holds the two sides together and gives them their strength; also, keystone.

⁸⁰ lasciviousness – per the Greek: unbridled lust.

lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (Jam 1:15). There is no sin so little as not to kindle an eternal fire! Sin’s first-born is death, and its last-born is hell!

Though repentance is the act of man, yet it is the gift of God. It requires the same power to *melt* the heart as to *make* it. As we are deeply fallen from a state of innocence, so we should rise to a state of penitence. Those sins shall never make a hell *for* us that are a hell *to* us. Some people do nothing more than make work for repentance, and yet do nothing less than repent of their works. They have sin enough for all their sorrows, but not sorrow enough for all their sins. Their eyes are windows to let in lusts, when they should be flood-gates to pour out tears!

When godly sorrow takes possession of the house, it will quickly shut sin out of doors. There must be a falling out⁸¹ with our lusts before there can be a genuine falling off from our lusts. There must be a sincere loathing of sin in our affections before a true leaving of sin in our actions. It is a hearty mourning for our transgressions that makes way for a happy funeral of our corruptions!

Sinner, you have filled the book of God with your sins, and will you not fill the bottle of God with your tears? Remember that when Christ draws the likeness of the new creature, His first brush is dipped in water: “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luk 13:3). Is it not better to repent without perishing, than to perish without repenting? Godly sorrow is such a grace that without it not a soul shall be saved, and with it not a soul shall be lost! Is it not therefore better to swim in the water-works of godly repentance, than to burn in the fire-works of divine vengeance? Do not think that the tears that are shed in hell will in the least abate the torments that are suffered in hell!

Repentance is a priceless grace, for it is the bestowment of a priceless Savior. “God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Act 5:31). As a Prince He gives repentance, and as a Priest He gives a pardon. Our humiliation is the fruit of His exaltation. As He was abased for the sinner’s advancement, so He was exalted for the sinner’s abasement! Remember, sinner, if your heart is not broken in you, your guilt is not broken from you. If you lay not your sins to heart that you may be humbled, God will lay your sins to your charge that you may be damned. Though repentance is not a pardon’s obtainer, yet it is a pardon’s forerunner.⁸²

He who lives in sin without repentance shall die in sin without forgiveness. There is no coming to the fair haven of glory without sailing through the narrow strait of repentance. Christ rejoices over those as blessed, who mourn over themselves as cursed. “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Mat 5:4). Out of the saltiest water, God can brew the sweetest cordial. The skillful bee gathers the best honey from the bitterest herbs. When the cloud has been dissolved into a shower, there soon follows a glorious sunshine. The more a stone is chiseled by the hand of the engraver, the greater the beauty of the gem. By groans unutterable, the Lord ushers in joys unspeakable.

None do more sing in the possession of Christ than such as most lament the departure of Christ. Usually their joys are commensurate to their sorrows. A tender heart is like melting wax; ah, what choice impressions are made upon such soft dispositions!

A Christian should mourn more for the lusts of the flesh than for the works of the flesh—for the sin of our nature transcends the nature of all our outward sins. Carnal sins defile the soul by the body, but spiritual sins defile the soul in the body.⁸³ Many people can mourn over a body from which a soul is departed, but they cannot mourn over a soul whom God has deserted! Alas! What is the bite of a flea compared to the bite of a lion? What is a spot in the face compared to a stab in the heart? Inward diseases are least visible and yet most fatal. A man may die of an internal cancer, although a spot never appears on his body.

Sin in the soul is like Jonah in the ship; it turns the smoothest water into a troubled ocean. We must mourn for sin on earth, or burn for sin in hell! It is the coldness of our hearts that kindles the fire of God’s anger. “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zec 12:10). Christians, the nails that pierced Christ’s hands should now pierce your hearts! You should now be deeply wounded with godly sor-

⁸¹ **falling out** – ceasing to be on friendly or agreeable terms.

⁸² **pardon’s forerunner** – pardon’s “companion” might better convey the reality that repentance and pardon go together: where one is, the other is. This lest the reader surmise a delay between one and the other.

⁸³ **carnal sins** – note that these proceed from the spirit: “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders” (Mar 7:21).

row for having so deeply wounded Him with your ungodly sins! It should grieve your spirits to remember how much you have grieved His Spirit.

A believer puts on the sackcloth of contrition for having put off the garment of perfection. As the sugar-cube is dissolved and weeps itself away when dipped in wine, likewise do our hearts melt under a sense of divine love. Our language at such a season is, "O that we should be such base children to such a blessed Father!"

Man must be convinced of sin before he can truly repent of sin. Unbelief in the heart is like the worm in Jonah's gourd: an unseen adversary. Unbelief is least visible but most hurtful. Unbelief is the worst of robbers; it both plunders and wounds the soul. Christ may dwell in the heart where unbelief lurks, but not where it reigns. If Christ destroys its armor, it becomes as weak as other men. The chief strength in which unbelief trusts is ignorance (cf. Eph 4:18)! It is no wonder why men sigh so little for sin, when they see so little of sin. They have tears enough for their outward losses, but none for their inward lusts! They can mourn for the evil that sin brings, but not for sin that brings the evil.

Pharaoh more lamented the hard strokes that were upon him, than the hard heart that was within him! Esau did not mourn because he sold the birthright, which was his sin, but because he lost the blessing, which was his punishment. This is like weeping over an onion: the eye sheds tears because it hurts! When the sailing is smooth, the mariner has his heart set on his costly cargo; yet he casts it overboard in a storm. Many complain more of the sorrows to which they are born, than of the sins with which they were born! They tremble more at the vengeance of sin than at the venom of sin: the venom of sin delights them; the vengeance of sin affrights them!

"The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites" (Isa 33:14). Why, what is the matter? "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?" (Isa 33:14). They feared sin, not as it was a black coal that defiled them, but as it was a fire that burned them! A stroke from God's justice broke the heart of Judas into despair, while a look from Christ's mercy melted Peter's heart into tears!

There are two evil things in our sins: the devilishness of them, and the dangerousness of them. Now, take a saint and an unrepentant sinner. The saint says, "What evil have I done?" The sinner says, "What evil must I suffer?" One mourns for the sin; the other mourns for the punishment! The saint grieves because his soul is defiled; the sinner grieves because his soul is damned. Water may gush from a rock when it is smitten with a rod. But all such streams are lost, for they neither quench the flames of hell nor fill God's bottles in heaven (Psa 56:8).

Our whole life should be a life of repentance, and such repentance as needs not to be repented of. While the vessel is leaking, the pump may be going. Reader, it is an unfavorable symptom if you can wipe away tears from your eyes before God has washed away guilt from your conscience. It is better traveling to heaven sadly than to hell merrily! Give me a sorrowful saint rather than a merry sinner.

Did the rocks rend when Christ died for sin? And shall not our hearts rend for having lived in sin? "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1Jo 1:9). Did ever words like these drop from the lips of any being except God? Here, the sinner is desired only to acknowledge the debt, and the mountain of sin shall be canceled. Is it not therefore better to be saved by divine mercy than to be damned by divine justice? As soon as we are oppressed and groan under our burden of sin, we are sure to be eased by Christ's shoulders. If we repent of our offences with sincere grief, the offended Lord joyfully forgives and forgets them all.

Where misery passes undiscerned, there mercy passes undesired. Christ may knock long at such doors before He gains admittance. He only enters into those who enter into themselves.⁸⁴ "Behold I stand at the door and knock" (Rev 3:20).⁸⁵ Christ oftener comes to the door than He enters the house. As we knock at His door for audience, so He does at ours for entrance. If Christ is shut out of our heart, our prayers will be shut out of His heart. Why should God show him mercy who never acknowledged himself guilty? A saint's tears are better than a sinner's triumphs.

Bernard⁸⁶ says, "The tears of penitents are the wine of angels!" When a sinner repents the angels rejoice!⁸⁷ Give me such a mourning on earth as creates music in heaven. Many are battered as lead by the hammer, who

⁸⁴ **who enter into themselves** – that is, understand their personal sinfulness and need of mercy.

⁸⁵ **"stand at the door and knock"** – modern conservative teachers understand this passage in context to refer to Christ's seeking fellowship with believers. Nevertheless, it is often used in reference to the gospel call to all lost sinners to repent and believe in Him (Mar 1:15; 1Ti 2:4).

⁸⁶ **Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)** – French monastic reformer known for his devotion.

were never bettered as gold by the fire. Sometimes that repentance which begins in the *fears* of hell, ends in the *flames* of hell!

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

9. To keep his heart the lowest when God raises his estate the highest.

Paul saw the need of this when he enjoined Timothy to charge those who were rich in this world not to be proud-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches (1Ti 6:17). Sinful arrogance usually attends creature-confidence. Worldly wealth is a bellows to swell the balloon of pride! For when men's estates are lifted up, it is but too common for men's hearts to be puffed up. Oh, how fond is thin dust (Gen 2:7) of thick clay (Hab 2:6)! Pride breeds in great estates as worms do in sweet fruits.

Remember, Christian, if you are poor in the world, you should be rich in faith; and if you are rich in this world, you should be poor in spirit. The way to ascend is to descend; the deeper a tree roots, the wider do its branches spread. The sun of prosperity shines the clearest in the sphere of humility. The true nobility of the mind consists in the humbleness of the mind. Consider that as none have so little but they have great cause to bless God, so none have so much as to have the least cause to boast before God.

Shall the theatrical vagrant be proud of his borrowed robes, or the mud wall swell because the beams of a beautiful sun shine upon it? Gold in your bags may make you great, but it is grace in your hearts that makes you godly. Godliness without greatness shall be esteemed, when greatness without godliness shall be confounded. Proud sinners are the fittest companions for proud devils. The more prosperity man enjoys, the more humility⁸⁸ God enjoins.⁸⁹

Nature teaches us that those trees bend the most freely that bear the most fully. As a proud heart loves none but itself, so it is beloved by none but itself. Who would attempt to gain those pinnacles that none have ascended without fears, or descended without falls? When men through daring pride cast off all allegiance to God, He in just derision casts them out from the inheritance of God. If we refuse to acknowledge Him, He will refuse to acknowledge us (Luk 9:26).

It is reported of Philip of Macedon⁹⁰ that, after having obtained the honor of an unexpected victory, he was observed to look very much dejected. On being asked the reason, he replied, "that the honors which were obtained by the sword, might also be lost by the sword." Was he pensive when providence crowned him with victory? And shall we be vainly elated when providence makes us wealthy? The Supreme Majesty cannot allow us to glory in any but Himself. Therefore, when we glory in our pride, He stains the pride of our glory. It is a difficult matter to be grand in the estimation of others and base in our own estimation. The face of no mere man ever shone so illustriously as that of the ancient Jewish lawgiver's, and yet it is affirmed that no man's heart was ever so meek (Exo 34:29; Num 12:3). But most men resemble chameleons, which no sooner take in the air than they begin to swell.

As that is a rebellious heart in which sin is allowed to reign, so that is not a very enlarged heart which the world can fill. Alas, what will it profit us to sail before the pleasing gales of prosperity, if we are afterwards over-set⁹¹ by the gusts of vanity? Your bags of gold should be ballast in your vessel to keep her always steady, instead of being topsails to your masts to make your vessel giddy.⁹² Give me that distinguished Christian who is rather pressed down under the weight of all his honors than puffed up with vain-glory.

It has been observed by those who are experienced in the sport of angling that the smallest fishes bite the fastest. Oh, how few great men do we find so much as nibbling at the gospel hook! But the leaders had utterly rejected their God (Mat 21:42). Mercy favored them, but gratitude could not bind them.

⁸⁷ **angels rejoice** – "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luk 15:10). A. T. Robinson viewed this as "the joy of God Himself."

⁸⁸ **more humility** – such admonition (necessary for all) is especially important for those in prosperity: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1Ti 6:17).

⁸⁹ **enjoin** – to direct or command with urgency.

⁹⁰ **Philip II of Macedon (382-336 BC)** – Greek king of Macedon from 359 BC until his assassination in 336 BC. He was the father of Alexander the Great.

⁹¹ **overset** – overturned; capsized.

⁹² **giddy** – reeling; unstable; dizzy; whirling; staggering.

When King James' tutor lay upon his expiring pillow, his Majesty sent to inquire how he did; [he replied,] "Go tell my royal sovereign that I am going where few kings go." The tree of life is not often planted in an earthly paradise. Under the Levitical laws, the lamb and the dove were offered in sacrifice when the lion and the eagle were rejected. The shining diamond of a great estate may frequently be found upon an unsound and idolatrous heart. Great prosperity is not to be deemed the greatest security. The lofty unbending cedar is more exposed to the injurious blast than the lowly shrub. The little rowboat rides safely along the shore while the gallant ship is wrecked in the wide ocean. Those sheep which have the most wool are generally the soonest fleeced. Poverty is its own defense against robbery. Who would shake those trees upon which there is little fruit? A fawning⁹³ world is worse than a frowning world.

Many think they are saved because they are poor, and others because they are rich; but these are all capitally⁹⁴ mistaken! For much of the former are not saved, and not many of the latter will be saved. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1Co 1:26). You nobles, I call you to see that not many nobles are called. He does not say "not any," but "not many." Blessed be God, we can say of them as Luther⁹⁵ once said of Elizabeth, a pious queen of Denmark, "Christ will sometimes carry a queen to heaven." Rich men are choice dishes at God's table.⁹⁶

For some people, when their estates are low, their hearts are high. But for true believers, when their estates are high, their hearts are low. What an excellent commendation does the beloved prophet of Israel give the beloved prince of Israel: "Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" (2Sa 7:18). The weighty clusters of mercy completely bowed the branches of this royal vine! He does not contend with God for mercies denied, but he adores Him for mercies granted. The eye of his humility views the grace of God, and then he is thankful; it also views the folly of his heart, and this makes him mournful.

Theodosius deemed it more honorable to be a child of God than a monarch of the world, and so did King David. Ah! Why will you set your heart upon vanity? For everything will come to nothing but He Who formed all things out of nothing. Many think it must go well with them hereafter, because it is so well with them here; as if silver and gold, which came out of the dirt of the earth, would carry them to the bosom of the God of heaven. Though the gates of heaven will open to admit the heaven-born soul, yet they are not unlocked with a golden key. A man may bask in the beams of prosperity now, and yet burn in the flames of eternity hereafter!

The worm of pride is always injurious to celestial plants! Either this vice must be shut out on earth, or we shall be shut out in heaven. The bowing reed of a humble mind shall be preserved entire, while the sturdy oak of a proud, lofty mind shall be broken to shivers. A proud person thinks everything too much that is done *by* him, and everything too little that is done *for* him. God is as far from pleasing him with His gifts, as he is from pleasing God with his works. Remember what the observant prophet Habakkuk declares: "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him" (Hab 2:4). Observe, he introduces the subject with a "Behold!" He who lifts up himself is not lifted up of God. I will not say, "a godly man is never proud," but I will say, "a proud man is never godly."

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

10. To seek to be better inwardly in his substance⁹⁷ than outwardly in appearance.

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2Ti 3:5). This is a business that no hypocrite chooses to be employed in; he prefers varnish to solid gold. It little concerns him how much the house is infected with the leprosy, just so long as it is but outwardly fair to human inspection. He forgets that, "he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom 2:28-29).

⁹³ **fawning** – seeking favor by flattery.

⁹⁴ **capitally** – play on words: the term can refer to financial assets or something of extreme importance. Both senses are at work in this passage.

⁹⁵ **Martin Luther (1483-1546)** – German monk, priest, professor of theology, and a leader during the Protestant Reformation—restoring to the Church the doctrine of justification through faith alone.

⁹⁶ **choice** – that is, uncommon (cf. 1Co 1:26).

⁹⁷ **substance** – what he is.

Formality frequently takes its dwelling near the chambers of integrity, and so assumes its name—the soul not suspecting that hell should make so near an approach to heaven. A rotten post, though covered with gold, is more fit to be burned in the fire than for the building of a fabric.⁹⁸ Where there is a pure conscience, there will be a pure conversation. The dial of our faces does not infallibly show the time of day in our hearts. The humblest looks may enamel the face, while unbounded pride governs the heart! Unclean spirits may inhabit the house when they look not out at the window.

A hypocrite may be both the fairest and the foulest creature in the world! He may be fairest outwardly in the eyes of man, and foulest inwardly in the sight of God. How commonly do such unclean swans cover their black flesh with their white feathers! Though such wear the mantle of Samuel, they bear the name of Satan!

Many appear righteous who are only righteous in appearance. But while they are deceiving others with the false shows of holiness, they are also deceiving themselves with the false hopes of happiness. The hypocrite would not willingly appear evil, and yet would inwardly be evil. He would gladly be accounted godly, and yet would not be godly. Man, either appear what you are or be what you appear! What will the form of godliness do for you, if you deny the power thereof? Own this, or God will disown you! Those who have the power of godliness cannot deny the form; while those who have the form of godliness may deny the power.

Hypocrites resemble looking-glasses that present the faces that are not in them. Oh, how desirous are men to put the fairest gloves upon the foulest hands, and the finest paint upon the rottenest posts! To counterfeit the coin of heaven is to commit treason against the King of heaven. Who would spread an exquisite cloth upon a dirty table?

If a mariner sets sail in an unsound ship, he may reasonably expect to lose his voyage. No wise virgin would carry a lamp without light (Mat 25:1-13). O professor, either get the light or part with the lamp. None are so black in the eyes of the all knowing God as those who paint [themselves] for spiritual beauty.

Some people are better in show than in substance. But not so with true Christians; they are not like painted tombs that enclose decayed bones. “The king’s daughter is all glorious within!” (Psa 45:13). She is all glorious within, though within is not all her glory. That is a sad charge which the God of truth brings against certain false professors: “I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan!” (Rev 2:9). A false friend is worse than an open enemy. A painted harlot is less dangerous than a painted hypocrite. A treacherous Judas is more abhorred by God than a bloody Pilate!

Professors, remember the sheep’s clothing will soon be stripped from the wolf’s back! The velvet plaster of profession shall not always conceal the offensive ulcer of corruption. Neither the ship of formality nor of hypocrisy will carry one person to the harbor of felicity. The blazing lamps of foolish virgins may light them to the Bridegroom’s gate, but not into His chamber.⁹⁹ Either get the *nature* of Christ within you, or take the *name* of Christ away from you!

O, what vanity is it to lop off the boughs and leave the roots which can send forth more; or to empty the cistern, and leave the fountain running which can soon fill it again! Such may swim in the water as the visible church, but when the net is drawn to shore, they must be thrown away as bad fishes. Though the tares and the wheat may grow in the field together (Mat 13:24-30), yet they will not be housed in the granary together.

How pious and devout did the Pharisees appear before men! The people concluded these religious leaders to be the only saints upon the earth. They judged the inward man by the outward—but not so with the heart-searching God! For He said unto them, “Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luk 16:15). That sepulcher is not always the repository of gold which is outwardly garnished. Herod was a god in the esteem of the people, when he was but a fiend in the sight of the Lord; they adored him, but God destroyed him (Act 12:21-23).

A man’s outward life may be civilized when his heart is not evangelized. There is as much difference between nature restrained and nature renewed, as between the glimmering of a glowworm and the splendor of the noon-day sun! A bad man is certainly the worst when he is seemingly the best. We must not account everyone a soldier who swaggers with a sword. A rusty sword may frequently be found in a highly decorated scabbard. What good is it to have our hands as white as snow, if our hearts are as black [with sin] as the bottomless pit! Such professors resemble soap bubbles: smooth and pretty without, yet only filled with air!

⁹⁸ **fabric** – a structure.

⁹⁹ **chamber** – here, the place of the marriage bed.

A man may wear the Savior's livery¹⁰⁰ and yet be busied in Satan's drudgery!¹⁰¹ The skin of an apple may be fair when it is rotten at the core! Though all gold may glitter, yet all is not gold that glitters. The worst hypocrite may have the color of gold but not the value of gold. What comparison is there between the golden cup filled with putrid water, and the clay cup filled with fine wine?

Very few deceivers duly weigh that notable saying of the wise man, "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known" (Pro 10:9). God, Who promises to cover the true Christian's infirmities, threatens also to disclose the hypocrite's impieties. Well would it be for such to remember that arch-traitor Judas, who purchased nothing by his deceitful dealings but a halter for his body, in which he was hanged; and fire for his soul, in which he is burning!

¹⁰⁰ **livery** – uniform.

¹⁰¹ **drudgery** – menial work.

IV. Doctrine:

What a Christian Does More than Others

Principles 11-20

[Now I shall add to this golden chain ten more links for believers to wear about their necks.] Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

11. To be more afflicted at the distresses of the Church than affected at his own happiness.

When we suffer not from the enemies of Christ by persecution, we should then suffer for the friends of Christ by compassion. Let not Zion's sons be rejoicing while their mother is mourning, "for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?" (Lam 2:13). If her breaches be irreparable, our hearts should be inconsolable. It is observed of doves that if one is sick, the other laments. Yes, the savage beasts will mourn over the afflicted creatures of their own species; and shall that which is found among beasts be lost among men?

Christianity never was designed to strip men of humanity. Reader, can you see the Church bleeding and never ask balm for her wounds? How can you rejoice when she stands, if you do not mourn when she falls? It thrilled impious Nero to see the Christians burning, but it should *wound* us to hear of it. The cruel massacre of the Judean infants was a pleasant sight to bloody Herod (Mat 2:16).

We may justly prefer that charge against many nominal¹ Christians, which God did against nominal Israel: "That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph" (Amo 6:6).

Many can weep a flood for the groans of a child, but they cannot drop a tear for the groans of the Church. Their love to relations transcends their love to religion. He who has property on board the Church's ship cannot but be alarmed at every storm. Many professors are like a silver eye in the spiritual head and a wooden leg in the spiritual body, which are insensible to all its sorrows. That man who has no compassion for afflicted Christians, may rest persuaded that God will have no compassion on him! His language will be, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not" (Mat 25:41-43).

The enemies of the Church may toss her as waves, but they shall not split her as rocks. She may be dipped in water as a feather, but shall not sink therein as lead. He who is a well of water within her to keep her from fainting, will also prove a wall of fire about her to preserve her from falling. Tried she may be, but destroyed she cannot be. Her foundation is the Rock of Ages, and her defense the everlasting Arms. It is only such structures as are founded upon the sand that are overthrown by the wind. The adversaries of God's people will push at them as far as their horns will go, but when they have scoured them by persecution as tarnished vessels, then God will throw such whisks² into the fire!

Many would rather see the Church's expiration than her reformation. It would afford them more pleasure to find her nullified than purified, for they suppose that happiness increases in proportion as holiness decreases. Christians, when persecutors make long furrows upon the saint's back, then we should cast in the seed of sympathetic tears! "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Act 26:14); thus the Head (cf. Eph 5:23) cries out in heaven while the toe is trod upon the earth!

Though Jesus Christ has altered His condition, yet He has not changed His affection. Death took away His life for us, but not His love from us. He Who washed away the blood of guilt from our hearts, will soon wipe away those briny tears that disfigure our cheeks. He Who paid so great a price for our redemption, will not resign us

¹ **nominal** – having a name not corresponding to the reality.

² **whisks** – small bundles; hence, small insignificant things.

into the hands of our cruel tormentors. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned” (Isa 40:1-2). If the Father of mercies thus proclaims pardon to returning prodigals, we may expect soon to hear of music and rejoicing among all the heavenly harpers!

When we see the Church suffering in the cup of affliction, we should then help her with the cup of consolation. A heavy burden may easily be borne by the assistance of many shoulders. Some are like Gallio: “none of those things” concerned them (Act 18:17). Nay, when they should be sympathizers, they are censurers. They conclude that the gold is not good because it is tried, and that the ground is worthless because it is ploughed. They wound those with the arrows of reproach, whom God has only corrected with the rod of reproof. It is dangerous to smite those with our tongues whom God has smitten with His hand. *His* right to correct is not *our* right to correct!

Because Christ suffered for transgressors, many numbered Him with transgressors; but that was to give Him the sharpest vinegar, when they should have given Him the sweetest wine. “Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them” (Psa 69:24). Why, David? “For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded” (Psa 69:26).

Sympathy is a debt we owe to sufferers. For Christians to be rejoicing when their brethren are weeping, is like putting silver-lace upon a mourning suit. Our own particular losses and distresses resemble the extinguishing of a candle, which only occasions darkness in one room; but the general distresses of the Church are like the eclipsing of the sun, which overshadows the whole hemisphere. Pliny³ informs us of two goats meeting together on a narrow bridge, where neither of them could either proceed or recede; at last one of them lay down, that the other might go over him. How much of the man was there in those beasts, and how much of the beast is there in some men!

It is certainly better to be in the humble posture of a mourner, than in the proud gesture of a scorner. The woman of Canaan could not rest while her daughter was restless. The torture of one was the torment of the other, but a word from Jesus relieved them both. Sympathy renders a doleful state more joyful. Alexander refused water in a time of great scarcity because there was not enough for his whole army.

It should be among Christians as among lute⁴-strings: when one is touched, the others tremble. Believers should be neither proud flesh⁵ nor dead flesh. Fellow members should ever have fellow feelings. Other men’s woes are our warnings: their desolation should be our information.

Jeremiah suffered not in his own person, being under the protection of the Divine Being, but though he dwelt securely from the hand of mortality,⁶ yet he was filled with the affections of sympathy. Though he wrote of the Jews desolations, yet he named them Jeremiah’s Lamentations.

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

12. To render the greatest good for the greatest evil.

Mariners look for a storm at sea when the waters begin to utter a murmuring noise. Theodosius the emperor, being urged to execute one who had reviled him, answered, “I am so far from gratifying your wish; that were it in my power, if he were dead, I would raise him to life again; rather than being alive, to put him to death.”

He makes a good market of bad commodities, who with kindnesses overcomes injuries. For a man to be captivated by his own angry passions and conquer another person, is but to lose the palace of a prince to gain the cottage of a peasant. A spark of fire falling in the ocean expires immediately; but dropping upon combustibles, [it] burns furiously. God has bound every believer in gospel cords to godly behavior.

A carnal man may love his friends, but it is a Christian man who loves his enemies. “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Mat 5:44). He calls to patience, Who is patience itself! He Who gives the precepts enforces them by His own example. It is unnatural to hate those who love us, and it is supernatural to love those

³ **Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus, AD 23-79)** – Roman author, naturalist, and natural philosopher, as well as naval and army commander of the early Roman Empire. Personal friend of the emperor Vespasian.

⁴ **lute** – stringed musical instrument.

⁵ **proud flesh** – swollen flesh around a wound.

⁶ **mortality** – death.

who hate us. A sinner can do much evil, but he can suffer⁷ none; a saint can suffer much evil, but he will do none.

He who takes up fire to throw at his adversaries is in great danger of burning his own fingers! A badly loaded gun, instead of hitting the mark, does but recoil on him who discharges it. He who glories in wounding others will finally wound himself. If injuries are our enemies' weapons, forgiveness should be ours. How many have had their *blood* seen, because they would not have their *backs* seen. Men's bad actions towards others are generally excused by others' bad actions towards them. There is a two-fold madness: that of the head, which deprives men of prudence; and that of the heart, which deprives them of their patience. To forget an injury is more than nature can promise, but to forgive it is what grace can perform. Patience affords us a shield to defend ourselves, but innocence denies us a sword to offend others. If ever you hope that your charity should live after you, then let resentment die before you.

It is written in the law of Mahomet⁸ that "God made angels of light and devils of flame." But of this I am sure: they are of hellish constitutions who play off⁹ the fire-works of contention. "Be ye angry, and sin not" (Eph 4:26). Anger should not be a burning coal from Satan's furnace, but a blazing coal from God's altar. It should resemble fire in straw, which is as easily quenched as suddenly kindled. He who would be angry and not sin, must be angry at nothing but sin! "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil" (Eph 4:26-27). He who carries angry passions to bed with him, will find that the devil will creep between the sheets! Why should we give place to Satan, who crowds in so fast himself?

O man, shall your life be mortal and your wrath immortal¹⁰? Should we not give place¹¹ to an offending brother, rather than to be a designing murderer (Mat 5:22)? How many are there who profess to forgive, but cannot forget an injury! Such are like people who sweep the chamber, but leave the dust behind the door. Whenever we grant our offending brethren a discharge, our hearts also should set their hands¹² to the acquittance.¹³

We should not only break the teeth of malice by forgiveness, but pluck out its sting by forgetfulness. To store our memories by dwelling on injuries, is to fill that chest which was made for refined gold with rusty iron. The pot of malice should not stand upon the fire until it boils over. Christian, can you expect better treatment in the world than He Who was better than the world?

When Aristides,¹⁴ the Athenian general, sat to arbitrate a difference between two people, one of them said, "This fellow accused you at such a time!" To whom Aristides answered "I sit not to hear what he has done against me, but against you." How should a Christian shine if a heathen gives such light! "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Rom 12:20). [These are] not the coals of vengeance to consume him, but the coals of kindness to soften him.

Jesus was an intercessor both in His life and death; His dying breath was praying breath, and that not only for His sorrowful disciples but for His enraged murderers also: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luk 23:34). Thus He gave them the best wine for the bitterest gall. The Lord Jesus spreads a large table every day, and the major part who feed thereat are His enemies! In that day, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isa 11:6). The Lord Jesus can both tame the most cruel beast and quench the most raging lust!

None but a patient Christ can make us patient Christians. As our passions were the cause of His, so His passion is the cure of ours. Reader, if you cannot forgive others, God will not forgive you. You have His own authority for this, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mat 6:14-15). In vain do we ask God to be pacified to us while we live at variance with others. How can we expect to have pounds remitted to us, if pence¹⁵ are not remitted by us?

⁷ **suffer** – endure.

⁸ **Mahomet** – Mohammed; prophet of Islam.

⁹ **play off** – exploit.

¹⁰ **immortal** – without end.

¹¹ **give place** – to give room for.

¹² **set their hands** – approve.

¹³ **acquittance** – clearing or setting free from a charge or accusation.

¹⁴ **Aristides (530-468 BC)** – Athenian statesman; commander of his native tribe at the Battle of Marathon.

¹⁵ **pounds...pence** – British monetary units; a pound is about 1.6 US dollars in today's money; a pence is 1/100th pound.

I have read of a person who imbrued¹⁶ his hands in his own blood, because they were too short to reach his enemy's. Poor revenge! How repugnant was this to the apostolic advice, "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath" (Rom 12:19). This was the conduct of dying Stephen, "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Act 7:60). Could living men do worse to a dying man, or a dying man pray better for living men?

To do evil for good is human corruption; to do good for good is civil retribution; but to do good for evil is Christian perfection. Though forgiveness is not the grace of nature, yet it is the nature of grace.

When Shimei cursed David in his distress, Abishai was for an immediate retaliation. "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head" (2Sa 16:9). What was David's answer? No! the king said, If the Lord has told him to curse me, who am I to stop him? (2Sa 16:10). He was so far from taking off his head that he does not even attempt to shut his mouth. The shoulders of charity are able to carry the burden of injury without either being moved with violence or removed from patience.

Though God does not allow His people to sin in avenging¹⁷ their enemies, yet He allows not the sin of their enemies to go unavenged. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay! says the Lord" (Rom 12:19) "Anger rests in the bosom of fools" (Ecc 7:9). Where there is the most indignation, there is the least discretion. No men do more readily brook¹⁸ insults from others than such as have learned to despise themselves. Make not an enemy of your friend by returning evil for good; but make a friend of your enemy by returning him good for evil!

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

13. To take those reproofs best which he needs most.

It was the saying of a heathen, though no heathenish saying, that "he who would be good must either have a faithful friend to instruct him, or a watchful enemy to correct him." Should we murder a physician because he comes to cure us? Should we like him worse because he would make us better?

The flaming sword of reprehension¹⁹ is but to keep us from the forbidden fruit of transgression. "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head" (Psa 141:5), i.e., let him smite me *as with a hammer*, for so the word signifies. A Boanerges is as necessary as a Barnabas.²⁰

"Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal 4:16). Truth is not always relished where sin is nourished. Light is pleasant, yet it may be offensive to sore eyes. Honey is sweet, though it causes the wound to smart. We must not neglect the sinful actions of friends, for fear of drawing upon ourselves the suspicions of being enemies. It is better to lose the smiles of men than the souls of men. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him" (Lev 19:17). He who loves a garment hates the moths which fret it.

"Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee" (Pro 9:8). Reproof slides from a scorner's breast as water from an oiled post; instead of loving a man amidst all his injuries, he will hate him for all his civilities.²¹ Most people are like unruly horses that no sooner feel the "bit" than they strike with their heels. Or like bees that no sooner are angered than they give a sharp sting!

There is much discretion²² to be manifested in reprehension. A word will do more with some than a blow with others. A Venetian glass is not to be rubbed so hard as an iron kettle. The tender reed is more easily bowed than the sturdy oak. Christ's warfare requires no carnal weapons. Dashing storms do but destroy the seed, while gentle showers nourish it. Chariots too furiously driven may be overturned by their own vehemence.

How many are there who check passion with passion, being very angry in reproving anger! Thus, to slay one devil they raise another, leaving more work to be undone than they found to be done. Such a reproof of vice is a vice to be reproofed. In reprehension, we should always beware of carrying our teeth in our tongues and of biting

¹⁶ **imbrued** – stained.

¹⁷ **avenging** – that is, taking vengeance upon them.

¹⁸ **brook** – tolerate.

¹⁹ **reprehension** – act of reproving or censuring.

²⁰ **Boanerges...Barnabas** – *Boanerges* means "sons of thunder" (Mar 3:17). *Barnabas* means "son of consolation"; he was Paul's beloved companion in missions (Act 4:36; 9:27).

²¹ **civilities** – courteous, considerate, respectful behavior.

²² **discretion** – avoiding offense; keeping secrets; prudence.

while we are speaking. A surgeon would not be justifiable in dismembering a body, if he could effect a cure without such drastic measures.

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness” (Gal 6:1); the word *restore* signifies to set a dislocated bone. This requires a lady’s hand—tenderness as well as skillfulness. Reprehension is not an act of butchery, but an act of surgery; take heed of putting too keen an edge upon this scalpel. Mark the reason that the apostle assigns for gentle reproof: “Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal 6:1).

If your neighbor’s house is on fire, your own may be in danger. We should be willing to lend mercy at one time, as we may have occasion to borrow it at another. We should do with other’s sins as we do with our own sores: if a gentle cut will produce a sufficient healing, we avoid sharp slashing. If ravenous birds can be scared away by a look, we need not expend powder and shot.

It is true: open sinners deserve open censures, but private admonitions will best suit private offences. While we seek to heal a wound in our brother’s actions, we should be careful not to leave a scar upon his person. That is a choice friend who conceals our faults from the view of others, and yet reveals them to our own view. The medicine that rouses the evil humours²³ of the body and does not carry them off, only leaves it in a worse condition than it found it.

It must be lamented that many are as deaf to the softest tongue of reproof, as the adder is deaf to the sweet voice of the charmer. They are always administering the bitter pills of calumny²⁴ for the sweet cordials of charity. Men love to be adored, yet hate to be reproofed. But how can we praise what they do, when they are so far from doing what is worthy to be praised?

How securely would David have slept if Nathan had not been sent to rouse him (2Sa 11:27-12:13)! How far do many travel in the downward road for lack of a wholesome friend to stop them in their journey! Private admonition is rather a proof of benevolence than of malevolence.²⁵ It was the saying of Augustine, when his hearers resented his frequent reproofs, “Change your conduct and I will change my conversation!” The more a serpent is stirred, the more he gathers up his poison!

Some are to reproof as tigers are to drums: because they cannot stop them, they will tear their own flesh. Man is a cross creature, yet cannot endure to be crossed. He would have a “touch me not” written upon himself, but who would chide the dog for barking when the thief is approaching! Sin is like a nettle, which stings when it is gently touched but hurts not when it is roughly handled. Beloved, this rough hewing of reproof is but to square us for the celestial building. As for flatterers, they may be named the devil’s upholsterers. They no sooner see men troubled at their lusts than they are for laying pillows under their elbows! But let such know that their lack of the fire of zeal will be punished with the fire of hell. He is an unskillful artist who paints deformities with the loveliest of colors.

Reprehension should tread upon the heels of transgression. The plaster should be applied as soon as the wound is received. It is easier to extinguish a burning match than a burning house. Gentle medicine will serve for a new distemper, but chronic diseases require powerful remedies.

The sword of reproof should be drawn against the offence and not against the offender. Man thinks this cup is not sufficiently bitter unless he mingles it with his wormwood and gall. But “the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God” (Jam 1:20). The severest reproofs of the godly are not mortal but medicinal. They are to raise the dead to life, not put the living to death.

Who knows how much the kindness of a reprover may tame the insolence of an offender. He who hates reproof is brutish.²⁶ He is brutish, like an angry dog that snarls and bites while the festering thorn is being taken out of his foot! Or like a wicked horse that kicks the groomer while he is rubbing off the dirt.

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother” (Mat 18:15). The spaniel loses the prey by barking at the game. The presence of a multitude makes a man take up an unjust defense, rather than lie down under just shame. It is better to censure a man in private than to spread his guilt by proclamation. How many do that in the market,

²³ **evil humours** – bodily fluid thought to be causing a person trouble. (Modern readers should not dismiss the author for illustrations using antiquated scientific thought. Rather, we should focus on the truth he seeks to illustrate.)

²⁴ **calumny** – false accusation; malicious misrepresentation.

²⁵ **malevolence** – hostility.

²⁶ **brutish** – displays little intelligence.

which they should do in the closet (Mar 12:38-40)! Sin is a slippery mire: if we attempt to help others out [of it], do we not sink them the deeper? Remember, tender lambs, if straying, must be gently restored to the fold.

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

14. To take up every duty in point of performance and lay down in point of dependence.

When the purest duties have been performed, the purest mercies should be implored. Many have passed the rocks of gross sins who have suffered shipwreck upon the sands of self-righteousness. Some people live more upon their customs than they do upon Christ; more upon the prayers that they make to God, than upon the God to Whom they make their prayers. This is for the redeemed captive to reverence the sword instead of the hand that wrought his rescue!

The name of God with a sling and a stone will do more than Goliath with all his armor. Duties are but dry pits, though ever so meticulously wrought until Christ fills them. Reader, I would neither have you be idle in the means nor make an idol of the means. Though it be the mariner's duty to weigh his anchor and spread his sails, yet he cannot make his voyage until the winds blow. The pipes will yield no conveyance unless the springs yield their concurrence.²⁷

What is hearing without Christ but like a cabinet²⁸ without a jewel? What is receiving without Christ but like a glass without a cordial? We can only ascend to heaven upon the ladder that was let down from heaven.

The most diligent saint has been the most self-distrusting saint. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phi 3:8-9). If you are found in your own righteousness, you will be *lost* by your own righteousness. The garment that was worn to shreds on Adam's back will never make a complete²⁹ covering for you.

Duties may be good crutches to go upon, but they are bad "christs" to lean upon. When Augustus Caesar desired the senate to join some person with him in the consulship,³⁰ they replied that they held it "as a great dishonor to him to have anyone joined with him, who was so capable himself." It is the greatest disparagement that Christians can offer to Christ to put their services in the scale with His suffering. The beggarly rags of the first Adam must never be put on with the princely robe of the second Adam (Rom 5; 1Co 15)!

Man is a creature too much inclined to warm himself by the sparks of his own fire, though he lies down in eternal flames for kindling them (Isa 50:11)! Though Noah's dove made use of her wings, yet she found no rest but in the ark. Duties can never have too much of our diligence or too little of our confidence. "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works" (Heb 4:10).³¹ A believer does not perform good works to live, but he lives to perform good works.

It was a haughty saying of one, "I will not accept of heaven gratis";³² but he shall have hell as his debt who will not take heaven as a gift. "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phi 3:3). A true Christian stands at as great a distance from trusting in the best of his services as in the worst of his sins. He knows that the greatest part of his holiness will not make the least part of his justifying righteousness. He has unreservedly subscribed to that sentiment, "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants" (Luk 17:10).

When we have kept all the commandments, there is one commandment above all to be kept: that is, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa 64:6). In most of our works we are abominable sinners; and in the best of our works we are unprofitable servants. Our works are not like the crystal streams of a living fountain, but like the impure overflowings of an unruly torrent. "I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of

²⁷ **pipes...concurrence** – that is, the water pipes will not transport the water unless it flows from the springs.

²⁸ **cabinet** – small chest or box where things of value are deposited for safe-keeping.

²⁹ **worn to shreds** – that is, Adam lost his uprightness and you will never stand by your own: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1Co 15:22).

³⁰ **consulship** – one of the chief governmental positions among the Romans.

³¹ **entered into his rest...ceased from his own works** – verse cited appears to be referring to Christ, Who finished His work for our salvation and entered into His rest, as His Father rested after completing the creation (see John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*).

³² **gratis** – freely.

thy righteousness, even of thine only” (Psa 71:16). You see, beloved, the righteousness of Christ is to be magnified and the righteousness of a Christian is not to be mentioned.

It is hard for us to be “nothing in ourselves” amidst all our works,³³ and to be “all things in Christ” (Eph 1:10) amidst all our weakness.³⁴ To undertake every duty and yet to overlook every duty, is a lesson that none can learn but Christ’s scholars.

Our obedience, at best, is like good wine that relishes of a bad cask. The Law of God will not accept ninety-nine [as equal in value] for a hundred. It will not accept the coin of our obedience, either short in quantity or base in quality. The duty it exacts is as impossible to be performed in this our fallen state, as the penalty it inflicts is intolerable³⁵ to be endured in our eternal state!

We do not sail to glory in the salt sea of our own tears, but in the red sea of the Redeemer’s blood! The cross of Christ is the only key of paradise! We owe the life of our souls to the death of our Savior. It was His going into the fiery furnace that keeps us from the devouring flames! Man lives by death: his natural life is preserved by the death of the creature,³⁶ and his spiritual life by the death of the Redeemer.

Moses must lead the children of Israel through the wilderness, but Joshua must conduct them into Canaan. While we are in the wilderness of this world, we walk under the guidance of Moses. But when we enter the spiritual Canaan, it must be under the leadings of Jesus (Gal 3:24).³⁷ The same hand that shut the doors of hell to keep us out of perdition, has opened the gates of heaven to admit us to its eternal fruition.

Those who carry their vessel of hope to the puddle of their own merit, will never draw the water of comfort from the fountain of God’s mercy! Luther compares the law and gospel to earth and heaven. We should walk on earth by the law in point of obeying, and in heaven by the gospel in point of believing. It was the saying of one that he “would swim through a sea of brimstone if [he] might but arrive safely at heaven.” Ah, how would natural men sing if they could but soar to heaven upon the pinions³⁸ of their own merit! The sunbeams of divine justice will soon melt such weak and wax wings!³⁹

He who has no better righteousness than what is of his own providing, shall meet with no higher happiness than what is of his own deserving. “They being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness” (Rom 10:3). If such people rest not from duty, then they rest in duty. They are determined to sail in their own ship, though they sink in the ocean! I would that all such did but know that though good works are not destroyed by Christ, yet they must be denied for Christ.

When a looking-glass reflects the brightness of the sun, there is but an acknowledgment of what was—not an addition of what was not. A well-drawn picture praises a beautiful face—not by communicating what it lacks, but by presenting what it has. As God has none the less for the mercy He gives, so He has none the more for the duty He receives. Man is such a debtor to God that he can never pay his obligation to God; yes, the more we pay Him, the more we owe Him for our payments.

It is Christ alone Who is the righteousness of God to man, and man to God. We are so far from paying the utmost farthing⁴⁰ that, at the utmost, we have not a farthing to pay! That man will be a miserable spectacle of vanity⁴¹ who stands upon the lame feet of his own ability.

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

15. To take up his contentment in God’s appointment.

As many do the things that God dislikes, so they dislike the things that God does. If the children of Israel obtain no meat for their lusts, then they are weary of their lives. They are delighted with their burning corruption, but are enraged with their trying condition. This is nothing less than to be in love with their malady and to hate

³³ **hard...amidst all our works** – because of our pride.

³⁴ **hard...amidst all our weakness** – because of our unbelief.

³⁵ **intolerable** – extremely agonizing.

³⁶ **death of the creature** – beasts men kill for food.

³⁷ **Joshua...Jesus** – the name “Jesus” is “Joshua” in Hebrew.

³⁸ **pinions** – wings.

³⁹ **wax wings** – allusion to Icarus who, in Greek mythology, tried to escape Crete by wax wings, but against warning, flew too close to the sun. Thus his wings melted and he fell into the sea and perished.

⁴⁰ **farthing** – coin formerly used in Great Britain worth one-fourth of a penny.

⁴¹ **vanity** – in this context: nothingness or emptiness.

their remedy. They studied more how to gratify their humor⁴², than to satisfy their hunger. They complained of the shoe, but the disease lay in the foot.

Those who think too highly of their own deserts will think too lowly of their estates.⁴³ [They think] it is the task of God to satisfy the desires of men. He can do everything, but they are not pleased with anything.

There is no man but who has received more good than he has deserved. Likewise, there is no man who has done less evil than has been inflicted upon him. He should therefore be contented, though he sees but little good. And he should not be discontented, though he suffers much evil.⁴⁴ “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). Where the seal of faith has been set to the bond⁴⁵ of truth, He Who has said it will maintain you in the lack of earthly provisions.

When a wicked man’s purse grows light, his heart grows heavy. When he has something without to afflict him, he has nothing within to support him. That well-known Scripture is unknown to him: “for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phi 4:11-13).

It is hard to carry a full cup without spilling, or to stand under a heavy load without bowing. It is difficult to walk in the clear day of prosperity without wandering, or in the dark night of adversity without stumbling. But from whatever point the wind blows, the skillful mariner knows how to meet it with his sails.

Repenting is the act of Christian men, but repining⁴⁶ is the act of carnal men. Though their estates are like a fruitful paradise, yet their hearts are like a barren wilderness. Such people are like those spiders that suck poison out of the sweetest flowers, and, by an infernal chemistry, extract dross from the purest gold!

Outward prosperity cannot create inward tranquility. Hearts-ease is a flower that never grew in the world’s garden. The ground of a wicked man’s trouble is not because he has not enough of the creature, but because he cannot find enough in the creature to satisfy him! His possession is great enough, but his disposition is not good enough (cf. Ecc 1:8).

Some are satisfied *under* the hand of God because they are not sensible *of* the hand of God. They never fret because they never feel.

We are not to be troubled that we have no more from God, but we are to be troubled that we do no more *for* God. Christians, if you are well pleased with your eternal salvation, should not you be well pleased with your temporal condition?

Believers should be like sheep, which change their pastures at the will of the shepherd; or like vessels in a house, which stand to be filled or emptied at the pleasure of their owner. He who sails upon the sea of this world in his own ship, will sink at last into a bottomless ocean. Never were any their own carvers, but they were sure to cut their own fingers.

A covetous man is fretful because he has not as much as he desires. But a gracious man is thankful because he knows he has more than he deserves. It is true that I have not the sauce, but then I merit not the meat. I have not the lace, but then I deserve not the coat. I lack that which may support my vanity, but I have that which supplies my necessity. “And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1Ti 6:8). Here is the flesh of the creature to fill us and the fleece of the creature to cover us.

It is reported of a woman who, being sick, was asked whether she was willing to live or die; she answered, “Whatever God pleases.” “But,” said one, “if God should refer it to you, which would you choose?” “Truly,” replied she, “I would refer it to Him again.” Thus, that man obtains his will from God whose will is subjected to God.

A contented heart is an even sea in the midst of all storms. It is like a tree in autumn, which secures its life⁴⁷ when it has lost its leaves. When worthy Mr. Hern lay upon his deathbed, his wife, with great concern, asked him what was to become of her and her large family? He answered, “Peace, sweetheart. That God Who feeds the ra-

⁴² **humor** – disposition.

⁴³ **estates** – conditions; possessions; social standings; situations; circumstances.

⁴⁴ **evil** – in this context, calamity; adversity.

⁴⁵ **bond** – promise; covenant.

⁴⁶ **repining** – being discontent.

⁴⁷ **secures its life** – that is, it lives; God preserves it.

vens will not starve the herms.”⁴⁸ If the child questions his father’s *affection*, he will soon be dubious of his father’s *provision*.

Our most golden conditions in this life are set in bronze frames. There is no gathering a rose without a thorn until we come to Immanuel’s land. If there were nothing but showers, we would conclude the world would be drowned. If there were nothing but sunshine, we would fear the earth would be burned. Our worldly comforts would be a sea to drown us, if our crosses were not a plank to save us! By the fairest gales a sinner may sail to destruction; by the fiercest storms a saint may sail to glory! When our circumstances become necessitous,⁴⁹ our corruptions become impetuous; they rage the more because [they are] stopped by the dam of poverty. If God withholds the hand of providence, we sinfully employ the tongue of insolence. We too frequently bite at the stone until we break our teeth! We murmur because we are in want,⁵⁰ and therefore want because we murmur.

Contentment is the best food to preserve a sound man, and the best medicine to restore a sick man. It resembles the coating on bitter pills, which makes a man willing to take them without tasting their bitterness. Contentment will make a cottage look as fair as a palace. He is not a poor man who has but little, but he is a poor man who desires much. In this sense, the poorest are often the richest, and the richest the poorest.

“Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1Ti 6:6). This is too precious a flower to grow in every soil. Though every godly man may not always be contented, yet every truly contented man is godly. “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psa 23:1). Such a Scripture will bring us plenty in scarcity and fullness out of emptiness. The water in a cloud soon ceases, but the water of a fountain continues.

As Seneca said to Polybius,⁵¹ “Never complain of your hard condition, so long as Caesar is your friend.” So say I to you, “Never complain of your hard condition, Christian, so long as Jesus is your friend!”

Let your condition be ever so flourishing; it is [nevertheless] a hell without Him. Let your condition be ever so fluctuating; it is [nevertheless] a heaven with Him. Can that man lack anything who enjoys Christ, or can he be said to enjoy anything who is without Christ? Why should Hagar lament the loss of the water in her bottle while there is a well so near (Gen 21:14-19)?

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

16. To be more in love with the employment of holiness than with the enjoyment of happiness.

Thousands of professors prize the wages of religion above its works, but a Christian will prize its works above its wages. Give me that singular preacher who prefers his labor to his lucre—and who prefers the flock he attends to the fleece he obtains.

Some men serve God that they may serve themselves upon God. He loves not religion sincerely who does not love it superlatively.

“Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself” (Hos 10:1)—empty and yet fruitful, fruitful and yet empty. Thus the fertility that springs up from the bitter roots of self, has nothing but vacuity⁵² in the account of God.

Such professors do not make gain stoop to godliness, but godliness to gain—as if a man should fit his foot to the shoe, when he *should* fit the shoe to his foot. In all the good a carnal man does for God, he seeks himself more than God. The clock of his heart will stand still unless its wheels of profit are oiled.

If the virgin should only give her hand in matrimony for her bridegroom’s riches, she would not espouse herself unto his person, but unto his portion. This would not make a marriage with him, but a merchandise of him. Augustine⁵³ has an excellent saying: “He loves not Christ at all who does not love Christ above all.”

“Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled” (Joh 6:26). Christ was the *object* of their actions, but self was the *end* of their actions. They came to Christ to serve their

⁴⁸ **herms** – herons; large water fowl common in coastal areas.

⁴⁹ **necessitous** – needy; indigent.

⁵⁰ **want** – lack.

⁵¹ **Polybius (c. 200-118 BC)** – Greek historian who described the development of the Roman Republic.

⁵² **vacuity** – emptiness.

⁵³ **Augustine (AD 354-430)** – Bishop of Hippo; early church theologian known by many as the father of orthodox theology; born in Tagaste, North Africa.

own turns; and when their turns were served, they then turned away their service. When the loaves were gone, these “disciples” were gone. When He left off feeding them, they left off following Him!

Reader, until you can love the naked truth, you will never [be willing to be impoverished] for the truth. Most people are mercenary⁵⁴ in those works wherein they should be filial⁵⁵ and free. They look more after the streams than upon the spring from whence they constantly run; [they] admire the beams more than the sun from whence they are emitted. The desire for pardon is the only spring of a servile⁵⁶ man’s duty; he plies his prayers as sailors do their pumps—only in a storm or when fearful of sinking!

“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee” (Joh 17:1). Christ prayed for glory, more for the Father’s sake, Who bestowed it, than for His own sake, Who received it. A true Christian not only desires grace that God may glorify him, but that he also may glorify God.

If carnal men could find the mercies of God, they would never seek the God of mercies. If they could tell how to be well without Him, they would never desire to come to Him. God has but little of their society, except when they can find no other company.

Worldlings, instead of looking upon godliness as their greatest gain, will look upon gain as their greatest godliness. They love religion not for the beauty existing in it, but for the dowry annexed to it. They are like the fox that follows the lion for the prey that is falling from him. If there is no honey in the pot, such wasps will hover no longer about it!

Mark how the long-suffering God expostulates with self-seeking Israel: “When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?” (Zec 7:5-6). In fasting and in festivals, their eyes were not cast upon God, but upon themselves! They did not forget to eat when they were hungry, but they forgot to praise God when they were full. Their greediness swallowed up all their thankfulness!

Reader, remember that God will shut your duties out of heaven, if your duties shut Him out on earth (cf. Eze 33:13)! I have heard an account of a woman who had fire in one hand and water in the other, and was asked what she was going to do with them. She answered, “With this fire I am going to burn up all the joys of heaven, and with this water I am going to quench all the flames of hell—that my services to my God might neither arise from fear of punishment, nor hope of reward.”⁵⁷

The less emphasis you lay upon your own works, the more will God lay upon them.⁵⁸ Those who are most righteous in themselves are least righteous to God. God has three sorts of servants in the world: some are *slaves* and serve Him from a principle of fear; others are *hirelings* and serve Him for the sake of wages; and the last are *sons* and serve Him under the influence of love. Now a hireling will be a “changeling.” He who will not serve God except something is given to him, would serve the devil if the devil would give him more! Either one who will but augment his wages shall have his works. Many are advocates for the enjoyment of happiness and enemies to the employment of holiness.

Demetrius cries up⁵⁹ the goddess Diana, yet it was not her temple but her silver shrines [that] he so much adored. He was more in love with her wealth than with her worship. “Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation” (Act 19:25). If her temple had been demolished, their trade would have been diminished. “Doth Job fear God for nought?” (Job 1:9). Yes, for Job served God when he had nothing. He was as pious in his poverty as in his plenty. In this sense, that man who will not serve God for nothing is nothing in His services.

Love does not serve for selfish returns, but it amply pays itself in serving its beloved. It is reported of one who, being asked for whom he labored most, answered, “For my friends.” And being asked for whom he labored least, he answered, “For my friends.” Love does most, and yet thinks least of what it does.

⁵⁴ **mercenary** – to serve only for material gain.

⁵⁵ **filial** – to behave as is appropriate for a child toward their parent.

⁵⁶ **servile** – enslaved.

⁵⁷ **neither arise...nor hope of reward** – this statement goes too far since Scripture uses godly fear and hope to motivate us: “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it” (Heb 4:1).

⁵⁸ **the more God will lay upon them** – observe how those that trusted in their own supposed righteousness were addressed: “Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Mat 23:28). Compare this to how those trusting in Christ are described in Hebrews 11.

⁵⁹ **cries up** – makes much of; celebrates.

Hypocrites are more in love with the gold of the altar than with the God of the altar. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation” (Mat 23:14). They painted their avarice⁶⁰ in religious colors, and put the arms of Christ upon the devil that iniquity might, by that means, be esteemed under the garb of religion. They fasted all the day, that they might feed upon the widows’ houses at night. They hatched the birds of oppression in the nests of devotion. These spiders weaved the web of their own works to catch the flies of other men’s wealth!

The observation of Augustine is founded on much truth: “There is often a vast difference between the face of the workman and the heart of the workman.” But a man influenced by the Lord in his services, though he may find self in them as an *intruder*, yet he will not allow self in them as a *leader*.

A Christian is more in love with his present duty than he is with his future glory. Paul was contented to stay a while out of heaven, that he might be the instrument of bringing other souls into heaven. “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phi 1:21). His life was most useful to others, but his death was most profitable to himself. By dying, he might have enjoyed his inheritance sooner; but by living, God made his usefulness greater.

Were it possible to put those things asunder that God Himself has joined together (Mat 19:6), a Christian would rather be holy without any happiness than happy without any holiness.

Luther had this expression: “I had rather be in hell with Christ than in heaven without Christ.” Indeed, hell itself would be a heaven if Christ were in it; and heaven would be a hell if Christ were not in it! These are hard sayings to an uncircumcised ear, but [they are] the real choice of every renewed heart.

A gracious man makes this request for his soul: “Lord, let me rather have a gracious heart than a great estate; let me rather be pious without prosperity than prosperous without piety.” Though he may love many things besides true religion, yet he would not love anything above true religion.

The earth is our work-house, but heaven is our storehouse. The earth is a place to run in; heaven is a place to rest in.

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

17. To be more employed in searching his own heart than he is in censuring other men’s states.

Those bishops are too busily employed who lord it over another man’s diocese.⁶¹ “Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds” (Pro 27:23). It is a matter of greater importance to know the state of our *hearts*, than the state of our flocks.

Censorious men commonly take up magnifying glasses to look at other people’s imperfections, [but they use] diminishing glasses⁶² to look at their own enormities.⁶³

Plato was entertaining a few friends at an elegantly spread table; Diogenes, a famous cynic philosopher, came in and trampled upon the table, saying, “I trample upon the pride of Plato!” To whom Plato immediately replied, “Yes, but by the greater pride in Diogenes!”

They are the first to find fault, in whom there is much fault to be found. “Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine *own* eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye” (Mat 7:5). He who blows into a heap of dust, is in danger of putting out his own eyes!

“For who maketh thee to differ from another?” (1Co 4:7). Reader, are there not the same lusts lodging in your heart, that are reigning in other men’s lives? The reason why there is so little self-condemnation is because there is so little self-examination. For lack of this, many people are like travelers: skilled in other countries but ignorant of their own.

Tradesmen being afraid to look into their books is an evidence that they are bankrupt in their estates. Likewise, it is plain that there is something wrong within, among all those who are afraid to look within. The trial of ourselves is the ready road to the knowledge of ourselves. He who buys a jewel in a box deserves to be deceived with a fake stone.

Reader, would you see God? Then cast your eyes upwards. Would you see yourself? Then cast your eyes inward. Contemplation is a magnifying glass to see our Savior in, but examination is a looking-glass to view

⁶⁰ **avarice** – extreme greed.

⁶¹ **diocese** – jurisdiction of a bishop.

⁶² **diminishing glasses** – lens that makes everything smaller, as in looking through binoculars from the wrong end.

⁶³ **enormities** – extreme evils.

ourselves in. Are we then in the narrow way which leads to life, or in the broad way which leads to death (Mat 7:13-14)? Are we Christ's bride or Satan's harlots? Are our hearts chairs for vice to sit on, or thrones for grace to rule in?

Nero thought no person chaste because he was so unchaste himself. Such as are troubled with jaundice⁶⁴ see all things yellow. Those who are most pious are least censorious. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" (Rom 14:4). Those who are fellow creatures with men should not be fellow judges with God. Reader, why will you probe another man's wound while your own is festering? Take heed that your own vesture is not full of dirt when you are brushing the dust off your neighbor. Complain not of dirty streets when heaps of rubbish lie at your own doors! Many people are not happy unless they are poking their fingers into another's sores. Such are no better in their conduct than crows that prey only upon carrion.⁶⁵ "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Gal 6:4).

For lack of self-examination, men have their accounts⁶⁶ to cast up,⁶⁷ when they should have them to deliver up.⁶⁸ They have their evidences of grace to seek when they should have them to show. They lie down with such hopes in their beds of rest, with which they dare not lie down in their bed of dust. Conversion begins in consideration. The hasty shower falls fastest, but the soft snow sinks the deepest.

As that mariner who is inattentive to his helm is in danger of wrecking his vessel, so he who knows not himself is likely to lose himself. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2Co 13:5). If your heart is not the cabinet of such a jewel, your head will never be graced with a diadem in glory. If you must needs be a judge, then pray sit upon your own bench. I shall ever esteem such to be but religious lepers, who care not for Scripture looking-glasses. He who never cries out, "Woe is me for I am undone!" (Isa 6:5), will never hear Christ's "Go in peace" (Luk 7:50; 8:48). Self-examination is the beaten path to perfection; it is like fire that not only tries the gold but purifies it also.

The heathen tell us that "Know yourself" was an oracle which came down from heaven. It is this oracle that will lead us up to the God of heaven. The sight of yourself in grace will bring you to the sight of God in glory! The plague of the body is not every man's plague, but the plague of the soul is. If the plague of the soul were known more, the plague of the body would be feared less. Though there may be a more pleasant sight, yet there is not a more profitable sight. Until you know how deep the pit is into which you are fallen, you will never properly praise that hand which raises you out of it.

The bottom of our diseases lies in not searching our diseases to the bottom. So we put on some filthy rags to cover our nakedness, and we then wickedly despise the Savior's righteousness.

"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Pro 28:26). And yet such fools are we as to trust our own hearts! The Lord searches all hearts by His omniscient eye; but He searches His people's hearts by the eye of His mercy. If a man would know whether the sun shines, it is better to view its beams on the pavement than its body in the sky. The readiest way to know whether you are in Christ, is to know whether Christ is in you. For the fruit on the tree is more visible than the root of the tree.

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

18. To set out for God at our beginning and to hold out with God unto the end.

First: to set out for God at our beginning.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not" (Ecc 12:1). In the distillation of strong waters, the first drawn is fullest of spirits.⁶⁹ "The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God" (Exo 23:19). God prizes a Christian in the bud, and delights in the blossoms of youth⁷⁰ above the sheddings of old age.⁷¹

⁶⁴ **jaundice** – disease causing the body to take on a yellow hue, including the eyeballs, due to abnormal bile pigments in the blood.

⁶⁵ **carrion** – decaying flesh of a dead body.

⁶⁶ **accounts...deliver up** – God has given us His Word, like a deposit to our "accounts." If we neglect its application, we shall lose its benefit, as a "cast up" or shipwrecked vessel loses its cargo. We should rather take heed to it and to ourselves (1Ti 4:16) that good "accounts" might be "delivered up" to Him, that the "investment" is "fruitful."

⁶⁷ **cast up** – to deposit something on the shore; shipwreck.

⁶⁸ **deliver up** – to surrender, to bring to the proper place or recipient.

⁶⁹ **spirits** – strong distilled alcoholic drink.

⁷⁰ **blossoms of youth** – fruitful young Christians

Naturalists inform us that the most orient⁷² pearls are generated from the morning dew. The field is full of the richest corn that is cleansed from its noxious weeds in the spring. How pleasant is it to see the thousands of spiritual Israel,⁷³ seeking the heavenly Manna⁷⁴ in the morning of their lives⁷⁵ (Exo 16:21). Is it not better to cry for mercy on earth with the publican (Luk 18:13), than to call for water in hell with Dives (Luk 16:24)? To discover grace in an old sinner is well, but to view it in vigorous youth is better. All the sacrificial animals were offered to God in their prime. Jesus was carried in triumph upon a colt.

No music could ever equalize the heaven-born cries of new-born babes. When the snow-drops of youth appear in the garden of the Church, it shows that there is a glorious summer approaching.

If youth is sick of the shall-nots, old age is in danger of dying of the will-nots. It is hard to cast off the devil's yoke when we have worn it long upon our necks! Grace seldom grafts upon such withered stocks. An old sinner is nearer to the second death than he is to the second birth. It is more likely to see his soul taken out of the flesh, than the flesh taken out of his soul. His body is nearer to corruption than his soul is to salvation.

Where the enemy is the strongest, there the victory is the hardest. Usually, where the devil pleads antiquity, he keeps propriety.⁷⁶ As there are none so old as that they should despair of mercy, so there are none so young as that they should presume on mercy. If God's "today" is too soon for your repentance, your "tomorrow" may be too late for His acceptance.⁷⁷ Mercy's clock does not always strike at our beck!⁷⁸ The longer poison stays in the body, so much the more harmful are its effects. O how amiable are the golden apples of grace in the silver pictures of blooming youth! God prizes a young friend, but punishes an old enemy. Old sinners are much like old serpents—the fullest of poison!

It is singularly pleasant to view the Ancient of Days in infants in days, and to see green pieces of timber being squared for the celestial building. Blessed are those in whom grace is in its prosperity, while their nature is in its minority.⁷⁹ "I have more understanding than all my teachers" (Psa 119:99)—his youth was wiser than their age; his dawning was brighter than their noontide. And this was the more admirable because it was in his youth; for when our lives are the most vigorous, our lusts are the most boisterous.

You teach a dog while he is a pup, and break a horse while he is a colt. A plentiful harvest is the outcome of an early seed time. Young Reader, remember that your youthful sins lay a foundation for aged sorrows. You have but one arrow to shoot at the mark; if that is shot at random, God may never put another into your bow!

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending; the first and the last" (Rev 1:8, 11). He Who is the first and the last should be served from the first to the last. You can never come too soon to Him Who is your beginning; and you can never stay too long with Him Who is your ending. The flower of life is of Christ's setting, and shall it be of the devil's cropping?⁸⁰

But what is setting out without holding out? Mutability⁸¹ is at best but the badge of infirmity. It can only be those trees that are unsound at their roots which cease from putting forth leaves in their season. Those who at present are inwardly corrupt, will in the future be openly profane. False grace is always declining, until it is wholly lost. But true grace goes from a morning's dawn unto a meridian splendor. It is just to be cast off from God, for casting off the ways and works of God.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev 2:10). He has a crown for the runner (1Co 9:24), but a curse for the run-away. God accounts not Himself served at all, if He is not always served. It is not enough to begin our course well unless it is crowned with perseverance. Some trees put forth fair blossoms,

⁷¹ **sheddings of old age** – elderly in spiritual decline.

⁷² **orient** – bright; shining; glittering.

⁷³ **spiritual Israel** – true Christians: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phi 3:3).

⁷⁴ **heavenly Manna** – Christ: "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (Joh 6:32-33).

⁷⁵ **morning of their lives** – youth.

⁷⁶ **propriety** – conformity.

⁷⁷ **too late for acceptance** – though genuine repentance is never too late (cf. Pro 1:23), one who has refused to turn to God may cry out for deliverance in the day of their calamity, without true faith, and find they are rejected (cf. Pro 1:20-33).

⁷⁸ **beck** – a call or summon by nodding.

⁷⁹ **minority** – youth.

⁸⁰ **setting...cropping** – referring to the planting and picking of a flower.

⁸¹ **mutability** – tendency to change frequently; inconstancy.

but their flattering spring is turned into an unfruitful winter. Some clear mornings have become overcast with the thickest clouds. The corn, which promised a large harvest in the blade of profession, is blasted⁸² in the ear. The light remains no longer than while the sun shines. When God ceases to be gracious, man ceases to be righteous.

The flowers of paradise would quickly wither on earth if they were not watered with drops from heaven. How have the mighty fallen when the Almighty has not stood by them! The devil would soon put out our candles, if Christ did not carry them in His lantern. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal 6:9). To see a ship sink in the harbor of profession is more grievous than if it had perished in the open sea of profaneness.

There goes forth the same power of God to strengthen a saint as to quicken a sinner. He Who sets us up and makes us holy, must keep us up and make us steady. How many professors have seemed to be just ready to cast an eternal anchor, when a contrary wind has driven them to sea and they have perished forever! "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?" (Hos 6:4)—why, what is the matter? "Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away" (Hos 6:4).

Some have beat Jehu's march; they have driven furiously in religion⁸³—but within a few years, they have knocked off their chariot wheels. After they have lifted up their hands to God, they have lifted up their heels⁸⁴ against Him! That man's beginning was in hypocrisy, whose ending is in apostasy!⁸⁵ Reader, you look for happiness as long as God has a being in heaven, and God looks for holiness as long as you have a being on earth. "He who endures to the end shall be saved" (Mat 10:22)

"If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb 10:38). He who draws back from his profession on earth, shall be kept back from any possession in heaven. He that departs in the faith shall be saved, but he who departs from the faith shall be damned.

That mariner has no praise who sinks his ship before he comes to the harbor. That soldier obtains no glory who lays down his weapons in the heat of the battle. Some say that the chrysolite,⁸⁶ which is of a golden color in the morning, loses its splendor before the evening. Such are the glittering shows of hypocrites. Though fiery meteors fall to die on earth, yet fixed stars remain in heaven.

When once the fire that is laid on God's altar is kindled, it shall no more be quenched. True grace may be shaken in the soul, but it cannot be shaken out of the soul. It may be a bruised reed, but it shall never be a broken reed (Mat 12:20).

Christ is more tender of His mystical body than He was of His natural body. Though a believer may fall foully, yet he shall never fall finally. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the heirs of heaven (Mat 16:18). The fiery darts of the devil, which in themselves are intentionally mortal, shall be to saints eventually medicinal (Eph 6:16). These bees may sting [a believer], but their venom shall not destroy him. His light may be eclipsed for a time, but the sun will break forth again.

Under the Law, the Lord had His evening sacrifice as well as His morning sacrifice. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luk 9:62). Our labors are never fulfilled until our days are fulfilled. There is nothing pleasant but what is constant. Though a saint may sometimes be weary *in* doing the work of the Lord, yet he is at no time weary *of* doing the work of the Lord. There may be a suspension of the operation of grace⁸⁷, but there cannot be a destruction of the being of grace. This babe may lie upon a sick-bed, but it shall never lie upon a death-bed.

Christ is called the Finisher of our faith as well as the Author of our faith (Heb 12:2). There is as much necessity for the Spirit to keep up our graces, as there is to bring forth our graces.

Indifference in religion is the first step to apostasy from religion. Though Christians are not altogether kept from falling, yet they are kept from falling altogether. They may show an apathy toward Christ for a time, but

⁸² **blasted** – blighted; made to wither by too much heat or too little water.

⁸³ "And the watchman told, saying, He came even unto them, and cometh not again: and the driving is like the driving of *Jehu* the son of Nimshi; for he *driveth furiously*" (2Ki 9:20).

⁸⁴ **lifted up their heels** – to be lifted up in pride (see Psa 41:9; Joh 13:18).

⁸⁵ **apostasy** – state of having abandoned the faith one had once professed.

⁸⁶ **chrysolite** – mineral found as yellow-green crystals in rock.

⁸⁷ Not absolutely: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phi 1:6). Only relatively: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat" (Heb 5:12).

they shall not depart from Christ forever. The trees of righteousness may have their winter, but they shall also have their spring. There is never so low an ebb but there is also as high a tide.

Christians are like crocodiles that grow until they die! They are like the moon, which increases in her beauty until she is at the full. They have no desire of putting off the robes of purity while they are on this side [of] eternity. They wish to hold the sword of piety in their hands until God sets the crown of glory upon their heads!

Professing Reader, if piety is not the way of safety, why do you set forth in it? And if piety is the way, why do you shrink back from it? Usually those who ride fastest at the beginning of their journey are the first who talk of halting on the road.

See what a sparkling diamond there is set in the apostle's crown: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (2Ti 4:7-8). Paul the warrior was Paul the conqueror, and Paul the conqueror was Paul the crowned. Jesus Christ is never a father of abortive⁸⁸ children. Where He gives strength to conceive, He gives strength to bring forth. He turns the bruised reed into a brazen pillar and the smoking flax into an enduring flame.

Another singular action of a consistent Christian is,

19. To take all the shame of his sins unto himself and to give all the glory of his services unto Christ.

Many people take all the glory of their services to themselves, and lay all the share of their sins on Christ—as if He Who died on earth to redeem us *from* sin should live in heaven to confirm us *in* sin.

The devil may flatter us, but he cannot force us. He may *tempt* us to sin, but he cannot *compel* us to sin. He could never come off a conqueror were he not joined by our forces. The fire is his, but the tinder is ours. He could never enter into our houses if we did not set open our doors.

Many complain for lack of liberty who thrust their feet into Satan's fetters!⁸⁹ "And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen 3:12). As if he had said, "I took that as a gift from her whom You gave as a gift to me." It is the worst of sins to charge God with our sins! They may receive their punishment from Him, but they shall never receive their temptation from Him. He cannot be the unrighteous upholder of what He is the righteous avenger. O blasphemy, to charge that Sun with darkness by which the heavens are enlightened, or that Sea with a lack of moisture by which the whole earth is watered! Our impiety is as truly the offspring of our souls as our posterity is the issue of our bodies. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jam 1:17). Whatever is truly good has its origin in God. Now the same spring cannot send forth both sweet and bitter waters. It is a known rule that contraries destroy each other.

Many have more leaves to cover their wickedness than they have garments to cover their nakedness (Gen 3:7). They lay their heresy⁹⁰ at the door of the sanctuary and call their diabolical seductions "evangelical revelations"—as if the Father of light could bring forth the darkness of sin. What is this, but to set a crown of lead upon a head of gold! We can defile ourselves, but we cannot cleanse ourselves. The sheep can go astray alone, but [they] can never return to the fold without the assistance of the shepherd. Until we taste the bitterness of our own misery, we shall never relish the sweetness of God's mercy. Until we see how foul our sins have made us, we shall never pay our tribute of praise to Christ for washing us. If we were left to ourselves but for a moment, we would destroy ourselves in that moment!

Many advance themselves to depreciate Christ, but we should look upon ourselves as nothing and Christ as everything. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints" (Eph 3:8)—Paul was willing to be esteemed a cipher,⁹¹ so that Christ might stand for a figure.⁹² Well may we abase ourselves for His advancement, Who abased

⁸⁸ **abortive** — of children dying in miscarriage.

⁸⁹ **fetters** — chains for binding prisoners.

⁹⁰ **heresy** — false teaching.

⁹¹ **cipher** — zero; nothing. "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, *though I be nothing*" (2Co 12:11).

⁹² **figure** — a number; not zero; something. "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the *cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal 6:14).

Himself for our salvation. “Let Luther be accounted a devil, so long as Christ may be exalted as Savior!” said that flaming seraph⁹³ [Luther] of himself.

“Without me ye can do nothing” (Joh 15:5). The pen may as soon write without the hand that holds it, as our hearts work without the Spirit that moves them. Not only the enjoyment of our talents⁹⁴ is from God, but the improvement of them is from Him. “Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds” (Luk 19:16)—it is not my pains, but Your pound that has done it. The children of God are like a clock, which soon stands still if it is not wound up.⁹⁵ “Did not our hearts burn within us” (Luk 24:32); but how long did the flame last? All the time He talked with them. When He gave over breathing on them, their fuel gave over burning. Gracious hearts are like stars in the heavens, which shine not by their own splendor.⁹⁶ He who takes the brick must give the straw to make it (Exo 5:18). There is no water unless He smites the rock (Exo 17:6), nor fire unless He strikes the flint.

If He calls us to the work of angels, He will supply us with the strength of angels. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom 5:6). A Christless soul is also a strengthless soul. Man is indebted to God for what he has, but God is not indebted to man for what He does. “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:36). The humble heart knows no foundation but God’s grace, and the upright man knows no end but God’s glory.

Whatever action has God for its author, has God for its center. A circular line makes its ending where it had its beginning. Reader, take heed of turning a sacred privilege into a privy⁹⁷ sacrilege. If God gives that grace which is not due to you, will you deny the praise which is due to Him?

The wicked make their end their god, but we make God our end. The sky is made more glorious by one sun than by all the stars which stud the heavens. Thus Jesus Christ has more glory given to Him from one saint than from all the world besides. He takes more pleasure in their prayers and is more honored by their praise.

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1Co 10:31). From the lowest act of nature to the highest act of grace, there is no argument for the pride of man, but every argument for the praise of God. If He makes our nature gracious, we should make His name glorious. He that would be stealing the honor of God is not worthy to receive the honor of a man.

Caesar once said to his opponent, “Either I will be Caesar, or nobody.” So the Lord says, “Either I will be a great God or no God.” That man disparages the glory of the sun who sets it upon a level with the twinkling stars. The glory of God is the golden mark at which all the arrows of obedience are shot; otherwise they fall short of their mark. The body has two eyes, but the soul must have but one—and that so firmly fixed upon Christ as never once to glance beside Him. A single eye is fittest for a single object (Luk 11:34).

“And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men” (Act 14:11). But do they take that glory to themselves, which is idolatrously given to them from others? No! “And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you” (Act 14:15). As if they had said, “We are so far from possessing the glorious perfections of God, that we are clothed with all the weaknesses and sins of men.”

Ungodly Herod was not like Paul and Silas: “And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man” (Act 12:22). What the people gave foolishly, he took fearlessly. “And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost” (Act 12:23). Ah, how soon this worm-eaten wretch was a wretch eaten up by worms! Every little river pays its tribute to the great sea, and shall we refuse ours to the great God?

As there is no time in which God is not blessing His children, there should be no time in which His people are not praising Him. As He designs our happiness in all He does, it is but reasonable that we should seek His honor in all we do. We have no way to turn the streams unto God, the Ocean of all bounty, but through the pipes of gratitude.⁹⁸

⁹³ **seraph** – like an angel; one who is a blessing to others.

⁹⁴ **talents** – an amount of precious metal of such a measure (see Mat 25:14-30).

⁹⁵ “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: *for without me ye can do nothing*” (Joh 15:5).

⁹⁶ **stars** – that is, moons.

⁹⁷ **privy** – private.

⁹⁸ **pipes of gratitude** – our thanks to God is a gift from God (Eph 1:3).

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1:12). It is very fit that He should be magnified by us, when He makes us fit to be glorified with Him.

As the best of means⁹⁹ should make us fruitful, so the least of mercies should make us thankful. “The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power” (Rev 4:10-11). Whatever ointment is poured out upon Christ’s head will run down to the skirts of His garment. What a saint gives to Christ in copper shall be returned to him in silver! Yes, the only way to keep our crowns on our heads is to cast them down at His feet!

The last singular action of a consistent Christian is,

20. That he values his heavenly inheritance above all earthly possessions.

God has reserved a priceless inheritance for His children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay (1Pe 1:3-4). “Our citizenship is in heaven” (Phi 3:20). Some say that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, but surely such a bird in the bush is worth two in the hand. If others dote¹⁰⁰ upon the streams, let us admire the fountain. Socrates,¹⁰¹ being asked what his native country was, answered, “I am a citizen of the whole world.” But ask a Christian what his native country is, and he will answer, “I am a citizen of all heaven!” Believers build their tombs where worldlings build their habitations. The *men* of the world fix their hearts upon the *things* of the world. This fleeting world is the cabinet in which they lock up all their jewels! Though God has given the earth to beasts, yet such beasts are men as to give themselves to the earth!

It was the saying of a cursed cardinal, “I prefer a part in the honors of Paris to a part in the happiness of paradise.” What is the glimmering of a candle compared to the shining of the sun? Or the value of dirt compared with gold? Foolish children are taken up more with fleeting pleasures than with eternal glory. Thus while the shadow is embraced, the substance is neglected.

That man who is a laboring bee for earthly prosperity, will be but an idle drone for heavenly felicity. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col 3:1).

There is no need of blotting out the characters¹⁰² of our affections, but of writing them on fairer paper. There is no necessity for drying up these running waters, but for diverting them into their proper channels. Why should we wholly destroy these valuable plants, when they might thrive so well in a better soil? He who looks upon heaven with desire will look upon earth with disdain. Our affections were made for the things which are above us, and not for the things which are about us.

What is an earthly manor compared to a heavenly mansion! As carnal things seem small to a spiritual man, so spiritual things appear small to a carnal man. There is no desiring and living for things that are beyond the sphere of our own knowledge. Heaven is to the worldling as a mine of gold that is buried deep in the earth; he does not realize that it exists. But if he had the eyes of an eagle to see it, he would wish for the wings of an eagle to soar unto it.

How little would the great world¹⁰³ seem to us, if the great God were not so little in us! Either men have no thoughts of a future state, or else they have low thoughts of a future state. If we had souls without any bodies, then there would be no need of the earth to keep us; if we had bodies without any souls, there would be no need of heaven to crown us. Such as have no present holiness are for a present happiness.

“There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?” (Psa 4:6)—any good will serve those who know not the chief good. But David adds, “LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.” O how sordid¹⁰⁴ is it for men to prefer the garlic and onions of Egypt to the milk and honey of Canaan (Num 11:5)! Visible trifles to them are better than invisible realities. They mind the present world so much, as if it would never have any end; and the eternal world so little, as if it would never have a beginning.

⁹⁹ **means** – God’s methods used to bless us, like the Word of God, preaching, prayer, etc.

¹⁰⁰ **dote** – to show strong fondness and love.

¹⁰¹ **Socrates (c. 469-399 BC)** – Greek philosopher of Athens who investigated the nature of virtue. When condemned to death, he committed suicide.

¹⁰² **character** – letters

¹⁰³ **great world** – in this context, the present world, not heaven.

¹⁰⁴ **sordid** – dirty; immoral.

Reader, why should you be so taken up *with* your riches, when you will be so soon taken *from* your riches? Why do you dote upon a flower, which may wither in an hour? As you are traveling beyond the world, it would be your wisdom to be trading¹⁰⁵ above the world. But alas, such are not easily awakened who fall so fast asleep on the world's pillow!

When the Gauls¹⁰⁶ had tasted the wine of Italy, they asked where the grapes grew—and would never rest until they came there. Thus may you cry, “And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest” (Psa 55:6). A believer is willing to *lose* the world for the enjoyment of grace. He is willing to *leave* the world for the fruition of glory. As the worst on this side of eternity, compared with hell, is mercy; so the best on this side of eternity, compared with heaven, is misery. There is no more comparison to be made between heaven and earth than there is between a piece of refined gold and rusty iron.

Augustine says, “The hope of immortal life is the life of our mortal lives.” It is the expectation of a future, glorious inheritance that is the Jacob’s staff of saints with which they walk through this dark pilgrimage (Gen 32:10). “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1Co 15:19). But because we have hope in Christ, after this life we may be of all men the most comfortable!

Though we have desires in the world, yet we have no desires after the world. “For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (2Co 5:2). A believer longs most for that place where he shall be best. He not only grows in grace, but groans for glory. Perfection is the boundary of the strongest expectation.¹⁰⁷ As it is satisfied with nothing less, so it looks for nothing more. Everything in eternity is wound up to its highest capacity. It is in heaven that mercy will be received unmixed, and majesty viewed unveiled. What is a worthless pebble compared with a matchless diamond?

What a sweet salutation is that of the Savior to His servant, “Enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Mat 25:21). O, what joy shall enter into the believer when he shall enter into the joy of his Redeemer! Then the vessels of mercy shall have sea-room enough in the ocean of glory!

Those whom love has closely united together cannot contentedly dwell forever asunder. “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat 25:34). That which makes hell so full of horror is that it is below all hopes, and that which makes heaven so full of splendor is that it is above all fears. Hell is a night without the return of day; heaven is a day free from the approach of night. Who would not seek after glory with the greatest diligence, and wait for glory with the greatest patience—seeing we increase the interest while we wait for the principle (cf. Mat 6:20).

There are some deluded professors who aspire after earthly grandeur, as if the place where saints are crucified were the place where they are glorified. This were to consider the Church in a triumphant condition, rather than a militant¹⁰⁸ condition. The ark of the Church, which is now tossed upon a tumultuous sea, shall then rest in the harbor of eternal tranquility.

“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (Joh 14:2). Our Redeemer is our forerunner: He Who takes possession of us on earth takes possession for us in heaven (Rom 8:17). As we are not long here without Him, so He will not be long there without us. Here on earth, all the world is not enough for one carnal man; but there in eternity, one heaven shall be enough for all Christians. In this life there are showers of tears that fall from the saint’s eyes, but in that eternal life there shall be a perpetual sunshine of glory in the saint’s heart.

Many temptations may accost¹⁰⁹ a heaven-born soul, but no temptation shall finally prevail against him. Flying birds are never taken in a fowler’s snare. What is all that we enjoy here on earth, but as a dying spark of that living flame! as a languishing ray of that illustrious sun! or as a small drop of that overflowing spring!

“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8). If there is so much delight in believing, O, how much is there in

¹⁰⁵ **trading above the world** – conducting yourself not according to the world’s ungodly pattern.

¹⁰⁶ **Gauls** – Celts of ancient Gaul, corresponding roughly to modern-day France and Belgium.

¹⁰⁷ **Perfection...expectation** – at the Resurrection we shall be perfect or “complete” (1Jo 3:2), and this shall be the start or “boundary” of the “strongest expectation,” that is, to be with Christ (Phi 1:23).

¹⁰⁸ **triumphant...militant** – contrasting the state of God’s people in military terms: in heaven they are triumphant, but on earth they are at war or militant.

¹⁰⁹ **accost** – to stop and address in a bold, aggressive, threatening way.

beholding! What is the wooing day¹¹⁰ compared to the wedding day! What is the sealing of the will compared to the enjoyment of the inheritance! What are the foretastes of glory compared to the fullness of glory! The good things of that life are so great as not to be measured; they are so many as not to be enumerated; and so precious as not to be estimated!

If the picture of holiness is so lovely in its rough draft, how lovely a piece will it be in all its perfections! Every grace that is here seen in its minority shall be seen there in its maturity.

¹¹⁰ **wooing day** – Christian life on earth may be compared to the days of betrothal before the wedding day. In the Jewish betrothal, the woman belonged to the man by promise at betrothal: she was his wife. But the marriage was not yet consummated; that was reserved for the wedding day. So the days of betrothal were the days of “wooing” or seeking the affection of the betrothed with a view to the wedding day.

V. Application

Principles by which a Believer Should Walk,

1-10

Having dispatched that which is doctrinal, I now come to the discussion of that which is practical. And I shall here propose two practical considerations: firstly, the erection of singular *principles*, and secondly, the direction of singular *practices*.

Natural men obey natural principles, and spiritual men obey spiritual principles. No man can expect that bitter roots should produce sweet fruits. Though civil principles may be kindled at the torch of nature, yet sacred principles are lighted at the blaze of Scripture. Now there are twenty singular principles, which I shall consider as the rise and spring of singular practices.

The first principle that believers walk by is this,

1. Whatever is transacted by men on earth is eyed by the Lord in heaven.

A man may hide God from himself, and yet he cannot hide himself from God. This even a prodigal could acknowledge, “I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight” (Luk 15:21). When a man wishes God to be like himself, it argues that he is wicked; but when he desires to be like God, it indicates that he is virtuous.

A false god would be most acceptable to a false heart. For, “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands” (Psa 115:4). They have mouths, but they speak not for our direction; they have eyes, but they cannot see our condition; they have ears, but they cannot hear our supplication; they have hands, but they cannot work our redemption. These were not the God that made men, but the gods that men made.

“All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:13). We cannot always see His will in His works, but He can always discover our works in our will. To Him the most hidden roots are as visible as the uppermost branches. Though the place where we sin is to men as dark as Egypt, yet to God it is as light as Goshen (Gen 47:6). The advice that one gave to his friend privately is worthy to be adapted publicly: “So act towards men as in the sight of God; and so pray to God as in the sight of men.”¹ He is a bold thief who will cut your purse while you look in his face!

“All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits” (Pro 16:2). The Lord sees faults where men see none. Atoms, which are invisible in the candle light of reason, are all made to dance naked in the sunshine of omniscience! Cato² was so grave and so good a man that none would behave wrongly in his presence; thus it grew to a proverbial caution, “Take heed what you do, for Cato sees you!” How reproachful is it to us that the eyes of a man should have more effect upon our actions than the penetrating eyes of God!

God has a clear window into the darkest houses. He sees what is done in them when none other can. To God’s omnipotence, there is nothing impossible; and to God’s omniscience, there is nothing invisible. I never look for those people to strain at gnats, who will easily and greedily swallow camels (Mat 23:24).

What is the reason that men do the works of darkness, but that they think they do their works in thick darkness? They suppose that no eye sees them; no, God’s eye does nothing else but see. “And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds *are* a covering to him, that he seeth not....” (Job 22:13-14). Ah, how gladly would the hand of man draw a veil over the face of God!

¹ **pray to God as in the sight of men** – we may be tempted in prayer toward a self-preoccupation that would embarrass us if we exhibited such in the presence of other men.

² **Cato the Younger (95-46 BC)** – politician, statesman, and noted orator in the late Roman Republic. He is remembered for his tenacity, immunity to bribes, moral integrity, and distaste for the corruption of the period.

A sinful man would³ be an unseen man! “Understand, ye brutish among the people: and *ye* fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?” (Psa 94:8-9). Will you make Him deaf Who gives you ears? Will you make Him blind Who gives you eyes? This is acting like a beast among men, and not as a man among beasts. But, “The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity” (Psa 94:11). Foolish men think that God does not know the vanity of their thoughts. This is the vainest thought of them all!

Reader, you cannot set down your lusts in such characters, but what the eyes of God can read them! As He can save in the greatest extremity, so He can see in the deepest obscurity. Though we cannot see God while we live, yet He can see how we live. “For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves” (Job 34:21-22). Man may gild over the leaves of a blurred life with the profession of holiness; but God can unmask the painted Jezebel of hypocrisy and lay her naked to her own shame (2Ki 9:30)!

Because sin has put out our eyes, we vainly imagine that it has put out God's eyes! Because we cannot see what God does in heaven for us, we think that He cannot see what we do on earth against Him.

Men do not care what sins they do, when they believe that God does not see what sins are done. “They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it” (Psa 94:6-7).

The adulterer waits for the twilight. His sin gets up when the sun goes down. The time of darkness pays most tribute to the prince of darkness. There are many that blush to confess their faults who never blush to commit them. When poor Adam had sinned, he sought not the fairest fruits to satisfy his hunger, but the broadest leaves to cover his nakedness (Gen 3:8).

It is God's gracious eye placed upon us that makes us pious, and it is our believing eye fixed on Him that keeps us pious (1Pe 1:5). What servant is there who would pilfer⁴ under the view of his master? What soldier would appear a coward in the presence of his prince?

Another principle by which a Christian should walk is this,

2. After all his present receivings, he will be brought to his future reckonings.

Thus the certain rich man dealt with his steward, “Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward” (Luk 16:2). Man's enjoyment of outward blessings is not a lordship but a stewardship. God communicates those good things of life to men, not that they should lay them up for their own vanity, but that they should lay them out for His glory. The richest man had as poor a beginning as the poorest, and the poorest will have as rich an end as the wealthiest.

“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psa 90:12). Augustine says, “We can never do that unless we number every day as our last day.” Many put their last day far away. They refuse to leave the earth, when the earth is about to take its leave of them. People of the greatest eminence have anciently had their monitors to remind them of their mortality. Agathocles, a Sicilian prince, had his earthen plate set before him to remind him that he had been a potter. The Roman triumphers, in the meridian of their splendor, had a servant behind them crying to each, “Remember that you are only a man!”

Men who are gods in office are too apt to think themselves gods in essence; but the change of the name can make no change in the man. The psalmist ridicules such a haughty prince's vanity: “I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes” (Psa 82:6-7). All human divinity will soon be shrouded in mortality; those who would appear as gods before men, shall soon appear as men before God.

Death levels the highest mountains with the lowest valleys. Death mows down the fairest lilies as well as the foulest thistles. The robes of illustrious princes and the rags of destitute peasants, are both laid aside in the wardrobe of the grave. As the cloud and pillar that led Israel through the wilderness left them [once in the promised land], so shall all the glittering shows of life be forgotten in the solemn article⁵ of death!

³ would – desires to.

⁴ pilfer – steal.

⁵ article – object.

Then those ungodly mortals who were determined not to approach the throne of grace, shall be obliged to appear before the throne of judgment. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2Co 5:10).

At the shrill voice of the last trumpet, every jailer shall deliver up all his prisoners. Now we see the living fall into the arms of death; but then we shall behold the dead awake, and rise to an unchanging life! Then the scattered dust of all Adam's children shall ride upon the wings of the wind until it meets together in its own bodies. Then the purchased bodies of saints shall be claimed by their heavenly Owner. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isa 26:19).

All the various animals that have feasted on human flesh shall then find that their food was too rich for digestion. The bellies of beasts and whales are not to be always the bed of God's Jonahs. Death will cut us down, but it shall not eternally keep us down. Now the same glorious Person Who shall come to raise the dead will also come to judge the dead: "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Rom 2:16). The same rule that God has given the world to act by, the same rule has He taken to Himself to judge by. Reader, if you obstinately and finally disobey the precious Word of God revealed from heaven to you, you must suffer the eternal wrath of God revealed from heaven against you. Though you may now obstinately resist the judgments that He sets before your eyes, yet you cannot then resist those judgments that He will angrily pour out upon your souls.

Poor sinner, will you yet so willfully embrace those poisonous vipers, your lusts, which will so assuredly sting you with the pains of eternal damnation? Why will you rashly pursue anything in this world that will subject you to the intolerable curse of God in the eternal world? "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" (Act 17:31). It is the Son of man by Whom the believing world was redeemed, and it will be by the same Son of man that the whole world shall be judged. He Who was guarded to the cross by a band of soldiers, shall soon be attended to the bench⁶ by a shining company of angels!

The ancient Thebans pictured their judges without eyes that they might not favor persons, and without hands to denote that no bribes should be received.⁷ "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen 18:25). The wills of human judges are to be regulated by the laws of righteousness, but so glorious is the heavenly Judge that even the laws of righteousness are regulated by His will. As all His works are great and marvelous, so are all His ways just and righteous.

Reader, there will be no possibility of standing before Christ but by standing in Christ. What hopes can you entertain of an acquittal at the final judgment if your conscience condemns you before you appear at the bar?

Those who freight⁸ their minds with carnal pleasures will one day be condemned for carrying contraband⁹ commodities. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes" (Ecc 11:9)—this were brave¹⁰ indeed, if it could but be secured forever. But alas, after the flash of lightning comes the dreadful clap of thunder: "But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Ecc 11:9). This is just as if God had said, "Well, poor sinner, run down the hill as fast as you please, but know that you will be sure to break your neck at last!"

This is the day of God's long-suffering, but the Judgment Day will be the day of the sinner's long-suffering. Here the cords of patience, as it were, tie the hands of vengeance; but our Samson will at last be roused and break all these cords, and then, woe be to all the Philistines (Jdg 16:26-30)! Sinners may have sparing patience exercised towards them, and yet not have converting grace revealed in them. All such, at the world's end, will be at their wit's end.

He Who now shakes His sword over the hardened sinner's head will in the great day sheathe it in his heart! In the awful storm of death, if his vessel be wrecked, there will be no plank to swim to shore upon. "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-

⁶ **bench** – seat of judgment. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son..." (Joh 5:22).

⁷ **judges...received** – "Plutarch reported that in Egypt, 'statues of judges erected at Thebes had no hands; and the chief of them had also his eyes closed up, hereby signifying that among them justice was not to be solicited with either bribery or address,'" quoted in *Representing Justice: Invention, Controversy, and Rights in City-States and Democratic Courtrooms* by Judith Renik and Dennis Curtis.

⁸ **freight** – load.

⁹ **contraband** – items imported or exported unlawfully.

¹⁰ **brave** – impressive in appearance.

man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev 6:15-17).

Thus, all who refuse and reject Him as a refining fire must be obliged to meet and feel Him as a consuming fire! How can they endure the wrath of the Lamb, who have consistently disregarded the death of the Lamb? If the night of death finds them graceless, the day of judgment will find them speechless (Rom 3:19)!

Peter informs us of some who deridingly challenge God to come to judgment: "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2Pe 3:3-4).¹¹ These cowards may boast and discharge the artillery of their venom, and appear as conquering heroes now; but when God appears with His naked sword, they will wish for the wings of the wind with which to make their escape!

As a dying man has generally a short resurgence before his departure, and as an expiring candle gives a brighter glare when just going out, so these in their boasted security will be surprised with eternal misery! As God's mercy lets no service pass unregarded, so God's justice lets no sin pass unrevenged. [The one] who now takes no account of His coming will have a sad account to give at His coming!

One observes that the resurrection of the body is placed between the forgiveness of sins and everlasting glory, to show that the resurrection of the body only can be a benefit when remission of sin precedes it and eternal life follows it.¹²

It is reported of a Hungarian king who, being extremely dejected, was asked the cause of it by his brother. "O, I have been a great sinner against God!" said he, "and know not how I shall appear before Him in judgment!" His brother ridiculed these thoughts as too melancholy and unworthy of the king's thought. The king then made no further reply. But in that country, it was customary that if the executioner sounded a trumpet at any man's door, he was immediately to be brought forth to execution. At midnight, the king sent the trumpeter to sound an alarm at his brother's door—which so terrified him that he ran to the king with a trembling heart, a pale and frightful countenance, and besought him to make known wherein he had offended him. "O brother," said the king, "you have never displeased me; but if the sight of my executioner is so dreadful in your eyes, what must the sight of God's be in mine!"

Reader, if you have consistently lifted up your rebellious hand *against* Christ, how will you be able to lift up your guilty head *before* Christ? "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecc 12:14). If men were to be their own judges, they would never be just judges. But God shall bring every work into judgment. As God is too merciful to condemn the innocent, so is He too just to acquit the guilty!

"For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Mat 12:37). Though the arrows of idle words may be shot out of sight for a season, yet they will certainly hereafter fall down upon the heads of those who discharged them! Reader, if your servant is capable of offending you by his words, is it not as reasonable to suppose that you are capable of offending God with your evil words? "From the same mouth come blessing and cursing" (Jam 3:10). There is nothing better than a good tongue, and there is nothing worse than an evil tongue. Jesus Christ will, in the great day, pass a sentence upon every sentence that has passed.

In the same rose, there is honey for the bee and poison for the spider. The same Person Who shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mat 25:34), will also say, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mat 25:41).

As both blessing and cursing proceed out of the mouth of the same man, so both blessing and cursing will come out of the mouth of the same Christ! Man's curse is a curse of wicked execration, but Christ's curse is a curse of righteous execution.

As the same wind may send one vessel into the haven and sink another in the ocean, so shall the same voice of Christ doom the sinner to eternal damnation and welcome the saint to eternal salvation! The same gate that is opened for a citizen to go abroad for recreation, may also be opened for a malefactor to go out to execution!

¹¹ The author understands this as a derisive challenge; it may be better understood as an assertive expression of unbelief.

¹² **resurrection...benefit** – the sentiment here appears to be: "what benefit would it be to live forever if not without sin enjoying eternal life?"

Reader, how sad is that tragedy which shall never be ended! On the stage of eternity, the rich man's bags will be emptied to see how the poor man's box has been filled. Then the charge of the pilgrim's journey will be examined in the steward's accounts. Ah, how you can hear the doleful knell¹³ of an everlasting funeral! Will those transient glances at former prosperity lessen the intolerable weight of eternal calamity? The wheat and the chaff may grow together, but they shall not always lie together. There may be but a few moments of breathing between the sinner and his everlasting burning! The day of retribution will prove to him a day of separation. While the wheat is secured in the garner, the tares are consumed in the fire (Mat 13:24-30)!

Sinner, if you now hold the righteous in derision, you would then give a thousand worlds to be their companion! Then their enjoyments will be incomparably pleasant, while your torments shall be intolerably painful. The sea of damnation will not be sweetened with even a drop of compassion! If once you fall into hell, after millions of ages are elapsed, you will be as far from coming out as you were at going in! There will not be a sinner in heaven to interrupt the joys of saints, nor will there be a saint in hell to soften or soothe the anguish of sinners! Those who have the ear-mark of election, and those who have the hand-mark of transgression, shall be put into separate folds.¹⁴

How will those magistrates appear who have stained the sword of authority with the blood of innocence? They have turned its back against the wicked and have whet its edge¹⁵ against the righteous. Many an unjust judge, who now sits confidently on the bench, will then stand tremblingly at the bar!

How those ministers will appear who, like the dog and wolf, combine to macerate¹⁶ and fleece the flock! Who instead of treading out the corn, tread it down! Who instead of nurturing the child, have strangled the child!

How fair-faced, gilded professors will appear when they shall be found no better than hell's freeholders!¹⁷ How they will appear when the painted sepulcher shall be opened and the dead men's bones disclosed (Mat 23:27)! They will not be judged by the whiteness of their hands, but by the blackness of their hearts! The black hand must then part with its white glove! That solemn day of judgment will be too critical for the hypocritical. All those, who now color for show, will then be shown in their true colors.

Another principle by which a Christian should walk is this,

3. God bears a greater respect to their hearts than He does to their works.

"For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1Sa 16:7). God looks most where man looks least. We cannot trust God too much, or ourselves too little. God is our merciful keeper; the heart is our barbarous traitor.

"My son, give me thine heart" (Pro 23:26). God, Who is all in all *to* us, calls for that which is all in all *in* us. We may commit our estates into the hands of men, but we must not commit our hearts into the hands of any but God. None of our hearts are so good that God deserves them,¹⁸ and none so bad that He cannot refine them. On whom do parents bestow their hearts, but upon their children? And on whom should children bestow their hearts, but upon their parents?

Ah, how unwilling is man to give what he has no right to keep! As God prefers the heart to everything, such is the wickedness of man that he will give God anything *but* the heart!

"This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Mat 15:8). Heartless operations are but hearty deceptions. Men may keep their works to themselves if they refuse to yield their hearts to Jesus Christ. He Who regards the heart—without anything—He also will not regard anything without the heart.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom 12:1). He, Who makes all He has, has a right to have all He makes. The formalist is all for outward activity, and the pietist¹⁹ is all for inward sincerity. The formalist has nothing within him, therefore he is for that which is outward. The pietist has nothing without him,

¹³ **knell** – sound of a bell.

¹⁴ **ear ...hand-mark** – identifying characteristics.

¹⁵ **whet its edge** – sharpen

¹⁶ **macerate** – to wear away; to make lean.

¹⁷ **freeholders** – having title to property; ownership

¹⁸ **God deserves them** – not that we have any merit before God in ourselves, but rather God is due the devotion of our entire being.

¹⁹ **pietist** – here the emphasis is probably not on Pietism (a 17th century reform movement within Lutheranism), but rather on those who emphasize the heart while neglecting deeds.

therefore he is for that which is inward. But it is not the pretense of inward sincerity that can justify outward impiety. Nor will a show of outward piety be an excuse for inward hypocrisy!

Though the brain is the spring of cognitive motion, yet the heart is the original spring of vital motion. The heart is the first that lives and the last that dies. "Wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" (Jer 4:14). Vain thoughts defile the heart as well as vile thoughts. Snails leave their slime behind them as well as serpents. If the mildew takes hold of a single thread, it will soon spread over the whole piece. Though sinful thoughts will rise, yet they must not reign. Though these foul birds may hover over the Christian's heart, yet he does not allow them to build their nests in it!

The devil knows that if there is any choice treasure, it is in our hearts; and he would gladly have the key of these cabinets, [so] that he might rob us of our jewels! A heart that is sanctified is better than a tongue that is silvered. A spiritual man may pray carnally, but a carnal man cannot pray spiritually. If God's mercies do not eat out the heart of our sins, our sins will soon eat out the heart of our duties! A work that is heartless is a work that is fruitless. God cares nothing for the decorated cabinet; [He cares] for the precious jewel.

It is said of Hannibal,²⁰ the great Carthaginian commander, that he was the first who went into the field of battle and the last who came out of it. Thus should it be in all the operations of a Christian; the heart should be the first that comes into the house of God, and the last that goes out of it. In prayer, the heart should first speak the words, and then the words should speak the sentiments of the heart. If the heart is indicting a good matter, the tongue will then be as the pen of a ready writer (Psa 45:1).

It is observed of the spider that in the morning, before she seeks her prey, she mends her broken web; and in doing this, she always begins in the middle. Shall those who call themselves Christians rise and pursue the callings and profits of the world, and yet be unconcerned about the broken webs of their lives—especially of their hearts?

Those who would have their wells run with wholesome water, should look well to the springs that supply them. The Christian's heart is the guest room where the King of glory takes up His residence. That which is most worthy in us, should be resigned to Him Who is most worthy of us. Good words without the heart are but flattery, and good works without the heart are but hypocrisy! Though God pities stumbling Christians, yet He punishes steady hypocrites!

It is reported of Cranmer²¹ that after his flesh and bones were consumed in the flames, his heart was found whole. A gracious man is clothed with sincerity in the midst of his infirmities. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Joh 4:24). None can ever give Him the heart of their services,²² unless they are enabled to give Him their hearts in their services. The sorrowful sighing of the heart in worship is preferable to the most elevated and harmonious voice.²³ One is the production of grace, the other is the exertion of nature. Pride may be at the root of one, but God is the foundation of the other. One may ravish our ears, but the other ravishes²⁴ God's heart!

It is said of the Lacedemonians, who were a poor and stupid people, that they offered lean sacrifices to their gods; and that the Athenians, who were a wise and wealthy people, offered fat and costly sacrifices. And yet in their wars, the Lacedemonians had always the mastery of the Athenians. Whereupon, the Athenians went to "the oracle" to know the reason why those should fare worse who gave more. The oracle returned this answer to them: "The Lacedemonians were a people who gave their hearts to their gods, but the Athenians only gave their gifts to their gods." Thus, a heart without a gift is better than a gift without a heart!

True religion is a sacrifice, but the heart is the altar upon which it must be offered. As the body is at the command of the head, which rules it, so should the soul be at the command of God, Who gives it. For a man to

²⁰ **Hannibal (247-183 BC)** – military commander of Carthage, considered one of the greatest military commanders in history. One of his most famous achievements was when he marched an army from Iberia over the Pyrenees and the Alps into northern Italy.

²¹ **Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556)** – a leader of the English Reformation and Archbishop of Canterbury during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI. He arranged Henry's divorce from the Catholic Catherine of Aragon, resulting in the establishment of the Church of England. He established its first doctrinal and liturgical structures. When Edward came to the throne, Cranmer was able to promote major reforms, including the first two editions of the Book of Common Prayer. He was burned at the stake by Roman Catholic Mary I, who succeeded Edward.

²² **heart of their services** – to serve Him first.

²³ **preferable to...harmonious voice** – merely voice, without heart.

²⁴ **ravishes** – delights.

take his body to the service of God, and leave his soul behind him, is as if a person should send his garments stuffed with straw, instead of making a personal appearance.

Another principle by which a Christian should walk is this,

4. There is more final bitterness in reflecting upon sin than there can be present sweetness in the commission of sin.

The “ways of sin” may have popular approval, but they shall also have divine abhorrence marked upon them. This Delilah may please us for a time, but she will betray us at last (Jdg 16:18)! Though Satan’s apples²⁵ may have a fair skin, yet they certainly have a bitter core! Methinks the flaming sword in one hand, and the golden scepter in the other, should guard us from the forbidden tree; [they should] make our hearts like wet tinder to all the sparks of Satan.

Reader, if you behold nothing but pleasure in the commission of sin, you will experience nothing but the most dreadful pain in the conclusion of sin. “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). All workmen should have their wages; it is but reasonable that those who employ you should pay you. But, however you may delight in the works of sin, you will by no means relish the wages of sin. Ah, what wise man would toil so long in sin’s drudgery, whose wages are no better than eternal misery!

Though all sins are not equal in their nature, yet all sins are deadly in their very nature. The candle of man’s life is blown out by the wind of his lusts! The corruption of nature tends to the dissolution of nature.²⁶ When the plague was in the Jewish houses, they were immediately to be demolished (cf. Lev 14:33-53). It is that enemy *sin* at which God shoots all His arrows!

Reader, you began to be sinful when you began to be mortal. If you had never had anything to do with sin, death could never have had anything to do with you. It can only be your impiety that divests you of the chartered²⁷ blessings of immortality.

Sin is like a serpent in your bosom that stings you! Sin is like a thief in your closet who plunders you! Sin resembles poison in the stomach or a sword to the heart, both of which tend to death! Like John’s little book, sin may be sweet in your mouth, but it will be bitter in your belly (Rev 10:9-10)!

The foul dregs lie at the bottom of the cup. The golden cup of sin is filled with the most poisonous ingredients! Sinner, that which is now like a rose flourishing in your bosom will in a very little time be like a poisoned dagger in your heart! Poor soul, beware of those embraces that are but signals of destruction. While such a Judas kisses, he kills! While the ivy twines round the oak, it eats out its sap.

If sin’s promises were not so delightful, it would not be so deceitful. Like a cunning angler, sin shows the bait—but conceals the hook! Now it presents its present painted beauty, but sin casts a covering over its future misery. Wickedness is certainly like a river that begins in a quiet spring, but ends in a tumultuous sea.

Every being produces its own likeness. “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” (Mat 7:16). The grapes of tranquility cannot grow upon the thorns of impiety. Inward peace can only be espoused to inward purity. A good way to have conscience untormented is to have it undefiled. He Who made you clean within will also keep you calm within.

A saint cannot so sin as to destroy his grace, but he may so sin as to disturb his peace. The spider cannot destroy the bee-hive, but it may get in and spoil the honey. If you, O man, are found nibbling at the bait, you may justly expect the hook! O, think, you who now boast in nothing so much as sin, that there is a time approaching when you will be ashamed of nothing but sin! You will be eternally sinful, but you will never be joyful. In hell, all that sugar will be melted in which this bitter pill of sin was wrapped!

The pleasures of sin are but for a season (Heb 11:24-26), but the torments of unpardoned sin are of an eternal duration. Our first parents ate of the forbidden fruit, and the world to this day feels that it is not freed from the miserable consequence of that stolen “apple”!

Solomon exactly describes sin’s rise and fall: “Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness” (Pro 14:13). Death will turn all the waters of pleasure into blood. The serpent of sensual de-

²⁵ **Satan’s apples** – appears to be referring to the fruit of the tree from which Adam was commanded not to eat, though Scripture does not call it an apple tree. This tree was made by God and was good. It here is said to be Satan’s because he made use of it to tempt Eve.

²⁶ **dissolution of nature** – death, that is dissolving of our bodies.

²⁷ **chartered** – special.

light always carries a deadly sting in its tail! All the blaze of worldly pomp will soon end in midnight darkness and horror!

Sinner, will gall and wormwood²⁸ ever make you pleasant wine? Will thick and poisonous vapors ever yield you sweet and wholesome showers? If you pursue sin for profit, you will never profit by your sin.

O, that England did but look with Scripture glasses upon all its departing glories, and solemnly say, "If sin had not been here, our miseries would never have been here." It is better to make your lodgings in a bed of snakes than in the forbidden bed of sinful lusts! Who would spread the silken sails of the mind upon the pirate ship of wantonness?

When the pale horse of death goes before, the red horse of wrath follows after (Rev 6:8)! When the sinner's body goes to the worms to be consumed, then his soul goes to hell to be tormented! A wise man knows that it is far better to forego the pleasures of sin here, than to undergo the pains of wrath hereafter!

Reader, if you delight in sin, I wish you to remember that your *ill-doing* will shortly be your *undoing*. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death" (Rom 6:21). "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day" (Luk 16:19). What pleasure does Dives now reap in hell from all the choice banquets he sat down to on earth? "For I am tormented in this flame" (Luk 16:24). The stench and torment of everlasting burnings will take away the sweetest perfumes that ever covered sin!

Young Joseph chose rather to be a bound prisoner for Christ, than to be an open slave to his lusts. "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen 39:9). It does not only grieve a saint that God is displeased at what he does, but also that He is dishonored by what he does. He is more distressed for sin that brings evil than for the evil that sin brings.

When the mute son of Croesus²⁹ saw his father's life in danger, he cried out so loud in his fright that his tongue-strings broke, and he exclaimed, "Do not kill King Croesus!" Since Christ opened His veins for our redemption, shall not we open our mouths for His vindication? "The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!" (Lam 5:16). Sin is not only a monster, which unmans us; but it is also a tyrant, which uncrowns us. Nay, it not only takes the crown from off the sinner's head, but it also entails the curse upon the sinner's soul.

There are many who vainly suppose that the fountain of their sin is quite dried up, when alas, the streams are only turned into another channel. A hand taken off from sinful practices, without a heart taken off from sinful principles, is only like a field, which having for a time lain fallow, afterward springs up with greater increase! Or it is like a stream, which having been dammed for a while, at last runs with greater violence when the sluices³⁰ are opened!

Another singular principle for believers to walk by is this,

5. *There is the greatest vanity in all created excellency.*³¹

"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Ecc 1:2). If this truth were more believed, this world would be less adored. A lady, being once told that the world in all its glory was but vanity, answered, "True, I have heard that Solomon said so, but he tried it before he said it, and so will I." Thus, many believe not a serpent to be poisonous until they are envenomed with it! They forget that it is not only vanity, but also vexation of spirit—and all who are resolved to try the former, must also feel the latter.

He who knocks at the creature's door for supplies will find an empty house kept there! "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full" (Ecc 1:7). Though all the rising streams of worldly profits may run into the hearts of men, yet they cannot fill up the hearts of men. Reader, did you ever hear a rich man complain of the lack of riches? Though he has enough to support him, yet he never has enough to content him!

"All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing" (Ecc 1:8). Were it possible for the eye to see all that is to be seen, yet it would not be satisfied with see-

²⁸ **gall and wormwood** – the idea of bitterness is common to both words (see Deu 29:18).

²⁹ **Croesus (560-545 BC)** – last king of Lydia. Prospered, but fell to the Persians under Cyrus. His name became a synonym for a wealthy man.

³⁰ **sluices** – man-made channel to control water flow.

³¹ **vanity** – see the *Book of Ecclesiastes*.

ing. If there is not enough in the world to satisfy the senses of men, how should there be enough in it to satisfy the souls of men? The earth is not a satisfying substance, but a fleeting shadow!

“For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth” (Jam 1:11). The most excellent and flourishing appearances in the whole creation are continually hastening to dissolution! We are commanded to use the world as though we used it not, because, while we use the world, it *is not*!³² The tide of worldly grandeur that brings the gallant ship into the haven, may suddenly leave her in the mud. The higher the sun of prosperity approaches on its meridian, the nearer it is to its setting.

O, all you who caress the world, have you not seen some who have begun their lives in a palace to end them in a prison? The golden chains about their necks have been turned into iron fetters about their feet! The substance of this life is but for the season of this life. All creature felicity will become a victim to mortality. You who feed upon golden dust will have all your gold turned to dust! The short summer of your prosperity will usher in the long winter of damnation. Those who now rejoice in the world will, before long, have no world wherein to rejoice. “Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction” (Mic 2:10). Heart’s-ease is a flower that does not grow in the world’s garden.

Where does a fish swim that will not nibble at the hook on which there hangs a golden bait? How many perish eternally, [who seek] to gain that which perishes in the using.

Poor worldling, why do you seek for wealth with such incessant anxiety, seeing the greatest misers are laid as naked in their “long home”³³ as the poorest beggars? The tighter you grasp the world in your hands, the sooner it slides between your fingers. “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mat 16:26). He Who made this world knew its worth. If the world is gained, it may be lost again; but if the soul be lost at death, it can never be recovered. There is one way to *keep* a man out of hell, but there is no way to *get* a man out of hell. It is as easy for a stone to lodge in the air, as for a man to find rest in the earth.

How many there are who have resolved to ascend the pinnacle of honor, but have left a good conscience at the bottom of the ladder! Believers, themselves, would be gluttoned³⁴ with the world’s sweets if a gracious God were not to call them away from the banquet. Creature comforts are like the soft morning dews, which, while they water the branches of the tree, leave the roots dry. Why should professors be found eagerly pursuing those trifles that even heathens have been found flying from? The world is rather a sharp brier to wound us, than a sweet flower to delight us.

As poison works more furiously in wine than in water, so corruptions manifest themselves more in a state of plenty than they do in a state of poverty.

One compares this life to a beautiful fruit that, however fair it may seem, is full of nothing but worms and rottenness! The earth is for a saint’s passage, but heaven is prepared for him as his portion. The earth is for a believer’s use, but heaven alone is a believer’s choice. Everything below heaven is too base for the soul’s nobility,³⁵ and too brittle for the soul’s stability.

A professor boasting of the world is but like a balloon filled with the wind. Those like Judas who set out at first *for* the world, may like Demas be put off at last *with* the world (2Ti 4:10). “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things” (Luk 16:25). These blossoms will fall off from all such spreading trees when death comes to shake the boughs!

The world is too frequently gotten with anxious cares, kept with alarming fears, and lost with heart-rending groans! We see the outside of the great estate, but not the inside of it. We behold the field of corn, but not the tares that are mixed with it. We do not always see the worldling’s clouds and dark nights, but his clear day and sunshine. The riches, honors, and pleasures of the world are like beautiful but poisonous trees. The devil shows us the fair leaves and offers us the pleasant fruits, but conceals from us their deadly nature!

The world pretends to be a nurse, but those who draw³⁶ her breasts will find in one the water of vanity and in the other the wind of vexation. The world does us infinitely more hurt by our loving it, than it can possibly do us

³² **not** – nothing compared to eternity.

³³ **long home** – the grave.

³⁴ **gluttoned** – excessively filled.

³⁵ **soul’s nobility** – being made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27), we should not be satisfied with anything less than God Himself (Psa 17:15).

³⁶ **draw** – suckle.

good by our having it. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (Joh 6:27). Ah, what a fool is he who would hazard a glorious crown above for a single crumb below! When we have the least of creature enjoyments, it is then our duty to bless God for them. When we have most of creature enjoyments, it is then our distinguished privilege not to bless ourselves³⁷ in them.

The higher the larks are in their flight, the sweeter are their songs. The higher a Christian is raised above the things of the earth, the more he is ravished with the joys of heaven. The least portion of grace is preferable to a mountain of gold. One ray of God's mercy is better than a sun of earthly pleasure! One whisper of love from Christ's voice is worth more than all the symphony of nature. Give me that Friend Who lives forever, and that wealth which lasts forever! I desire those blessings that come freely, satisfy fully, and continue eternally!

"Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them" (Psa 39:6). Every carnal man walks in a vain show, and yet how vain is he of his show of vanity! He is disquieted in vain, and it is only vanity that disquiets him. He labors all his life for the profit of riches, and yet in death, his riches will not profit him. He who views cattle grazing in a fat pasture, concludes that the livestock is but being prepared for the day of slaughter!

The greatest happiness of the creature is not to have the creature for his happiness. It is far better not to have the world at all, than to have our all in the world. Who would be like the raven that feeds upon the carrion of this execrated world, while there is much more wholesome food for doves in the ark? The world at best is but a looking-glass; there is a face presented by it, but there is no face seated in it.

"Labour not to be rich" (Pro 23:4)—a strange paradox! If it were not for labor, who would be rich? And if it were not for riches, who would labor? But see what follows! "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" (Pro 23:5). While riches are, they are not—they are not what they look like; they have not in them what we look for. But what are they not? They are not durables but changeables. "For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (Pro 23:5). The gourd may flourish in the day, but it will wither at night. The cup that now overflows with wine may soon be filled up to the brim with water. When the sun of earthly happiness is in its meridian, it may be eclipsed.

A man rejoices in health and a severe illness shakes him. He delights in honor and a cloud shadows him. He delights in riches and a thief robs him. He delights in peace and a rumor disturbs him. He delights in life and death disappoints him!

The heavens at first had their dropsy,³⁸ and then the old world was drowned. The heavens at last shall have their fever, and then the present world shall be burned!

The earth is big in our hopes but little in our hands. It is like Sodom's apples: beautiful to the eye at a distance, but when they are touched, they crumble into ashes. "Riches profit not in the day of wrath" (Pro 11:4). Wealth is worthless in the day of man's wrath to preserve him from plundering; wealth is worthless in the day of God's wrath to keep him from punishment. Pleasures are but a shield of melting wax against a sword of power; they can no more keep an evil conscience from tormenting, than a velvet sleeve can keep a broken arm from aching.

See how the men of the world toil upon their hands and knees for the vanities of the world! "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?" (Psa 4:6)—as if they could find a heaven in the trifles of earth. That was a hard expression of a hardened worldling: "Let God but give me enough of the earth and I will never complain of the loss of heaven." Thus we see the curse of the serpent entailed upon the seed of the serpent. What God pronounces as a malediction, they take as a benediction!³⁹

The devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All these things will I give thee," he said, "if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Mat 4:9). If a covetous man had been there, O how would he have cached⁴⁰ the promise out of the devil's lips, lest he should have gone back from his word! Some are so enchanted with their golden bags, that they will run hastily to hell if they might but be well paid with golden wedges for their pains. All such covetous Balaams must fall by their own devices (Jude 1:11)!

³⁷ **bless ourselves** – honor ourselves.

³⁸ **dropsy** – in medicine, an unnatural collection of water in a part of the body.

³⁹ **malediction...benediction** – meaning, such is their blindness that they take God's curse to be a blessing.

⁴⁰ **cached** – to store up or hide.

Covetousness is incompatible with the love of holiness. The truly excellent *of* the earth can see no excellency *in* the earth (1Jo 2:16). This world is no better than a loathsome dunghill, upon which the wealthy stand crowing and about which the poor are scraping! If He alone is blessed Who lives above the world, then those cannot be blessed who live in conformity to the world.

Another singular principle by which a Christian should walk is this,

6. Duties can never have too much attention paid to them, or too little confidence placed in them.

The Christian owes nothing to his corruptions but their crucifixion. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (Rom 8:12). Where God becomes a donor, man becomes a debtor. The debt of sin is mercifully discharged for him [in order] that the debt of service might be willingly discharged by him. Every created thing has its bounds but grace has none. There is no excess in true godliness. Those wells that are of God's digging can never be too full of water. He delights to see the trees of righteousness laden with the fruits of righteousness!

Though faith alone justifies the soul, yet that faith is not alone. Faith without good works is like trees without their fruits. In proof of sanctification,⁴¹ good works cannot be sufficiently magnified! But in point of justification, good works cannot be sufficiently nullified!⁴² The lamp of duty can only shine clearly as it is trimmed with the oil of mercy.

Some choice ship captains, when they have approached the shore, have left the bottom of merit to sail in the bark⁴³ of mercy, crying out, "Our greatest safety is to rest only in the mercy of God." The Law of God is such a master as to require the whole task of duty without mitigation, and the mercy of God is so good a benefactor as to be capable of pardoning every transgression without limitation. He who ignorantly trusts in his own righteousness will feel God's angry sword! And he who, as lost and helpless, trusts in the mercy of God, shall be enabled to touch the golden scepter (Est 5:2)!⁴⁴

[For] most that perish, it is not their disease that kills them, but their physician! They think to cure themselves, and this leaves them incurable. Good works are so indigent⁴⁵ that no man can be saved by them, and yet [they] are so excellent that no man can go to heaven without them! It would be well for Christ's members if it were with them as it is with skillful mariners, who have their eyes on the stars, and their hands at the stern! The self-righteous man is too prone⁴⁶ to wrap himself in his religious duties! But this is making bad worse!—for he who vainly thinks to wipe off old scores by his merit, does but increase his enormous debt!

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped" (Rom 3:19). How shall any mouth be opened to plead guiltless, when God has stopped every mouth with its own guilt? It is in vain to stand up and plead innocence before Him Who is all eye to see the blackest flesh under the whitest feathers, and the foulest heart under the fairest act!

Reader, though good works may be our Jacob's staff to walk with on earth, yet they cannot be our Jacob's ladder to climb to heaven with (Gen 28:12)!⁴⁷ To lay the salve of our services upon the wound of our sins, is as if a man who is stung by a wasp should wipe his face with a nettle;⁴⁸ Or as if a person should busy himself in supporting a tottering shack, with a burning fire-brand!

It is the greatest folly to expect profit from that which is unprofitable. Could we have done all that was commanded us, yet, without the mercy of God, all that we could have done would certainly undo us.

When the river fails us in its supplies of water, we then look up to the clouds for moisture. If Christ does not breathe into our religious services, it is impossible to grow under them. It was not the tempered clay that cured the blind man, but Christ's anointing his eyes therewith. Without Christ, the clay was more likely to make a see-

⁴¹ **sanctification** — "Sanctification is the work of God's Spirit whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die to sin, and live to righteousness." (Spurgeon's Catechism, Q. 34) See FGB 215, *Sanctification*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁴² **nullified** — of no value or use.

⁴³ **bottom...bark** — *bottom*: antiquated word for a cargo carrying ship; *bark*: small ship.

⁴⁴ Believers are granted (rather than enabled) to appear before God, and not die but be accepted.

⁴⁵ **indigent** — lacking or deficient.

⁴⁶ **prone** — tending; inclined.

⁴⁷ **good works...cannot be our ladder** — good works, evidence of his salvation, accompany the believer like a "staff" in his Christian walk, but he is brought to heaven altogether by grace alone, not by a "ladder" of good works.

⁴⁸ **nettle** — a stinging or prickly plant.

ing man blind than a blind man see! Thus, though we may receive our spiritual sight in the ordinances, yet it is not the ordinances that give us sight.

It was not the troubling of the pool in Bethesda that made it healing, but the coming down of the angel into it (Joh 5).⁴⁹ That man must famish at last who always feeds upon the dish instead of the meat. There is no instruction to be gotten from the sundial of duty, except the Sun of Righteousness (Mal 4:2) shines upon it.

Reader, it is dangerous for you to take shelter in your own righteousness; for the lightning of divine vengeance, which flashes before you, and the curses of the Law, which thunder around you, may suddenly shake your house down upon you. As fast as you lay on your own plasters, a spiritual conscience will rub them off again. Nothing but the grace of the gospel can perfectly heal the wounds that a broken law has made. Though at the command of Christ you may let down the net, yet it is only by the blessing of Christ that you can enclose a profitable catch (Luk 5:4-6).

Christian people judge that, as they can never see God according to the greatness of His majesty, so they can never serve Him according to the greatness of His mercy.

When Paul wrote to Philemon concerning his receiving his servant Onesimus back, he used this argument to prevail with him: "albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides" (Phm 1:19). Thus man not only owes his services, but also himself, to God. No man can merit a reward by paying his debts; much less can a sinner merit mercy by being an insolvent debtor.

The body of a man can as soon labor incessantly without food, as the soul of a Christian can live continually without ordinances.⁵⁰ Paul's Christianity was dearer to him than his life, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Act 20:24). Jesus Christ laid down His precious life to secure the possession of heaven for man, and shall man refuse to lay out his life in pursuing the glories of heaven? Was heaven worth Christ's passion, and shall it not be worth our seeking? Alas, what is our sweat compared to His blood?!

What could Jesus do more than to die for us?! What can we do less than to live for Him?! "To whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luk 12:48).

You cannot fathom all the good that He has bestowed upon you, nor all the evil that He has forgiven you! His goodness is such that He deserves infinitely more from you than He demands of you!

If heaven could be obtained by human endeavors, then heaven must either be of little worth, or the endeavors must be of great value. But He, who puts an estimate upon all things according to their true value, has said, "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luk 17:10). We are not only unprofitable when all is to be done, but when all has been done. We are unprofitable to God because He is necessarily and eternally blessed without us! We are not profitable to ourselves, because without Him we shall be everlastingly cursed in ourselves!

It is our bounden duty to live in obedience, but it will prove our utter ruin to think we live [because of] obedience. Heaven is either the gift of mercy, or the reward of duty. If the latter, Christ died in vain; but if the former, we boast in vain. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luk 12:32). Thus we see that heaven is not the product of man's labor, but the token of God's good pleasure.

Many proud sinners will labor hard in the storms of life and hurricanes of death, rather than cry with Peter, "Lord, save me" (Mat 14:30). But God is determined that every person shall die a malefactor, who dies without the Mediator.⁵¹ The dignity of good works does not lie in their merit, but in God's grace alone—for were He to examine and estimate them according to the rigor of the Law, and separate from Christ, instead of their being valuable as refined gold, they would be as despicable as worthless tinsel!

Our highest perfections are darkened with the blackest shades of imperfection. If Christ is not the foundation of our perfection on earth, He will not be the top-stone of our salvation in heaven.⁵² Reader, what person would

⁴⁹ **but the...angel** – rather, God who sent the angel was the alone source of any healing accomplished.

⁵⁰ **ordinances** – that is, the means by which God blesses us, such as the Word, prayer, fellowship, preaching, etc. (1Pe 2:2).

⁵¹ **Mediator** – one who goes between two hostile parties to remove conflicts and to reconcile them; "It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all Eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified." (1689 *London Baptist Confession*, 8.1; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY)

⁵² **foundation...heaven** – that is, if Christ is not our righteousness on earth, we shall not go to heaven.

thank you for holding a candle to assist⁵³ the light of the sun? Or what prince would praise you for setting a dirty pebble in his crown of precious diamonds? How then can it be supposed that those works that are pregnant with evil can be pleasing to God?

If man lays too much weight⁵⁴ upon the pillars raised by his own hands, he will pull the building down upon his own head! God, Who cannot lie (Ti 1:2), has said, "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom 9:16). It is not of him who wills, though he wills ever so heartily; nor of him who runs, though he runs ever so hastily. Man's crown of glory is only made by the hand of God's mercy. Man's working is not the cause of God's grace, but God's grace is the cause of man's working! The creature may do something against grace, but he can do nothing without it. It is dangerous to hang the weight of eternity upon the slender threads of our activity.⁵⁵ The boundless life of felicity flows only from the bottomless love of the Deity.

Another principle by which a believer should walk is this,

7. Those precious promises, which are given to insure his happiness, do not supersede⁵⁶ those precepts that are laid down for him to seek after happiness.

"Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them" (Eze 36:37). As those under the Law were not without a gospel to save them, so those who are under the gospel are not without a law to rule them. There is the same impropriety in divorcing those who are united—as in uniting those who are divorced.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Mat 7:7). Continued gospel importunity⁵⁷ is the most powerful oratory; man's importunity has no meritorious claim upon God. God has a right to the former, but we have no right to the latter. He Who enables us to find Him enjoins us to seek Him. The Lord has no delight in slothful seekers or doubtful seekers.

He who refuses to hear the voice of Christ shall never see the face of Christ! "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1Jo 2:6). The watch of our lives move regularly only when the hand of mercy winds it up. The law condemns those as criminals who lay claim to the royal crown when they are not of royal blood. Many would be like Christ in bliss, who would not be like Him by grace. They are willing to have those promises that confirm them in happiness, but dislike those precepts that are to regulate their conduct!

"For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us" (Isa 33:22). Wherever the Lord is a Priest for pardon, He is a Prince for dominion. He is always a Ruler where He is a Savior. As Jesus Christ is the foundation of our happiness, so is He the fountain of all our holiness. Reader, remember: if Christ be not a *refiner's fire* in you, He will be a *consuming fire* to you (Mal 3:2; Heb 12:29)! "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luk 19:27). Thus, if you refuse Him to reign over you, He will refuse you to reign with Him.

"As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them" (Gal 6:16; see 6:11-17). To tread in any other path on earth is to miss the one way to heaven. If the golden chains of love to God do not bind you to duty, the iron chain of God's wrath will bind you to eternal misery! He who abuses his liberty⁵⁸ in this world will forever lose it in the eternal world.

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life" (Rev 22:14). To look upon a precept without a promise is the high road to desperation; to look upon a promise without a precept is

⁵³ **candle to assist** – so far from assisting or contributing to our righteousness before God, the fact is we have no righteousness at all apart from Christ: "And be found in him, *not having mine own righteousness*, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phi 3:9). We are guilty of breaking the whole law: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one [point], he is *guilty of all*" (Jam 2:10).

⁵⁴ **lay too much weight** – we should not trust in our works at all.

⁵⁵ **slender threads of our activity** – our works are worse than slender threads, for they cannot support any weight at all.

⁵⁶ **supersede** – to cause to be set aside.

⁵⁷ **importunity** – insistence.

⁵⁸ **abuses his liberty** – by practicing sin. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1Jo 2:4).

the high road to damnation. The promise is like the cork in the net to preserve it from sinking. The precept is like lead to the net to keep it from floating.⁵⁹

A believer is like the mariner's compass, which is governed by the constant heavens and not by the variable winds. Reader, will you make Him a stumbling stone Whom God has made a foundation stone (1Pe 2:7-8)? Remember, the fire can consume the dross as well as refine the gold. The strength of a rock is seen not only in supporting the house that is built upon it, but [also] in breaking the ships that dash against it. The pillar of cloud was as dreadful in the darkness it gave to the Egyptians, as it was glorious in the light it gave to the Israelites!

Whenever Christ takes the burden of guilt from a sinner's shoulders, He then lays a yoke of obedience upon his neck (Mat 11:29). Though God can give a pardon to the greatest sin, yet He cannot grant a patronage⁶⁰ to the least sin. To be lascivious because God is gracious, what is this but to drown yourself in that river in which you should wash yourself! To live a life of gospel obedience is the liberty of God's children. But to give your licentious appetite the reins⁶¹ is the bondage of Satan's slaves!

That soul who was never devoted to Christ was never related to Christ. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Mat 7:21). Subjection to the will of God is not only a test of our present duty, but it is also an evidence of our future glory! To expect to see God in heaven, and not to seek Him on earth, is as foolish as if a gardener should leave his plough in the barn, and then look for a rich harvest.

Sitting birds are the fowler's targets, while those that soar as the eagle are in safety. When men are out of the way of their worldly callings, it is easy to call them out of their heavenly way. God works with and without means:⁶² with means [so] that man should not be indolent, without means [so] that he should not be self-confident. Jacob makes his prayers to his heavenly Father, and yet presents his gifts to his angry brother. David went out against Goliath in the name of the God of Israel, and yet went to the brook to fetch stones for his sling. The sword of Joshua must go with the prayers of Moses; and the prayers of Moses accompany the sword of Joshua. Had they fought and not prayed, they would have obtained no victory, because God will not be *neglected*. Had they prayed and not fought, they would have obtained no victory, because God will not be *tempted* (Mat 4:7).

"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ" (1Jo 5:6). He did not come by water without any blood, or by blood without any water. He came not to pardon and to leave the soul unpurged. Nor did He come to merely purge and to leave the soul unpardoned. Wherever the death of Christ clears a soul from guilt, the Spirit of Christ cleanses that soul from filth. A man may be justified⁶³ without immediate glorification, but not without attendant sanctification. The law by which God rules us, is as dear to Him as the gospel⁶⁴ by which He saves us.

Many would use faith as an eye to see with, but not as a foot to walk with. They look for the crown of victory but are unwilling to fight the good fight of faith. The faith that sets men to oppose their internal enemies, sets God also to oppose their external adversaries (Pro 16:7). Prayer is the midwife of the promises (Jam 4:2; 1Jo 5:14)! The promises are wells of comfort to the Church, and believing prayer is the cup to draw the water out of the wells!

Another principle by which a believer should walk is this,

8. It is dangerous dressing himself for the heavenly world by the looking-glass of this present world.

"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Exo 23:2). Satan's herd of swine is larger than Christ's flock of sheep! Let them be ever so mighty, they are not to be feared. Let them be ever so many, they are not to be fol-

⁵⁹ **promise...precept** – attention to commandments ("precept," "lead"), while neglecting the gospel ("promise," "cork") leads to despair ("sinking"). Affirming salvation by grace, but denying works that we are saved to walk in (Eph 2:8-10), is a denial of God's purpose and may ultimately lead to final damnation!

⁶⁰ **patronage** – support.

⁶¹ **give...the reins** – that is, to give control, as the one holding the horse's reins controls the horse.

⁶² **means** – instruments through which God works to communicate to the hearts of men.

⁶³ **justified** – declared righteous by God through faith in Jesus Christ.

⁶⁴ **law...as dear to Him as the gospel** – this may seem shocking, but consider that God's love for His Son did not prevent His pouring out His wrath upon that Son in order to satisfy His Law (Rom 3:24-26), so important is God's holiness to Him.

lowed. To infer that way to be the truest which is the largest, is to conclude upon the quality of the cloth by the size of the cloth.

Remember, the multitude of people is like the droves of cattle that go to the slaughter! “For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return” (Isa 10:22). The whole piece belongs to the devil, but God cuts off a remnant for Himself!⁶⁵ There are many birds of prey to one bird of paradise. Pebbles lie abundant in the streets, but pearls are rare to find.

The Scripture not only presents us with an account of the purity of those who shall be saved, but also with the smallness of their number. “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Mat 7:13-14). “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luk 12:32).

The Persians thought a crooked nose was a great ornament because the face of their emperor had a crooked nose. Great men’s vices are more imitated than poor men’s graces. The ill humors⁶⁶ of the head may consume the vital organs of the body. Inferiors love to go the way that superiors are accustomed to go. The actions of their rulers are too much the rule of the people. Such people conceive by the eye like Jacob’s sheep, which brought forth their lambs suitable to the color of the rods (Gen 30:37-41).⁶⁷ Those who follow after others in *sinning*, will be sure to follow them in *suffering*! Alas, the greatness of the multitude will not extinguish then the fierceness of the flame! The number of those immortal faggots⁶⁸ will but intensify the fury of the eternal fire!

“For many be called, but few chosen” (Mat 20:16). It is not: many are chosen and few called; but many are called and few are chosen. Sinners are certainly the greatest company, but they are also the worst company. Though the nature of believers is the greatest, yet their numbers are the smallest.

One said that, “All the names of the good emperors might be engraved on a little ring.” I will not say there are not any godly men who are *great*, but I will say that there are not many great men who are *godly*. The trees of righteousness are thinly planted in the world’s orchard. As in one righteous man there are many sins, so to one godly man there are many wicked sinners!

The generality⁶⁹ of people will rather walk in the way that *most* people go, than in the way that the *best* people go. They are like dead fish, which float down the stream wherever it runs; or like the water, which takes the fragrance of the vessel in which it is contained.

The “voice of the people” is often the voice of the devil. Whatever is engraved upon the seal is imprinted upon the wax. If we will not have the people of the world to be our leaders, we shall be sure to have them as our troublers. If they cannot seduce us into their evil way, they will oppose us in our holy way. If they cannot scorch us with their fire, they will try to blacken us with their smoke. They will speak evil of us because we do not run into the same excess of evil with them. Because we refuse to play the fool with them, they will say that we are mad!

Those who would arrive where the righteous now are, should be found in the road in which they once were. “But followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb 6:12). What is the reason that there are so many scribbling⁷⁰ professors in the world, but that they write after such imperfect copies! The best of men are but men, at best.⁷¹ It is better to imitate an evil man in that which is good, than imitate a good man in that which is evil.

Paul said, “Be ye followers of me”; but his exhortation has its limitation: “Even as I also am of Christ” (1Co 11:1). Where he follows Christ, there we must follow him. But if Paul forsakes Christ, we must forsake even Paul!

⁶⁵ **whole piece belongs to the devil** – rather, God’s elect belong to Christ even before they believe. “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, [and] one shepherd” (Joh 10:16).

⁶⁶ **humors** – attitudes; dispositions; taken from early medical theory that certain vapors moved through the body causing abnormal moods.

⁶⁷ **conceive by the eye** – for discussion of issues that may have been involved in this history of Jacob, see *The Genesis Record* by Henry M. Morris.

⁶⁸ **faggots** – bundle of small tree branches used for fuel.

⁶⁹ **generality** – main body.

⁷⁰ **scribbling** – writing in haste and carelessness.

⁷¹ **men at best** – because of humanity’s wickedness in our experience, many may view man as synonymous with sin. But it is important to remember man was created good and One Man remains so. In Christ’s case, manhood did not equate to sinner-hood (see Gen 1:31; Heb 4:15).

That was a good saying of Thomas More,⁷² "I will not pin my faith upon any man's sleeve, because I know not where he will carry it."

Believers have not only infirmities that are natural, but they have also such as are sinful. Noah was no sooner delivered from a deluge of water, than he was drowned in a deluge of wine (Gen 9:21)!

The failings of Christians do not flow from a want of grace, but from a weakness in grace; not from their depravity of spirit, but from the corruptions of the flesh (Rom 7:22-23). As they are not what they have been before conversion, so they are not altogether what they would be after conversion. Those roses that are now in blossom shall hereafter be fully bloomed! And the stars that are concealed under a cloud shall be yet seen in a clear sky.

Those are but suspicious Christians who will approve *all* that believers do. Their lives must be followed no further than [the ways that] they agree with the Scripture. He is a rotten professor who says in his heart, "Why may not I be drunk as well as Noah, and commit adultery as well as David?" Did you ever hear of any who plucked out their eyes because others were smitten with blindness? Or of any who cut off their legs because others went on crutches?

If you have sinned as David and Noah did, you should also mourn as they did (Psa 51)! Their sins are not for our imitation, but for our caution. They are not landmarks to direct travelers but sea-marks to *warn* mariners. If a man finds a piece of gold covered with dust, will he preserve the dirt and throw away the gold?

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job" (Jam 5:11). Yes, and of his impatience also! Instead of cursing the sin with which he was born, he cursed the day in which he was born (Job 3:3)!

You have heard of the meekness of Moses (Num 12:3), and yet this even thread was not without its knots. While he was bringing water out of the rock, he was also fetching fire out of his own heart (Num 20:10)!

Peter not only forsook his Lord, but also forswore Him (Mar 14:71). Who would ever have suspected that he who had his name from an immovable rock should have proved such a shaken reed!

Reader, if you do not turn your back upon Egypt, you will fall short of the land of Canaan!⁷³

When God comes to pass sentence, He will bring every sinner to the bar. His Laws are not like spiders' webs, which keep the little flies prisoners, but which the greater will break with smaller struggles.⁷⁴

Though man may have many under him upon earth, yet he has One in heaven Who is above him. "The LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" (Gen 3:9). Not, where *were* you? but where *are* you? Oh, how quickly had Adam forfeited the inheritance that the Lord had settled on him in paradise! "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen 3:12). Because she put it into his hands, was that any reason why he should put it into his mouth? The monsters of sin are so hateful when they are brought forth, that we are unwilling to own them ourselves; therefore we lay them at the doors of others.

The stable mountains are not so firm that they [cannot] be removed by fearful earthquakes. Those saints who have been as the greatest stars or suns, have at times had their sad eclipses.

Another principle by which a believer should walk is this,

9. *Wherever sin proves hateful,⁷⁵ it shall not prove hurtful.*

What an apology⁷⁶ does a sorrowful Savior make for His sleeping saints! "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mat 26:41). Take a carnal man: what he can do, that he will not do. Take a Christian man: what he would do, that he cannot do (Rom 7:19).

God will pity impotency, but He will punish obstinacy. God has mercy for His own people's *can-nots*, but none for the devil's *will-nots*! Adam's lack was rather in his will than in his power, but a saint's lack is rather in his power than in his will. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!" (Psa 119:5). A saint's will begins where his work ends.

⁷² **Sir Thomas More (1478-1535)** – English lawyer, social philosopher, author, statesman, and noted Renaissance humanist. He was a counselor to Henry VIII of England and became Lord Chancellor. He is recognized as a saint within the Catholic Church, and was an opponent of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, and William Tyndale. He is quoted here as a source of common wisdom, not for his spiritual insight.

⁷³ **fall short of Canaan** – they fell short on account of unbelief (Heb 3:14-19).

⁷⁴ **the greater...struggles** – while a spider's web seemingly is effective in holding flies within certain bounds, the fact is that larger flies may break free from them. God's Law is not like this; all men are subject equally to its moral provisions.

⁷⁵ **hateful** – that is, sin that is hated.

⁷⁶ **apology** – defense; explanation in this context.

“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mar 9:24). Lord, I see, but enlighten my darkness! Lord, I hear, but cure my deafness! Lord, I move, but quicken my dullness! Lord, I desire, but help my unwillingness!

In playing over a tune upon an instrument, a single string may jar and slip, and yet the main be musical. It would be folly, indeed, to think that our fields have no grain in them because there is some chaff about the wheat; or that the ore had no gold in it because there is some dross among it. In heaven there is service alone without any sin; in hell there is sin alone without service; but on earth, there is sin and service in the same man, as there is light and shade in the same picture.

Christian Reader, to condemn your evil is good, but to condemn your good is evil. Here on earth, believers are like the Israelites, who in their darkest night had a pillar of fire, and in their clearest day had a pillar of cloud (Exo 13:21). Above us there is light without any darkness; below us there is darkness without any light—in this world it is neither day nor night, but in the evening time it shall be light.⁷⁷

Though the lowest believer is above the power of sin, yet the highest believer is not above the presence of sin! It is in a living Christian that sin is to be mortified, but it is only in a dying Christian that sin is to be destroyed.

When the body and the soul are separated by mortality, sin and the soul [of believers] will be separated to eternity! Though a forced subjection is sufficient to satisfy a tyrant, yet it is only a sincere obedience that is true homage⁷⁸ to a king.

Sin never ruins but where it reigns. Sin is not damning where it is [only] disturbing. The more trouble sin receives from us, the less trouble sin does to us. Sin only is a murderer where it is a governor.

The rose is a fragrant flower, though it be surrounded with piercing thorns. The Passover was a feast, though the Israelites ate it with bitter herbs.

There is always too much of the wild olive tree in those who are engrafted into the true olive tree (Rom 11:24). Our graces are our best jewels, but they do not yield their brightest luster in this world. When it shines brightest, the moon has its spots; and when it burns the hottest, the fire has its smoke.

“For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications” (Psa 31:22). Who would have thought those prayers should ever have had any prevalency⁷⁹ in God’s ear, that were mixed with so much infidelity in the petitioner’s heart?

Sin is an enemy at the Christian’s back, but not a friend in his bosom. Although believers should be mournful because they have infirmities, yet they should be thankful because they are *but* infirmities. It is true they have sin in them, and that should make them sorrowful; but it is just as true that they have a Savior for them, and that should make them joyful. It is not the interposition of a cloud, but the departure of the sun, that constitutes a night.

Take the purest believer in the world, and you will find him fuller of sin than he is of prayer. There is too much of the earth in his most heavenly employments. But as Alexander’s painter could find a finger to conceal the scar on his master’s face, so when Jesus Christ draws the picture of the saint’s excellency, He can find a covering for all the scars of his infirmities.

The Savior *looks over* that which is His own, and *overlooks* that which is His people’s. Where there is no sin allowed by them, there shall be grains of allowance⁸⁰ to them. God will not throw away His jewels for every speck of dirt that may be on them!

Though Christ honors grace in its maturity, yet He owns it in its minority. “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Mat 14:31). Poor Peter had faith enough to keep him from drowning but not enough to keep him from doubting. The least buds, as well as the greatest branches, draw sap from the root. Though one star exceeds another in magnitude, yet both are alike seated in the heavens. Though one member of the body is larger than another, yet each has an equal union with the head.

The conduct of a Christian may sometimes be spotted with infirmity, while the heart is [nevertheless] sound in the love of sanctity. Jacob halted and yet was blessed (Gen 32:24-30). As his blessing did not take away his halting, so his halting did not keep away his blessing.

⁷⁷ **Above us...shall be light** – heaven is above and has no darkness; hell is below and has no light. In this world today there is not one or the other only, but at the end of time it shall be only light for believers when Christ returns in His glory.

⁷⁸ **homage** – money or respect paid to a superior for privileges given.

⁷⁹ **prevalency** – predominance; most general reception or practice.

⁸⁰ **allowance** – not that any sin is approved, but that God is longsuffering. Compare God’s description of His saints in Hebrews 11 to their histories in the Old Testament for a sense of the author’s meaning.

Hagar will have a room in Sarah's house until death turns her out of doors (Gen 21). As death leaves the body soulless, so it leaves the soul sinless. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2Co 8:12). God does not expect the pump to run with pleasant water where there is none put into the cistern.

The heavenly Bridegroom will not put out a believer's candle because of the dimness of its burning, nor will He overshadow a believer's sun because of the weakness of its shining.

Though that vice may be found in us for which He might justly damn us, yet that grace is to be found in Him by which He can easily save us. He does not come with water to extinguish the fire, but with wind to disperse the smoke!

"The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination" (Pro 21:27) unto the Lord, because the incense savors of the hand that offers it! Not only the wicked man's designs against the godly are sinful, but also all his prayers to God are hateful. Not so for the righteous: the prayer of the upright is God's delight. If the vessel of the heart is clean, God will taste of the sweet wine that is drawn from it! "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (Song 2:14).

Another principle that a Christian should walk by is this,

10. Inward purity is the ready road to outward plenty.

This is [nothing else] but a hell-made proverb: "Honest dealing is a jewel, but he who adheres to it shall die a beggar." Though true religion is against our sloth, yet it is not against our interest. Oh what rich clusters of grapes hang all along our way to Canaan! True religion is so bountiful a master that none need be afraid of becoming its servant. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mat 6:33). Our work below is the best done when our work for above is the first done. He who has most of heaven in his heart, has not always the least of earth in his hand.

"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing" (Psa 34:10). As they would feel no evil thing within, so they shall lack no good thing without.

He Who freely opens the upper spring will never wholly close the nether⁸¹ springs.⁸² There shall be no silver lacking in Benjamin's sack while Joseph has it to throw in (Gen 44:12; 45:22). Grace is not such a beggarly visitant as will not pay its own way. When the best of beings is adored, the best of blessings are enjoyed.

... "For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psa 84:11). Why need a saint fear darkness when he has such a sun to guide him? Or why should he dread dangers when he has such a shield to guard him?

Christian, the God Whom you serve is so excellent that no good can be added to Him, and He is so infinite that no good can be diminished in Him! He blesses others, and yet He is not the less full. He shows mercy to the full, and yet remains full of mercy!

Sinners look upon times of obedience as times of hindrance. They trust to their own toiling and not to God's undertaking. They carry on such a trade for the earth as makes them miscarry in their merchandise for heaven. Though every rich man is not truly godly, yet every godly man is truly rich!

The sun can as easily diffuse its beams over the whole world as upon a single field. What God receives from man makes Him no richer, and what man receives from God makes God none the poorer. His goodness may be imparted, but [it] cannot be impaired.

Christian Reader, if the deep fountain is still running, why should you fear to fill your little vessel? "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psa 23:1). The sheep of Christ may *change* their pasture, but they shall never *lack* a pasture. "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" (Mat 6:25). If God grants to us great things, shall we distrust Him for small things? He Who has given us heavenly blessings, will also give us earthly blessings. The great Gardener never under-stocked His own gardens.

Jehu, who only served God in hypocrisy, had an external kingdom (1Ki 19:16); and shall those who serve Him from a principle of inward purity be put off without a heavenly kingdom? If God examines counterfeit coin judi-

⁸¹ **nether** – lower.

⁸² **upper springs...nether** – the God that will give you the *blessings of heaven* ("upper spring") will not withhold all *blessings of earth* ("nether spring").

ciously, how highly will He esteem the true gold! If He drops so much blessing into a vessel of wrath, what will He put into a vessel of mercy! If He gives so much to a bond-slave of hell, what will He do for a free-born child of heaven!

"Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" (Jer 2:31). God was not a wilderness to them when they were in the wilderness. When they wanted⁸³ bread He gave them manna; when they wanted water He opened a rock; and though they had no new apparel, yet their old garments did not wear out. Thus, they were never better off than when they were ready to give up all as lost.

Had Christians too much of temporal things, they might care too little for spiritual things. Daniel appeared better with his plain vegetables than the Babylonians with all their royal feasts (Dan 1:1-15). Some have rowed safely in a narrow river and then drowned afterwards in a large sea. A little is sufficient to him who with it enjoys God's all-sufficiency.

Godliness is so full a spring that it will not let the Christian perish for lack of water. "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee" (Psa 67:5). What then? "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us" (Psa 67:6). Our unthankfulness is the cause of the earth's unfruitfulness.⁸⁴ While man is blessing God *for* His mercies, He is blessing man *with* His mercies.

Some are afraid of Christianity, because they suppose they shall lose all their earthly mammon while they are seeking heavenly manna. They think that *piety* is the greatest enemy to *prosperity*. Could they but reap profit by praying, they would be found more at prayer. Ignorant worldlings look upon gain as their greatest godliness, and not on godliness as their greatest gain (1Ti 6:5-6). But a golden plaster is a poor application for a wounded conscience. When the worm of carnality is gnawing at the root of religious performances, all the formalist's blooming hopes will fade and die away at last!⁸⁵

"For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1Ti 4:8). Who knows how many rich productions there are in the pleasure-garden of true religion! There is mellow fruit in it for every day in the year.

"Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments...Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever" (Psa 112:1, 3). We may lose all worldly gain while we live, and we must leave it when we die—but in keeping God's commandments there is great reward. There is a reward⁸⁶ of God's approbation in life, of His confirmation in death, and of His complete salvation in glory.

In earthly services, the master enjoys the profit; but in pious services, the servant enjoys the profit. "And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obbedom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obbedom, and all his household" (2Sa 6:11). The ark was not blessed for the sake of his household, but his household was blessed for the sake of the ark. The ark of God always pays for its hospitality, wherever it dwells.

Many will side with religion while they can live upon it, and desert it when it must live upon them. But that saying is yet true, "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1Ti 6:6). It is only the Christian man who is the truly contented man, and what are our enjoyments without contentment? What is a great possession if wedded to great vexation? Wicked men make this world their treasure, and God makes it their torment. When they want⁸⁷ estates, they are troubled *for* them; when they have estates, they are troubled *with* them. When they would drink of the river, God disturbs the water!

Reader, if you know nothing of Christ, I wish you to remember that when you come to die, you will find true religion necessary; and while you live you will find it profitable. The purest honey is gathered out of the hive of holiness. The ways of iniquity are the ways of beggary. It is but reasonable that God should fall out with those in the course of His providence, who fall off from Him in the course of their obedience.

"In Wisdom's right hand is length of days; and in her left hand riches and honor" (Pro 3:16). Look to which ever hand you will, and you will find it full!

⁸³ **wanted** – lacked

⁸⁴ **unfruitfulness** – though famine may be brought as a chastening for unthankfulness, there may be some other reasons (see 2Sa 21:1; 24:13; 1Ki 8:37-40).

⁸⁵ As a worm destroyed the shade Jonah delighted in (Jon 4:7), so sin destroys the hope the outwardly religious have in their church attendance, etc.

⁸⁶ **reward** – all by grace alone: "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and *what hast thou that thou didst not receive?* now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1Co 4:7).

⁸⁷ **want** – lack.

VI. Application

Principles by which a Believer Should Walk,

11-20

[I here continue with the remaining ten singular principles, which are the rise and spring of singular practices.] Another principle that a Christian should walk by is,

11. All the time that God allows him is but enough for the work that He allots him.

“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). Nature’s womb sometimes proves nature’s tomb. With many, it is ebb water before the tide is at the full. The lamps of their lives are benighted almost as soon as they are lighted. The sand of their hourglass is run out when they think it is but newly turned.

When men feel sickness arresting, then they fear death is approaching. But we begin to die as soon as we began to live. Every man’s death-bell hangs in his own steeple. Take him in his four elements—earth, air, fire, and water. In the earth he is as fleeting dust; in the air he is as a disappearing vapor; in the water he is as a breaking bubble; and in the fire he is as consuming smoke! Many think not of living any holier until they can live no longer; but one today is worth two tomorrows.

Reader, you know not how soon the sails of your life may be rolled up, or how near you are to your eternal haven. And if you have not Jesus as your pilot within you, you will suffer an eternal shipwreck!

Poor soul, what will you do if you begin to die naturally before you begin to live spiritually? How you will be astonished if the tabernacle of nature be taken down before the temple of grace be raised up! What must you feel if your paradise is laid waste before the tree of life is set in it!¹ How can you bear to give up the spirit before you have received the Holy Spirit? Eternal will be your darkness if the sun of your life sets within you before the Sun of Righteousness shines upon you. Woe be to you if your body is returned into the earth before your soul is fit to be taken into heaven. If the second birth has no place in you, the second death will assuredly have power over you.

Our life can be compared to a *day*. Infancy is the day dawn; youth is the sun rising; adulthood is the sun’s meridian; and old age is the setting sun. By the light of the day, the Lord helps us to do the work of the day. “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes” (Luk 19:42). O how just it is that they should miss of heaven at last, who never seek for heaven until the last! How reasonable it is that God should deny them His grace to repent, who abuse His grace to sin!

It is a maxim that everything has a principle to return to its own source. The rivers that have their efflux from the sea have their reflux² to the sea. Out of the dust man was formed, and therefore into the dust man will be returned. Aged reader, how much of your life is gone, and yet how little of God is known! How can you appear before God if you are not found in God? Your being ancient in days will be no plea for you before the Ancient of Days. If you have not Christ, the hope of glory, in you, you must have Christ, the God of glory, against you. If you do not partake of what Christ has done, you will be eternally undone!

O fresh picture of youth, how lovely will you appear if hung up in heaven’s palace! And will you spend your youthful life in following youthful lusts? Do you not know that the blossom is as subject to be nipped, as the flower to be withered; and the spark to be extinguished, as the flame to be consumed? Veins full of youthful blood may be emptied by an accident as soon as those that are leakish with old age. As there are none too old for eternity, so there are none too young for mortality. In Golgotha,³ there are skulls of all sizes. Tell me, how will

¹ **paradise...tree of life** – paradise “laid waste,” referring to the garden of Eden and representing the demise of our natural life. The tree of life not “set in” or planted before this, refers to salvation not received before death.

² **efflux...reflux** – *efflux*: to flow out, an outward flow; *reflux*: a flowing back, ebb.

³ **Golgotha** – “And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, *The place of a skull*” (Mar 15:22). The place where Jesus was crucified (Joh 19:17-18). The author uses this to represent death.

you live when you die, if you are dead while you live? Every step that your body takes is towards the earth. O that every step your soul takes may be towards heaven!

The vine that brings forth no grapes shall be cut down, as well as that which brings forth wild grapes. Oh, how sad it is to be taken out of the world before we are taken off from the world! "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation" (Heb 3:15). We have but a day wherein we are called to repent, and therefore [we] should repent while it is called today. The Lord has made a promise to late repentance, but He has not made a promise of late repentance.⁴ If the heart of man is not now thawed, it will⁵ be forever frozen.

A pardon is sometimes given to a thief at the gallows, but he who trusts to that usually has a rope for his wages! "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Pro 27:1). Man is such a blind creature that he cannot unerringly see a day before him. O, see the end of one day before you glory in the beginning of another!

Many a man's days deceive him; they pass away like a shadow by moonshine, which appears longest when the moon is lowest. You may not have half a day to live, when you think that you have not lived out half your days.

"The night cometh, when no man can work" (Joh 9:4). The grave is a bed to rest in, but not a shop to trade in. There is no setting up under ground for those who have neglected their souls above ground.

When the soul takes her flight from her loving mate, the body, they shall meet no more until the great day of retribution. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2Co 6:2). Opportunities are *for* eternity, but not *to* eternity. Mercy's clock does not strike at the sinner's beck! Where the means of grace are greatest, there they are often the shortest. You may be unhappy all your days for despising the happiness of these days.

That was a sad cry of one, "My life is done, but my work is undone."⁶ "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise" (Pro 6:6). Though the summer of life is but just opening, yet the winter of death is approaching. And how can you live in that winter, if there be no honey in your hive in this summer?

"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Isa 55:6). Young person, the sufferings of eternal death are but the consequence of your willful contempt of eternal life. Methinks the worth of such a heavenly pearl as Christ should sparkle in your eyes. O that you may walk in the light of that sun by the beams of which you may see your way to heaven! No disease is more fatal than that which stimulates you to reject the restoring medicine. What a sad thing it is that such mines of grace should be opened, and not a penny of this treasure fall to your share! Come, I trust you are not gone so far in sin as to be beyond all hope of returning. A returning prodigal may yet meet with a welcome reception (Luk 15). The eternal Father is yet a tender Father. He delights to see a repenting prodigal, to hear a mourning Ephraim (1Ch 7:22), and to help a sinking Peter (Mat 14:30).

How much time has God bestowed upon man before ever he has returned⁷ any of it to Him again? It is good to have an ark prepared before that deluge comes in which you may be overwhelmed. Remember that God can as easily turn you into dust, as He took you out of the dust. Delays are no more numerous than they are dangerous. Before you can do good, you must be made good. For who would look for fresh water from a stagnant pool, or sweet grapes growing upon a withered vine?

For a man to make his soul's concern his last concern is as a gardener putting in his plough when he should be thrusting in his sickle!

Know, man, that there is but one heaven! Miss that, and where will you take up your eternal lodging but in hell! A wicked man's life expires like a tallow⁸ candle leaving a foul odor behind it, but a gracious man's life expires like a wax candle that leaves a sweet perfume behind it.

Another principle that a Christian should walk by is this,

⁴ **The Lord...of late repentance** – the Lord has promised to save those who repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, even if they do so at the end of their lives, but He has not promised to grant the graces of repentance and faith to those who wait until the end to repent and believe.

⁵ **not now...it will be** – better: "...it *may* be." "Now" refers to the duration of our lives on earth. Where physical death finds us, eternity will hold us forever.

⁶ **undone** – not done.

⁷ **time...returned** – believer, think of all God has done in the long past in creation—by His prophets, by Christ, and by pastors before you believed and began to devote your time to Him—not as payment for salvation, but altogether by grace (see Rom 12:1-2).

⁸ **tallow** – fat.

12. *There can never be too great an estrangement from defilement.*

He who now gives way to the least sin, may be given up to the greatest sins. We are never far enough from lust while we are on earth, or near enough to Christ while we are out of heaven. A sound eye cannot endure the least spot.⁹ O, stand far off from the devil's mark, unless you would be hit by his arrows (Eph 6:16)!

"Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1Th 5:22). The drawing near to the appearance of evil is the first step to the accomplishment of the most enormous evil. A spark of fire will easily catch in a box of tinder. Little streams will find a passage to the great sea. Christian reader, restriction is a good barrier to transgression! Why should you venture on slippery places, when you can scarcely stand upon the firmest ground?

As faith is a grace which feeds all the rest, so fear is a grace that guards all the rest. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Mat 26:41). That man who is the most watchful is the least sinful. He may quickly be cast down by a sinful temptation who is already prepared for it by a sinful occasion.¹⁰ Who will pity that man whose house is blown up with gun powder if he stores it in the chimney corner?

Such is the monstrous wickedness of men: they use spurs and whips to the horse that of itself rushes fast into battle. Though the streams and currents of their own lusts carry them too swiftly already, yet they hoist up sails to catch the devil's winds! Such have a title¹¹ good enough for hell, without so much trouble to make it surer.

The fowler spreads his net, but the wings of the bird carry her into it! Do you murmur for lack of liberty, and yet surrender yourself to slavery? If you would not step into the harlot's house, you should not go by the harlot's door! If you would not gather the forbidden fruit, then beware how you look on the tree where it grows!

To pray against temptations, and yet to rush into occasions to sin, is to thrust your fingers into the fire, and then pray that they might not be burnt! The fable says, "That the butterfly inquired of the owl, how she should deal with the candle which had singed her wings? The owl counseled her to not so much as behold the smoke!" If you hold the stirrup,¹² no wonder Satan gets into the saddle!

The fort-royal¹³ of your soul is in danger of an attack, while the outworks of your senses are unguarded. Your eyes, which may be floodgates to pour out tears, should not be windows to let in lusts. A careless eye is an index to a graceless heart! Remember, the whole world died by a wound in the eye.¹⁴ The eyes of a Christian should be like sunflowers, which are opened to no blaze but that of the sun.

To keep the eyes and not regard the ears is as if a man should shut the windows of his house and leave the doors open to the thief! The ear is an instrument which the devil loves to play upon! As your ears are joined to your head on earth, so they should be fastened to your Head¹⁵ in heaven.

Your tongue, which should be tuned for God's glory, should not be turned to your own shame. By the striking of those clappers, we guess at the metal of the bell. "Thou art a Galilaeen, and thy speech agreeth thereto" (Mar 14:70).

A soul without its watch is like a city without its wall—exposed to the inroad of all its enemies. We need a sun to dispel our darkness and a shield to repel our dangers. The earth is not so apt to be over-run with thorns as the mind would be with sins, if our heavenly Gardener did not prevent their growth.

Those who would not fall into the river should beware how they approach too near to its banks. He who crushes the egg need not fear the biting of the serpent. He who would not drink of the wine of divine wrath, should not touch the cup of sinful pleasure. He who would not hear the bell of eternal death should not play with the rope of sin. A person who carries gunpowder about him can never stand too far from the fire. If we accompany sin one mile, it will compel us to go two. It swells like Elijah's cloud—from the size of a man's hand to such an expansion as to cover the whole sky (1Ki 18:44-45).

⁹ **sound eye...least spot** – a healthy spiritual "eye" condemns the least sin.

¹⁰ **occasion** – opportunity, a time or event favorable to a particular purpose.

¹¹ **title** – evidence that something is rightfully yours.

¹² **stirrup** – part of a saddle where you put your foot, perhaps held to assist someone to mount a horse.

¹³ **fort-royal** – Fort Royal is a French fort built in 1687 on the island of Newfoundland during the time of the French colonization of Canada. It was particularly well situated and considered almost invincible.

¹⁴ "And when the woman *saw* that the tree was good for food, and that it was *pleasant to the eyes*, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Gen 3:6).

¹⁵ **Head** – Christ. "And he is the *head* of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col 1:18).

“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1Co 10:12). You will quickly lose your standing if you are fearless of falling. He who abstains from no lawful thing may soon be brought to commit something that is sinful.¹⁶ Many a man has been thrown out of the saddle of profession by riding with too slack a rein of circumspection.

An honest woman will blush to be found in the attire of a sluttish woman. Reader, will you invite that sin into the chamber of your heart that brought Christ to the cross? Is your house so largely built that you can afford that sin a harbor, which you know to be a traitor?

“Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 1:23). Those garments that are defiled with the leprosy of sin must either be cleansed by the priest or burnt outside the camp (Lev 13). If a sick man dislikes the cup out of which he took his bitter medicine, how should he refuse and abhor that which is filled with deadly poison! A believer disbands those auxiliaries,¹⁷ who have assisted his adversaries.

If an Achan¹⁸ handles the golden wedge, his next work will be to steal it (Jos 7:1). If you take the devil's cup into your hand, it is to be feared that you will soon lift it to your head.

Another principle that a Christian should walk by is this,

13. Whatever is temporally enjoyed should be spiritually improved.

All that a believer receives is from the hand of divine bounty; it should be employed for the end¹⁹ of divine glory. Others make an earthly use of heavenly things, but he makes a heavenly use of earthly things. The more God oils our wheels on earth, the swifter our chariots move to heaven. Grace can teach [us both] how to plume²⁰ the wings of riches and how to lay up that treasure in heaven, which comes out of the midst of this earth.

There is a divine chemistry that can extract the purest spirits out of the most foul matter. The beast on the altar differs not in kind from the beast at the slaughter. There is a lawful craft of coining our money over again [in order to replace] the image and superscription of Caesar with that of God. It is said of the philosopher's stone that it turns whatever it touches into gold.

Whatever mill a saint has going in the world, he will spread the sails²¹ of it for the wind of divine approbation,²² [so] that it may move round for God's glory. When God sets him up above the world, then he holds up God to the world.

It is unequal to be hot in our petitions and cold in our praises. Many will *cry aloud*, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Mat 6:11) and *whisper* out, “Hallowed be thy name” (Mat 6:9). This is like opening our windows to admit the light, and then shutting them closely to keep out the sun.

It cannot be praiseworthy to remember God in our necessities and then forget Him in our prosperity. His kindness is as proper a ground for praising Him, as His promise is for praying to Him. If under our miseries we can seek God with diligence, then under the weight of His mercies we should praise Him with cheerfulness. Mercies are such gifts as advance our debts.²³ It is as unpleasant to see a Christian in an ungrateful temper, as it is unnatural to see Pharaoh's lean cows in a fat pasture (Gen 41:27).

Well may those hands reap the fruits that set the plants. Is he not worthy to feed at the table that his own hands have spread? Where former blessings have been acknowledged, there future blessings shall be enjoyed. When man fights against God with His gifts, he fights against himself with his own sins.

Take a wicked man: you will not find him led to God by [material things] which come from God. He, like the sea, turns the sweetest showers into the saltiest waters. The greater substance he has from God, the less service has God from him. Like the moon, he is furthest from the sun when he shines with the greatest splendor. The more a dunghill has the sunbeams upon it, the more stinking is the vapor arising from it!

¹⁶ **abstain from no lawful thing** – lawful things may choke the Word if pursued inordinately (Mar 4:19). Lusts or “desires” of other things: such things may not be essentially evil, but sinfully may be made an idol (1Co 6:12).

¹⁷ **auxiliaries** – those relied upon to render help in difficulty.

¹⁸ **an Achan** – that is, one with a mind like Achan is likely to do so.

¹⁹ **end** – purpose.

²⁰ **plume the wings of riches** – that is, put it to heavenly use, using the image of a bird being furnished with feathers for its wings so as to fly.

²¹ **mill...sails** – a windmill has adjustable canvas “sails” on its four blades, whereby the speed of rotation is increased as they are spread.

²² **approbation** – praise (cf. Rom 2:29).

²³ **advance our debts** – cover our needs in advance, especially our need of forgiveness.

Instead of having vials full of sweet odors (Rev 5:8), sinners have hearts full of foul evils. How many are there who are highly above others in false greatness, and yet are greatly below them in real goodness! To turn from God while He is blessing them is worse than to turn from Him while He is smiting them!

Jesus answered, "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?" (Joh 10:32). He showed them His goodness, and they [sought to] stone Him for the goodness He had shown. They were like Aesop's snake, which lay still in the frost but stung him who laid it in his bosom! If it be a sin to return unto man evil for evil, what must it be to return unto God evil for good?

When we taste the sweet wine, we should not forget the vine whereon the grapes grew. When we are refreshed by the rolling streams, it would be well to remember the spring from whence they arose. A load of earth²⁴ has crushed many a man to death! The richer some professors have been without, the poorer they have been within.

Notwithstanding the pious pretenses of the Romish conclave,²⁵ the Indians had brought more of the Spaniards to worship their gold, than ever the Spaniards brought of the Indians to worship their God. The Indians had made more infidels than the Spaniards had made converts. Outward mercies to our bodies are divine baits that are sometimes laid to catch our souls. God tries the vessel with plain water, [so] that He may fill it with sweet wine. Every stream leads an observant believer to the Fountainhead. The more God's hand is enlarged in blessing him, the more his heart is enlivened in blessing God.

Where the sun of mercy shines hottest, there the fruits of grace grow fastest. In the book of nature, we may read [about] the God of nature. The creature²⁶ is like a tuned instrument, and the Christian's hand can strike it to the Redeemer's praise.

As a saint has a heart to seek God in what He has promised, so he has a hand to serve Him with what he possesses. The greater the wages are that he receives, the better is the work that he performs. If he has five talents committed to him, he earns five more (Mat 25:14-30). If he has one, he improves one. The more a merchant adventures at sea, the greater are the returns expected at land. The tallest vines should always bear the sweetest grapes, because they lie most open to the sun. It is sacrilege to possess the largest crops, and return to God the smallest gifts of gratitude.

The requital of good for evil is admirable. The requital of good for good is laudable. The requital of evil for evil is blamable. The requital of evil for good is abominable!

The April showers, which invigorate the herbage and beautify the spring, do likewise bring forth many offensive, croaking frogs. Man should resemble the rivers, which, as they receive their increase from the sea, are restlessly returning to their source. Who is so unworthy of God's blessing as man? Who is so worthy of man's praises as God?

Beloved, we have not longer enjoyed the blessings of the earth than we have abused them. This gives too much cause to fear that—though the child of mercy, like Jacob, has put forth his hand—yet the child of judgment, like Esau, may supersede him²⁷ (Gen 25:26).

The devout Bernard observes, "Ingratitude is a parching wind, which will dry up the divine springs of bounty and dews of mercy." Man was formed the last of the creation, [so] that he might contemplate upon God through every creature.²⁸ Beloved, when you survey the spacious skies, and behold them hung with such resplendent gems, then think that if the suburbs are so beautiful, what must the city be! What is God's footstool, compared to the throne whereon He sits! When you view the evening star above you, then reflect upon the Morning Star within you (Rev 22:16).

Let this [Morning Star] be your first course when you sit down at your table to eat. How happy are all those who shall eat bread in the kingdom of Christ! Those are the rarest feasts that are graced with the most royal guests. When you see the winged travelers swiftly part the skies, or the winding rivers hastening to their origin, then consider how rapidly the little rivers of opportunity are pushing their way to the great ocean of eternity.

²⁴ **A load of earth** – abundant material possessions in this world.

²⁵ **Romish conclave** – Roman Catholic priests who maintained a religious presence in the Spanish subjugation of South America.

²⁶ **creature** – creation. "O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (Psa 104:24).

²⁷ **Jacob...Esau** – as Jacob first appeared from the womb, but Esau was first born, so often abuse of blessing follows quickly after appearance of blessing.

²⁸ This is an interesting inference of the author based on only circumstantial evidence.

When you are decorating your bodies with fine clothing, then reflect how the eternal Word put on the rough suit of humanity (Phi 2:5-11). Think how mercy undressed itself to cover you with its garments!

When you take off your apparel, then remember that you must put off this tabernacle. Be going to your bed as if you were going to your grave, and so close your eyes in one world as if you were immediately to open them in another. When you behold your garden stored with trees and richly laden with fruit, then contemplate upon the Great Gardener, the true Vine, and His believing branches (Joh 15:5). It cannot be so pleasant to see our orchards bearing fruits for us, as it is to God to see us bringing forth fruit to Him.

When you gaze upon the stately buildings, the shady groves, the crystal streams, the pleasant meadows, and all the pomp of wicked men, then think: if sinners go away with such large portions, how great shall Benjamin's portion be (Gen 43:34)! If the children of the concubines have such possessions, what shall be the inheritance of the children of promise (cf. Gen 25:5-6)! If the dogs fare so well beneath the table, how must the children fare at it (Mat 15:26-27)! Give me the eye that can see God in all, and the hand that can serve God with all, and the heart that can bless God for all.

Another principle that a Christian should walk by is this,

14. He should speak well of God whatever evil he receives from God.

"What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10). While the water is quiet the mud lies at the bottom, but when it is disturbed it rises to the top. Every small rowboat can swim in a shallow river; but it must be a strong vessel that ploughs the troubled ocean. "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). God gives before He takes, and He takes only what He gives. The hourglass of outward happiness soon runs out! Today Job is the richest man in all the east; tomorrow Job is the poorest man in all the world. Yet his heart was like a fruitful paradise when his estate was like a barren wilderness! Though God burnt up his houses, yet his palace (his heart) was left standing.

Outward mercies are like the tide, which ebbs as well as flows. Outward mercies are like the sky, which sometimes is clear and is another time clouded. Outward mercies are like a budding flower, which opens on a warm day and shuts on a cold day. If God blesses us *in* taking as well as in giving, let us bless Him *for* taking as well as for giving.

That is the best musician who can play well upon a broken instrument. To be impatient with our affliction, and patient with our corruption, is to be angry with the medicine that heals us, and in love with the poison that kills us! Beloved, it is sometimes a mercy to us that God removes outward mercies from us. He never wounds a saint to kill him, but to heal him! A gracious person once said, "Though I am sometimes full of pain, yet I am at all times full of patience! I often mourn under my corruption, but I never murmur under my affliction." Some can rejoice in anything but in Christ, and grieve for anything but lust.

Too many think that God is cutting down the whole tree when He is but lopping off its wasteful branches. They imagine that He is demolishing the superstructure, when He is only laying a right foundation. Poor souls, He is not nipping the flowers but plucking up the weeds! He is not laying your land fallow,²⁹ but plowing the field! He is not putting out the light, but snuffing the candle. God's Providence has a beautiful face under a black mask! God has the fairest ends in the foulest ways! The sheep may be dipped in water to *wash* it, when there is no design in the Good Shepherd to *drown* it!

Christian reader, you may read the marks of a kind Father in the severe stripes of His children. Every twig of His black rod of affliction is but to draw His image upon you!

Could we but bury our friends alive, we should not mourn so much for them when they are dead.³⁰ If the possession of riches did not sometimes draw away our hearts, then the loss of them would not break our hearts! "Behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke" (Eze 24:16). Though God takes your wife out of your bosom, so He takes her into His own. You may embrace a creature until you kill it with kindness. You may wither the sweetest flowers by smelling them too often. God takes that out of your hands which would thrust Him out of your heart.

He who mingles his angry passions with his afflictions is like a foolish patient who chews the bitter pills that he should swallow whole. He who carnally disturbs his soul for the loss of his substance casts away the kernel,

²⁹ **fallow** – unplowed and unseeded during growing season; uncultivated.

³⁰ **bury our friends alive** – that is, not make idols of them.

because God has taken away the shell. If the tree yields us good fruit, it will be no very great loss though the wind blows away the leaves. To bless God for *mercies* is the way to increase them; to bless God for *miseries* is the way to remove them. No good lives so long as that which is thankfully improved; no evil dies so soon as that which is patiently sustained. God can make a plaster of a disease and bring soundness to the inward man by the sickness of the outward man. When the stars do not shine, the sun appears, replacing the loss of the smaller lights with brighter beams. In the loss of withered bouquets, you may smell flowers fresh on the stalk. When Christians have their candles put out, they may fetch their light from the sun; and when they have their streams cut off, they may drink at the fountain.

The birds of paradise make the swiftest flight when they have the smallest feathers. The creature often interrupts the respect that we owe to our Creator, and then no wonder if He breaks the cistern to bring us to the fountain.³¹ Those who are found blessing God *under* all their losses, shall find God blessing them *after* all their losses (cf. Job 42:12).

Another principle that a Christian should walk by is this,

15. The longer God forbears with the unrepenting sinner in life, the sorer He strikes him in the Judgment Day.

Divine patience is to be adored by all and abused by none. Sinners usually take God's forbearance for their acquittance.³² Because they sin unpunished for a time, they imagine there is no punishment for sin in eternity. They forget that it is one thing to forbear the debtor and another to forgive the debt.

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecc 8:11). Because the Lord continues to spare them, therefore they go on to provoke Him. As He adds to their lives, so they add to their lusts. What is this but as if a man should break all his bones, because there is a surgeon who is able to set them again!

Christian reader, you were greatly in debt to divine justice, but mercy stopped the dreadful arrest of vengeance. Many others have been taken from the earth by a sudden arrow darted from heaven. Adulterous Zimri and Cozbi unloaded their lives and their lusts at the same time (Num 25:14-15). Because Justice seems to wink, men suppose her blind; because she delays punishment, they imagine she denies to punish them; because she does not always *reprove* them for their sins, they suppose she always *approves* of their sins. But let such know that the silent arrow, as well as the roaring cannon, can destroy. Though the patience of God is lasting, yet it is not ever-lasting. Believer, the sword of justice is dipped in the oil of mercy for your sake, and it afflicts some parts of your body that the whole might not be destroyed. "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Pro 29:1).

God loves all men so as to feed and forbear them; yet He loves but few men so as to forgive them. He was six days in making the whole world and seven days in destroying one city. Our garrisons are fairly summoned before they are furiously stormed.³³ If God's warnings are not sanctified to us,³⁴ His vengeance will be executed upon us. It is sad for the iron to gather rust under the file.³⁵

Reader, remember that if you are corrected, the Lord takes the scourge out of your own house (cf. Gal 6:7). "I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not" (Rev 2:21). Many have the space of repentance who have not the grace of repentance. But what follows? "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds" (Rev 21:22). Sinners may cast themselves upon a bed of false hope, but justice will cast them into a bed of real torment. Mark how the long-slumbering arm of Deity awakes to the prey: "I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, [and] refrained

³¹ **cistern...fountain** – that is, removes the temporary storage used in this world of a small amount, to replace it with an abundant never-ending supply that lasts forever.

³² **acquittance** – discharge or release from debt.

³³ **garrisons summoned...stormed** – using military imagery, we as enemy soldiers fighting against God are called ("summoned") from our dwellings ("garrisons") by the gospel to surrender. If we obey not this call, the Lord, as a Man of war, will "storm" our garrisons in judgment.

³⁴ **warnings...sanctified to us** – if we are not made by grace to heed them.

³⁵ **rust under the file** – if the file of God's warnings is applied to the iron of our lives, and instead of becoming bright with repentance, we gather the rust of obstinate indolence, it is sad indeed.

myself: [now] will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once" (Isa 42:14). The longer God is in raising His hand, the heavier will the blow be when it falls.³⁶

Carnal security resembles a flash of lightning, which ushers in a clap of thunder; or, it is like a profound calm at sea, which is generally followed by a dreadful storm.

Know, sinner, that God is pleased sometimes to shake your feeble cottage before He throws it down; He often makes it totter before it tumbles. It may be a fair, sunshiny season with you now, but a whirlwind may soon arise and dash you to pieces!

We pity a body that is going to the block;³⁷ shall we not pity a soul that is hastening to the bottomless pit? He dies the most comfortably who lives the most heavenly. It is easier for a bird to avoid the snare than to break the snare. The very beasts will shun the places where their own species have miscarried. The rising sun in the morning was no proof that Sodom should not be entombed in its own ashes before the evening. The day that begins in prosperity may end in adversity!

Attend to the charge that the King of heaven brings against the priests of Israel: "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes" (Psa 50:21). But what is the application of this? "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver" (Psa 50:22)! Justice proportions the sinner's punishment to his sin, so that we may behold the greatness of the offence in the fitness of the punishment.

"If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors" (Psa 7:12-13). The sharpening of the sword is but to give it a keener edge, that it may cut the deeper. God is long silent, but when the sword is sharpened, it is to cut; when the bow is bent, it is to kill. Woe be to that man who is God's target!

Enraged justice will avenge the quarrel of abused mercy. For, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:31). It is a good thing to fall at His feet, but a fearful thing to fall into His hands. The stronger the enemy's arm is, the stronger will his blow be. Never did a weary traveler complain of being at his journey's end too soon. Yet if a sinner dies soon, it but hastens his torment; if he lives long, it but heightens his torment.

Ah, what a dreadful vision is that where the black horse of death precedes, and the red horse of wrath follows after (Rev 6:4-5)!³⁸

Sinner, how fearful is it to be preserved from small evils and reserved for great evils! The higher you are raised, the greater will be your fall. You may wonder more at the divine indulgence that has so long reprieved you, than at the Almighty vengeance that so soon overtakes you. You were dry enough for eternal flames when you were wrapped in your swaddling bands, for you "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph 2:3). All who draw their first breath in corruption, deserve to draw their second breath in destruction! It is a wonder that He should add to our days when we are adding to our sins.

God has His vials of wrath filled with indignation for those who are vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. If His patience does not draw the sinner to repentance (2Pe 3:9), His wrath will drown him in desperation! O sinner, either seek a Savior to deliver you from the wrath of God, or else [try to] find a shoulder to bear you up under the wrath of God.³⁹

Another principle that a Christian should walk by is this,

16. There is no judging of the inward conditions of men by the outward dispensations of God.

"For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (Psa 73:3). The greatness of our estates is no argument of the goodness of our hearts. To prize⁴⁰ ourselves by what we have, and not by what we are, is to estimate the value of the jewel by the box that contains it. Grace and gold can live together, but the smallest degree of grace in the heart is preferable to a thick chain of gold around the neck.

³⁶ This is an inference of the author. The Scriptures proclaim both the forbearance of God and His just wrath upon sin (cf. Mat 18:32-34).

³⁷ **block** – place of execution by beheading.

³⁸ **black horse...wrath** – in Rev 6:8 it is the pale horse ridden by death. The black is associated with a pair of balances (Rev 6:5). The red is associated with peace being taken from the earth, killing, and a great sword (Rev 6:4).

³⁹ **shoulder to bear you up under the wrath of God** – there is none to be found!

⁴⁰ **prize** – to esteem; to ascribe value or worth.

Here on earth, it is sometimes evil with the righteous and well with the wicked. Those who live most upon God sometimes fare worst in the world. Under the Law, the dove was preferred in sacrifice to the swine. Riches are called “thick clay” (Hab 2:6). They are more likely to weaken the back than strengthen the heart. You cannot read the wrath of God in the black lines of adversity, or the love of God in the white lines of prosperity.

God often gives a full cup of temporal blessings to wicked men, though there are dregs at the bottom. They may be fruitful vines, and yet only laden with sour grapes. It is seldom that the sparkling diamond of a great estate is set in the golden ring of a pious heart. Riches have made many good men worse, but they never made any bad man better. Thus, if we discern but a spark of grace in a nobleman, we cry it up as a blazing comet and speak of it in the superlative degree.

Though a Christian is made happy *in* the world, yet he is not made happy *by* the world. Give me those judgments that give birth to mercy, rather than those outward mercies that give birth to judgment. There are many who are temporally happy who will be eternally miserable, and many are now temporally miserable who will be eternally happy.

If poverty could procure heaven, how many poor people would then be saved; and if wealth could free a man from hell, how very few of the rich would be damned! The kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of the cross. Those who attempt to take the cross from the Christian's shoulders do, in effect, aim to remove the crown from his head.

“For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mat 5:45). The sun of prosperity shines upon the dunghill as well as upon beds of spices. The rain of adversity falls upon the fruitful garden as well as the barren wilderness. The abundance of the infidel is a golden chain to bind him to the earth, and the apparent miseries of the believer are as fiery chariots to convey him to heaven!

Now, those who do evil get rich, and those who dare God to punish them, go free of harm (Job 12:6). God's jewels may here be trodden under foot, but hereafter they will be fixed in His royal diadem. If we look for a saint, he is not always to be found upon a bed of down, but sometimes he has been seen on a heap of dust. Poor Lazarus rises to heaven and rich Dives sinks to hell (Luk 16:20-23)!

Benjamin was not the less regarded by Joseph because the silver cup was discovered in his sack (Gen 44:12). We must not infer the absence of God's affections from the presence of numerous afflictions. Though the north wind may chill us, yet the warm beams of summer can soon revive us. Those stones that are designed for the building are frequently wounded by the chisel, while those that are neglected lie in ruinous heaps.

A saint is glorious in his misery, but a sinner is miserable amidst all his glory. We must not therefore think evil of true religion, though we should behold a Joseph in the prison while a Pharaoh is in a palace; or a Job on the ash-heap, while a Julian⁴¹ is on a throne. The most choice pearls are often enclosed in the most hideous shells. “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (Joh 7:24). Those who judge of a man's real greatness by his apparent grandeur are unfit to sit upon the judicial bench. The apple that has the fairest skin may have the rottenest core.

The tinsel glare upon a sinner is too apt to blind the weak eyes of a saint. Alas, why should he envy him a little light who is to be shrouded in everlasting darkness! Why should we throw bludgeons⁴² at those boughs that are only laden with poisonous fruits! “Deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword: From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life” (Psa 17:13-14). The things of the world are the only happiness of the men of the world. None of their flowers grow in paradise. They are anxious for the creature and indifferent about the Creator!

A man's estate in this world may be great, and yet his state for the eternal world may be fearful. God may say to him as to Pharaoh, “For this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth” (Exo 9:16). The same hand that now pours abundance on ungodly men like oil, will soon pour down wrath upon them like fire. Under all their wealth, their hearts are sinful; after all the riches are fled, their situation will be doleful! It is far better to pass through the Valley of Baca (Valley of Weeping) to Zion (Psa 84:5-7), than to pitch our tents in the plains of Sodom. Luther's expression was not the less true because it was homely: “The whole Turkish empire is but a crust which God threw to the dogs.” One said, “I

⁴¹ **Julian (Flavius Claudius Julianus, c. 331-363)** – Roman emperor; known as Julian the Apostate. He rejected Christ and sought to revive false religion.

⁴² **throw bludgeons** – practice of throwing clubs at high-hanging ripe fruit, to knock it to the ground where it may be gathered.

would rather have Paul's plain coat with his heavenly graces, than the purple robes of princes with all their kingdoms."

Lest riches should be accounted evil in themselves, God sometimes gives them to the righteous; and lest they should be considered as the chief good, God frequently bestows them on the wicked. But they are more generally the portion of God's enemies than His friends.

Alas, what is it to receive, and not *to be* received! Alas, what is it to have no other dews of blessing than such as shall be followed with showers of brimstone! We may compass ourselves with sparks of security, and afterwards be secured in eternal misery! This world is a floating island; and sure as we cast anchor upon it, we shall be carried away by it.

He can never lack treasure who has such a golden mine as God! He is enough without the creature, but the creature is not anything without Him. It is, therefore, better to enjoy Him without anything else, than to enjoy everything else without Him. It is better to be a wooden vessel filled with wine, than a golden vessel filled with water.

Another principle that a Christian should walk by is this,

17. It is safest to cleave to that good which is the choicest.

There never was one who thought he had made a bad exchange by selling all for the Pearl of great price (Mat 13:45-46).

"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (Joh 6:68). Peter knew that a soul who was truly changed, was not for changing. There cannot be a better being for us than for us to be with the Lord; and shall those who have forsaken all to follow Him, forsake Him again to follow nothing?

Reader, you cannot tread in the steps of Christ without drinking of the cup of Christ (Mar 10:39). The nearer you are to such a spring, the clearer will your streams be. When every other gourd is withered, He will prove a refreshing shelter (Jon 4:6-9). "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee" (Psa 139:17-18).

David was least alone when he was most alone. His heart was like the needle in the compass, which always inclines to the northern pole. Believers are desirous of leaving their hearts with God now, [so] that they may dwell with Him forever. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psa 73:25). Let a believer search heaven and earth, yet he can find nothing comparable to God! As Judah said of Jacob, "his life is bound up in the lad's life" (Gen 44:30), so say I of the Christian: his life is bound up in God. To draw near to Him in present holiness [is] to be near to Him in eternal happiness.

Many unstable professors may justly be reflected upon. They will readily attend an applauded Christ, but [they] will hastily desert a crucified Christ. But a true Christian is as willing⁴³ to follow Him to the cross as to the throne! He has no desire to turn like a shadow from [Christ], in Whom there is no shadow of turning.

As there is no natural good in us to lead us to God, so there is no evil outside of us that shall finally draw us from Him. Who but an idiot would address a picture instead of a person, or prefer a shadow to a substance? There is nothing that can do us so much good as God's presence, or so much evil as His absence.

It is far better to part with a thousand worlds for one Christ, than [to part] with one Christ for a thousand worlds. How dreadful is their darkness who live in the absence of such a sun! Reader, every step you take to Christ is a step toward heaven, and every step you take from Him is a moral step towards hell.

"Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich" (Luk 18:22-23). This poor rich man, or rather this rich poor man, came hastily to Jesus, and ran heavily from Him. If he may not enjoy God *and* mammon, he will leave God *for* mammon. Jesus was for *selling* all, and the rich man was for *saving* all. Ah, what false balances are those that will make corruptible silver outweigh an incorruptible Savior!

The "prince of darkness" employs the men of the world to draw us from God, and the things of the world to keep us from God. Truly that good was never worth seeking that is not worth keeping.

⁴³ as willing – not that Christians esteem suffering as they esteem the throne, but they *will* follow Christ and suffer for His sake (Phi 1:29).

Reader, is it not a fault to depart from that God, in Whom there is no fault? As Saul said to his servants, "Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds..." (1Sa 22:7). So say I to sinners: Can sin, Satan, or the world do that for you which God can? It is only the Best of Beings Who can convey the best of blessings.

None but that God Who has the keys of heaven can open the gates of heaven. By Him we obtain admittance into the celestial inheritance. What is our life but a warfare, and what is the world but a thoroughfare? Know, sinner, that if you reject the Savior, you despise grace, which is the fairest jewel on earth, and glory, which is the brightest sun beyond this life.

No men are in greater danger of losing the life to come, than those who are contented to have the present. A drop is more easily dried up than a river, and a spark is more quickly extinguished than a flame⁴⁴.

What powerful constraints does our God lay upon us to seek His friendship! "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5). It would be better for us to leave all behind than that He should leave us behind. It is not the brightest star that can constitute day when the sun is set, or the thickest cloud that can make a night if the sun is risen.

Another principle that a Christian should walk by is this,

18. No present worldly business should interrupt his pursuit of future blessedness.

Solomon says, "All the labour of man is for his mouth" (Ecc 6:7). Though he says it is so, yet he does not say it should be so; this would encourage a Christian to become a glutton.

The hawk that follows the world's prey is in danger of falling into God's snare! Why should I lay out that time in seeking worthless pebbles, which may be better employed in search of priceless jewels? What God bestows on some men as a temporary pension, they embrace as their only portion. Such foolish travelers are so taken up with the inn, as to forget the end of their journey. They may indeed sow this seed, but it will produce nothing but wormwood.

Outward mercies are neither so base as to be totally neglected, nor so great as to be primarily desired. If they are seducements⁴⁵ from the mercy seat, they will prove to be indictments at the judgment seat.

I may say of the earth, as one said of Athens, "It may serve for a transient lodging, but not for a constant dwelling." Outward plenty may be a comfortable ship for indigence⁴⁶ to sail in, but it is a dangerous rock for confidence to build upon. Give some people the earth in their hands, and they care not who has heaven in his heart.

When Crates⁴⁷ threw his gold into the sea, he cried out, "I will destroy you lest you should destroy me!" Thus, if the world is not put to death here, it will put us to death hereafter. Then we shall say, as Cardinal Wolsey⁴⁸ when discarded by his prince and abandoned to the fury of his enemies, "If I had served my God as faithfully as [I served] my king, He would not have thus forsaken me." Poor man, all the perfumes on earth are unable to prevail over the stench of hell.

It would be well for Christians could they say, as one did, "I desire riches no more than a feeble beast wishes for a heavy burden." Cares are bound to crowns. Anxiety disfigures the face of prosperity. A body laden with cares and a soul laden with spiritual fruits cannot well unite together. Those who die trifling with salvation will, after death, tremble under the pains of damnation.

I have heard of a woman who, being busied to save her goods when her house was in flames, forgot her child! But the child being soon after inquired for, she cried out, "O my child, my child!" Thus will many thoughtless sinners in a worse fire cry out, "O our souls, our souls!" Poor Sisera was not much better for the milk and butter, when he so soon after felt the nail and the hammer (Jdg 4:2-3)!

⁴⁴ **drop...spark** – the man content with the temporal is in great danger (see Mat 19:21-23). His desire is small (as a "drop" or "spark") and satisfied ("dried," "extinguished") with small things ("the present"), and therefore he does not desire nor seek the great things of God.

⁴⁵ **seductions from the mercy-seat** – persuasions to believe the gospel. In the ceremonial worship of Israel, the mercy seat was positioned about the ark, which contained the law. Upon it the sacrificial blood was sprinkled. Above it God manifested His presence. This depicted the mercy God would accomplish by Christ (cf. Exo 25, 30:6; Lev 16; Num 7:89; Heb 9).

⁴⁶ **indigence** – neediness; poverty.

⁴⁷ **Crates of Thebes (c. 365 - c. 285 BC)** – Greek philosopher who gave away his money to live a life of poverty on the streets of Athens.

⁴⁸ **Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (1473-1530)** – English political figure and cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, who prospered serving King Henry VIII, becoming the controlling figure in virtually all matters of state and of the Catholic Church in England. He fell into the king's disfavor over the king's demand to divorce.

Ah! how careful are men of their outward concerns, and how careless about their inward concerns! In a vigorous body there is a wicked soul. The evil disposition of the soul spoils the good composition of the body.

If a man is attentive to his flesh and inattentive to his spirit, he is like a gardener who gathers in his stubble and leaves his grain behind, or a goldsmith who hoards his dross and casts away his gold!

Reader, will you decorate your scabbard, and let the costly sword decay with rust? If there is nothing done in your soul on earth, there will be nothing done for it in heaven. It is truly lamentable that the soul, which received its being from God, should be excluded from being with God.

Another principle that a believer should walk by is this,

19. Gospel integrity toward God is the best security against wicked men.

Surly mastiffs⁴⁹ that have no teeth may bark, but they cannot bite. Who would fear the hissing serpent if he knew it had no sting? A naked man with innocence is preferable to Goliath with his coat of armor.

“Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” (1Pe 3:13). As no flattery can heal a bad conscience, so no cruelty can wound a good one. As the ways of God have happiness connected with them, so sufferings for the sake of God have honor annexed to them. A pious martyr has more renown than a bloody persecutor.

Integrity may not keep us from infamy. The choicest professors have had their black marks in the world's calendars. But though integrity may not keep us from being shot at, yet it will preserve us from injury.

“The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me” (Psa 118:7). God will either find a shield to ward off sufferings, or a hand to sustain us under them. Though the Christian is as a sheep among wolves, God can save him from being torn by them. Though the Christian is as a ship amidst waves, God can keep him from being overwhelmed by them.

Whether God plucks up the tares or lets them stand (Mat 13:24-30), it is only for the sake of His people (Rom 8:28). Noah was sound in the faith when all the earth was polluted, and he was saved in the ark while the earth was deluged (Gen 7:7).

The shields of salvation are not hung up in the way of transgression. All the wiles of hell cannot conquer a single soldier in Christ's camp, much less rout His whole army. “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Pro 18:10). The name of the Lord is a strong fortress both for sublimity⁵⁰ and security. When Christ is our harbor, we may safely run our vessels into so desirable a haven.

“A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed” (Song 4:12). As God numbers the hairs of His people, so He preserves their heads. He has a strong hedge of protection for them, when their enemies would break in upon them (cf. Pro 16:7).

“But now thus saith the LORD that created thee...Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee...For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour” (Isa 43:1-3). Here is a dangerous voyage, but a safe convoy.⁵¹ God never deals with His friends as we do with ours. We serve them too often as we do sundials, which we only look upon when the sun of prosperity shines; or as ladies do with flowers, placing the fresh in their bosoms, but casting the faded away. But when our need is greatest, God's help is nearest. The more grievous is our oppression, the more glorious is our deliverance.

When our misery is most powerful, then the Lord's mercy is most visible.⁵² “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ” (2Co 1:15).

When God's benignity⁵³ is most admired, our calamity is more easily endured. Israel often slumbers and sleeps, but He Who keeps Israel does neither (Psa 121:4). Thus we may boldly say, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31). Against us they may be to hate us; but against us they shall *not* be to hurt us.

⁴⁹ **mastiffs** – breed of large dog often used as guard dogs.

⁵⁰ **sublimity** – elevation of place; lofty height.

⁵¹ **convoy** – protecting escort.

⁵² **mercy most visible** – God's mercy to His saints is always unfailing, but sometimes physical suffering is met with spiritual mercy, which may not be manifested in a way that is immediately apparent to us, perhaps only to those with spiritual eyes (cf. Rom 8:36-39).

⁵³ **benignity** – kindness.

Noah rides safely in a well-pitched ark, while the old world is drowned. When Israel is led captive, Jeremiah is set at liberty (Jer 40:4). The prophet found more favor with the princes of Babel than from the people of Israel. Gideon's fleece was wet when the earth was dry (Jdg 6:38). Thus will God always preserve integrity and punish vanity. His grain is often gathered into the garner, before He comes to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (Mat 3:12)!

Lastly, a Christian will walk by this principle,

20. The richness of the crown to be received more than compensates⁵⁴ for the bitterness of the cross here endured.

The last wine that Christ draws (Joh 2:10-11) is the best wine that Christians drink. When the waters cover the earth, where should the dove-like spirits fly but to the ark of Christ (Gen 8:11)? He Who left heaven to make them righteous, will come from heaven to make them glorious!

"Ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance" (Heb 10:34). O how did the glory of their heavenly mansions outshine all the glare of their earthly possessions!

Christian, you are now on a troubled sea; do not say that you shall never arrive at your sure resting-place. What! has God plucked you out of the fire of destruction, and will He leave you in the water of affliction? In a small moment you will cheerfully sing: "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away" (Song 2:11-13). The blessed Sun of Righteousness will shine clearer when these clouds are blown over. If there is so much delight in a single grape, what must there be in the whole cluster!

Take a believer while he lives and God has a servant on earth; take a believer when he dies and God has a servant in heaven. Christian, you must never look for an end to your sorrows, until you see an end to your sins! As your sorrows did not come a day before your sins, so they will not stay a day after your sins! "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev 3:19). Well may you bear the rod when infinite Love takes it up and lays it on. When you lie under God's afflicting hand, you then lie near His loving heart. Rake a dunghill, and its stench will be foul; but beat perfume, and its fragrance will be sweet.

I have read of a fountain that is cold at mid-day and warm at midnight. Thus are saints frequently cold in the mid-day of prosperity, and warm in the midnight of adversity. To the godly, afflictions are not a consuming fire, but a refining fire.

"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18). Our present sufferings fall as far short of glory as the least filings of gold fall short of all the riches of India. If the faint glimmerings of Christ's face overpower the pains of our afflictions, what must the full meridian of His glorious light do?

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2Co 4:17). Ah, how light is a grain of reproach, compared to a weight of glory; and how short a moment's pain, compared to an eternity of pleasure!

He should not be weary of the cross who is sure of the crown. After the cup of affliction, then comes the cup of salvation. The winepress prepares for the wine cellar. The painful throes of travail are soon forgotten in the fond embraces of a tender babe.

Sour fruits require something to sweeten them. Death is grateful⁵⁵ to no creature, but it is profitable to every Christian. Our good Physician will not continue us a moment longer in His infirmary than is necessary. Our Refiner regards His choice gold too much to consume it in the flames.

Those who are patient in the seed time of sorrow shall soon reap the glorious harvest of unfading joy! We may converse concerning our future greatness, but we shall never know the weight of the crown until it be placed on our heads.

Come, O Christian, be of good comfort; though the cloth is cut, it is only to make it up into a splendid garment. The hewing of the timber is only to prepare it for the structure. The new corn that lives in summer is

⁵⁴ **compensate** – reduce something unpleasant by exerting an opposite effect.

⁵⁵ **grateful** – welcome; pleasant.

produced from the old corn that died in the winter. It is neither commendable to rush into the arms of death contrary to the dictates of reason, or to fly from the arms of death when God calls us to them.

Shall Jesus come down from heaven to die for you, and will you be unwilling to ascend from earth to heaven to live with Him? A saint's reluctance to meet death arises from his apprehensions of unreadiness to meet Him. A pardon that is not put into the prisoner's hand may have passed the prince's seal. The edge of the sword of death has been blunted ever since it was sheathed in Christ's side!

After the vessel has endured the storms, it will arrive at the haven. Though the Christian's triumphs never end, yet, blessed be God, his trials shall soon end. When his body and soul shall part asunder, then God and his soul shall meet together.

"Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold" (Psa 68:13). Suppose the lancet makes a deep incision, it is only to reach the depth of your wound and render the cure more complete. Health is most pleasant after sharp sickness, and liberty is most pleasant after the most rigorous bondage. Sailors most rejoice at the appearance of land after a long and tedious voyage. All the grapes in Christ's vineyard must pass through the winepress.

However pleasant a sinner's beginning may be, his end is damnation! And however troublesome a saint's beginning may be, his end shall be salvation! The fresh rivers of carnal pleasures run into the salt sea of eternal destruction; but the seedtime of a pious life ends in the blessed harvest of eternal glory.

When Adrianus⁵⁶ asked how the Christians could so patiently endure the tortures he had inflicted on them, they answered, "The love of Christ constrains us and the love of heaven encourages us!" Those who are born blind cannot judge of the glories that dazzle the eyes of angels. One smile from God's face will forever dry up all the tears from the saint's eyes (Rev 21:4)!

As fish dropping out of a narrow brook into the large ocean do not lose, but enlarge, their element; so when the godly leave this life, they do not forsake, but increase, their blessedness. As the flames of a burnt-offering ascend to heaven while its ashes fall to the ground, so the soul of a saint rises to glory while his body falls into the dusty grave!

⁵⁶ **Adrianus of Tyre (c. AD 113-193)** – philosopher of ancient Athens who flourished in Rome under the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus.

VII. Application

Seven Practices for Those Who Wish to Do More than Others

Having thus digested the twenty singular principles by which a believer walks, I come lastly to give directions to those who wish to do more than others.¹ And here I shall stud your golden ring with seven precious diamonds.

Would you therefore *do* more than others? Then,

1. You must deny yourself more than others;
2. You must pray more than others;
3. You must resolve more than others;
4. You must love more than others;
5. You must believe more than others;
6. You must know more than others; and
7. God must reveal Himself more to you than He does to others.

Would you do more than others? Then,

1. Deny yourselves more than others.

Either self must be laid aside, or God will lay us aside. What can any true Israelite behold in this Dagon that the Ark of God should bow before it (1Sa 5:2-4)?

Though self-seeking had its birth in heaven, yet, being justly cast out (Rev 12:7-9), it can never find its way there again. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mat 16:24). This is the very basis² of our profession. Sinful self is to be destroyed and natural self is to be denied.³

A little will satisfy a man who is strong in grace; much will but satisfy him who is weak in grace; but nothing will satisfy him who is void of grace. As we are called to lay *out* all in the cause of God, so we are to lay *down* all at the call of God.

Would you do more than others? Then,

2. You should pray more than others.

Our daily bread calls for our daily prayers (Mat 6:11), because one want is created while another is supplied.⁴ Are we called by the name of Christ, and shall we not call upon the name of Christ? Take away spiritual breath and you take away spiritual life. There never was one new-born soul who was still-born.⁵

Who would not stretch out a beggar’s hand to receive a jewel of infinite value? With what boldness should those appear at court who are sure of the king’s ear!

Spiritual prayer resembles Noah’s dove which returned with an olive branch.⁶ Prayers were never rightly offered to God but they were quickly answered (Isa 65:24). We are as much bound to pray while on earth, as angels are to praise while in heaven.⁷

¹ **do more than others** – not in a sense of competition as compared to others, but compared to God’s standards of holiness. True believers simply are not content to serve God only in a common way, when convenient or easy, but rather their hearts’ desires are to glorify God in *all* they do. The author’s focus is upon serving God with excellence, running the race to win (1Co 9:24).

² **basis** – basic or fundamental to the Christian calling we profess.

³ **Sinful self...denied** – this distinction between sinful and natural self is difficult to derive directly from Scripture. Perhaps the author considers the sin in “sinful self” as deserving to be mortified (Col 3:5), and the natural inclinations in “natural self,” which tempt us toward sin before sin occurs, as simply deserving to be denied (Jam 1:13-15).

⁴ **one want is created while another is supplied** – as God supplies our “want” (lack) of food, another “want” is created: that of prayer and thanksgiving for His provision. In addition, as God continues our lives by feeding us, our need for prayer continues also: “Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him *as long as I live*” (Psa 116:2).

⁵ **take away spiritual breath...still-born** – making the point that all true Christians pray (Phi 4:6).

He who would speed in his enjoyment should plead for the attainment.⁸ The prayerless soul is a fruitless soul. The waters of life are sweet; it is blessed to bring the vessels of prayer to these wells. Throw a dry sponge into the river, and it will soon fill itself with water.

Many will cast off this duty because they are ashamed to go to it with crutches; but these lacks of accomplishment should not be a discouragement, for many dumb beggars have been relieved at Christ's gate by making signs. "As he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening" (Luk 9:29). Christ had the bright sunshine of His Father's affection when He was moving in the orbit of supplication.

Reader, is not that mercy worth your breath, which was worth a Savior's blood? Why should we cease petitioning while God continues granting? "Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless..." (Gen 15:2). Thus may you pray: "Lord, what will You give me, seeing I go comfortless?" Believing prayer is a trading⁹ for those commodities that are only locked up in heaven's storehouse. Why should we be dumb, seeing God is not deaf?

By fasting the body learns to obey the soul; by praying the soul learns to command the body.

No Christian has so little from Christ but there is ground for praise; and no Christian has so much from Christ but he has need of prayer. Every day we find it is a great work to accomplish a little work. Every new act of obedience requires fresh assistance.

"Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (Joh 16:24). Spiritual supplication is the channel to consolation. Now, none are more fruitful in divine labor than those who are most joyful under a sense of the divine favor (Neh 8:10). Death shortens our way to heaven, but prayer sweetens our way to heaven.

A neglect to prune the flowers does but increase the growth of the weeds. A small vessel with large gales will sail faster than a large ship with small winds. I never expect that branch to bear any fruit which receives no sap from the vine. When prayer mounts upon the wings of fervor to God, then answers come down like lightning from God.

The gift of prayer may have praise from men, but it is the grace of prayer that has power with God.¹⁰ A few grapes prove the plant to be a vine and not a thorn. Though prayer is God's due as a Creator, yet it is more truly performed when offered to Him as a Father.

Though none can pray aright but new creatures, yet all ought to pray because they are creatures.

Christians will never lack a praying time if they possess a praying frame. In the morning, prayer is a golden key to open the heart for God's service; and in the evening, prayer is an iron lock to guard the heart against sin.

"Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him" (Act 12:5). These prayers fetched an angel out of heaven to fetch Peter out of prison. Their prayer went up like fire and brought down blessings like water. It is not always the hound which barks the loudest that catches the hare, but that which follows closest in the chase.¹¹

Believers should not only pray one *with* another, but one *for* another. Next to the breach of piety in religion, we should abominate the breach of charity in communion.¹²

Reader, when the vessel of your soul has given up sailing, we may conclude that divine winds have given up blowing. He Who is omniscient to know your needs is also omnipotent to grant your requests. Are you made a spiritual priest, and will you refuse to offer up spiritual sacrifices (1Pe 2:5)? Your affections should soar like an eagle, [though] your lips cannot move faster than a snail.

"Pray without ceasing" (1Th 5:17). We may pray continually, though you be not continually at prayer. If the lesson is not always playing, yet the instrument must be kept in tune.

⁶ **returned with an olive branch** – that is, God answers scriptural prayer.

⁷ **bound to pray...praise** – both are commanded: "Pray without ceasing" (1Th 5:17). "Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts" (Psa 148:2).

⁸ **plead for the attainment** – it is not of us, but of God alone (1Co 4:7).

⁹ **trading** – business of buying and selling, used figuratively here to describe receiving from God by prayer, for all such supplies are gifts of grace and we have nothing to pay (Isa 55:1).

¹⁰ **gift of prayer...grace of prayer** – contrasting eloquence in prayer, which may impress men, with believing scriptural prayer, which God promises to answer ("has power with God").

¹¹ **barks...closest** – persevering faith rather than loudness of voice is associated with prayer that God answers (Jam 5:16).

¹² **breach of piety...breach of charity** – love to God ("piety") and love to neighbor ("charity"); see Mark 12:28-34.

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us” (1Jo 5:14). That soul shall have its will with God, who desires nothing but what God wills. They should never be dying petitioners¹³ who have an ever-living intercessor. It matters not how often you carry your empty pitcher to so full a river!

The intercession of Christ is a golden censor, and can we desire Him to offer up our drossy¹⁴ prayer for incense? It was an expression of Luther’s: “Let my will be done mine Lord, because it is Yours”—because it fixed in the same center, he was bold to call for the fulfilling of it.

The covenant of grace¹⁵ without us turns precepts into promises,¹⁶ but the Spirit of grace within us turns promises into prayers. “Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously” (Hos 14:2). Oh how willing is God that we should hit the mark when He teaches us how to direct our arrows! What desires are there in Him that we should prevail when He shows us how we should wrestle (Gen 32:24-25)! Spiritual breathings are more potent than carnal roarings. None but such desires as lack good aims, do lack good outcomes.¹⁷ Nothing will get up to heaven but that which has first come down from heaven. Prayer meets with no answer that is not offered up in faith. Deny not God [your] faith in prayer, and God will not deny [your] faithful prayer.

Would you do more than others? Then,

3. You must resolve more than others.

God looks more at our wills than at our works. The first fruits of conversion hang upon the trees of holiness. “I will arise and go to my father” (Luk 15:18). Arrows weakly shot fall short of the mark. Shame is that which sinful nature abhors, and danger is what timorous nature declines. Reformation is an icy path; cowardly spirits love to have it well beaten by others before they will venture to tread it.

“As for me and my house we will serve the Lord” (Jos 24:15). Firm resolutions are like rocks that the waves cannot move. By our prayers we show what we wish God to do for us, and by our purposes we manifest what we desire to do for God. By the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the heart conceives holiness, the will resolves on holiness, and the life produces holiness (cf. Gal 5:22-25).

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1Co 2:2). Until we attain to strong resolutions, we shall not be conquerors of Satan’s strong temptations. As diseases resort most to that part of the body which is weakest, so the devil’s attacks will be most frequent where he is likely to be most prevailing. The Law’s curse is the motive of a servile spirit,¹⁸ but the love of God is the motive of a true Christian.

The resolutions of a Christian are like the water of a fountain that flows by itself, but the resolutions of [an unbeliever] resemble the water of a pit, which must be forced up by artificial engines.¹⁹ Some never form resolutions but under heavy afflictions, like children under the rod: full of promises, but empty of performances.

The [unbeliever’s] determinations are like ice, which thaws in the burning sun but freezes again in the cold shade. What! shall we vow against our sins, and then sin against our vows? This is to take the wages²⁰ from one master, and do the work for another master! This is to make our promises to God and our performances to the devil!

¹³ **dying petitioners** – those that ask of God in prayer.

¹⁴ **drossy** – like the scum formed from impurities on the surface of molten metal; thus, worthless.

¹⁵ **covenant of grace** – covenant among the Persons of the Godhead, consisting of God’s gracious, eternal purpose of redemption, conceived before the creation of the world, first announced in Genesis 3:15, progressively revealed in history, accomplished in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, and appropriated by faith in Him.

¹⁶ **turns precepts into promises** – promises to give obedience to His Law: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Eze 36:26-27).

¹⁷ **lack good aims...outcomes** – “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1Jo 5:14-15). “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psa 66:18).

¹⁸ **motive of a servile spirit** – not exclusively: “And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Act 4:40-41).

¹⁹ **engines** – any mechanical device for assisting labor.

²⁰ **wage** – used figuratively for all the good we receive from God as a gift and not earned. Here the idea is how outrageous it is to take good received from God and then sin against Him.

Sacred vows bind us to obedience, and sinful vows to repentance. Reader, say not that you have noble blood running in your veins, except you can prove it by heroic actions.

Would you do more than others? Then,

4. *You must love more than others.*

“The love of Christ constraineth us” (2Co 5:14). There is no sin so sweet but the love of Christ restrains them from it; there is no service so great but the love of Christ constrains them to it. If once this affection takes fire, the room becomes too hot for any sin to stay in. The heart becomes a chamber for Christ, but not a harbor for lust. “The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved” (Song 7:13). Love never shakes the boughs but for Christ to eat the fruits.

Many pay the performance of duties as oppressed subjects do heavy taxes with sad complaints; but the spouse of Christ looks upon what she is as not great enough for His remembrance, and what she does as not good enough for His acceptance. Had she anything a thousand times better than herself, or were she herself a thousand times better, it would be bestowed upon Him!²¹ What is that little which He desires, compared to that much which He deserves?

When Achilles²² was asked what enterprises he found most easy, he answered, “Those which I undertake for my friends.” Seven years service seemed like nothing to Jacob, because of the love he bore to Rachel (Gen 29:18). Love, as it acts the most excellently, so it acts the most easily: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (Joh 14:15). The crystal streams of divine actions bubble from the pure spring of divine affection.²³

“Faith which worketh by love” (Gal 5:6). The Christian’s love advances by equal paces with the Christian’s faith, as the heat of the day advances with the shining of the sun. Faith, like Mary, sits at the feet of Christ to hear His sermons; and love, like Martha, compasses Him about with services (Luk 10:38-41). Faith is the great receiver; love is the great disburser. We take in all by believing, and we lay out all by loving. Faith at first works love, and then it works by love—as the workman sharpens an edge upon his tools, and then carves and cuts with them.

The Scripture has exceeding high expressions of this affection. Christ brings the Ten Commandments down into two commandments: “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mat 22:37-39). Christ brings the ten words down into two words, but Paul folds them all up in one word: “For the law is fulfilled in one word” (Gal 5:14). What is that word? Surely it is too big for any mouth to utter: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Gal 5:14). He who is not lacking in this duty is lacking in no duty. Love is called an “old commandment” and a “new commandment.” It is as old as the Law of Moses, and yet as new as the gospel of Jesus Christ.²⁴

Faith is the grace that first seals the title to heaven, and love is the grace that at last possesses the heavenly inheritance. Faith unites Christ and sanctified souls together on earth, but love unites God and glorified souls together in heaven.²⁵

As the spleen grows, the body decays; and as hatred increases, so holiness abates. It is best that dissension should never be born among brethren, and next that it should die presently after its birth. When any leak springs in the ship of Christian society, we should use our endeavors to stop it speedily! The nearer the union is, the more dangerous is the breach. Things that are glued together may (if severed) be set together as beautiful as ever, but bodies rent and torn cannot be healed without a scar.

²¹ **were herself a thousand times better** – the Christian knows he has no merit other than Christ (Rom 5:19) and that in his flesh is no good thing (Rom 7:18). He is to yield himself to God as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1-2) and view himself an unprofitable servant (Luk 17:10).

²² **Achilles** – one of the 318 persons present at the First Council of Nicaea (AD 325). He was metropolitan of Larissa in Thessaly, Greece, and is remembered primarily for his vehement defense of orthodoxy.

²³ **divine actions...divine affections** – that is, those that love God (“divine affections”) are obedient to Him (“divine actions”).

²⁴ **old as Moses...new as the gospel** – the Law commanded love: “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*: I am the LORD” (Lev 19:18). Christ gave a new standard: not our love for ourselves, but His love for us: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; *as I have loved you*, that ye also love one another” (Joh 13:34).

²⁵ **faith...love** – not that faith will not be operative in heaven. Rather, the author appears to be emphasizing that in heaven, objects hoped for will be seen (cf. Rom 8:24), and that love, which “never faileth” (see 1Co 13:8), will be exercised. Faith has for objects certain historical realities (Heb 11:3; Rev 4:11; 5:7-10). Since these events of the past are not forgotten in heaven, the faith by which they were understood is still in operation.

The love in a hypocrite's bosom is just like the fire in the Israelite's bush, which was not burning all the while it was blazing (Exo 3:2). His estate and relations have the chief and strength of his affections; they admit the world not only into the suburbs of their senses, but into the city of their souls. But the love of a Savior in the soul of a believer is as oil put into a vial with water, in which, though both be ever so much shaken together, the oil will be uppermost.

The expression of Absalom is also the language of God's people: "Now therefore let me see the king's face" (2Sa 14:32). It is heaven on earth for His children to see Him, and it is heaven in heaven for His children to dwell with Him! Love does not put off the pursuit of duty until it attains the possession of glory. There is no rocking this babe to sleep but in the cradle of the grave. A soul who loves much will work much. The injunctions of love are not grievous, but precious!

God is not so much displeased at our *having* sin, as at our *loving* sin.²⁶ He is more pleased at our loving His service than at our performing His service. None can serve God like a believer, because none can love Him as a believer [does]—for the obedience of the heart is the heart of obedience.

Would you do more than others? Then,

5. It is necessary to believe more than others.

If there is life in the body, the pulse will beat; and if there is faith in the heart, it will work. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (Jam 2:14). An idle faith is an evil faith, for the faith that works not saves not.

Perceiving of Christ bespeaks our knowledge, but receiving Him bespeaks our faith. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (Joh 1:12). Faith not only looks upon Christ as a fountain, but it also lays pipes to convey the water into its own cistern. The window only radiates the room as a medium by which the rays of light are let in. As faith can do nothing without Christ, so it will do nothing against Christ. A true faith resembles the spring in a watch, which moves all the golden wheels—but only as it is wound up.²⁷

"The father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mar 9:24). Though his tears dropped to the earth, yet his faith reached up to heaven. Divine confidence can swim upon those seas that feeble reason cannot fathom.²⁸ Strong distrust begets weak obedience. The cords of unbelief once tied the hands of Christ, but not so strongly but He could have broken them (Mar 6:5-6; Mat 13:58). Now, if they bound this greater than Samson, what must they do to feeble Israelites?

It is as natural for a believing man to be a working man, as it is for the sun to shine or the fire to burn. Other graces, like the common people of Israel, stand in the outward court;²⁹ but faith, like the high priest, enters within the veil. If Satan can undermine the foundation, the superstructure will soon totter and fall. The great Bernard of Clairvaux said, "Infidels fear the devil as a lion, but those who are strong in the faith despise him as a very little worm." As there is no grace that glorifies God so much as faith, so there is no grace that He magnifies so much as faith.

Martha and Mary both had said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (Joh 11:32). What then, could not He have saved Lazarus while absent as well as present? Could He not as easily have sent him health as brought it? But does their unbelief stop here? No! "Lord, by this time he stinketh" (Joh 11:39). True, but their unbelief stank more in Christ's nostrils than Lazarus' body did in theirs.

Abraham did not waver in his trust in God's promise, "But was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Rom 4:20). Skillful swimmers are not afraid to venture beyond their depth, while learners paddle along the river bank.

²⁶ **displeased not so much at having...as loving sin** – relatively speaking: both render us guilty (Jam 2:10). But there is a difference between the believer that hates sin yet commits it (Rom 7:7-25), and the unbeliever that practices sin (Psa 5:5) and loves it (Psa 109, especially verse 19).

²⁷ **faith...a spring in a watch...moves...only as it is wound** – see Hebrews 11 for instances of what God's people did by faith. Yet faith itself is gift of God (Eph 2:8-10) and works by love (Gal 5:6), which is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) and is no part of our righteousness before God (Rom 5:19).

²⁸ **divine confidence...feeble reason** – that is, by faith in God's Word people do things that those with mere natural understanding, unenlightened by God's promises, would never attempt (cf. Heb 11).

²⁹ **other graces ...within the veil** – the outward court and the veil were different areas of the place established for Old Testament worship. God met with His people "within the veil." Using this imagery, the author describes Christian "graces" (that is, things done by God's grace working in us). Some are more focused on others (loving our neighbor, etc.) and are thus said to "stand in the outward court." But faith focuses exclusively on God and His Word. Thus he says that faith "enters within the veil."

As faith receives the righteousness of Christ for justification, so it receives the holiness of Christ for sanctification. Faith is the hand, the mouth, and the eye of the child of God. It is the ring by which the soul is united to God, the chief good.³⁰ “He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (Joh 7:38). When saints would advance to a high degree in other virtues, then they generally pray for an increase of faith. “Lord, increase our faith” is no uncommon prayer (Luk 17:5).

What the root sucks from the earth, it soon disperses through the branches. Lusts may struggle like wounded soldiers on their stumps, and rally like broken troops—but they shall never be masters of that field where faith is fighting. As our lusts would not let Christ live without us,³¹ so Christ will not let them live within us. “Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience” (1Ti 3:9). If faith is a precious pearl, a good conscience is the cabinet that contains it. This heavenly manna of faith must be laid up in a golden pot of a good conscience (1Ti 1:5).³²

When faith comes out of the battle a glorious conqueror, then fear is foiled and taken prisoner. Faith is able to keep us from falling into temptations as from fainting under afflictions. He is a rich man who lives upon his wealth, and he is a righteous man who lives by faith. Christians are far from wrapping up the talent of faithfulness³³ in the napkin of idleness.

Unbelief not only blinds the eyes to the purity of the Law, but deafens the ears to the music of the gospel, and deadens the affections to the glories of heaven. Every appeal to an unbeliever is like a spark of fire falling into the water, which is no sooner in than it is out.

Would you do more than others? Then,

6. *You should know more than others.*

“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Joh 8:12). “I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Act 26:17-18). “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Eph 5:8). “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness” (1Th 5:5). “Ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1Pe 2:9).

Wisdom makes the face to shine. I may say of divine wisdom as was said of a Grecian lady: that no man ever saw her but he loved her. That Christian is most excellent who is the most intelligent.³⁴

The papists³⁵ cry up “ignorance” as the mother of devotion. But we cry down “ignorance” as the father of superstition. Satan binds all his captives down in the dark dungeon of ignorance! Like the cunning falconer, he blindfolds his birds that he may carry them to hell more securely. The Father of Light takes no pleasure in the children of darkness. He does not carry souls to heaven as mariners do their passengers to their port, who shut them under the hatches so that they cannot see where they are going. It is no wonder that Christ should be so much *undesired*, when He is so much *unknown*.

A person without understanding is but the soul of a beast imprisoned in the body of a man. “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (Joh 13:17). The will of God must be *known* on earth as it is in heaven, before it can be *done* on earth as it is in heaven (Mat 6:10). Utter darkness is the recompense of inward darkness. None will ever be darkened by walking in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Where there is a veil upon the eye of knowledge, there will be a chain upon the hand of diligence. An ignorant man neither cares what he does nor knows where he is going. When such a one is taken off the earth, he cannot be taken into heaven (cf. Eph 4:18; Rom 10:1-3).

³⁰ **ring** – faith in the promise of the gospel may here be compared to a wedding ring: a sign of the marriage promise. In marriage man and woman are united (Mat 19:6). We are united to Christ by the Spirit (1Co 12:12-13). Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:17).

³¹ **lusts would not let Christ live without us** – the sinfulness of man occasioned the death of Christ (cf. Joh 7:7).

³² **manna of faith...golden pot** – for imagery utilized here, see Exo 16 and Heb 9:4.

³³ **talent of faithfulness** – see Luk 19:11-27. We must be careful not to confuse “faith” and “faithfulness.” We are justified by faith without the deeds of the Law (Rom 3:28). Some usages of “faithfulness” may include works of obedience (this appears to be the usage in 1Sa 26:23). Thus to confuse “faith” and “faithfulness” can result in a denial of the biblical gospel.

³⁴ **most intelligent** – not in mental knowledge, but in spiritual knowledge and communion with God. Heaven has no academic entrance exam.

³⁵ **papists** – those devoted to the pope, i.e., Roman Catholics.

Wherever there is a trade carried on for heaven, the Spirit of God must first open the shop windows. “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (Joh 9:4). There is no doing the work of the day but by the light of the day. Darkness is the devil’s element and the sinner’s punishment. “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col 1:13). “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos 4:6). When the candle of the soul is extinguished, it must needs sit in darkness.

“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God” (2Th 1:8). The infidel’s lack of judgment is a sin that Christ will bring to judgment. Ah, how do blinded men take for devotion that which is only superstition!—and for a Bethel (1Ki 12:29) that which is no better than a Babel (Gen 11:9). To preserve the understanding (as a Goshen;³⁶ Exo 8:22) from the darkness (of Egypt; Exo 10:22-23) is the way to avoid the plagues of Egypt.

“I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins” (Act 26:17-18). Spiritual acts require spiritual eyes: the clearer we see them, the better we perform them. He who desires to see the face of holiness in its native luster must not set his carnal judgment to draw the picture!

Would you do more than others? Then,

7. You must have God reveal Himself more to you than He does to others.

Man does not first come to God that he might be taught, but he is first taught that he may come to God (1Co 4:7). “It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Mat 13:11). God gives, and then we know. When He opens our eyes, then we can see. When He loosens our tongues, then we can speak. When He says come forth, then we live (Joh 11:43). When He commands us to be of good comfort, then we can rejoice (Mat 9:22).

God is first in all the works of creation and providence. He is all in nature, all in grace, and all in glory. “Without me ye can do nothing” (Joh 15:5).

Thus, if you would deny yourselves—pray, resolve, love, believe, or know more than others—it can only be by the gracious revelation of God to your heart. All the difference that exists between man and man is only from the Lord Almighty (1Co 4:7), Who is wonderful in counsel (Isa 9:6). You may cast the net on any side of the ship of piety, but God alone can enclose it with spiritual blessings (Luk 5:4-10). Only thus may you be taught to acknowledge Who He is, rest on what He does, and finally be with Him where He is. And though your journey is attended with bitterness, yet He shall soon crown you with eternal blessedness!



³⁶ **Goshen** – area in northern Egypt where the Hebrews settled when Jacob and his sons went to live under the provision of Joseph.