

Monergism

THE FOUR LAST THINGS

Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell
Practically Considered and Applied

W I L L I A M B A T E S

Monergism

THE FOUR LAST THINGS

Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell
Practically Considered and Applied

WILLIAM BATES

The Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell

by William Bates

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Dedication to Lady Russel](#)

ON DEATH

[I. Proofs of Christ's deity. How the devil is said to have the power of death. An account of death's entrance into the world](#)

[II. What the fear of death includes. The passion of fear in general. The special causes that make death so fearful. The bondage of men from the fear of death. Reasons why men do not always feel this fear](#)

[III. How the death of Christ frees us from the tormenting, fear of death. It redeems us from the curse, makes death a blessed advantage, frees the saints from afflictions, and obtains for them the highest positive good](#)

[IV. Why believers are subject to death since the sting of it is taken away. They die that sinful frailties may be abolished, that their graces may be exercised, and because the natural body is incapable of a celestial divine life. Their resurrection is delayed till the coming of Christ. Proofs of the certainty of their resurrection](#)

V. The qualifications of those who have a right to this privilege. Union with Christ is absolutely requisite. The Spirit is the bond of this union. He illuminates the understanding, inspires love to God, and communicates power to do the divine will

VI. Application of the subject. How great are our obligations to the Redeemer. It should be our great business to overcome the fear of death. Necessity of reconciliation with God. The danger of delaying repentance

VII. Application continued. The desperate hazard of trusting to sick-bed and death-bed repentances. Such instances very few, and extremely uncertain

VIII. Application concluded. Rules how death may be rendered comfortable. The duties of dying saints

ON ETERNAL JUDGMENT

I. The coherence of the text. Divine prerogative to judge the world. Qualifications of Christ for that office. Why the day of Judgment is called the great day

II. The equity of the divine law which will be the rule of judgment

III. The wisdom and justice of God in ordaining eternal death to be the punishment of sin

IV. The evidence of facts produced as the reason of judgment. The books will be opened, divine omniscience will give evidence, conscience will bear testimony, and numerous witnesses will appear. The impartiality of the sentence

V. Application of the subject. The certainty of a future judgment. It is a vindication of the proceedings of providence, a comfort to the saints under persecution, a restraint from secret sins, a remedy for sensual temptations, and a motive of terror to the wicked

VI. Application concluded. Preparatives for the last judgment. Faith in Christ. Sincere obedience. Self-examination. Improvement of talents. Zeal for the cause of Christ. Love to the saints

ON HEAVEN

I. The divine presence is the felicity of the saints. The glory of the place described. The happiness of heaven illustrated by sensible representations

II. In heaven there is an exemption from all evils, and the enjoyment of all blessings

III. The vision of God in heaven. His works and word, his decrees and counsels will be revealed to the blessed

IV. Effects of the vision of God. A glorious likeness. Humble veneration of His excellencies. Ardent love to Him

V. Union with God and its effects. Perfect knowledge. Pure love. Supreme joy.

VI. Communion with saints and angels. The felicity of heaven is everlasting

VII. The felicity of heaven is not diminished by number of its possessor. It continues for ever. The application. The woful folly of sinners in refusing this happiness. It originates in the mercy of God, and is obtained obedience of Christ

VIII. The qualifications of those who shall obtain heaven. The nature and necessity of regeneration, and sanctification

IX. The necessity of faith in Christ. We must choose heaven as our supreme happiness. This choice must be sincere

X. Our choice of heaven must be lasting. The properties of saving perseverance

XI. Directions how to fix our choice aright upon the felicity of heaven

XII. On the steadfast belief, and serious consideration of eternal realities

XIII. Objects which give vigour to the serious consideration of the soul, and determine it to choose heaven

XIV. Additional motives to encourage us to seek the kingdom of heaven

ON HELL

I. Exposition of the text. The dreadful nature of future punishment

II. The eternal duration of future punishment

III. Practical inferences. The mercy of God in salvation. The depravity of sinners. The wages of sin. Our infinite obligations to Jesus Christ

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

RACHEL LADY RUSSEL

MADAM,

OF all affairs for the compassing whereof men are so diligent and solicitous, there is none of that absolute necessity, and high importance, as the preparation for death and judgment, and the immediate consequence of them, heaven and hell, to obtain the one, and escape the other. This requires the whole man in his best vigour, and should be the work of the day, but it is usually delayed till the melancholy evening of age, or the twilight of death. The trifles of this world divert them from that main business, to which all other things should be subordinate. It equally deserves wonder and compassion, that death which is so constantly in men's view, should be so seldom the matter of their application, when all are of the same glass, made of the same frail natural principles; and no argument is more frequently and pathetically urged upon them.

It is not strange that deep truths, which by the strength and exercise of the mind are drawn like gold out of the mines, have no efficacy upon those that are not capable of understanding them: but the doctrines of death and judgment, heaven and hell, are plain truths, by natural, moral, and divine evidence known to all; yet no more affect men, than a paradox of incredible novelty. If the doctrine of eternal judgment were but a probable opinion, controverted with equal arguments, yet it is a matter of such vast concernment, that reason requires all our possible diligence to avoid an eternal evil, that may be the loss of celestial glory, and the torments of hell: but since it is an infallible truth, as certain as the word of God, it is a miracle to astonish heaven and earth, that men live as carelessly as if they should never die, and die as securely as if they should not live in the next state, to receive the just punishment of their sins. They are fearless whilst death is far off in their thoughts: and when age has snowed upon their heads, that no marks of decaying nature should appear, make their own winter to flourish with another's spring. But it is in vain, for death knows them under their disguise, and will not stay beyond the appointed time. And in that decisive hour, infidelity or presumption hardens men to pass as quietly and boldly, in appearance, into another world, as unfeigned faith, and a regular lively hope in the promises of the gospel. But as deceitful physic

stops the fit for the present, that will return more violently and fatally afterwards: so a counterfeit short peace transmits them to everlasting sorrows.

The design of the following discourse is to awaken men, that they may be wise and consider their latter end: to secure an interest in our Redeemer, who has disarmed death of its sting, and made that enemy our friend: and to practise dying every day, by withdrawing their hearts from the vanities of this transient world that have such a pernicious influence to excite the carnal appetites, and stupify the conscience, which are the true causes of their sin and misery. And what can be more powerful to render them temperate and sober in the use of present things, vigilant and serious in their preparations for their great and final change, than the remembrance that death is immediately attended with judgment, and judgment with blessedness or misery for ever? I know this argument is naturally displeasing, but the usefulness should recommend it to our most solemn and composed thoughts before all the vain entertainments of the fancy and sensual affections. As herbs of medicinal virtue, that are not pleasing to the sight or smell, yet are valued by the skilful as treasures of health; and preferred before the fairest flowers that are perfumed and painted by nature, so as to excel the richest lustre of Solomon's glory.

The body is in a continual consumption, and no art can long preserve it: but whilst the outward man is irrecoverably declining and wasting, if the inward man be ascending and renewing to perfection, the advantage is incomparable. O how comfortable is it to a holy believer in the parting hour to commit his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father! (for thus he is authorized and encouraged by our Saviour's example) and "lay down the flesh to rest in hope:" for Christ is the guardian of the grave, "has the keys of death", and will revive the, bodies of his saints incorruptible and immortal, the copies of his own glorious body.

The immediate recompences of eternal judgment, heaven and hell, are worthy of our most attentive and applicative thoughts, that we obtain the one, and escape the other. Heaven is the true happiness of the reasonable creature, and is the first and last in the order of things desirable; the first for its attractive excellence, the last in its consummate fruition. This may be certainly and perpetually enjoyed by all who sincerely and diligently seek it. If in the very different states of life here, there were any incapable of eternal life, or that have another object for their last end, there might be some reason why they should be coldly affected towards celestial happiness, and to justify their sole pretensions to the things of time, wherein their interests are confined: but the offer of heaven regards all that upon God's terms will accept of it. The most sensible inequality, that riches, dignity, or any temporal accident makes between men here, is so true a nothing in comparison of eternal glory, that it makes no difference of one from another as to the obtaining it. For this reason it most nearly concerns every person, "first to seek the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof," as the only way to ascend to it.

The serious consideration of the everlasting hell prepared for unreformed sinners, is most necessary and useful, though carnal men are extremely averse from thinking on that terrible object. For this is the first motive that turns men from sin to holiness. The joys of heaven being spiritual and divine, have no attractive influence upon the carnal affections, would never convert and reform any; but the torment of fire being most evident and vehement to sense, is strongly represented by the imagination, and moves the affections. How many by solemn and believing thoughts of the unquenchable fire, have felt the miracle upon the three children in the furnace renewed in themselves, their strong cords, the obstinate habits of sin, burnt asunder, and their powers restored to the freedom of duty, the blessed liberty of obedience? In this respect the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," that directs us in the way to blessedness.

Madam, I shall not attempt the celebrating your Ladyship's virtues, that render you a bright ornament of your sex, and more truly honourable than your noble descent and alliance: but direct my best desires to God, that your family may be a singular and eminent example of the divine favour; that the fading gloss of this world may not deceive you, but "your heart may be above, where your treasure is;" that you may live to God, and your soul for heaven and eternity. I am,

MADAM,

Your Honour's very humble

and faithful Servant,

WILLIAM BATES.

ON DEATH

And deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. - HEB. 2:15.

Chapter I: Proofs of Christ's Deity

The coherence of the text opened; wherein the proofs of the eternal Deity of Christ are clearly alledged from scripture. An account given of the reasons of his incarnation. In what respects the devil is said to

have the power of death. The death of Christ frees his people from the tormenting fear of death. An account of death's entrance into the world, in a three-fold respect.

IN the first chapter of this epistle, the proofs of the eternal Deity of Christ are produced with that evidence of scripture-light, that only a veiled heart, obstinate infidelity can resist. The medium which the inspired penman makes use of, is, the comparing him with the angels, the most noble flower of the creation, and showing that he is infinitely dignified above them. This he does by a strong connexion of arguments: first, by his title that is divinely high and peculiar to himself. He is declared by the testimony of the eternal Father to "be his Son," ver. 4, 5. in the most proper and sublime sense: "begotten of him," and therefore having the same essential perfections of the Godhead in their uncreated glory. But the angels are not dignified with this name in any places of scripture, where the excellency of the angels is in the fullest terms expressed. And that this name is taken from his nature, is clearly proved: because adoration is due to him upon this account, even from the angels of the highest order. "When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him." Ver. 6.

Divine worship is a prerogative inseparably annexed to the Deity, both upon the account of the supreme excellencies of the nature of God, and his relation to angels and men as Creator and Preserver, the fountain of their being and happiness. This, without the most open defiance of his authority, cannot be given to a mere creature; and by the command of God himself is to be performed as a respect due to the filial Godhead. Deut. 6:13. & 10:20. The argument proceeds from the name to the offices. "Of the angels he saith, who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." ver. 7. They are the prime instruments of his providence, most zealous and active to accomplish his pleasure. But the Son is God, not by analogy and deputation, as princes are, nor with a limitation and diminution, as Moses was made "a God to Pharaoh," but absolutely and really as subsisting in the divine nature: and consequently he is the Supreme

King, and to him the ensigns of majesty divinely royal are ascribed: "but unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Ver. 8. Whereas the sceptres of earthly kings are often unrighteously managed, and their thrones ruinously fall. There is a further confirmation from his works, that are divinely great and glorious, wherein no creature has any share of efficiency. The making of the world is ascribed to him: "thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands." Ver. 10.

The divine attributes, the peculiar character of the Deity, belong to him: eternity and immutability. The most solid parts of the visible creation "shall perish and be changed: but thou remainest, and art the same". His life is an entire, uniform, unchangeable perfection. His glory and felicity are in the same invariable tenour for ever possessed by him. Lastly, the Son sits in that quality "at the right hand of the Father," ver. 13. in the society of empire, as equal to him in power and honour, commanding all in the visible and invisible world, most easily and irresistibly, though gradually, subduing his enemies to a consummate victory. But the angels, so numerous and powerful, "are ministering spirits," ver. 14. employed for the defence and benefit of the church.

From this summary account we may understand how firmly the divinity of Christ is established in the scripture. For those passages of the prophets, that speak of the God of Israel as Creator, and the sole object of adoration, are directly referred to Jesus Christ. And the name Jehovah, Psal. 97:9. the majesty of which consists in its being incommunicable, is attributed to him. This is the foundation upon which the whole fabric of the gospel is built. The office of Mediator in the prophetic, priestly, and regal administration, is necessarily joined with the divinity of his person. And the revelation of it from heaven, is as clear as the sun is visible in the firmament. All the difficulties in our conceiving this great mystery of godliness, are but like the shadows that attend the light. And all the heretical subtilties

to pervert the sense of such plain and positive texts, are as impertinent as impious.

This being established, the apostle proceeds to give an account of the Son of God's assuming the human nature, and submitting to sufferings and death. This is a divine secret so miraculously strange, that the contrivance was without the compass of the angelical minds, and the discovery of it is only by super-natural revelation; but when revealed, the account of it is so open and consentaneous to reason, as being the most congruous means for the illustration of God's glory in the saving lost men, that the human Mind, if not deeply corrupted with the tincture of prejudice, must consent to it, "as worthy of all acceptance."

The substance of his reasoning is this: that it was the product of the most wise, merciful, and righteous counsel of God, that the Saviour of men should have communion with them in their nature, that he might have a right to redeem them by his alliance and propinquity: for "he that sanctifies, and they that are sanctified, are all one," chap. 2:11. and that he might undergo sufferings, even to death, for the price of their redemption, and the remedy of their infirmities. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil: and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lives subject to bondage."

The devil is said to have the power of death. 1. Because he induces men to commit sin, that meritoriously renders them liable to death. He tempted the first man cum effectu, "and was a murderer from the beginning." 2. In that he inspires them with furious thoughts, and inflames their passions, from whence proceed strifes and wars, that efficiently cause death. He is supreme in all the arts of mischief, and always intent upon evil. It is by his instigation that men become like raging beasts, animated and bent on mutual slaughter. 3. Because he is many times the executioner of God's wrath, and inflicts death upon rebellious and incorrigible sinners. It is recorded by the psalmist,

that "God cast upon the Egyptians the fierceness of his anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels," Psal. 78:49. those princes of the air, the instruments of the thunder, and fiery storm of hail that destroyed them. 4. Because he makes death more formidable to sinners, by heightening their guilty fears of God's tribunal. The false spirit tempts men to sin by many blandishments, but afterward he is a severe accuser of them to God, and to themselves, Lastly, This title may signify his tormenting sinners with unrelenting cruelty in hell, which is the second death. Now these evils being the penal consequence of sin, our Saviour by his death appeased the injured justice of God, and thereby destroyed the cruel tyranny of the devil. As the Lamb of God, in the notion of a sacrifice, he overcomes our spiritual enemies. Sin, satan and death, lie vanquished at the foot of his cross. Besides, our Saviour having felt such sorrows and infirmities as are usual to his people, by that correspondence and resemblance between them, is compassionately inclined to relieve them. I shall now insist upon the blessed privilege of believers set down in the text, viz.

That Jesus Christ by his death frees his people from the servile tormenting fear of death.

In prosecuting the point, I shall, 1. Consider the account the scripture gives of death's entrance into the world. 2. Show what the fear of death includes, and the bondage consequent to it. 3. How the death of Christ frees us from the thralldom of that fear. 4. Who are partakers of this blessed privilege. And then apply it.

I. The scripture gives an account of death's entrance into the world, in a threefold respect.

1. As the desert of sin. 2. As the effect of the divine decree. 3. As the sentence of the law.

1. As the desert of sin. The first design of the Creator was his own glory in conjunction with the happiness of man. He was made

accordingly holy in perfection, placed in paradise, and his state contained all the ingredients of felicity proper to his nature. He was capable of dying, as sad experience proves; yet no accident from without, no distemper from within had impaired his vigour, and made him actually subject to death without sin. Whilst innocent he was immortal, not from everlasting principles of nature, but by divine preservation, of which the tree of life was the ordained means and sacramental pledge. For God unchangeably loves his own image: and though by his sovereignty and absolute power he may resume the being he gives, yet his goodness and covenant were a sacred assurance that man's happy life should run parallel with his perseverance in his duty. This immortality was not the singular privilege of Adam's person, but had been the inheritance of all his progeny. But he soon revolting from his just obedience, of immortal became mortal, and according to the original establishment of propagation, transmitted his nature with the guilt and poison of sin to all his posterity. "Thus by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" Rom. 5:12. As his obedience had been rewarded, so his rebellion is punished in all that naturally descend from him. From hence it is, that so numerous a part of mankind are cut off before the commission of actual sin. Death enters into the forge of life, and destroys the conception that newly began to live. And what is more righteous than that man when he disobeyed the Author of life, should forfeit his life and blessedness?* The soul voluntarily lost the spiritual life by forsaking God, therefore unwillingly loses the natural life by expulsion from the body. The apostle says, "the wages of sin is death," Rom. 6:23. not only that of the body, but the death of the soul, which is a dreadful concomitant of it. And from hence we may discover the false philosophy of the wisest heathens in their opinion of death.* They judged it to be the primary necessity and condition of nature, fixed by irresistible fate: and not understanding the true and just reason of its coming into the world, they could not apply a sufficient remedy against its evil.

2. As the effect of the divine decree respecting sin. This is discovered by revelation in the word of God, and by the real execution of it. "It is appointed to men once to die" Heb. 9:27. This decree is universal and unrepeatable. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh:" Eccles. 1:4. like the ebbing and flowing of the sea in its stated periods. Nothing can interrupt or frustrate this appointment. There are divers conditions of men, and various ways of living in the world; some are high in dignity, others are level with the earth: some walk in a carpet-way, smooth and easy, others in a thorny and troublesome some walk on the golden sands, others on the mire: but the same uncontrollable necessity of dying involves all. And whatever the way be, whether pleasant or doleful, yet every one passes in it with equal steps, measured by the same invariable spaces of hours and days, and arrives at the same common end of life. Those who are regarded as visible deities amongst men, that can by their breath raise the low, and depress the lofty, that have the lives of millions in their power; yet when the ordained time is come, as they cannot bribe the accusing conscience for a minute's silence, so neither delay death. "I have said ye are gods, but ye shall die like men."

3. Death is to be considered as the sentence of the law. The reasonable creature was made under a law, the rule of his actions. The moral law directed him how to continue in his holy and blessed state: to which was annexed the precept of not eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, only as a mark of his subjection, and for the trial of his obedience. This precept had an infallible sanction by the Most high Lawgiver: "in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death". Gen. 2:17. Man did not keep this command of so easy observation, and justly incurred its doom. As sin is the violation of the law, so death is the violation of the sinner in his nature and felicity retorted from the law.

The deaths of men are very different in their kinds; and are comprised in the words of David concerning Saul: "the Lord shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into the battle, and perish." 1 Sam. 26:10. Sometimes they are cut off by the

immediate flaming hand of God, for the more exemplary revenge of sin; sometimes by surprising accidents; sometimes by bloody contentions; sometimes by consuming diseases. But though death be not uniform, yet it is always the execution of the law upon offenders. As of those who are condemned by human justice, some suffer a more easy and honourable death, others a more disgraceful and torturing; some are beheaded, others are crucified, yet all die as malefactors. Thus some die a natural death, others a violent; some by a gentle preparing sickness without reluctance, others die upon the rack by sharp pains: some die attended with their friends, and all supplies to sweeten their passage, others forsaken of all comforters: yet death is the same sentence of the law upon all men. And this, if duly considered, makes it terrible in whatever shape it appears.

Chapter. II: What the Fear of Death Includes.

The passion of fear in general considered. The special causes that make death so fearful. It is an evil universally known. It is certainly future. The bondage of men from the fear of death. The reasons why men are not always under the actual fear of death.

II. THE next thing to be considered is, what the fear of death includes, and the bondage that is consequent to it. This I shall explain and amplify, by considering four things. 1. The nature of fear in general, as applicable to the present subject. 2. The particular causes that render death so fearful. 3. The degree of this fear expressed by bondage. 4. How it comes to pass that men are not always under the actual fear of death, but subject to the revolutions of it all their lives.

1. I will consider the nature of fear in general, as applicable to the present subject. Fear is a passion implanted in nature, that causes a

flight from an approaching evil. Three things are requisite to qualify the object, and make it fearful.

(1.) The evil must be apprehended. Knowledge, or at least suspicion, excites fear, by representing an evil that is lively to seize upon us. Till the mind discern the danger, the passions are unmoved: and imaginary evils by the mere apprehension, are as strongly feared as real.

(2.) The evil must be future. For the naked theory of the most pernicious evil does not wound the soul, but the apprehension of falling under it. If reason can open an expedient to prevent an evil, this passion is quiet. And fear precisely regards its object as to come. Present evils induce grief and sorrow: past evils by reflection affect with joy, and give a quicker relish to present felicity. Approaching evils alarm us with fear.

(3.) The evil must be apprehended as prevalent to make it fearful. For if by comparison we find our strength superior, we either neglect the evil for its levity, or determine to encounter it; and resistance is the proper effect of anger, not of fear. But when an impendent evil is too hard for us, the soul shrinks and recoils from it.

Now all these qualifications that make an object fearful, concur in death.

1st. It is an evil universally known. The frequent funerals are a real demonstration that speaks sensibly to our eyes, that death reigns in the world. On every side death is in our view, and the shadow of it darkens our brightest days.

2dly. It is certainly future. All the wretched accidents of this life, such as concern us in our persons, relations, estates and interests; a thousand disasters that a jealous fear and active fancy will extend and amplify; as they may, so they may not happen to us. And from this mixture of contrary possibilities, from the uncertainty of event, hope, that is an insinuating passion, mixes with fear, and derives

comfort. For as sometimes a sudden evil surprises, not forethought of; so, often the evil that was sadly expected, never comes to pass. "But what man is he that lives, and shall not see death?" Psal. 89:4. Who is so vain as to please himself with an imagination of immortality here? Though men are distinguished in the condition of living, yet all are equal in the necessity of dying. Human greatness in every kind, nobility, riches, empire cannot protect from the sudden and sovereign hand of death, that overthrows all. The most conspicuous difference in this world is between the victorious, and the vanquished prostrate at their feet: but death makes them equal. Then the wretched captive shall upbraid the proud conqueror, "art thou become weak as me? Art thou become like us?" The expressions of scripture concerning the frailty of man, are often literally and precisely verified: "he is like the grass, in the morning it flourishes and groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withereth."

3dly. Death is a prevalent insuperable evil: hence the proverbial expression, "strong as death that subdues all, cruel as the grave that spares none." It is in vain to struggle with the pangs of death. No simples in nature, no compositions of art, no influence of the stars, no power of angels can support the dying body, or retain the flitting soul. "There is no man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war." Eccles. 8:8. The body sinks in the conflict; and "Death feeds on its prostrate prey in the grave."

2. I shall consider more particularly the causes that render death so fearful to men: 1. In the apprehension of nature. 2. In the apprehension of conscience.

1. In the apprehension of nature, death hath this name engraven in its forehead, *ultimum terribilium*, the supreme of terrible things, upon several accounts,

(1.) Because usually sickness and pains languishing and tormenting, make the first changes in the body, and the natural death is violent.

This Hezekiah complained of with a mournful accent, "He will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night thou wilt make an end of me. I reckoned till morning that as a lion, so will he break all my bones Isa. 38. A troop of diseases are the forerunners of this "King of terrors." There is a preceding encounter, and sometimes very fierce, that nature feels the cruel victory before it yields to this enemy. As a ship that is tossed by a mighty tempest, and by the concussion of the winds and waves loses its rudder and masts, takes in water in every part, and gradually sinks into the ocean: so in the shipwreck of nature, the body is so shaken and weakened by the violence of a disease, that the senses, the animal and vital operations decline, and at last are extinguished in death.

(2.) Death considered in the strictest propriety, as destructive of the natural being, that is our first and most valuable good in the order of nature, is the just object of fear. The union between soul and body is very intimate and dear, and like David and Jonathan they part unwillingly. Nature has a share in the best men, and works as nature. St. Paul declares, "we would not be unclothed," not finally put off the body, but have it glorified in conjunction with, the soul. Our blessed Saviour, without the least impeachment of the rectitude and perfection of his nature, expressed an averseness from death, and with submission to the divine will desired a freedom from it. His affections were holy and human, and moved according to the quality of their objects.

(3.) The natural consequents of death render it fearful. Life is the foundation of all natural enjoyments; and the loss of it induces the loss of all for ever. It is from hence that such evils as are consistent with life, and deprive us only of some particular content and pleasure, are willingly chosen rather than death. The forfeiture of estate, the degrading from honour, the confinement to a perpetual prison, the banishing from our native country, are less penalties than death.

There is a natural love of society in man, and death removes from all. The grave is a frightful solitude. There is no conversation in the territories of darkness. This also Hezekiah in his apprehensions of death speaks of with tears: "I shall see man no more in the land of the living." Isa. 38:11. As in the night the world is an universal grave,* all things are in a dead silence; palaces, court of justice, temples, theatres, schools, and all places of public conversation are shut up; the noise and rumour that keeps men in continual observation and action ceases. Thus when the sun of this present life is set, all the affairs and business, all the vain joys of company, feasting, dancing, music, gaming, cease! Every one among the dead is confined to his sealed obscure cell, and is alone an entertainment for the worms.

The psalmist saith of princes, "Their breath goeth forth, they return to the earth, in that very day their thoughts." their glorious compassing thoughts, "perish." This the historian observes was verified in Julius Cesar: after his assuming the imperial dignity, he thought to reduce the numerous laws of the Romans into a few volumes, comprising the substance and reason of all; to enrich and adorn the city of Rome, as was becoming the regent of the world; to epitomize the works of the most learned Grecians and Romans for the public benefit,† And whilst he was designing and pursuing these, and other vast and noble things, death surprised him, and broke off all his enterprises.

At the terrible gate that opens into eternity, men are stripped of all their honours and treasures, "and as naked as they come into the world, go out of it. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased. For when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descent after him." Psal. 49:16, 17. Death equally vilifies, makes loathsome and ghastly the bodies of men, and reduces them to sordid dust. In the grave the* dust is as precious and powerful of one as of another. Civil distinctions are limited to the present time. The prodigious statue in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, Dan. 2:32, 33, 34, 35. while it was upright,

the parts were really and visibly distinct: "The head was of fine gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet part of iron and part of clay: but when the stone cut out without hands, smote the image upon the feet, then were the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff the wind carries away." Who can distinguish between royal dust taken out of magnificent tombs, and plebeian dust from common graves? Who can know who were rich and who were poor, who had power and command, who were vassals, who were remarkable by fame, who by infamy? "They shall not say this is Jezebel," 2 Kings 9:37. not know this was the daughter and wife of a king. The king of Babylon, styled Lucifer the bright star of the morning, that possessed the first empire in the world, was degraded by death, humbled to the grave, and exchanged all his glorious state for worms and putrefaction. "The worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee." Isa. 14:11. In short, death separates men from all their admired charming vanities. Now considering man merely in the order of nature, what reflection is more fearful and tormenting, than the necessity, that cannot be overruled, of parting for ever with all the delights of life? Those who have ascended to the throne, that are arrived at the height of temporal happiness, what a melancholy prospect is before them of death and the dark grave? When all things conspire to make men happy here, the sensitive faculties and their fruitions are ebbing and declining, till they sink into death, the whirlpool that will shortly swallow them up for ever. This renders the thoughts of mortality so frightful, and checks the freest enjoyments of carnal pleasures.

2. Death is fearful in the apprehension of conscience, as it is the most sensible mark of God's wrath, that is heavier than death, and a summons to give an account of all things done in this life, to the Righteous Judge of the world. "It is appointed to all men once to die, and afterward the judgment." Heb. 9:27. The penal fear is more wounding to the spirit than the natural. When the awakened sinner presently expects the citation to appear before the tribunal above, where no excuses, no supplications, no privileges avail, where the

cause of eternal life or death must be decided, and the awards of justice be immediately executed; O the convulsions and agonies of conscience in that hour! when the diseased body cannot live, and the disconsolate soul dare not die, what anxieties surround it? This redoubles the terrors of death, that the first transmits to the second that was figured by it. O the dismal aspect of Death riding on a pale horse, with hell the black attendant following. This fear surprised the sinners in Sion. "Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? who among us can remain with everlasting burnings?" This made a heathen, the governor of a province, to tremble before a poor prisoner; "While Paul discoursed of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." Acts 24:25. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, who lives for ever, and can punish for ever." Heb. 10:31). None is so powerful as God, nothing so fearful as the guilty conscience.

3. The degrees of this fear are expressed by bondage. This passion, when regular in its object and degree, is excellently useful: it is a wise counsellor and faithful guardian, that plucks off the mask from our enemies, and keeps reason vigilant and active to prevent a threatening evil, or to sustain it in the best manner. It is observable in the brute creatures, that the weak and fearful are most subtile and ingenious to secure themselves, and supply the want of strength with artifice. But when fear is inordinate, it is tyrannous master, that vexes the weary soul, and hinders its free and noble operations. Cesar chose rather to be exposed to sudden death, than to be continually harassed with fear how to avoid it.* The Greek word implies the binding of the spirit, that causes an inward slavery. And in the apostle's writing "the spirit of fear, and the spirit of bondage," Rom. 8:15. † 2 Tim. 1:7. ‡ are equivalent. Ishbosheth, when Abner provoked by the charge about Saul's concubine, imperiously threatened to translate the kingdom to David, was struck "with such a fear, that he could not answer Abner a word." 2 Sam. 3:10, 11. The sudden passion stifled his reply, and reduced him to a defenceless silence. Now the fear of death, as it is remiss or vehement, such are the degrees of bondage from it.

(1.) It imbitters the enjoyments of the present life, and makes the most prosperous in the world, "even in the fulness of their sufficiency, to be in straits." Though the senses are pleased with the quick sweetness of change from one object to another, yet the soul cannot have a delightful undisturbed fruition, foreseeing that the stream of pleasure will issue into the dead sea. "Truly light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun." Eccles. 11:7. But how short is this life with all its pleasures, in comparison of "the days of darkness" that follow. Now though it is our best wisdom and truest liberty to rejoice "in this world as if we rejoiced not," and frequently to meditate on the cooling doctrines of "death and judgment," to repress the transports of the voluptuous appetite; yet since the comforts of this life are liberally indulged to us by the love of God, to be the motives of our grateful and affectionate obedience, to sweeten our passage to heaven, we may with tranquillity of spirit make a pure and cheerful use of them in his service: and it is an oppressing bondage when the disquieting anxious fears of death hinder our temperate enjoyment of his favours and blessings.

(2.) The fear of death oppresses the souls of men under a miserable bondage to the devil; for his dominion is maintained by the allurements and terrors of the world. Though men do not explicitly acknowledge his sovereignty, yet by voluntary yielding to his pleasing temptations, they are really his slaves. And the apprehension of temporal evils, especially of death, dressed up in a frightful representation with its bloody pomp, is the strongest snare to the soul. Prov. 29. The faint-hearted prove false-hearted in the time of trial: for the timorous spirit being wholly intent how to avoid the incursion of a present evil, forgets or neglects what is indispensably to be done, and thinks to find an excuse in the pretended necessity. How many have been terrified from their clearest duty and resolved constancy? To escape death they have been guilty of the most insufferable impieties, by renouncing God their Maker and Saviour, and worshipping the devils for deities. Every age presents sad spectacles of many "that choose iniquity rather than affliction" Job 36:21. that relinquish their duty, and by wicked compliances save

their lives, and lose their souls. Carnal desires, and carnal fears are the chains of hell, that retain men satan's captives. But what folly, what madness is it, for the avoiding the impotent fury of the creature, to venture on the powerful wrath of God, that exceeds all the terrors that can be conceived by fear? This renders them more brutish than the horse, that starting at his shadow, springs over a desperate precipice. "The fearful are excluded from heaven, and cast into the lake of fire and brimstone for ever." Rev. 21.

(3.) The extreme fear of death and judgment dejects and discourages the soul from the use of means to prevent eternal misery, and induces a most woful bondage. Fear anticipates and exasperates future evils: for as knowledge excites fear so fear, increases knowledge, by the incessant workings of the thoughts upon terrible objects. The fearful mind aggravates the foreseen evil, and distils the poison from all the circumstances and consequences of it. And when the evil is apprehended as insuperable and indeclinable, all endeavours to escape are cut off.* What a philosopher observes of an earthquake, compared with other destructive evils, is true in this case. There may be a safe retreat from fire, from inundations, from storms, from war, from pestilence; but an earthquake astonishes with so violent a perturbation, that stops our flight from the imminent danger: † so the vehement impressions of fear from the approaches of death, and the severe executions upon the sinner after it, distract the mind, and disable from "flying from the wrath to come." These fears are more heavy by the suggestions of satan, who represents God so terrible in his majesty, inexorable in his justice, and unchangeable in his threatenings, that all hopes of obtaining his favour are lost. As the "Egyptian darkness" was not merely from the absence of the sun, but from feculent vapours condensing the air, that it might be felt: so these dark and fearful expectations of the divine wrath are not only from the withdrawing the light of God's countenance, but from the prince of darkness, that foul spirit. And as we read of the Egyptians, that "no man arose from his place for three days;" as if they had been buried in that darkness, and deprived of all active power and motion: so the despairing soul sits down mourning

at the gates of death, totally disabled from prosecuting the things "that belong to its peace." It is hope inspires and warms us with alacrity, encourages our endeavours: despair blunts the edge of our industry. The soul suffers the hardest, bondage, and the condition is inexpressibly sad under the tyranny of this fear. O how enthralled, how desolately miserable! Despair does meritoriously and effectually ruin the soul. For whereas there is no attribute more divine, no clearer notion of the Deity than love and mercy; this passion disparages his mercy, as if sin were more omnipotent, than his power to pardon; and all the tears that flow from it, are so far from expiating, that they increase guilt: and whereas the believing view of Christ would as completely and presently recover the soul-wounded sinner, as the Israelites were by looking to the ordained visible sign of their salvation; despair turns away the eye from our deliverer, and fixes it upon misery as remediless and final.

4. How comes it to pass that men are not always under the actual fear of death, but subject to the revolutions of it all their lives?

The seeds of this fear are hid in the guilty breasts of men, and at times, especially in their calamities, break forth and kindle upon them. In their leisure and retirement, intercurrent thoughts of death and judgment sting them by fits, and make them uneasy. The flashes of conscience, like moments of lightning, startle them, but they relapse into their habitual stupidity. And the account will be clear, by considering the following particulars.

(1.) Men are apt to flatter themselves with the hopes of long life, and look upon death at a great distance. Though there be a dying disposition in the youngest and strongest persons, though we live in a world of casualties, and death lie in ambush to surprise us every day, yet we are secure: because evils affect us according to their apprehended nearness. A petty constable that is troublesome and vexatious, is more feared by his neighbours, than the grand signior with all his executioners. As remote objects, though of vast bigness, are lessened to our sight; so through the supposed interval of many

years, death is looked on with a diminution of its terror. But when death presents itself before men ready to dispatch them, how formidable is its appearance! Saul, though renowned for his valour, yet when he understood by revelation, that to-morrow he and his sons should be in the state of the dead, "there was no strength in him, but he fell straightway all along on the earth;" 1 Sam. 28. struck through with fear before he was wounded by the arrows of the Philistines. Belshazzar in the midst of his luxury and jollity, attended with a thousand lords, and his herd of concubines, Dan. 5:1, 2, 3, 4. inflamed with wine, and therefore less capable of fear, yet upon the sight of the fatal hand writing on the wall a few unknown characters, which his guilty conscience (before the prophet Daniel came) interpreted to be the sentence of present death, how fearfully was his countenance changed, pale as a carcass? How suddenly did his blood congeal, and his warmest quickest spirits die in his heart? His whole body was seized by such a vehement trembling, that his joints were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. This is a representation of those who bid defiance to death at a distance: but when the fatal hour is come, and they hear the sentence decreed against them, "God has numbered thy days, and finished them; thou art weighed in the balance," (all thy words and actions, thy thoughts and affections) "and art found wanting;" and thy soul shall be divided from thy body, the one sent to hell to suffer the undying worm of conscience, the other to the grave, to be a prey to the worms of corruption; how are they overcome with horror!

(2.) The continual succession of the pleasures and business of the world divert the mind from the attentive strong contemplation of death and the consequences of it. Pensive thoughts are unwelcome, and we studiously endeavour to cancel the memory of such things as afflict us. It is said of the wicked, that "God is not in all their thoughts." The consideration of the holy inspector and judge of their actions is tormenting, therefore they fill their minds with earthly imaginations, to exclude the divine presence. We read of those, who to "put far away the evil day, chaunted to the sound of the viol, and drank wine in bowls." Amos 6:3, 4. They are rocked asleep with the

motion of fantastic vanities. And sleep takes away fear, but gives no safety.* It is recorded of Marius, that after his overthrow by Sylla, he was always in consternation, as if he heard the sound of the trumpets, and the noise of the victorious army pursuing him: and his fears were no longer quiet than whilst charmed with wine and sleep; he therefore was continually drunk, that he might forget himself, his enemy, and his danger. Thus men make a pitiful shift to forget their latter end; and whilst they are following either secular affairs, or sensual pleasures, are unconcerned for what is to be hereafter. But this diversion will shortly be at an end, for in their languishing hours, when the wasted body fails the carnal mind, and sensual desires fail the man, then conscience that spoke with a low voice before, is loud and terrible, and like the rigid exacter in the parable that took his debtor by the throat, requires them to pay what they owe.

(3.) Some are so hardened in infidelity, that the powers of the world to come make no impression on their hearts. They mind but little, and are less affected with invisible things. They fortify themselves with gross thoughts, that the spirit of man vanishes with his breath, that death is the end of this life, and not the beginning of another, "and feed without fear." Place one in the midst of destructive evils, but unseen or not believed, and he is as fearless as a blind person walking on the brink of a deep pit. Indeed there are none less disturbed with the terrors of death, than the eminently good, or the extremely bad: for the one sort have a blessed hope that death will be to them an entrance into life, and live like the angels, "with a joy unspeakable and glorious." The others are sensual and secure as the beasts that perish, having extinguished the fear of eternal future evils, which is the proper passion of reason. The apostle declares, "That knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (to be reconciled to him, before the season of mercy be expired.) 2 Cor. 5:11. But those who have suppressed the natural notions of eternal judgment, as they think it beneath their wisdom to be persuaded by the promises of heaven, so beneath their courage to be terrified with the threatenings of hell, and triumph over the ruins of conscience.

But though wicked infidels slight the threatenings, they shall not escape the vengeance of God.

We read of Noah, "That being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, he prepared an ark for the saving of his house." Heb. 11. His fear was the native issue of his faith. But the profane world, in whom sense was predominant, that despised the oracle, and trembled at no judgments but what were acting on the visible stage, "they ate and drank, married and were given in marriage," till swept away by the unfeared inundation. We read that Lot being certified by an embassy of angels, that a deluge of fire would in a few hours pour down from heaven Upon Sodom, he most earnestly solicited his sons in law, "Arise, depart out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city:" but they entertained his compassionate advice with derision, "he seemed to them as one that mocked," and were surprised by those fearful flames that dispatched them from a temporal hell to that which is eternal. Thus it was prophesied, "That in the last days there shall come scoffers; walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming?" But let them blaspheme and scorn the most sacred and terrible truths, let them perpetuate their excess of riot, and wild mirth while they live; death will come, and judgment as sure as death.

Chapter III: How the death of Christ Frees us From the Tormenting, Fear of Death

How the death of Christ frees us from the tormenting fear of death. By dying he paid our ransom to the injured justice of God, and deprives satan of the legal power he had over us. His death is our redemption from the curse of death. It makes death a blessed advantage to believers. The happiness obtained by death unfolded. It

frees the saints from afflicting evils, and sin the cause of them. The highest positive good obtained by death.

III. I Now come to show how the death of Christ frees us from the tormenting fear of death.

For the clearing this, we are to consider, that sin, satan and death, are enemies in combination against man in his mortal state; and the destructive power of satan, and death, is from sin. When man renounced his Creator and natural Lord, he was judicially given up to satan as the executioner of vengeance, and to the power of death. Such is the order, rather the confusion in the world by sin. The empire of satan and death is built on the ruins of our innocence.

Now the Son of God came from his throne in heaven to deliver us: and whereas there are two ways of obtaining freedom from captivity, either by ransom, or by power and rescue, in both respects our deliverance from bondage to these capital enemies, is ascribed to the death of Christ.

It is called our ransom, and that in its strict notion has a respect to captivity: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all." 1 Tim. 2:6. His life was the full price of our liberty and salvation. God does not pardon sin, and release from punishment by a pure absolute act of his will and authority, as a creditor forgives a debtor; but in such a way as to preserve the rights of justice inviolate. Therefore when man was devoted to death, our Redeemer exchanged conditions with him, and offered "up his precious blood," 1 Pet. 1:18. as our ransom to God, in the quality of the king and judge of all. Such was the dignity of his person, that the entire world, the heavens and the earth, with all their inhabitants, are of less value to him, than the basest dross to refined gold. Such was the greatness of his sufferings, Phil. 2:8. in which the highest degree of obedience, and the lowest degree of humility were conspicuous, as to be a valuable compensation, to obtain "eternal redemption for us."

Now when God the Supreme Judge is satisfied, satan forfeits the right he had to torment us, and is divested of his dominion over our wills; which though justly permitted, was an usurpation upon God's right in man that can never be extinguished. It is said by the apostle, that our Saviour "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;" Col. 2. He abolished the use of the ceremonial law, that was an evidence and inditement of their guilt who performed it, and the curse of the moral law: it follows, "and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Our Saviour died victoriously; the tree of infamy on which he suffered, was the trophy of his conquest. His death disarmed satan of his weapons, whereby he subdued us, sin, the law, and death; for though his actual triumph was in his resurrection and ascension to glory, yet it is justly ascribed to his death; for that meritoriously opened the grave at his resurrection, and heaven at his ascension.

And here by the way it is most worthy of observation, that our deliverance from our spiritual and most deadly enemies is equally righteous, as admirable and glorious: for our suffering Saviour appeased the wrath of God, and broke the powers of darkness. "The wisdom and love of God had their designs in his death, as well as the malice and rage of satan; as lines, that are opposite in the circumference, meet in the centre."

And as from the tyranny of satan, so the death of our Redeemer is our redemption from death, as to the curse and final dominion of it; nay, has made it a blessed advantage to us.

1. The curse is removed. Death considered as the wages of sin, is all sting and poison, the consequent of the spiritual death, and the introduction to eternal death. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." 1 Cor. 15. Death hath its wounding power from sin, and sin from the law, that forbids it, that discovers its nature, and enhances the measure of its guilt, and denounces

condemnation for it. Now our Saviour having in our stead subjected himself to death, the penalty of the law for sin, "There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Gal. 3. Death inflicted on the saints, has not that relation to the guilt of sin, as to be properly satisfaction to revenging justice. There are no petty payments to be made by our sufferings after his complete satisfaction to God. "The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all." Isa. 53.

It is indeed still a declaration of God's holy displeasure against sin, for that originally opened the way of its coming into the world; and sometimes by the immaturity or manner of it, it is a chastisement upon good men for sin; that is, to make them renew their repentance, and mortify their carnal affections that fasten them to the world. For though after the last act of expiration there is no place for repentance; yet in the approaches of death, the soul is strongly excited by the call of God to review its state, and make solemn preparations to "be found of him in peace." But it is not in a strict sense the malediction and vengeance of the law executed upon them. The serpent is turned into a rod of correction in the hands of our heavenly Father for their good. Heb. 12. As the apostle, speaking of some that for their profaning the Lord's table, were fallen asleep, adds, "that when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." 1 Cor. 10:33. "A believer shall not be hurt of the second death." Rev. 2.

From hence it is, that in the book of life, the scriptures, the death of the saints is called a sleep. Saint Paul argues, "If we believed that Jesus died and rose again; even so them also that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him." 1 Thess. 4:14. It is observable how the apostle varies the expression, "Jesus died, and the saints sleep in him:" for he sustained death with all its terrors, that it might be a calm sleep to his people.* They enjoy as perfect a rest in the beds of dust, as ever in the softest down. Stephen in the midst of a shower of stones fell asleep. Believers die in peace. "The righteous is taken from the evil to

come; he enters into peace." Isa. 57:1, 2. Being reconciled to God through the blood of Christ, they are not terrified at his call, but with sweet tranquillity resign their souls unto him. "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen thy salvation." Luke 2. There is a vast difference in God's account, between the death of the righteous and the wicked. As the tabernacle in the wilderness was taken down with care upon their change of station, and delivered to the Levites' charge, in order to the raising of it again with honour; but the house incurably infected with the leprosy, was plucked down with violence, and thrown into an unclean place with execration: thus "the death of the saints is precious in the sight of the Lord," their bodies are kept in the bosom of the earth, to be raised in glory; and the death of the wicked is accursed. In short, as the wood that Moses cast into the waters of Marah, by a miraculous virtue sweetened them: so the cross of Christ has taken away the malignity and bitterness of death.

2. Death is a blessed advantage, and enriching gain to a believer: it brings him to the possession of that good that incomparably exceeds the evil that remains in it. For the death of a saint is not total; but as in the ceremony of purification from leprosy, one bird was killed, and the other let fly in the open air, the mysterious shadow of the lepers being restored to a state of liberty: thus "when the body dies and returns to the earth, the spirit returns to God, the Father of spirits, and fountain of life." Our Saviour told the Jews, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, that I will give for the life of the world." John 6:48. The heavenly divine life, that is communicated by the Spirit of Christ to believers, remains entire when the sensitive life is lost. The natural order is, "There is a time to be born, and a time to die:" the supernatural is, there is a time to die, and a time to be born. The death of a saint is a* new birth; the pains of the dying body are as throws, whereby the ripened soul is delivered into the "land of the living." The happiness of a saint after death, more particularly will appear by considering;

3. The freedom he obtains from all afflicting evils that are numberless here, and from sin the worst in its nature, and the cause of all the rest. The present world is a labyrinth of thorns, in every state we meet with something to vex us. You may as well count the waves of the sea when enraged by a tempest, as the troubles to which in this mortal open state we are exposed. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." Job 14:1. A short life, and many miseries, O our unhappy capacity! the body is liable to as many diseases,* as there are members; and the soul to as many perplexities as passions. How often are the scenes and habits changed in the time of one man? He that lives in pleasures, must act the mourner's part, "Our sweetest comforts have hidden stings:" and whatever is most pleasing, may occasion bitter grief. And usually holy men have a greater portion of afflictions here: sometimes by the malignity and violence of the wicked; as under the law, the lamb and the dove were sacrifices, the emblems of innocence, and purity, and meekness, whilst the vulture and the lion, the greedy devourers escaped. The apostle declares of the elect, "They are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son," who traced out the way to heaven in his own blood, and by the cross ascended to the throne. Sometimes more immediately divine providence afflicts them to preserve their spirits from the tainted pleasures of the world, and for other holy ends: but there "is a rest for the people of God in heaven." Besides, there are relics of sin in the best of the saints here. Indeed sin is deposed from sovereignty and rule; the imperious lusts are crucified, but not quite expired. As those that were nailed to the cross in their hands and feet, the parts least vital and most sensible, died a painful and lingering death. "Still the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." As there is a complexion of humours in human bodies, always jarring when they are in the soundest health; and where there is not this active contrariety, either the body is without a soul, a mere carcass, or a glorified body in heaven: so where there is not this internal combat between grace and sin, either the man is wholly* carnal, "dead in sins and trespasses;" or wholly spiritual, reigning in heaven. And there is nothing more works on the tender affections of a saint, than to find in himself what is

displeasing to God; that still he is under a sad necessity of sinning. What is said concerning an old man wasted and decayed in his drooping years, that "the grasshopper is a burden to him," is true of the new man in a christian; the sins that are counted light in the valuation of the world, are a heavy weight to him. Vain thoughts, idle words, irregular passions, unprofitable actions are motives of heart-breaking sorrow. Now death is to a believer an universal remedy against all the evils of this life: it frees him from all injuries and sufferings, and from sin in all its degrees, from all inclinations and temptations to it. "He that is dead, ceaseth from sin." Death is the passage from this wilderness to the true Canaan, the rest above, that flows with better milk and honey, with innocence and happiness for ever. There is nothing can disturb the peace, or corrupt the purity of the blessed.

4. Besides the privative advantage, the freedom from all the effects of God's displeasure, and the resentments of it, there is the highest positive good obtained by death; "The spirits of just men are made perfect in heaven." The soul is the glory of man, and grace is the glory of the soul, and both are then in their exaltation. All the faculties of the soul are raised to the highest degrees of natural and divine perfection. In this life grace renews the faculties, but does not elevate them to their highest pitch: it does not make a mean understanding pregnant, nor a frail memory strong, nor a slow tongue eloquent, but sanctifies them as they are. But when the soul is released from this dark body of earth, the understanding is clear and quick, the memory firm, the will and affections ardent and vigorous. And they are enriched with divine light and love, and power, that makes them fit for the most noble and heavenly operations. The lineaments of God's image on the soul are first drawn here, but then it receives his last hand. All the celestial colours are added, to give the utmost life and lustre to it. Here we are advancing, but by death we arrive at perfection.

We shall in heaven be joined to the assembly of saints and angels, our best friends. Love is the law of that kingdom, and perfectly

obeyed there. Now how charming is the conversation of one that is wise and holy, especially if the sweetness of affability be in his temper? How pleasantly does time slide away in the company of our beloved friends? We are not sensible of its flight. But what dear satisfaction is it to be united to that chosen consecrated society above, "who love one another as themselves?" Though the angels and saints have different degrees of glory, yet every one is perfectly happy and pleased. As the strings of an instrument differ in the size and sound: some are sharp and high, some grave and deep, others a mean; and from that variety results the harmony of music, so that if every string had judgment and election, it would choose to be what it is: so from the different degrees of glory in heaven, the most admirable and equal order of the divine wisdom appears, that satisfies every one.

We shall be in the glorious presence of God and Christ, "where is fulness of joy, and infinite pleasures for ever." It is said of Abraham, "he rejoiced to see the day of Christ," two thousand years before his coming. When by faith he saw the incarnation of the Son of God, in order to the redemption of men, it put him into an ecstasy. Yet then our Saviour was born to sorrows and miseries. But how ravishing is the sight of our Redeemer, "set down on the right hand of the majesty on high, having purged our sins by himself," and accomplished our salvation? Now we are "absent from God," yet in believing his infallible promise, we "rejoice with a joy unspeakable and glorious:" but how much more joyful is the fruition of them? Here the divine goodness is derived to us through secondary means, that weaken its efficacy; but in heaven the consolations of the Creator are most purely dispensed, and his immediate excellencies are made known.

This blessedness exceeds all our thoughts and explicit desires, and requires the eloquence and experience of an angel to set it forth. The bright sum of it is this, we shall see God in his glory, "face to face," 1 Cor. 13. in the most perfect manner: the sight of his glory shall transform us into his likeness; "we shall be like him, for we shall see

him as he is." 1 John 3. This shall produce in us the most pure and ardent love; and love shall be attended with inexpressible joy, and that with the highest praises of the blessed God, whose influxive presence is the heaven of heavens.

And that which crowns all is, that the life above is eternal. This satisfies all our desires, and excludes all our fears: for unchangeableness is an inseparable attribute of perfect felicity. The blessed are in full communion with God, "the fountain of life, and Christ the Prince of life." "Because I live," saith our Saviour, "ye shall live also." What can interrupt, much less put an end to the happiness of the saints? The love of God is immutably fixed upon them, and their love upon him. Here their love is subject to decays and gradual alienations; as the needle in the compass, though it always has a tendency to the north pole, yet sometimes it declines and has its variations. But in heaven the love of the saints is directly and constantly set upon God. The light of his countenance governs all their affections. It is as impossible to divert their desires from him, as to cause one that is inflamed with thirst, to leave a clear flowing spring for a noisome puddle. In short, heaven is filled with eternal hallelujahs: for there is no appearance of sin, no shadow of death there: all miseries are vanished, and all that is desirable is possessed by the saints: the circle of their employment is to enjoy and praise the divine goodness for ever.

Now is not the blessed exchange a christian makes of the present life, for that which is infinitely better, sufficient to make death not fearful, nay desirable to him? The regular well-grounded hope of this will compose the thoughts in the nearest approach and apprehension of death: no other principles or resolutions are able to vanquish the terrors of our last enemy. And this happiness was purchased for us by the everlasting treasure of our Saviour's blood. The satisfaction of his sufferings was meritorious, as the merit of his active obedience was satisfying.

Chapter IV: The Reason Why Believers Die for a Time

The reason why believers die, and are in the state of death for a time, notwithstanding the sting of death is taken away. Sin is abolished by death. Their graces are eminently exercised in the encounter with the last enemy. The natural body is not capable of the celestial life. The resurrection of the saints is delayed till the coming of Christ. The resurrection proved from revelation; and the possibility of it by reason. How the resurrection of Christ is an assurance of the happy resurrection of the saints.

I Shall now resolve an interesting question; how comes it to pass, since believers are freed from the sting of death, that they die, and remain in the state of death for a time?

For this there are several reason.

1. By this means all the sinful frailties that cleave to the saints in this life, are abolished, "The body is dead because of sin;" Rom. 8. And what is more becoming the wise and holy providence of God, than that as by sin man was at first made subject to death, so by death sin dies entirely for ever. Thus, as in Samson's riddle, out of the devourer comes meat; and our worst enemy is conquered by his own weapons.

2. Death is continued to the saints, for the more eminent exercise and illustration of their graces, for the glory of God, and in order to their future reward.* Faith and love, and patience, are declared in their most powerful operations in our encounter with death. If every saint were visibly and entirely translated to heaven, after a short course of holy obedience; if the wicked did visibly drop down quick into hell, faith would be resigned to sight here. This would confound the militant state of the church with the triumphant. Therefore now "death happens to the good as well as to the wicked." In the next state they shall be separated by a vast gulph, and an amazing

difference. Now faith, whatever the kind of death be that a christian suffers, sees through the thickest clouds of disgrace and misery, the glorious issue. As the illustrious confessor, who was crucified with our Saviour, proclaimed his eternal kingdom in the midst of insulting infidels. And our love to God then appears in its radiancy and vigour, when we are ready for the testimony of his truth, and advancing his glory, to suffer a violent death: or when it comes in a gentler manner, for it is even then terrible to nature, we are willingly subject to dissolution, that we may be united to God in heaven. And our patience has never its perfect work, and is truly victorious, till this last enemy be subdued. Death is the seal of our constancy and perseverance. Now the righteous Rewarder will crown none but those "that strive lawfully," and are complete conquerors.* And how wise and sweet is the economy of the divine providence in this, that the frailty of our nature should afford us a means of glorifying God, and of entitling ourselves by his most gracious promises to a blessed reward?

3. Our Saviour by his invaluable obedience and sufferings, has procured for believers a celestial divine life, of which the natural body is not capable. The apostle saith, "flesh and blood cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." The exigencies and decays of the sensitive nature require a continual relief by food and sleep and other material supplies: but the life above is wholly spiritual, and equal to that of the angels. Therefore till this earthly animal body be reformed and purified, it is not capable of the glory reserved in heaven. This is so absolutely requisite, that those believers, who are found alive at the last day, shall "in the twinkling of an eye be changed," that they may be qualified for it. Now herein the wisdom of God is wonderful, that death, which by the covenant of works was the deserved penalty of sin, by the covenant of grace should be the instrument of immortality: that as Joseph by a surprising circuit was brought from the prison to the principality; so a believer by the grave ascends to heaven. This the apostle, in his divine disputation against infidels, proves in a most convincing manner; "thou fool, that which thou sowest, is not quickened except it die." As the rotting of the corn

in the earth is necessary to the reviving and springing of it up: so we must die, and the image of the earthly Adam be abolished, that we may be transformed into the image of the Heavenly One.

And to the other part of the question, why the saints remain in the state of death for a time? there is a clear answer. The resurrection of the saints is delayed till Christ's coming to judgment, partly for the glory of his appearance: for what an admirable sight will it be, that the saints of all ages shall at once arise glorified and immortalized, to attend upon our Saviour in the last act of his regal office, and then to make a triumphant entry with him into heaven? And partly, that the established order of providence may not be disturbed: for the changing of our nature into glory, in a sudden and inexplicable manner, cannot be without miraculous power; and if every believer presently after death, were in his glorified body translated to heaven, the world would be always filled with miracles, which were to cease after the sufficient confirmation of the gospel by them. But how long soever the interval be to the resurrection, it shall be with "them that sleep in Jesus," as it is with those that awake out of a quiet natural sleep, to whom the longest night seems but as a moment: so when the saints first awake from death, in the great morning of the world, a thousand years will seem no more to them than to God himself, "but as one day."

I now come to prove, that our Saviour will abolish the dominion of death over the saints.

Whilst the bodies of the saints remain in the grave, they seem to be absolutely under the power of death. The world is a Golgotha, filled with the monuments of its victories. And it may be said to this our last enemy, in the words of the prophet to the bloody king, "hast thou killed, and taken possession?" but we are assured by an infallible word, that the power of death shall be abolished, and the bodies of the saints be revived incorruptible and immortal.

The resurrection is a terra incognita to the wisest heathens; a doctrine peculiar to the gospel: some glimmerings they had of the soul's immortality, without which all virtue had been extinguished in the world, but no conjecture of the reviving of the body. But reason assists faith in this point, both as to the will of God, and his power for the performing it. I will glance upon the natural reasons that induce the considering mind to receive this doctrine, and more largely show how "the resurrection of the just is assured" by our Redeemer.

The divine laws are the rule of duty to the entire man, and not to the soul only: and they are obeyed or violated by the soul and body in conjunction. Therefore there must be a resurrection of the body, that the entire person may be capable of recompences in judgment. The soul designs, the body executes: the senses are the open ports to admit temptations. Carnal affections deprave the soul, corrupt the mind, and mislead it. The love of sin is founded in bono jucundo, in sensible pleasures: "and the members are the servants of iniquity." The heart is the fountain of profaneness, and the tongue expresses it. And the body is obsequious to the holy soul in doing or suffering for God; and denies its sensual appetites and satisfactions in compliance with reason and grace. The "members are the instruments of righteousness." It follows then there will be an universal resurrection, that the rewarding goodness of God may appear in making the bodies of his servants gloriously happy with their souls, and their souls completely happy in union with their bodies, to which they have a natural inclination, and his revenging justice be manifest in punishing the bodies of the wicked with eternal torments answerable to their guilt.

And of the possibility of the resurrection, the circular and continual production of things in the world, is a clear demonstration of the power of God for that effect. There is a pregnant instance that our Saviour and the apostle made use of as an image of the resurrection: a grain of corn sowed in the earth, corrupts and dies, and after springs up entire; its death is a disposition to life. The essays of God's power in the works of returning nature, flowers and fruits in their

season, instruct as how easily he can make those that are in the dust to awake to life. If the art of man, whose power and skill are very narrow and limited, can refine gold and silver to such a lustre, as if their matter were not* earth digged out of the mines: if from black cinders it can form crystal glasses so clear and shining, how much more can omnipotency recompact our dust, and reanimate it with a glorious life? Death that dissolves our vital frame does not abolish the matter of our bodies: and though it is corrupted and changed by a thousand accidents, yet it is unperishing; and under whatsoever colours and figures it appears, God perfectly discerns, and will separate it for its proper use.

More particularly, I will show how the resurrection of Christ is an assurance of the resurrection of believers to glory. As our surety he was under the arrest of death; it becoming the holy majesty of God, and conducing to the ends of his government, not to derogate from the dignity of his law, but to lay the penalty upon his Son, who interposed for us. Now having finished the work of our redemption by his sufferings, his resurrection was the just consequent of his passion. And it is observable that his resurrection, though one entire act, is ascribed as to himself, so to his Father, Rom. 1:11. by whose consent and concurrence he rose again. Therefore it is said, "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, since it was impossible he should be holden by it." Acts 2:24. It was naturally impossible upon the account of the divine power inherent in his person, and legally impossible, because divine justice required that he should be raised to life; partly to vindicate his innocence, for he was reputed, and suffered as a malefactor, and principally because he had fully satisfied God. Accordingly the apostle declares, "he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification," Rom. 4. Having paid our debt, he was released from the grave, and the discharge was most solemnly published to the world. It is therefore said, "the God of peace raised him from the dead:" Heb. 13. the act is most congruously ascribed unto God invested with that title, because his power was exerted in that glorious work, after he was "reconciled by the blood of the covenant." Briefly, Our Saviour's victory over death

was obtained by dying, his triumph by rising again. He foiled our common enemy in his own territories the grave. His death was a counterpoison to death itself; as a bruised scorpion is a* noble antidote against its venom.

Indeed his death is incomparably a greater wonder than his resurrection. For it is apparently more difficult that the Son of God, who originally possesses immortality, should die, than that the human body united to him, should he raised to a glorious life. It is more conceivable that God should communicate to the human nature some of his divine perfections, impassibility, and immortality, than that he should submit to our lowest infirmities, sufferings and death.

Now the resurrection of Christ is the argument and claim of our happy resurrection. For God chose and appointed him to be the example and principle from whom all divine blessings should be derived to us. Accordingly he tells his disciples in a forecited scripture, "because I live, ye shall live also." Our nature was raised in his person, and in our nature all believers: therefore he is called "the firstfruits of them that sleep:" because as the firstfruits were a pledge and assurance of the following harvest; and as from the condition of the firstfruits being offered to God, the whole harvest was entitled to a consecration; so our Saviour's resurrection to the life of glory is the earnest and assurance of ours. He is is called "the first-born among the dead," and owns the race of departed believers as his brethren, who shall be restored to life according to his pattern. He is "the head," believers "are his members," and therefore shall have communion with him in his life. The effect is so infallible, that now they are said "to be raised up together, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Ephes. 2:6. If his victory over our enemies had been imperfect, and he had saved himself with difficulty and hazard, "as it were by fire," in the apostle's expression, our redemption had not been accomplished: but his passion was triumphant; and is it conceivable that he should leave the saints, his own by so many dear titles, under the power of death? If Moses, the

deliverer of Israel from the tyranny of Pharaoh, Exod. 10:26. would not suffer any thing of theirs, "not an hoof" to remain in the house of bondage; will our great Redeemer be less perfect in his work? Shall our last enemy always detain his spoils, our bodies, in the grave? This would reflect upon his love and power. It is recorded, to confirm our hopes, how early his power was displayed in forcing the grave to release its chained captives: "and many bodies of saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Matt. 27:52, 53. What better earnest can we have, that the strength of death is broken? From what he has done to what he is able to do, the consequence is clear. The apostle tells us, "he will raise our vile bodies, and change them like unto his glorious body, by that power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." Phil. 3:21. Our redemption "will then be complete," Rom. 8:23. and all the bitterness of death past. The redemption of the soul is accomplished from sin and misery immediately after death: but the redemption of the body is the last in order, and reserved to crown our felicity at the great day. Then "death shall be swallowed up in victory," 1 Cor. 15. abolished for ever.

And O the joyful reunion of those dear relatives after such a divorce! when the body that was so long detained in the loathsome grave, 1 Cor. 15. shall be reformed with all glorious perfections, and be a fit instrument for the soul, and partaker with it in consummate blessedness and immortality. It is said, that "those that wear rich clothing are in kings' houses:" but what are all the robes of costly folly wherein earthly courtiers appear, to the brightness and beauty of the spiritual body wherewith the saints shall be clothed, to qualify them for the presence of the King of kings, and to be in his house for ever? But O the miserable condition of the wicked in that day! Death now breaks their bodies and souls into an irreconcilable enmity, and how sad will their conjunction be! The soul will accuse the body to have been sin's solicitor, continually tempting to sensualities: and the body will upbraid more than ever it allured the soul, for its wicked compliance: then the sinner shall be an entire sacrifice burning, but never consumed. Mark 9. Now from the assurance of a

blessed resurrection by Christ, the forementioned fear of death is conquered in believers. If the doctrine of the* transmigration of souls into bodies (the invention of Pythagoras) inspired his disciples with that fiery vigour, as to encounter the most present and apparent dangers, being fearless to part with the life that should be restored; how much more should a christian with a holy confidence receive death, knowing that the life of his body shall not be finally lost, but renewed in a blessed eternity?

Chapter V: Union with Christ the Qualification

The qualifications of persons considered, that have a right to this privilege. Union with Christ the fountain of eternal life is absolutely requisite. The vital bond of that union is the sanctifying Spirit, The eminent operations of the Spirit considered, as the Spirit of truth, and of holiness, and the Comforter. He illuminates the understanding to see the reality and excellency of supernatural things. He inspires the ardent love of God. Divine love is the principle of universal holiness. The Spirit communicates a divine power to do the will of God.

IV. THE fourth general head to be considered, is, the persons that have an interest in this blessed privilege.

This inquiry is of infinite moment, both for the awakening of the secure, who vainly presume upon their interest in the salvation of the gospel, and for the confirming and encouraging the saints. And we have an infallible rule of trial declared by St. John: "he that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life." 1 John 5:12. All the excellent and comfortable benefits procured by our Saviour are communicated only to those who are united to him. Particularly with respect to the present subject: justification, that

great blessing of the gospel, the complete pardon of sins, that disarms death of its sting, is not common to all that are christians in title, but is a privilege with a limitation; "there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. 8:1. vitally as their head, from whom are derived spiritual influences, and judicially as their advocate in judgment; and such are described by this infallible character, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." The blessedness after death that is assured by a voice from heaven, is with this precise restriction exclusive of all others, "blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works follow them." Rev. 14:13. The glorious resurrection at the last day, when the bodies of the saints that now rest in hope, shall be incorruptible and immortal, is the consequence of union with him. Thus the apostle declares; "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Cor. 15:22. As all that were naturally in and from Adam, the corrupt fountain of mankind, are under the sentence of death; so all that are in Christ, the head of the regenerate, shall partake of his blessed life. Others shall be raised by his power, as their Judge, but not as their head: raised to be more miserable than death can make them, not be transformed into his glorious resemblance; made capable of suffering an ever-dying death, not revived to eternal life.

Now the bond of our union to Christ, is the Holy Spirit derived from him, as the head of the church, and is the inward powerful and lasting principle of holiness, and new obedience in believers. "He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit:" 1 Cor. 6:17. that is, by the Spirit of holiness has a real participation of his life, is both "quickened and united to him." John 6:36. When the prophet Elisha by the outward applying the parts of his body to the dead child, 2 King 4:34. inspired life into him, there was no real union between them: but Christ is by his Spirit so intimately united to believers, "that he lives in them" and "they in him," Gal. 2:20. The sanctifying Spirit renews the directing and commanding faculties, the fountains of moral actions; enlightens the understanding with saving knowledge, rectifies the obliquity of the will, purifies the affections,

and reforms the life; so that "the same mind" is in christians "as was in Christ; and as his conversation was," such "is theirs in the world." This divine change is not wrought by natural reason, though assisted by the most powerful arguments. The breath of a man may as easily dispel a mist, or thaw a frost, as human directions and motives to virtue can renew the mind and heart, and produce a holy frame of soul towards God. Renewed christians are said to "be in the Spirit." illuminated, inclined and enabled by the Spirit to do God's will; and the Spirit of God to dwell in them, by his peculiar and eminent operations. "They live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit," An angel may assume a body, and act by it: but the human soul enlivens it, and performs sensible operations by it. And such a principle is the Holy Spirit to the soul, gives it spiritual life, activity and power for good works. By what application of the Spirit's power this is produced is mysterious and inexplicable: but as the apostle speaks of his rapture into the third heavens, that he knew it was real, and heard "unutterable things;" though how it was performed, "whether in the body, or out of the body," he could not tell: thus when a natural man, the current of whose thoughts and affections was to the things of this world, becomes spiritual, when the carnal appetite is subdued, and sanctified reason has the throne, when he feels such strong and sweet impulsives to holiness as engage the will; when the stream of his desires ascend to the things above, and his life becomes holy and heavenly, he feels and knows this wonderful change, though the manner how it was wrought he cannot tell. I will show more fully this sanctifying work of the Spirit, that we may the better understand our state.

The Spirit of God is denominated by various titles, "the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of holiness, the Comforter," John 15:26. and represented by various types, by "an ointment that clarifies the eye to see things aright," by "cleansing refreshing water," by "purifying refining fire," Rom. 1:4. correspondent to his sacred operations in the soul.

As the Spirit of truth, he illuminates the understanding to see the reason and excellency of supernatural and heavenly things, of the great mysteries of godliness, of eternal glory; so that a christian in his most deliberate, solemn and composed thoughts, in his exactest valuation infinitely prefers them before the gaudy vanities of this transient world. When the eyes of the mind are truly enlightened, present things appear, or rather disappear, as shadows.

As the Spirit of holiness, he renews the will and affections, inspires the soul with divine and unutterable desires after the favour and grace of God, and communicates spiritual power for the prosecuting and obtaining those desires.

The Holy Spirit raises such a love to God, that habitually and strongly inclines the soul to obey his commands.

This is the most clear and essential character of a christian, the special and most excellent property of a saint, upon which all other holy qualifications depend. As reason is the first and chief excellence of man, from whence his other perfections are derived, that distinguish him from the brutes, and give him a natural and regular pre-eminence and dominion over them, so that a man is most properly defined a reasonable creature: thus the love of God is the most divine grace, the true form of holiness, the root from whence all other virtues spring and flourish, and most peculiarly distinguish a saint from unregenerate men, however adorned and accomplished; so that a saint is most properly defined to be a lover of God.

This is the principle of true holiness inherent in the soul, and shining in the conversation, that distinguishes the sincerity of a saint from the art of hypocrisy, an affected appearance of religion for carnal sordid respects; and from civil virtue, that restrains from what is ignominious and disgraceful to our reputation, and makes obnoxious to penalties of the laws, and excites to praiseworthy actions, upon worldly motives; and from philosophical morality, that forbids vice as contrary to reason, and commends virtue as the chief ornament

and perfection of human nature, without a regard to please and glorify God.

And divine love is the principle of universal holiness. Love is called "the fulfilling of the law," as it is a comprehensive grace, and as it draws forth all the active powers of the soul to do God's will in an exact manner. Universal obedience is the exercise of love in various instances. As the spouse in the Song of Solomon is transformed in divers representations; sometimes as a sister, sometimes as a warrior, sometimes as the keeper of a vineyard, but she always acted as a lover, and her chief business was to please her beloved. This allegorical description of the church, signifies that when the soul is inflamed with the love of God, that affection will be active, and discover itself in all it does or suffers in the service of God. This will make a christian very desirous and diligent to please God in all things, and careful not to displease him in any thing; for that is the inseparable effect of love. The felicity of the natural temper, and the force of education, may cause a loathing of some evils, and dispose to some good works, but with a reserved delight in other sins, and a secret exception against other duties. Servile fear is a partial principle, and causes an unequal respect to the divine precepts: it restrains from sins of greater guilt, at which conscience takes fire: it urges to some duties, the neglect of which causes disquiet; but the love of God causes the hatred of sin; and therefore it is against all sin, not only to prevent the exercise of it, but to eradicate it out of the soul. All the fearful consequences of sin do not render it so odious to a gracious spirit, as its own proper idea and intrinsic evil, as it is contrary to the holy nature and law of God. Love unites the soul to God, and turns the thoughts continually to him: and the lively sense of his majesty and presence, who is so pure that he cannot behold iniquity, causes an aversion from all that is displeasing to his divine eyes. And from hence it is that a zealous lover of God is frequent and strict in reviewing his heart and ways; and upon the discovery of sinful failings, renews his repentance, which is the exercise of grief and love, and renews his purposes of more care and circumspection for the future. Love aspires to be like God in all possible degrees of

purity; for it inflames our desires after his favour, as that which is better than life, and all the sweetest enjoyments of it: and holiness is the powerful attractive of God's delightful love to us.

Love is the principle of free, ingenuous, and joyful obedience. It was our Saviour's meat and drink to do the will of his Father. For love is the fountain of pleasure, it moves the soul with election and liberty, and makes every thing grateful that proceeds from it. Therefore the apostle declares, "that the law is not made for a righteous man;" that is, as it is enforced by terrible penalties, to constrain rebellious sinners to obedience: for love is an internal living law in the heart, and has an imperial power over his actions. And this also distinguishes the renovation of one sanctified by the Spirit from the imperfect change that is made in the unregenerate. They may stop the eruption of corrupt nature, but "are swine, that being washed, have an inclination to wallow in the mire:" they may by strong impressions of fear be urged to do many good things; but in this they are like a bowl that is thrown with such violence, as controls the drawing of the bias, and makes it run contrary to it. But love inclines the soul to obey the holy motions of the Spirit with facility: as the wheels in Ezekiel's vision "turned every way with readiness as the Spirit moved them."

And with holy love there is a spiritual power communicated, that both the natural averseness and impotence to what is good may be healed. By the virtue of the sanctifying Spirit, the soul that was dead, absolutely unable to perform spiritual and super natural acts, "is revived to a kind of omnipotence, it can do all things," required by the evangelical covenant, by the new law that is in the hands of our merciful Mediator for salvation. It is true, there are relics of sin in the best, and the flesh and spirit are repugnant principles warring against one another: but the renewed spirit will make no capitulation or composition with sin, but is so predominant, that sin is gradually subdued, and does not so freely and frequently break forth as it does from the unrenewed. By the grace of the Spirit "we are enabled to mortify the deeds of the body, to crucify the flesh with the affections

and lusts thereof;" and to perform holy duties with freedom, alacrity and zeal, in such a manner as is acceptable to God. In short, saving grace is distinguished from that which is common to the unregenerate by its prevalency and constancy. There may be a declination in the saints tending to a downfall; but "the seed of God," that supernatural grace that "remains in them," will by the power of the Holy Spirit recover the supremacy. Others may be enlightened, and feel some good motions, and transient touches; as Saul had his rapture among the prophets: but they are not truly, entirely, and perseveringly converted to God; they are not proof against the allurements or terrors of the world. They make a fair profession till they are tried by temptations. Congealed drops of water appear like solid crystal, till the warm beams of the sun dissolve them, and discover the hypocrisy of the crystal. False jewels may seem to have the lustre of diamonds, till they are broke by a fall, and discovered to be glass. Thus the riches, the honours and pleasures of the flesh melt some, and temporal evils break the resolution of others, and make it evident they were not sincere converts. But where the Holy Spirit savingly works, he is said "to dwell:" he is not like a passenger, or a tenant at will, that neglects the house, and suffers it to fall into ruin, but as the proprietary and owner he keeps perpetual residence in true christians, and by his continual influence preserves them from final apostacy.

Now from hence we may judge whether we have an interest in Christ and his benefits. For the apostle clearly tells us, "that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Rom. 8:9. By this sacred signature we are appropriated to Christ, and visibly distinguished from the world. For though the secret and pure influences of the Spirit in the soul are only known to the person that feels them, yet his active inspirations are declarative of his presence and power in the outward conversation. As the wind that is of so thin and subtile a nature that it is invisible in itself, but we certainly know from what point it blows by the course and way that the ship makes: thus the Spirit of God, who is compared to the wind, is discovered by an infallible indication, his fruits and effects in a holy life. And those

who have communion with Christ by his Spirit, have a share in his victories, and may with confidence meet the last enemy, death: for we are assured, "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in us, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies, by the Spirit that dwelleth in us." Rom. 8:11.

A preparative conformity to Christ in grace, will be followed with a consummate in glory. But those who never felt the sanctifying efficacy of the Spirit in their hearts and lives, though they are christians in profession, yet they have no other union with Christ, than a dead branch with a tree that receives no sap and virtue from it; or an artificial member joined to the body, that may have the outward clothing and ornaments proper to that part, but derives no life and sense from it. "Whoever is in Christ is a new creature." 2 Cor. 5:17. And only "those who partake in the first resurrection from sin, shall be exempted from the power of the second death," and upon just grounds are freed from the tenors of the first.

Chapter VI: The Redeemer Frees Us from the Sting, Fear and Dominion of Death

Our dear obligations to our Redeemer considered, who frees us from the sting, and fear, and dominion of death. His love was equal to the height of his glory from whence he descended, and the depth of his sufferings for our sake. An excitation to make it the great design of our lives to overcome the fear of death. Reconciliation with God requisite to our being freed from the powers of death. Repentance is necessary to obtain the favour of God. The infinite danger of delaying it, unfolded. The presumption of long life is vain. The hope of a future repentance is very deceitful. It is very hazardous whether God will accept the repentance that flows merely from bitter constraint at

last. The continuance in sin upon the presumption of pardon, renders men most unworthy of it.

TO apply this point, let us,

1. Consider our dear obligations to our blessed Saviour, who to free us from the sting and enslaving fear of death, submitted to it with all its terrors from God and wicked men. He felt a sadness to an agony in his soul, and suffered the equal extremities of ignominy and torment in his body. The favour of God was intercepted from him, that it may shine upon us in that gloomy hour. And all his terrible sufferings, though foreknown by his enlightened mind, could not weaken his determined will to undergo them for us: but when Peter regarded with a more tender eye his life than our salvation, he was repelled with indignation. Unparalleled love! no less than divine, transcending all the instances of human affection. The highest kind and excess of love among men is to die for another, and the highest degree in that kind is to die to save an enemy; and of this our Saviour is the singular example: love incomprehensible! "it passes knowledge, and all understanding" but his who expressed it. His love was equal to the height of his glory from whence he descended, and the depth of his sufferings that he sustained in our stead. "By washing us from our sins in his blood, he makes us kings," Rev. 1. dignifies us with spiritual sovereignty over, not only defiling, but disturbing passions. The freest and most confident sinner in the world, that rebels against the divine laws without restraint, is a slave, not only under the chains of his imperious lusts, but in that he is liable to the scourgings of conscience whenever awakened, and to the servile fear of death every day. But the sincere christian has a dear and sweet peace, a blessed tranquillity from the tormenting apprehensions and fears of death, that are the just consequences of guilt.

One of the ancient Romans* highly celebrates the astronomers, who discovered the true causes of the eclipses of the sun and moon, and freed the world from the double darkness of ignorance and fear; for

before that discovery, men believed the obscuring of those great lights were the fainting fits of nature, and mortal symptoms threatening an universal calamity. But what praise and blessing is due to our Saviour, who hath given us infallible assurance that the death of the righteous is not, as the heathen world imagined, an irreparable loss of life, but a short eclipsing of this low and mean light that is common to sensitive creatures, to be restored more excellent and permanent in heaven, where those stars shine in the divine presence for ever. "Thanks be to God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." This should render him "infinitely precious to us," and inflame our hearts with desires equal to our obligations to serve him.

2. Let us make it the great design and main business of our lives to remove from our souls the just fears of death. It is one of the solemn follies of the world to fear where there is no cause: as if a sentinel should mistake glow-worms in the night for lighted matches, and give a false alarm: but it is a worse folly, though pleasing, not to fear when there is the greatest reason to excite it. And it is so in the present case; for the most are without the fear of death, that should make them serious in preparing for it: nay, to maintain their security, are as unwilling to hear conscience declare the wretchedness of their condition with respect to eternity, as Ahab was the prophet Micaiah, "who always foretold evil things to him."

It was the chief design of the philosophers, by principles of reason, to fortify themselves against all frightful accidents, and with a masculine mind, with an ardent and generous spirit, to * encounter this inevitable evil. When one of them was threatened by the Emperor Antigonus with present death, he boldly replied, threaten this to your dissolute courtiers that are softened and melted by sensual pleasures, and easily receptive of terrible impressions, not to a philosopher to whom death is contemptible in any appearance. This was a piece of affected bravery; for Pagan philosophy could never furnish them with armour of proof against the dart of our last enemy. But the gospel assuring us that death is an entrance into

immortality, makes that to be the reality of a christian, that was a vain boast of the philosophers.

Now that we may be established in that blessed tranquillity that death cannot discompose, the following directions are infinitely useful.

i. We must give all diligence to be in a state of reconciliation with God. The things requisite to that are, as the apostle declares, "repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 20:21. Repentance includes a godly sorrow for sins past, with a detestation and forsaking them sincerely, without hypocrisy; and entirely, without partiality in the heart and conversation. It is called "repentance from dead works," Heb. 6:1 the proper name of our sins, that deserve eternal death. By repentance we return to obedience that is due to God our maker and lawgiver. Faith respects the Redeemer, who by his blood shed on the cross, and pleaded in heaven, reconciles God to penitent sinners. The belief of his merciful and powerful mediation for our acceptance and pardon, "works by love," 2 Cor. 5:14. and "constrains us" to dedicate ourselves in a devoted propriety to his glory and service, and to live according to that dedication. These two are absolutely necessary to the vital and salvific state of a christian. And as soon as a person sincerely repents and believes, he is justified before God; and if he dies, will certainly obtain eternal glory. This should be the early and most speedy work of our lives: for the delay of repentance, and neglect of securing the favour of God, arms death with more stings and terrors.

The infinite danger of this I will unfold, to awaken the careless and secure.

The devil is a sophister in perfection; and his ordinary and successful artifice to elude the force of present conviction, and wrap men in sin and damnation, is to induce them to delay the great work of the soul till afterward. He is not so foolish to tell them, as he did our first parents, "ye shall not die;" for the temptation is so palpable, that it

could deceive none. Though the evidence and certainty of supernatural truths, that disturb the security of sinners, is sometimes obscured by effected doubts; yet there is no artifice that can resist the full and strong conviction in men, that death is inevitable. Though nature recoils from it with abhorrence, yet this sad truth is so visible, that it forces in assent from all. Those who are titular gods, the greatest princes, are not so vain as to pretend to an exemption by privilege from that fatal necessity; they cannot fancy to be embalmed alive, and that nature may be made incorruptible by art. The palace is as near the grave as the cottage: therefore the devil cherishes in men fond hopes of a long life. As some optic glasses deceive the sight, and make a superficial representation in colours on a wall but two or three steps distant, appear a long deep gallery: thus the tempter by a dangerous deceit, presents to the imagination the fatal term at a great distance; and since he cannot lessen the certainty of death in men's belief, he removes the image of it out of their memories, to weaken the impression that it is capable to make on their affections. They dare not venture to die, as they live, careless of salvation, and unprepared for their accounts with God; therefore they suspend the workings of conscience by a seeming compliance; they resolve at random to convert and reform hereafter, but will not determine at present to forsake their sins. The tempter insinuates there will be a long interval between the present time and the last hour, that shall decide their state for ever; that it will be a convenient season to prepare for the other world when they have done with this; as if repentance were best at last, when there are no temptations, and therefore no danger of retracting it. And the heart of man is a great flatterer, very subtle to deceive and rain him with vain resolutions of a devout retirement, and becoming seriously religious hereafter: and thus by an easy permission he gratifies the present desires of the flesh, and goes in a circuit from one vanity to another, till death surprise the presumer. It is very applicable to this purpose, what is related of Alcæus the poet, who from every season of the year,* took arguments to give a new title to his intemperance: the spring, he said, required liberal drinking, in sign of joy for the renovation of nature; the summer to temper our heat, and refresh our thirst; it was

due to autumn that is dedicated to the vintage; and winter required it to expel the cold, that would congeal the blood and spirits: thus he pleaded for the allowance of his excess. And so men in the several ages of life (that are correspondent to the seasons of the year) frame some excuses to delay repentance, and give some colour to their rebellion against God, who commands us to hear his voice today, obediently and immediately, upon no less than being excluded from his blessed rest for ever: Heb. 2:7, 8. yet the self-deceiving sinner preaches another gospel to himself, † and thinks the vanities of childhood, the pleasures of youth, the business of middle age, and the infirmity of old age, are plausible pretences to put off the serious work of repentance: O that such would duly consider the desperate uncertainty upon which men build their hopes of a future repentance, and divine acceptance!

1. Men delay repentance upon the presumption of a long life: but what is more uncertain? It is the wisdom and goodness of God to conceal in his impenetrable counsels the time of our sojourning here: for if men, though liable to death every hour, and therefore should be under just fear lest it surprise them unprepared, yet against so strong a curb, run with that exorbitant vehemence after the present world; how much more licentious would they be, if secured from sudden death? but none can promise to himself one day. Death comes not according to the order of nature, but the decree of God. How many in the flower of their youth and strength thought themselves at as great a distance from death, as the east is from the west, when there was not the space of an hour between them and death, between them and hell? The lamp suddenly expires by a blast of wind, when there is plenty of oil to feed it. The rich man pleased himself with designs of sensual enjoyments for many years, yet did not see the dawning of the next morning: "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." This sentence is pronounced in heaven against thousands that are now alive, conversant in the vanities and business of the world, eating and drinking, playing and trading, and all unconcerned as to dying, yet shall breathe their last before to-morrow, and their unwilling souls be rent from the embraces of their bodies. In various

manners men die from inward and outward causes; an apoplexy, an imposthume, a flux of rhume stopping respiration, kills the body without any presaging signs of death: as if the roof and all the chambers should fall within the house, while the walls are standing entire. And how many unforeseen accidents, and therefore inevitable, put a sudden period to life? Is it not our truest wisdom, by an early repentance, to prepare for death when the season is certainly short, and but uncertainly continued, and the omission is irreparable?

2. Suppose life be continued, yet sinners that delay repentance, can have no rational hopes that they shall sincerely repent in time to come. For,

(1.) Saving repentance is the gift of God: and is it likely that those who have been insensible of the loud and earnest calls of the word, inflexible to the gracious methods of his providence leading them to repentance, should at last obtain converting grace? The gales of the Spirit are very transient, and blow where he pleases; and can it be expected that those who have wilfully and often resisted him, should by an exuberant favour receive afterwards more powerful grace, to overrule their stubborn wills, and make them obedient? To expect divine grace and the powerful workings of the Spirit, after long resisting his holy excitations, is both unreasonable and unrevealed. It is written as with a sun-beam, that God will graciously pardon repenting sinners that reform their lives;* but it is no where promised that he will give saving repentance to those who securely continue in sin, upon a corrupt confidence they will repent at last. Our Saviour threatens to him that neglects the improving the grace that is offered, "That which he hath shall be taken away:" yet men unwilling at present to forsake their sins of pleasure and profit, vainly hope they shall obtain grace hereafter, without any promise from God, and against the tenor of his threatenings. God has threatened that his Spirit "shall not always strive with rebellious sinners," and then their state is remediless. This may be the case of many in this life, who are insensible of their misery. As consumptive

persons decline by degrees, lose their appetite, colour and strength, till at last they are hopeless: so the withdrawals of the Spirit are gradual, his motions are not so strong nor frequent; and upon the continued provocations of the disobedient, finally leaves them under that most fearful doom, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still:" and thus punishes them on this side hell, as he does the damned, by giving them over to sin. It is a bloody adventure for men to indulge their carnal appetites, as if they had infallible assurance that they should not die in an impenitent state. The delayer does not regularly trust, but tempt God.

(2.) Suppose the Holy Spirit be not totally withdrawn, yet by every day's continuance in sin, the heart is more hardened against the impressions of grace, more averse from returning to God, and repentance more, difficult and hazardous. The last guilty disposition that seals up the damnation of sinners is impenitence. Now he that delays the returning to his duty, shall have more cause to repeat hereafter, but less will and power; for sin repeated, makes him more incapable of repentance, and that which is indisposition, will become averseness and obstinacy. The heart with difficulty changes its last end. Actions may be suddenly changed, when there is a disability to perform them; but the inward inclinations to sin, without supernatural renewing grace, remain. It is therefore the subtilty of the old serpent to make the entrance of sin easy: for he knows that custom is a second nature, and has a mighty power in us: "Can an Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard change his spots? then may you who are accustomed to do evil, do good." If sin in its infancy can make such resistance, that the Spirit of grace is foiled in his motions to rescue the soul from its bondage, how much more when it is grown into a confirmed habit? Therefore the apostle urges so zealously; "To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

(3.) How uncertain it is whether God will accept the addresses of such at last? We are commanded, "Seek the Lord while he may be

found; call upon him while he is near." The limitation implies, if the season be neglected, he will hide his face for ever. Now in cases of great moment and hazard, what diligence, what caution should be used?

1st. Consider how derogatory it is to his majesty, to offer to him the dregs of our age, the reliques of a licentious careless life, spent in the works of vanity. Is this "to give glory to God?" Jer.13:16. Contempt provokes superiors as much as actual injuries: how vilifying is it of his eternal greatness, that men lavishly waste the best of their time and strength upon their lusts; and when through weakness of age, or the violence of a disease, they can no more do the acts of sin, nor relish the pleasures of sin, to presume that God will upon their prayers forgive their sins so long indulged, and of such violent provocations, and receive them into his kingdom, as if he could not be happy without them, and it were his interest to receive them? God has laid his exceptions against such addresses: he may justly stand upon his greatness and honour: "If ye offer the blind for a sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now to thy governor, will he be pleased with it, to accept thy person, saith the Lord of hosts?" As the Lord upbraids the Jews for their black ingratitude in bargaining for thirty pieces of silver, to have him betrayed to their malice; "a goodly price that I was prized at of them:" so when there is an universal prostration of all the powers and faculties, when the spirits are damped, the vital heat is checked, and the function of the senses is obstructed, then to seek to God for mercy, and to make fair promises of obedience, he may justly reproach the presumer, "a goodly time you have allotted for me!" Your youth and strength, the golden age of life, have been wasted on your lusts, and in the business of the world; and the wretched remains you think worthy of my acceptance.

2dly. Consider what sincerity or moral value is in religion that merely proceeds from bitter constraint. It is a rule in law, *Falsum est eam peperisse, cui mortuæ filius extractus est*: it is not a natural birth when the child is extracted from the dead mother: it is not genuine

piety that is extorted by the rack, whilst the heart full of reluctance does not truly content. Pure religion flows uncompelled from love to God; it is the dregs that come forth with pressing. It is observed of the Israelites, that "when God slew them, they sought him, and returned and inquired early after God." But it is added, "Nevertheless they did flatter with their mouths, and they lied to them with their tongues: for their hearts were not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." Psal. 78:34, 36. How often does experience convince us of the inefficacy of a sickbed repentance? How many that were very devout and mournful with one foot as it were in the grave, and another in hell, and were as a brand plucked out of the fire; yet when the fear of death is removed, all the terrors of conscience, the religious affections that were felt and expressed by them, vanish as the morning dew? Now converting grace is distinguished by its radication and efficacy, not only from the mere pretences of those who know their own insincerity, but from the real workings of conscience, and the imperfect dispositions to good that are in the unrenowned. And those persons who with the return of health, have returned to their sins, if they had died with their religious resolutions, would have presumed "that their repentance was unto life," and of their interest in the divine mercy. "The heart is deceitful above all things," and above all things deceitful to itself. Besides, when sinners are plunged in deep distress, when the shadow of death sits upon their eye-lids, they may with plentiful effusions of tears desire God to receive them to heaven, not to see and praise his adorable excellencies, not to please and glorify him for ever, but as a sanctuary from revenging justice, a refuge from hell. And will such prayers prevail? What swells the confidence of sinners, but unworthy notions of God, as if a forced and formal confession of their sins could deceive his all-discerning eye; and desires merely terminated on themselves were sufficient to reconcile his offended majesty?

3. There is nothing renders men more unworthy of mercy than continuance in sin, upon presumption of an easy pardon at last. This is the most provoking abuse of his "Goodness and long-suffering, that should lead them to repentance." Rom. 2. He can in the

twinkling of an eye, in the beating of a pulse, cut off the sinner: it is as easy to his power as to will it. And there is no consideration should be so melting and moving as his clemency. We read of David, that he had more than once in his power Saul his unjust and cruel enemy, yet spared him: the effect of it was that Saul was softened, and under such compunction of spirit, that he wept, confessed his guilt, and persecuted him no more, overcome by that unexampled love: "If a man find his enemy, will he let him go?" 1 Sam. 26:21. Yet men take advantage from the goodness of God, securely to despise his laws. The habitual sinner thinks that God is so gracious, such a lover of souls, so easy to be entreated, that upon his dying prayer, "Lord, remember me in thy kingdom," the answer will be, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." This is the deceitful principle upon which men usually build their hopes, as actions that bear the image of their minds clearly manifest. Now this presumptuous indulgence gives the deepest grain to their sins, and makes them more incapable of pardon. Chrysostom observes, that Judas was encouraged to betray his master, presuming on his lenity, goodness, benignity; which considerations intolerably aggravated his treason, and confounded his hopes. There is a dreadful threatening against those who reject the invitations of grace in their prosperity, and when the righteous judge comes to sentence and execution, are earnest supplicants for mercy. "Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hands, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear comes: when your fear comes as a desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me: for they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." Prov. 1. A doleful case beyond all possible expression! when the sinful creature, forsaken of all comforts below, addresses to heaven for relief, and meets with derision and fury, scorn and indignation. The foolish virgins, careless to prepare for the Bridegroom's coming, in vain at last discovered their want of oil, in vain solicited the wise virgins for supply, in vain knocked at the door,

crying, "Lord, Lord, open to us," Mat. 25. The answer was severe and peremptory, "I know you not;" and they were for ever excluded from the joys of heaven.

Chapter VII: Do Not Delay To Be Reconciled with God

It is most incongruous to delay our reconciliation with God till the time of sickness. It is very uncomfortable to delay it till our declining time. The vanity of men's presuming to delay repentance, because some have been converted in their last hours. The instances of such are rare, and not to be drawn into example. Innumerable have died in their sins, deceived with hopes of repenting hereafter. Those who have delayed their repentance, are not utterly destitute of hopes if they earnestly seek God at last.

4. HOW incongruous is it to delay the solemn work of reconciliation with God till the time of sickness. This is an affair wherein our transcendent interest is concerned, and should be performed in our most calm and sensible condition, when we are most capable of reflecting upon our ways, and making an exact trial of ourselves in order to our returning to God by a holy change of our lives. Now that the time of sickness is not a convenient season for this work, is sadly evident; for some diseases are stupifying, and all the powers of the soul are benumbed in a dull captivity; so that the sick man only perceives with his animal faculties. Some diseases are tormenting, and cause a great disorder in the soul, and distract the thoughts from considering its spiritual state. When the storm is at the highest, and the pilot so sick that he can give no directions, the ship is left to the fury of the winds, and escapes by miracle. When there is a tempest in the humours of the body, and the soul by sympathy is so discomposed that it cannot apply itself to prepare for its appearance

before the divine tribunal, what danger of being lost, and passing from a short agony to everlasting torment?

Besides; suppose the sickness more tolerable, yet how unfit is a person weak and languishing,* when sense and conscience are both afflicted, to encounter with the cruel enemy of souls? All that sincerely seek peace with God, must expect fierce anger and war from satan: therefore it is a point of necessary wisdom, whilst our bodies and minds are in the best order, to be preparing against his assaults.

5. Consider how uncomfortable it is to delay repentance till age and sickness, when the fruits of it are not so evident nor acceptable: in evil days, and the approaches of death, it is very hard to discover the sincerity of the heart, whether repentance proceeds from holy principles; whether the sorrow then expressed be godly for sin, or merely natural, for punishment; Whether the good resolutions be the effects of permanent fidelity, or of violent fear, that will vanish, the cause being removed. When the invitations to sin cease, there may remain a secret undiscerned love to it in the heart, which is the centre of corruption, and root of apostacy. The snake that seemed dead in the frost, revived by the fire. The inordinate affections that seemed mortified, when the sensitive faculties were disabled to carnal enjoyments, may have inward life, and will soon be active and vigorous in the presence of temptations. And that a deathbed-repentance is usually deceitful, appears from hence, that not one of a thousand that recover from dangerous diseases are faithful in performing their most sacred and solemn vows. How many having the sentence of death in themselves, and under the terrors of the Lord, have expressed the greatest detestation of their sins, and resolved, as they thought sincerely, if God would spare them, to reform their ways, to become new creatures, exemplary in all holy conversation; yet the danger being over, their heats of devotion expire as they revive, and their lusts recover strength with their bodies, and being suppressed only by fear, are more fierce in their return. Their hearts were as marble, that in rainy weather seems

dissolved into water, but it is only from the moisture of the air, and remains as hard as ever: when the fear of death is removed, all their promises of reformation are ineffective, as violent and void; all their religious affections vanish as the morning-dew. Now if these persons had died before this visible trial and discovery, they had passed into the other world with the reputation of true penitents, deceiving others with their prayers and tears, and liberal promises, the outward signs of repentance, and deceived themselves by the inward workings of an alarmed conscience: therefore ministers should be very circumspect in applying the promises of mercy to persons in such a state; for an error in that kind has fearful consequences. A little opiate divinity may quiet the mind for a time, but the virtue of it will be soon spent, and the presumer perishes for ever. But suppose a dying person with true tears and unfeigned persevering affections returns to God; can he have a comfortable assurance of his sincerity? Indeed the searcher and judge of hearts will accept him: but how doubtful and wavering are his hopes? what anxious fears are in his breast, lest he builds upon a sandy foundation? And how dreadful is it to appear before the tribunal of God, and expect an uncertain sentence?

But sinners still please themselves in this, that God has effectually called some at the last hour, and they may find the same favour with others. To this I answer:

(1.) It is true we have some rare admirable instances of God's mercy and grace, the dying thief and some others, which showed it is possible with God to abolish the most confirmed habits in a short time, and by a swift conversion to prepare a sinner for heaven. But these miraculous examples are not to be drawn into consequence for the encouragement of any in their sins. A* prince will not endure that his free favours should be made a law to him, and the special privilege of some be extended to all. As Thales said, an old mariner that has escaped the various dangers by rocks and storms at sea, was a new miracle: so that one who has lived an obstinate sinner, dies a penitent believer, is very rare and extraordinary. What our Saviour

said concerning the salvation of rich men, is justly applicable to this case, "That it was as easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, as for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." This so astonished the apostles, that they cried, "Who then can be saved?" To mitigate the difficulty, he reminds them of the divine omnipotence: "All things are possible with God." Thus for one who has been hardened in a long course of sin, and making himself meet for the company of damned spirits in hell, to be at last suddenly prepared and received into the pure and glorious society above, is possible, but possible only as miracles are, by the efficacy of infinite power; and we cannot reasonably expect such miracles. And are heaven and hell such trivial things as to be left to an uncertainty? Are not men concerned in another manner in the affairs of this world? How careful to prevent the sentence of death, of imprisonment, of banishment? How diligent to obtain some temporal advantage? Yet how neglectful in things of highest importance? It may be, says the secure wretch, God will give me repentance at last, as he did to others.* Remember you speak of that that most nearly concerns your soul, and dare you venture the salvation of an immortal soul upon a naked possibility of receiving grace? What reasonable person would neglect a disease that may prove deadly, and rely on extreme remedies? And can you be guilty of such a cruel indifference, such a desperate carelessness, as to leave eternal salvation and damnation to a peradventure?

(2.) Consider how many thousands have died in their sins,[†] and of them great numbers cherished fallacious hopes of repenting at last. Diagoras the atheist, that denied a governing providence of things in this lower world, the sphere of mutability, when one for his conviction showed him in the ‡ temple of Neptune many votive tables, containing the grateful acknowledgments of those who by addresses to the gods in dangerous storms, had arrived safe at their ports; and asked him, whether he had observed those numerous testimonies for divine providence?§ He replied, 'I see them; but how many having invoked Neptune, yet perished in the ocean, and never came to pay their vows for deliverance?' It was impiety in him

to argue so against God's disposing providence; but it may be justly said to those who neglect their present duty, presuming upon some examples of his glorious goodness on those who were converted and saved in their approaches to death, how many have finally miscarried in shooting that gulph, to one that has arrived safe at heaven? How many that presume upon their youth and strength to delay repentance, are suddenly cut off? the first symptom of their sickness is death. And what the angel with such solemnity declared, "that time should be no more," is verified concerning them by an unexpected dissolution. How many, when sick, hope either by the vigour of nature, or the virtue of medicines, to overcome the disease? and thus hope is cherished by the mortal kindness, the cruel deceit of friends, who are unwilling to discover their danger, lest their spirits should sink under the apprehension of it. And thus deluded, many never see death till they feel it, and perish for ever in their impenitence. How many that are guilty and graceless, when distant from death and hell but a few hours; yet from atheism are secure as Jonah, who slept in the midst of a tempest at sea? The tenor of their lives discovers this to be divine vengeance, they are seized by a spirit of slumber, and pass without fear into the state of everlasting desperation. How many are deceived with the appearance of repentance, and mistake a false peace for a true, and assuage the anguish of conscience, by palliating remedies? Their sorrow for sin, their prayers, their resolutions of reformation, are the product of servile fear, that is ineffectual to salvation: and as it is with crafty tradesmen, that take up much upon trust when near breaking; so they are very liberal of the promises of amendment when they are near dying. From hence they vainly presume that God is reconciled to them, whose all-discerning eye sees the inward spring of their sorrows, and the principle of all the religious resolutions is the guilty fear of eternal judgment. Now a false tranquillity is more terrible than the storms of a troubled spirit: for those who hope upon deceitful grounds, are in the most hopeless state, neglecting what is requisite in order to salvation. Thus innumerable pass in a cloud of delusion to the kingdom of darkness. And how many who have lived in careless security, as if they had "made a covenant with death," when conscience is awakened, and

looks into the depth of their guilt, when they see death before them attended with judgment, and judgment with an everlasting hell, as we read of Sisera, who from extreme fear passed to extreme security; so on the contrary, these self-deceivers from security have fallen into despair. Then truth and conscience, that were so long under unrighteous restraints, break the fetters, and terribly charge the sinners: then innumerable acts, which they thought to be innocent, appear to be sins; and sin, that they made light of, to be infinitely evil, and in the highest degree hateful to God. And sometimes by the suggestions of the enemy of souls, they are overwhelmed with despair, and their last error is worse than the first. The devil makes his advantage of the timorous conscience, as well as of the seared: solitude is his scene, as well as the noisy theatre; and by contrary ways, either presumption or despair, brings sinners to the same end. He changes his methods according to their dispositions; the tempter turns accuser, and then such who had but a dim sight of sin before, have an over-quick sight of it, and are swallowed up in an abyss of confusion: the condition of such is extremely miserable. It is observed by those who are bitten with a mad dog, that their cure is extremely* difficult, if not impossible; for being tormented with thirst, yet are so fearful of water, that the sight of it sometimes causes sudden convulsions and death. This is a significant emblem of a despairing soul: for when enraged conscience bites to the quick, the guilty person filled with estimations and terrors, ardently thirsts for pardon, yet fearfully forsakes his own mercies. Whatever is propounded to encourage faith in the divine promises, he turns to justify his infidelity. Represent to him the infinite mercies of God, the invaluable merits of Christ sufficient to redeem the lost world, it increases his despair, because he has perversely abused those mercies, and neglected those merits. The most precious promises of the gospel are killing terrors to him: as the sweet title of friend, wherewith our Saviour received Judas when he came to betray him, was the most stinging reproach of his perfidious villany. Thus it appears how dangerous it is to delay repentance and reconciliation with God till sickness and a deathbed, when the remembrance or

forgetfulness of sin, the sense or security of conscience may be equally destructive.

The sum of what has been amplified in this part is this: a vain hope of living long, and being reconciled to God when men please, is the fatal foundation of their sins and misery. They apply the word of God against the mind of God, and securely provoke him, as if they could take heaven by violence, in contradiction to the gospel. But they usually dispose of that time they shall never enjoy, and presume upon that mercy and grace they shall never obtain. We are commanded "to seek the Lord while he may be found;" a sad intimation that it is not in our power to find him to our comfort when we please. He spares long, but abused patience will deliver sinners to revenging justice. Samson was three times in the chamber of his lust exposed to treachery, and escaped; but the fourth time he said, "I will arise," but was surprised by his enemies, and lost his strength, and sight, and liberty. How justly will the wilful neglect of salvation so long, and so compassionately offered to sinners, render the divine mercy inexorable to their prayers and tears at last? When a Roman gentleman that was wont to revel in the night, and sleep in the day, had wasted a great estate by luxury, he petitioned the emperor Tiberius to relieve his poverty, and was dismissed with this upbraiding answer, *Sero experrectus es*, you are risen too late. He never opened his eyes to see his condition till it was past remedy. This is the sad case of many that waste the seasons of grace, and are careless of their duty, till upon the point of perishing, and then address themselves to God for his favour and pardon, but are justly rejected with the reproaches of their obstinate neglect of salvation in the time of their lives. I doubt not that some are wonderfully converted and saved at last; but these special mercies are like our Saviour's miraculous healing the two blind persons as he was passing in the way, when great numbers of the blind remained uncured. We read a prodigious story in the book of Kings, that a captain and his fifty men commanded Elias to come to the king, and immediately a tempest of lightning destroyed them. Now who would think that another captain with his fifty should be so desperate, having the

ashes and relics of those miserable carcasses before their eyes, as to make the same citation to the prophet? yet they did, and provoked the justice of heaven to consume them. And this madness is exemplified in thousands every day; for notwithstanding they see sinners like themselves cut off in their evil ways, they continue unreformed, as if they were fearless of hell, as if resolved to secure their own damnation.

I would not from what has been represented in this matter so universally useful, discourage any that have lived in a course of sin, from earnest seeking to God in their last hours: for even then they are not utterly destitute of hope. The gospel sets forth the mercy of God to returning sinners, in various representations and expressions of admirable tenderness. When the lost sheep was recovered, there was joy as if a treasure had been found. The prodigal had wasted his estate in lasciviousness and luxury, and by a harsh reduction came to himself, reflecting with shame upon his folly and rebellion; and the sense of his misery (not a more ingenuous or noble principle at first) compelled him to go to his father, to try what his affections would do. And it was not a vain presumption, for he found the effects of fatherly and compassionate love: "When he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said, father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, bring out the best robes, and put a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found." The design of Christ was to represent his heavenly Father in that parable: and to wounded spirits that feel the intolerable weight of sin, the mercy and mildness of the gospel is to be exhibited. God is rich in mercy to all that call upon him in truth. But to tell sinners who securely proceed in their sinful ways, that they may be saved at last, and notwithstanding their presumptuous repulses of God's calls to his service, yet think they may come into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, and be rewarded, is to give countenance and protection to sin, and to harden them to

destruction. Poison is not cured by giving food, but antidotes, that put nature into a passion till it be expelled. The terrors of the Lord can only prove medicinal to such depraved souls.

To conclude this argument, let us seriously consider the revelation God has afforded of himself in the gospel. He is a Father and a judge; justice and holiness as well as mercy are essential to his nature, that our affections may be accordingly moved towards him. "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Presumption and despair are very dishonourable to God, and pernicious to the soul: the one destroys the fear, the other the love of God. But hope tempered with fear, has an excellent influence in the christian life. As the ballast and the wind are both necessary, that the ship may sail safely; without the wind the ship can make no way; and without ballast it is in danger of oversetting by every gust. Thus hope and fear are necessary to bring us safely to heaven. Fear without hope chills, and stupifies the vigour and alacrity of the soul, that it cannot come to God: and hope without fear, makes it vain and careless of its duty, and liable to be overthrown by every pleasing temptation. Briefly, let us rightly understand the tenor of the evangelical promises of pardon and grace; they are conditional, and applicable only to penitent believers. And unfeigned faith purifies the heart, works by love, and is the living principle of universal obedience. And repentance unto life is productive of all good fruits in their season. Without faith and repentance we can neither be justified in this world, nor glorified in the next. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: as a man sows, so shall he reap. He that sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: he that sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Chapter VIII: Preserving Ourselves from Presumptuous Sins Renders Death

Comfortable

The preserving ourselves from presumptuous sins, a means to render death comfortable. The zealous discharge of the duties of our callings, and endeavours to glorify God, and do good according to our abilities, will sweeten the thoughts of death. An indifference of mind and affections to earthly things makes death less fearful. Frequent converse with God in holy duties, makes death desirable. A steadfast belief of future happiness makes death desirable. An excitation to the saints to die with courage and cheerfulness. It is our duty to die with resignation and with patience, and earnest desires to be with Christ. It is very becoming a christian to die with joy and thanksgiving.

ii. THE careful preserving ourselves from wilful presumptuous sins, is a happy means to render death comfortable to us. Sins of ignorance and infirmity, of sudden surreption and surprise, the best men are not freed from in the present state: and being the daily motive of our grief, and serious circumspection to prevent them, are consistent with the regular peace of conscience, and the friendship and favour of God. But great sins in their matter being so contrary to natural conscience, and supernatural grace, or sins presumptuous in the manner of their commission, such as proceed from the choice of the perverse will against the enlightenend mind, whatever the matter or kind of them be, are direct rebellion against God, a despising of his command, and provoke his pure eyes, and make the aspect of death fearful. The Spirit seals our pardon and title to heaven as the Holy Spirit; his testimony, that "we are the children of God, and heirs of glory," is concurrent with the renewed conscience, and distinguished from the ignorant presumptions, blind conjectures, and carnal security of the unholy. As the sanctifying Spirit he distinguishes true christians from the lost world, appropriates them to God, confirms their present interest in the promises of the gospel, and their future hopes. Briefly, grace is the most sensible effect and sign of God's special favour, the fruit of election, and the earnest of

glory: and the truth of grace is most clearly and certainly made evident by the continual efficacy of it in the conversation. The observation of our hearts to suppress unholy affections, and of our senses to prevent them, a constant course of holiness in our lives (though many frailties will cleave to the best) is usually rewarded with great peace here.

God has established a connexion between our obedience and his comforts. Those that keep themselves pure from the defilements of the world, have the white stone promised, the bright jewel of assurance of God's pardoning and rewarding mercy. We read of Enoch, "that he walked with God," was a star shining in a corrupt age; the tenor of his life was holy, and he was translated to heaven without seeing death. Though this was an extraordinary dispensation, yet there is a peculiar reward analogical to it; for those who walk circumspectly, they shall not see death with its terrors, but usually have a holy cheerfulness, a peaceful joy in their passage through the dark valley to heaven. But presumptuous sins against external and internal restraints, the convincing law of God, and the directions of conscience, (to which even the saints of God are liable here, as appears by David's earnest prayer to be preserved from them) such sins grieve the Holy Spirit, and wound our spirits, and, if continued, sequester us from the comfortable privileges of the gospel, and render us unfit for the kingdom of heaven. And when they are retracted by repentance, yet there often remains a bitter remembrance of them; as deep wounds, though cured, yet are felt in change of weather. And sometimes a spring-tide of doubts and fears breaks into humble penitent souls, in the last hours: though death brings them safely, yet not comfortably to heaven.

iii. The zealous discharge of the duties of our place and calling, the conjunction of our resolutions and endeavours to glorify God; and do good according to our abilities and opportunities of service, sweetens the thoughts of death to us. For the true end and perfection of life is the glory of God; and when with fidelity it is employed in order to it, death brings us to the blessed rest from our labours. Our Saviour

when he was to leave the world, addressed himself to his Father, "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do. And now, Father, glorify me with thyself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." John. 17. A christian that imitates and honours Christ, and with diligence perseveres in well-doing, may with a humble confidence in the divine mercy expect the promised reward. The reflection upon a well spent life is joined with a joyful prospect of God's favour and acceptance above. But to the careless and remiss, to those who are wilfully negligent of their duty, how fearful is death that summons them to give an account of their talents to the righteous Lord?

iv. A holy indifference of affection to present things, makes it easy to part with them, and death less fearful to us. David, though a king, declares he was a stranger on earth, not only with respect to his transient condition, but his inward disposition; and that he was "as a weaned child" from the admired vanities of the world. Chrysostom in a letter to Ciriacus, who was tenderly sensible of his banishment, wrote to him, 'you now begin to lament my banishment, but I have done so for a long time: for since I knew that heaven was my country, I have esteemed the whole earth a place of exilement. Constantinople, from whence I am expelled, is as distant from paradise as the desert to which they send me.' But when our affections are set upon external things, and we are irregular in our aims, intemperate in our use, and immoderate in our delights, how sensible and cutting is the division from them? How bitter is death that deprives a carnal wretch of all the materials of his frail felicity? What a storm of passions is raised, to lose all his good things at once? For it is a rule in nature, what is possessed with transporting joy, is lost with excessive sorrow. As the ivy that twines so closely about the tree, and is intimately fastened by so many roots as there are branches, cannot be plucked away without rending the bark with it; so when the world, that was as it were incarnated with the heart, is taken away, the heart itself is grievously rent by the violent separation.* And the infelicity of carnal and worldly persons is heavily aggravated, in that the guilt in procuring or abusing those

treasures and delights that they leave here with so great sorrow, will cleave to them, and give testimony against them before their Judge. But when the affections are loose to the world, and set upon heaven, our leaving the earth is no loss but gain, and our separation from the body of flesh is with that alacrity, as the putting off a vile garment to be clothed with a royal robe. It was the wise counsel of Tertullian[†] to the women of the first ages of the church, not to value and love the jewels and ornaments of gold, that they might be more ready and resolved to obtain by death, martyrdom, and by martyrdom, eternal glory. And that we may disentangle our souls from those voluntary bands that fasten us to present things, we must have a sincere uncorrupted judgment of their meanness. The apostle exhorts christians to moderation in their temper and conversation, with respect to the business and enjoyments here; that "they who have wives, be as though they had none; that those that rejoice, be as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use the world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of the world passeth away." To a wise and pondering observer, what comparison is there between shadows and dreams, and substantial everlasting blessedness? If men had the same opinion of this world whilst they live, as they will have when they are to die, they would not inordinately seek it. They who have magnified temporal honours and riches, and lived in pleasures without remorse, yet in their dying hours, when men speak with most feeling and least affectation, how have they vilified those empty appearances of happiness? with what moving expressions declared the vanity and brevity of worldly things? As when the Israelites were to go through the river Jordan, that opened itself to make a free and dry passage for them; the lower part of its waters ran into the dead sea, and utterly failed, Josh. 3:16. but the waters that came from above, rose up and appeared like a mountain.* Thus when men come to the universal passage from this to the next life, inferior things absolutely fail, and are lost in the dead sea; but the things above, that are eternal, then appear in their true greatness, exceeding all human comprehension: from hence is the change of mind and language concerning the one and other.

v. Solemn, affectionate, and frequent converse with God in religious duties, will render death not fearful to us. The whole life of a christian, as such, is a "continual communion with the Father, and with Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3. For he performs all good works by divine grace communicated "from above," and refers all to the divine honour. As in a pair of compasses, one foot is fixed in the centre, while the other moves in the circumference: so the heart of a christian is in heaven, his aims are for God, whilst he is active here in the world. His natural and civil actions are heightened to a supernatural end: and thus "his conversation is in heaven." But this was spoken of before: and that which is now specified, is the more immediate service of God in holy meditation, prayer, and the ordinances of the gospel, which is the noblest part of the spiritual life.

Our blessed Saviour who was a comprehensor upon earth, always saw the face of God, and invariably sought his glory in all things, yet had his special times of prayer and heavenly communion with God, and the most glorious testimonies of his favour in those times. Our communion with God here is as true as in heaven, but the influence and fruition is different according to our capacity. When the soul feels the vigorous exercise of the thoughts and affections upon God, and the raised operations of grace in holy duties, it is as certain a sign of God's favour and acceptance, as when fire descended from heaven to consume the sacrifice. And often our affectionate duties are rewarded with sensible consolations, and holy souls are dismissed from the throne of grace, as they shall be received at the throne of glory, with the reviving testimonies of God's approbation. Now the assurance of God's love conquers the fear of death.

This communion must be frequent. As love and respects between friends are maintained by constant visits and letters, and mutual confidence arises from acquaintance: so by the interchange of holy duties and divine favours, we preserve a lively sense of God's love, and a humble familiarity with his majesty, that his presence is not a terror to us. A christian that walks with God here, when he leaves the

world, (to use the words of a dying saint) 'changes his room, but not his company.' God was always with him on earth, and he shall be ever with God in heaven.

But cold and seldom converse begets strangeness, and that makes us shy of God. When religious duties are performed as a complimentary visit without zealous affections, or used only in times of affliction and exigency, as cordial waters in swooning fits, the divine presence is uncomfortable to us. They who prefer carnal sweets before acquaintance with God, cannot with peace and joy think of appearing before him. O how unwelcome is death to such! "for then the Spirit returns to God that gave it."

vi. Let us strengthen our belief of the blessed state after death. Divine truths lose their influence and efficacy when they are not steadfastly believed. "Faith is the substance of things not seen, and the evidence or conviction of things hoped for." Heb. 11:1. The Spirit confirms our faith, not by a pure physical act, but by convincing reason of the truth of the gospel. The life of Christ so glorious in holiness, his doctrine so becoming the wisdom and other excellent attributes of the Deity; his miracles so great, numerous, open, and beneficial, not merely to surprise the spectators with astonishment, but to touch their hearts; his death foretold by the prophets, and exactly agreeing in all the circumstances of the predictions; his resurrection the most noble operation of the divine power, are the strongest proofs that what he has revealed as the counsel of God for our redemption, and the preparations of glory for the saints in heaven, are divine truths. And the efficacy of the Spirit of Christ in sanctifying his disciples in all ages, is a continual and as satisfying an argument that the gospel is derived from God the fountain of truth, as extraordinary miracles. For holiness is as inseparable a property of the divine nature as omnipotence, and the sanctification of the soul as divine an effect as the resurrection of the body. Now in the gospel God enters into covenant with obedient believers, "to be their God," a title and relation, that supposing them the most happy here, all the enjoyments of this world cannot fulfil. This covenant is not dissolved

by death, for he uses this style after the death of his faithful servants: and from hence it follows they are partakers of his glory and joys in the next life. For the honour of his veracity is most dear to him. The psalmist declares that he has "magnified his word above all his name." No perfections of his nature are more sacred and inviolable than his truth. The foundations of nature shall be overturned, and the most solid parts of the creation destroyed, but his promises shall be completely accomplished. We are assured by his infallible authority, that "there remains a rest for the people of God." And "he that receives this testimony, sets to his seal that God is true;" honours the truth of God's word, and binds himself more firmly to his service, and is encouraged to leave this sensible world for that which is infinitely better. Our confidence and patience in well-doing, and in suffering the utmost evil to nature, is from the pregnant apprehensions of the reality of eternal things. "We know," saith the apostle, "if our earthly tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. 5:1. This fortified him against the terrors of death. When "Stephen saw the heavens open, and the Son of God ready to receive him," with what courage and constancy did he encounter the bloody rage of his murderers? Faith supplies the want of vision, it pierces the clouds, opens a window in heaven, sees the crowns of righteousness prepared for the saints, and sweetens the bitterest passage to it. But if our faith be weak and wavering, our courage will decline in the needful hour. It is with christians in their last passage from earth to heaven, as with Saint Peter walking upon the waters to Christ: whilst his faith was firm in Christ, he went upon the waves as on the firm land; but upon the rising of a storm his faith sunk into fear, and he sunk in the waters; till our Saviour upon his earnest prayer, "Lord, save me," took hold of him, and raised him with that compassionate reproof, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

The last use is, to excite the saints to die with that courage and cheerfulness "as becomes the gospel of Christ." The encouragement of Joshua to the Israelites against the giants that terrified them from entering into the land of Canaan, the type of heaven, "be not afraid of

them, they are bread for us," we shall obtain an easy conquest over them, is applicable to this purpose: do not fear death, the enemy that interposes between us and the true Canaan; for our conflict shall be the means of our victory, and triumphant possession of the holy and blessed land above. This is very honourable to our Redeemer, and recommends godliness to the judgment, affections, and practice of others. St. Basil* tells of a custom to anoint the tops of doves wings with some fragrant liquor, that mixing in company with other doves, they might by the scent allure them to follow to the dove-houses. Thus when holy persons live and die with peaceful joy, those that converse with them, are drawn by that fragrance of paradise to apply themselves to serious religion.

It is the apostle's consolatory advice to believers, "not to be sorrowful for those that sleep in JESUS, as those that are without hope." 1 Thess. 4.

When Jacob saw his beloved son's coat rent and stained with blood, he abandoned himself to desperate sorrow, and continued mourning for his death, when Joseph was advanced in authority and dignity next to Pharaoh in the kingdom of Egypt. Thus when we see the garment of mortality rent by diseases, we mourn for departed saints, as if death had absolutely destroyed them, when their souls are reigning in glory. This immoderate sorrow is a heathenish passion, suitable to their ignorance of the future happy state, but very unbecoming the plenary assurance the gospel affords us of it. Indeed for the wicked to die with fears and palpitations of heart, to be surrounded with impendent horrors, when such a precipice and depth of misery is before them, is very just and reasonable; but for the saints to die uncomfortably under inordinate fears, is a disparagement to the "blessed hope" established upon "the revelation of life and immortality by the gospel."

Now in three things I shall propound the duty of dying christians.

1. To submit to the divine pleasure with resigned spirits, as to the means, the manner, and time of death. God has a sovereign right and dominion over us. The present life is his most free favour, and he may justly resume it when he pleases. His will should be the first and last rule of ours. Whether he gently untwines the band of life, or violently breaks it, we must placidly without reluctance yield up ourselves. By what means soever death comes, all second causes are moved by an impression from above, in what age of life soever; all our times are appointed by the divine counsel: and a saint ought with that readiness and meek submission to receive it, as if he heard an express voice from heaven calling him to God, and say in his heart with Samuel, "here I am, thou didst call me." This is the last act of our obedience, and very pleasing to God. We read of the marvelous* consent of Abraham and his son Isaac, the father to offer up his son, and the son his life, (that were both the gifts of God) in compliance with the divine command, and from heaven he declared his high approbation of it. "This is to make a virtue of necessity, and turn nature into grace." But discontent and reluctancy, as if our lives were our own, and taken from us unjustly or unseasonably, is rebellious unthankfulness, unbecoming a creature, much more a true christian, who exchanges a perishing life for that which is eternal.

2. To receive death not only with patience, but earnest desires to be with Christ. I know death is naturally unwelcome. Our Saviour tells St. Peter, "when thou art old, another shall bind thee, and lead thee where thou wouldst not," John 21:18. signifying his martyrdom. The circumstance "when thou art old" is remarkable,† and intimates the natural unwillingness to die, when there was little time to live. But his rational sanctified will was superior and prevalent. The universal desire of the saints is to be happy in the presence of God: for the divine nature communicated to them is intelligent, and inclining towards its chief good: and if the obtaining it were not by "being unclothed, but clothed upon" by an immediate translation to heaven, how willingly would they leave this world? But there is a bitterness in death that makes it unpleasant; and many holy souls that desire the glorious liberty in heaven, yet are loath to leave their prison. Now

there are so many arguments to make the saints desirous of dying, that methinks since life is chiefly valued and dear to them, as it is the way to heaven, when they are come to that blessed end, it should not be longer desirable. What is this lower world that chains us so fast? It is the devil's circuit wherein he ranges, seeking "whom he may devour:" it is the theatre of contentions. The low aspire to rise; the exalted fear to fall: the poor envy the rich, and the rich despise the poor. It is a foreign country to the saints, and as pilgrims and strangers, they are liable to reproaches, injuries, and hard dealings from the wicked, the natives of the earth. What is the present momentary life that so enamours us? It is surrounded with temptations, oppressed with fears, ardent with irregular desires, and continually spent in vanity or vexation. In adversity it is depressed and melancholy; in prosperity foolish and proud. It is a real infelicity under the deceitful appearance of felicity. But above all other motives, the evil of sin from which we can not be clearly exempted here, should render death desirable. The best suffer internal divisions between "the law of the flesh, and the law of the mind;" as Rebecca felt the twins, Esau and Jacob, repugnant in her womb. How hard is it to be continually watching the heart that corruptions do not break out, and the senses that temptations do not break in? How difficult to order the affections, to raise what is drooping, and suppress what is rebellious? For they are like the people of whom the historian speaks, *qui nec totam servitutem pati possunt, nec totam libertatem*. How many enemies of our salvation are lodged in our own bosoms? The falls of the saints give sad evidence of this. If the body were unspotted from the world, as in the creation of man, there might be a just plea of our unwillingness to part with it; but since it is the incentive and instrument of sin, we should desire to be dissolved, that we might be perfectly holy. Death is the final remedy of all the temporal and spiritual evils to which we are liable here. And the love of Christ should make us willing to part with all the endearments of this life, nay desirous to enter into the celestial paradise, though we must pass under the angel's sword, the stroke of death, to come into his presence. He infinitely deserves our love, for we owe our salvation and eternal glory to the merit of his humiliation, and the

power of his exaltation. With what earnest affections did St. Paul desire "to be dissolved and to be with Christ?" Phil. 1. Love gave wings of fire to his soul, ardent desires mounting to heaven. How valiant were the martyrs in expressing acts of love to Christ? How boldly did they encounter death that interposed between them and the sight of his glory? Their love was hotter than the flames that consumed them. They as willingly left their bodies, as Elias let fall his mantle to ascend to heaven. And how does it upbraid the coldness of our love, that we are so contented to be here, absent from our Saviour. That the moles of the earth, who never saw the light of the sun, and feed on bitter roots, are pleased in their dark receptacles, is no wonder; but if birds that are refreshed with his cheerful beams, and feed on sweet fruits, should willingly be confined in caverns of the earth, it were unnaturally strange. Thus for Pagans (and those who are so in heart, though different in profession) that are so short-sighted and depraved, that they only perceive and affect present sensible things, for them to be unwilling to die is no wonder; for then all that is valuable and delightful to them is lost for ever: but for those who are enlightened by the revelation of God so clearly concerning the state of glory, and have tasted the goodness of the Lord, and know the incomparable difference between the mean and frail felicity here, and the inestimable immutable felicity hereafter, for them to be unwilling to leave this world for that which is infinitely better, is astonishing. Such was the love of our Saviour, that his personal glory in heaven did not fully content him, without the saints partaking of it with him: "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." John. 17. If our hearts do not answer his, it is a sad indication that we have not an interest in him: for the application of his merits is always joined with the imitation of his virtues, and the reflection of his love. The lovers of Christ will join with the inflamed spouse, "draw us, and we will run after thee:" Cant. 1. O loosen our affections from this world, that we may readily ascend to thee: they will renew the sighs of holy David in his banishment, "O when shall we come and appear before God!"

Lastly. To die with thanksgiving and joy. It is usual to compare this life to a voyage: the scripture is the chart that describes the coasts we must pass, and the rocks we must avoid; faith is the compass that directs the course we must steer; love is the rudder that governs the motion of the ship; hope fills the sails. Now what passenger does not rejoice at the discovery of his country where his estate and heart is, and more at the near approach to the port where he is to land? Is not heaven the country of the saints? Is not their birth from above, and their tendency to their original? And is not the blessed bosom of Christ their port? O what joyful thanksgivings are due to God, when by his Spirit and providence, they have happily finished their voyage through such* dangerous seas, and are coming into the land of the living? How joyful was to Noah the coming of the dove with an olive branch, to show him the deluge was assuaged, and the time was come of his freedom from the troublesome company of animals, and from the straitness and darkness of the ark, to go forth and possess the World? How joyful should death be to a saint, that comes like the dove in the evening, to assure him the deluge of misery is ceased, and the time is come of his enlargement from the body, his deliverance from the wretched sinful society here, and his possessing the divine world? Holy souls are immediately transported by the angels to Christ, and by him presented to his Father, without "spot or wrinkle," complete in holiness, and prepared for communion with him in glory. How joyfully are they received into heaven by our Saviour and the blessed spirits? they are the reward of his sufferings, the precious and dear purchase of his blood. The angels that rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, do much more at the glorification of a saint: and the "church of the first-born" who have before us entered into glory, have a new accession of joy, when their younger brethren arrive to the undefiled immortal inheritance. And is it not very becoming believers joyfully to ascend to the seat of blessedness, to the happy society that inspires mutual joys for ever? For our encouragement there are numerous instances of believers that have with peace and joy, though in various degrees, passed through "the dark valley to the inheritance of light." Some have died with more joy than they lived, and triumphed over the last enemy with the vocal

praises of God:* others with silent affections have quietly commended their spirits into his hand. Some have inward refreshings and support; others exuberant joys and ravishments, as if the light of glory shined into them, or the veil of flesh were drawn, and their spirits were present with the invisible world. Some of the martyrs in their cruellest sufferings felt such impressions of confidence and alacrity, that as in the house of Lamech there were accorded at the same time two discordant callings by the two brothers; Jubal the inventor of the harp and organ, and Tubal-Cain the first artificer in brass and iron, Gen. 4. the one practised on instruments of music, breathing harmonious sounds and melodies; the other used hammers and anvils, making noise and tumult: so in some persons, whilst the heaviest strokes fell on their bodies, their souls were ravished with the sweetest joy and exultation. Indeed it is not thus always with the saints: for though sin be pardoned, yet the apprehensions of guilt may remain. When a stream is disturbed, it does not truly represent the object: when the affections are disordered, the mind does not judge aright of a christian's state. A serpent may hiss when it has lost its sting. Death may terrify when it cannot hurt us. I doubt not but some excellent saints have been in anxieties to the last, till their fears were dispelled by the actual fruition of blessedness. As the sun sometimes sets in dark clouds, and rises in a glorious horizon. We read our evidences for heaven by the light of God's countenance: his image is made visible in our souls by the illustration of his Spirit: and he exercises prerogative in the dispensation of his comforts. It is his pleasure to bestow extraordinary favours on some, and deny them to others that are as holy. But every penitent believer has just cause of joy in death: for Jesus Christ has reconciled God, destroyed satan, and conquered death: and the last day of his life is the first of his glory.

ETERNAL JUDGMENT

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. - ACTS 17:31

Chapter I: The Coherence of the Text Opened.

The determining a time, and the designation of the person to judge the world are expressed. God is king of the world by creation. The two principal parts of his sovereignty, are giving laws to rule his subjects, and to pass final judgment according to those laws. His essential attributes qualify him for the exercise of government. The son of God united to the human nature, is wisely appointed to judge men. The quality of this office requires no less person, upon the account of its superlative dignity, and immense difficulty. It is the reward of his sufferings. The day of judgment is styled the great day in several respects. To define the particular time is beyond the knowledge of any mere creature.

SAINT Paul had this title of honour eminently conferred upon him, the apostle of the Gentiles: this office he performed with persevering diligence, diffusing "the light of life to those that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death." In this chapter we have recorded the substance of his sermon to the Athenians; wherein his admirable zeal and prudence are remarkable, in the matter and order of his discourse, to convince and persuade them to receive the saving truth of the gospel. He first lays down the principles of natural religion, to prepare them for the more easy belief of supernatural revealed religion. The depravation of the minds of men was in no instance

more prodigious than in their vilifying conceits of the Deity: they attributed his name and honour to various idols, and ascribed to him their own figure, and, which was infinitely more unworthy and dishonourable, their own passions and vices. They adored their own vain imaginations. The idols of their hearts were erected on their altars. Venus was a goddess, because impure love reigned in their breast. Bacchus had religious rites, because sensual pleasures, as sweet as wine, intoxicated their spirits. These errors, as gross as impious, were universal: the philosophers themselves were not exempted from the contagion. The apostle therefore makes use of the clearest arguments, to give authority to the plain conspiring voice of nature, that had so long in vain recalled them from idolatry to the worship of the only true God. He therefore declares that the divine Maker of all things, "the Father of spirits, could not be represented by corporeal and corruptible things," ver. 29. but was to be acknowledged and adored in a manner becoming his spiritual and infinite perfections. That "he made all nations of one blood," ver. 26. though distinguished in their habitations and times, that they might seek and serve the one universal Creator. And though the pagan world for many ages had lived in an unnatural oblivion of God, and he seemed unconcerned for their violation of his laws, yet it was not from the defect of justice, but the direction of his wisdom, that his patience was so long extended to them. And this he proves by the new and most express declaration of his will: "But now he commanded all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he raised him from the dead."

In the words, the eternal counsels of God are revealed in two great things.

First. The determining a time wherein he will righteously judge the world: "He hath appointed a day."

Secondly. The designation of the person by whom he will perform that eminent part of sovereignty: "by Jesus Christ, whom he hath raised from the dead."

In order to the handling of the main point, it is requisite to premise briefly some propositions.

1. That God is the universal monarch of the world, and has supreme authority to govern reasonable creatures, antecedent to their election and consent. The psalmist calls to the heathens, "Know ye that the Lord is God," Psal. 100:3. that is, the most glorious being, and absolute sovereign; "for it is he that made us, and not we ourselves." He formed all things by his almighty goodness, and is king by creation.

2. The two principal and necessary parts of his sovereignty are, to give laws for the ruling of his subjects, and to pass final judgment upon them for their obedience or disconformity to his precepts. Mere natural agents are regulated by a wise establishment, that is the law of their creation. The sun and stars are moved according to the just points of their compass. The angels are under a law in heaven, "and obey his commandments." The human nature of Christ, though advanced to the highest capacity of a creature, "yet received a law." And this whole work upon earth for our salvation, was an act of obedience to the will of God. If a prince out of affection to his friend will leave his own dominions, and live privately with him in a foreign country, he must be subject to the laws of that place. Indeed it is not conceivable that a creature should be without a law; for this is to make it supreme and independent: supreme, in not being liable to a superior power to confine and order it; independent, as to its being and operations; for dependance necessarily infers subjection. There is a visible connexion between those titles; "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King." Isa. 33:22. And sometimes in scripture his sovereignty is intimated in the title of judge: thus in that humble expostulation of Abraham for Sodom; "Shall not the Judge of all the world do right?" He addresses his

request to God under that title, to soften his power, and incline his clemency to save the wicked for their sakes who were comparatively righteous, that is, innocent "of their crying sins."

3. As his right to govern and judge the world is natural, so are his attributes, his wisdom, holiness, justice and power, that qualify and render him most worthy to exercise this government. These are finite separable qualities in angels or men, but essential perfections to the Deity. It is more rational to conceive that things may be congealed by the heat of fire, or turned black by whiteness, than that the least act of injustice can be done by the righteous Lord. The apostle rejects with extreme detestation, the blasphemous charge of unrighteousness in God's proceedings: "Is God unrighteous that taketh vengeance? God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" Rom. 3:5, 6. He may as soon renounce his nature, and cease to be God, for as such he is necessarily Judge of the world, as violate his own perfections in his judicial proceedings with us.

4. God being invisible in his own nature, hath most wisely ordained the last judgment of the world to be transacted by a visible person; because men are to be judged, and the whole process of judgment with them, will be for things done in the body. The person appointed for this great work, is Jesus Christ the Son of God united to the human nature. "The Father judgeth no man," John 5:22. not as if he descended from the throne, and divested himself of his supremacy, but not immediately; "but hath committed all judgment to the Son." And it follows, "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself: and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man?" ver. 26, 27. that is, in the quality of Mediator, for the reward of his sufferings. The quality of this office requires no less person for the discharge of it, than the Son of God.

(1.) Upon the account of its superlative dignity. No mere creature is capable of such a glorious commission. To pass a sovereign sentence upon angels and men, is a royalty reserved for God himself. We read

that "no man in heaven or earth was able to open the sealed book of his eternal counsels, as unsearchable as deep," Rev. 5. only Jesus Christ, who was in the "Bosom of the Father," the seat of his counsels and compassions, and was acquainted with all his glorious secrets, could unfold the order of the divine decrees about the church. And if no creature was worthy to be admitted into God's counsel, much less to be taken into his throne. The eternal Son, "the express image of his person," is alone fit to be authorized representative in judgment. Our Saviour declares that the Father invested the Son with this regal power, that "all men should honour the Son," John 5:23. with the same religions reverence, and supreme adoration, "as they honour the Father."

(2.) Upon the account of the immense difficulty no mere creature is able to discharge it. To judge the world, includes two things: 1. To pass a righteous and irrevocable judgment upon men for all things done in this life. 2. The actual execution of the sentence. And for this no less than infinite wisdom, and infinite power are necessary. If a select number of angels of the highest order were deputed, yet they could not manage the judicial trial of one man: for besides the innumerable acts and omissions in one life, the secrets of the heart, from whence die guilt or goodness of moral actions is principally derived, are not open to them. He alone that discerns all things, can require an account of all.

(3.) The Son of Man is invested with this high office as the reward of his sufferings. We must distinguish between the essential and economical power of Christ. The Son of God, considered in his divine nature, has an original power of judgment equal with the Father; but considered as Mediator, has a power by delegation. In the quality of the Son of Man, he is inferior in dignity to the Father. The apostle declares this in that scale of subordination of the creatures to believers, and of believers to Christ, and of Christ to God; "All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's." And observing the beautiful order that arises from the superiority and dependence between things, he saith, "The head of every man is Christ, and the

head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God." Now this power by commission was conferred upon him as the reward of his sufferings. The apostle expressly declares it, that Christ "being in the form of God," without any usurpation truly equal to him in divine perfections and majesty, "humbled himself, and became obedient to the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." His victorious sufferings are the titles to his triumphs; his being so ignominiously depressed and condemned by men, is the just reason of his advancement to judge the world.

5. There is a day appointed wherein the Son of Man will appear in sensible glory, and exercise his judicial power upon angels and men. He is now "seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high," and the celestial spheres are under his feet: universal nature feels the power of his sceptre: he reigns the hearts of the saints by his word and Spirit, and restrains the fury of his enemies in what degree he pleases: but still his servants are in distress, and his rebellious enemies insolently break his laws; and the curtains of heaven conceal his glory from us: therefore a time is prefixed when in the face of the world he will make an eternal difference by the rewards and punishments, between the righteous and the wicked, and his government shall have its complete and glorious issue. This is styled the "Judgment of the great day."

(1.) With respect to the appearance of the Judge. When the law was given from Mount Sinai, the mountain was covered with fire, and the voice of God as loud as thunder proclaimed it from the midst of the flames, so that the whole army of the Israelites was prostrate on the plain, struck with a sacred horror, and almost dead at the amazing sights and sounds. From hence it is said, that "in his right hand was a fiery law." And if the Lawgiver appeared in such terrible majesty at the proclaiming the law, how much more when he shall come to

revenge the transgressions of it? It is set forth in scripture in the most lofty and magnificent expressions: "He shall come in his Father's glory, and his own glory, and the glory of the angels." Luke 9:26. A devouring fire shall go before him, to consume all the works of the universe. He shall descend from the highest heavens, glorious in the attendance of innumerable angels, but more in his own majesty, and sit on a "radiant throne high above all."

(2.) It is great with respect to the appearance of those who are to be judged: all the apostate angels, and the universal progeny of Adam. The bowels of the earth, and the bottom of the sea, and all the elements shall give up the dead. The mighty angels, the winged ministers of justice, shall fly to all parts, and attach the wicked to bring them as miserable prisoners before that high tribunal. And those blessed powerful spirits shall congregate the righteous, to present them at his right hand.

(3.) It is great with respect to what shall be then done: he shall perform the most glorious and consummate act of his regal office; after a righteous trial, pronounce judgment, upon which the eternal destiny of the world depends. And immediately the saints shall ascend with him to the everlasting mansions of glory, and the wicked shall be swallowed up in the fiery gulph for ever.

To define the particular time when this shall be accomplished, is beyond the knowledge of the angels of highest dignity. It is *arcana imperii*, among the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. It is observable that God has revealed the times precisely wherein some great events should come to pass; after how many years the Israelites should be freed from Egyptian bondage; after what space of time they should be restored from the captivity of Babylon; when the Messiah should die for the expiation of sin: but there is no designation by certain characters of the particular day, nor year, nor age in any prophecy, of our Saviour's coming to judgment. And of this an account may be given. The special end of those predictions was, that those who lived to see their accomplishment,

notwithstanding the seeming impossibilities, might believe the truth and power of God to fulfil the revelation of his purposes for the time to come. But at the last day, all the promises and threatenings will be fulfilled, nothing will remain to be the object of faith; and consequently it was superfluous to declare the certain time, since the exact accomplishment of it according to the prediction, will neither be useful to confirm believers, or convert infidels.

Lastly, The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most convincing and commanding evidence of this doctrine, that he shall judge the world. For he was charged with blasphemy deserving of death for this testimony: "I say unto you, hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Mat. 26:64. He dedicated martyrdom in his own sufferings. Now God in raising him from the dead, confirmed the truth of his testimony by that visible miracle, and the belief of it converted the world to christianity.

Chapter II: God Will Righteously Judge the World by Jesus Christ.

The righteousness of God's judicial proceedings will appear by considering the equity of the law, the rule of judgment. The law of nature considered in its precepts and penalties. The precepts are such as become the Creator to give, and the reasonable creature to receive. An answer to the objection, that the law being pure and perfect, and man in a frail state, it seems hard to require perfect obedience from him, and condemn him for failings. The law of faith considered. Our innocence being lost, repentance is allowed. Sincere obedience is accepted, where perfection is wanting. Unfeigned faith in the Redeemer is the condition of our justification and glorification. The not complying with the gospel-terms of salvation, proceeds from the perverse wills of men.

I Will now proceed to illustrate and prove the main point, which is this:

That God will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ.

The Mediator, who shall be Judge in the union of both natures, considered as the Son of God, is essentially holy and righteous; and considered as the Son of Man, was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." In him all virtues shined in their absolute purity: and who is so worthy and qualified to reward holiness and punish wickedness as "the holy One of God?" It is said of him, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore thy God hath anointed thee with oil of gladness above thy fellows," Heb. 1:9. consecrated him to the regal office, and enriched his human nature with endowments suitable to it. It was prophesied of him, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity." Isa. 11:2, 3, 4. Human judgments are often unrighteous, from vicious respects and affections that pervert the will, or fair appearances that deceive the understanding: by gifts or guile, innocence is cast, and guilt acquitted; but the Judge of the world is inflexible to partiality, and all things "are entirely open to his sight." In the act of judgment he is represented "sitting on a white throne," Rev. 20:11. the emblem of unspotted holiness.

The righteousness of God's judicial proceedings will appear, by considering three things.

I. The equity of his law, the rule of the great and final judgment.

II. The evidence of the facts and matter, which shall be produced as the reason of judgment.

III. The impartiality of the sentence.

I. The equity of the law which shall be the rule of the last judgment. This will appear by considering i. the law of nature, and the law of faith, in their precepts and ii. the penalties annexed to enforce the observation of them.

i. The law of nature, which is the rule of man's duty, will be the rule of judgment: for "without the law there is no transgression;" and consequently a person is unaccountable for his actions. This law is composed of such rules as are most becoming, the wise and gracious Creator to give, and the reasonable creature to receive and obey: for they entirely agree and centre in his glory, and the good of his subjects. The apostle adorns the law with the most excellent elegy; "it is holy, just, and good." Rom. 7:12. Holy, as it enjoins all acts of piety to God: the adoration of his majesty resulting from his inexpressible divine perfections, the imitation of his purity, a reliance on his goodness, a resignation to his most wise providence, and a dutiful obedience to his will. Such a sense of our dependance and subjection to God, is the proper character of the reasonable creature, as dignified above inanimate and mere sensitive beings. "The law is just," as it directs us how to demean ourselves in our various relations. Justice is the cement of societies, without which they disband and fall into confusion. And the sum of the law is virtually comprised in one rule, "To do to others as we would they should do to us," than which nothing is more equal. It is good to man that keeps it, commanding nothing but what is influential upon his well-being here and for ever. It does not infringe his true freedom, but allows him unstained delights, and enjoins what is proper to advance and secure his dignity, felicity and perfection. It forbids every thing that defiles and debases him, and causes a degeneration from his native excellency. If we prescind in our thoughts the sacred authority of the Lawgiver, all the precepts of the law for their moral goodness deserve our esteem and choice, and entire observation. The sanctified mind approves them universally. "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right," saith holy David, Psal. 119:128.

Nay, in the wicked there is an intellectual assent to the goodness of the law, though the corrupt will doth not embrace it: there are some inclinations and wishes to obey it, but controlled by vicious desires. It is said of the convinced sinner, "Thou knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent." Rom. 2:18.

It may be objected, that the law being pure, and man in a frail state, surrounded with innumerable temptations, to require perfect obedience from him, and condemn him for his failings, seems hard. The law lays a restraint upon all the senses, and forbids all fleshly lusts: this may be easy to separate Souls, but for men to live in the body, as if they were out of it, to be always vigilant against the insinuations or attacks of sin, is impossible. Thus the carnal mind is apt with some colour, to traduce the righteousness of God's government. But it will be clearly vindicated, by considering;

(1.) The law supposes man in a state of integrity, furnished with sufficient power to comply with every precept, though free to fall from his duty and happiness. To command absolute impossibilities, is tyrannical, and utterly inconsistent with the nature of the blessed God.

(2.) The first man wilfully transgressed the law, and lost his holiness: and nature being poisoned in the fountain, is corrupt in all the descendants from him. Mankind was justly degraded in rebellious Adam, and is destitute of spiritual strength to perform all that the law requires.

(3.) This disability is vicious and culpable, and can be no pretence against the rights of the Lawgiver. A natural disability from the want of requisite faculties is a just excuse. It is no fault that a man cannot stop the sun, as Joshua did; nor calm a tempest, as our Saviour did by his word. But the disability that arises from a depraved disposition, renders a person more guilty. And this is the present case. The will of man is disobedient and perverse, and as soon as it can exercise election, chooses evil; and by custom in sin becomes

more hardened and obstinate. And from hence the prophet charges the contumacious Jews; "Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken." Jer. 6:10. Were they incapable of hearing the divine commands? No; "but the word of the Lord was so them a reproach, they had no delight in it." And our Saviour upbraids the pharisees, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that comes from God only?" John 5:44. They were in high reputation for their holiness, which made it impossible for them in a humble penitent manner to submit to our Saviour. In short, the primary end of the law was the happiness of man in the performance of his duty; and his first sin, and consequent impotence to fulfil it, was by his own fault. As the obliquity of a line cannot be ascribed to the straight rule, but to the error of the hand that draws it. And from hence it is clear, that if God should with a terrible exactness require of men unsinning obedience upon the pain of damnation, he could not be taxed with unrighteousness.

2. But God has been pleased to mitigate and allay the severity of the law by the gospel; so that although the least breach of it makes a person an offender and obnoxious to judgment, yet the law of faith propounds such merciful conditions to the guilty, that upon the performance of them, they may plead their pardon sealed with the blood of their Redeemer, and shall be saved and crowned in the day of judgment. We are commanded "so to speak and do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." Jam. 2:12. Thus the gospel is styled, in that it frees the conscience, though not from the obedience, yet from the terrors and condemnation of the law; for there was not the least signification of mercy by it. But in the gospel, "the grace of God most illustriously appears.

(1.) In that when our innocence was lost, there may be a renovation of the sinner by repentance, to which the plenary pardon of sin is assured: "Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil, and learn to do well, saith the Lord: and though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be white like wool."

Isa. 1:16, 17, 18. God will not pardon those who forgive and flatter themselves in their sins; "but those who confess and forsake them, shall find mercy."

(2.) Sincerity of obedience is accepted where perfection is wanting. When a person with consent of heart and serious endeavours strives to obey the holy will of God, without the exception of any known duty, or the indulgence of any sin, "God will spare him, as a father spares his son that serves him." Mal. 3:17. It is not so much the matter as the allowance that makes sin deadly. Where there is guile in the heart, it will be severely imputed. It is not according to some particular acts of sin, but the tenor of the life, that the state of men will be decided.

(3.) Unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus, that is such a belief of the truth and goodness of his promises, as induces us "to receive him as our Prince and Saviour," as purifies the conscience, the heart and life, will free us from hell, and entitle us to heaven, according to the covenant of grace. In short, the final resolution of a man's trial and case will be this; either he has performed the gracious conditions of the gospel, and he shall "be saved;" or rejected them, and he shall "be damned."

If it be objected, that the terms of evangelical justification, though in themselves comparatively easy, yet are of impossible performance to men in their natural sinful state. The answer is clear:

That although the "natural man be dead in sin," without spiritual strength to resolve and perform his duty, and holy heat of desires to it; and nothing is alive in him but his corrupt passions, that are like worms generated in a carcass; yet by the grace that is offered in the gospel, he may be enabled to perform the conditions of it: for in this the gospel excels the law, the law discovers sin, but affords no degrees of supernatural power to subdue it, and directs to no means for the expiation of its guilt. As "the fire in the bush" discovered the thorns without consuming them. But the sanctifying Spirit, the true

spring of "life and power," 2 Tim. 1:7. is the concomitant of the gospel, as St. Peter declares, "With the preaching of the gospel the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven." 1 Pet. 1:12. And the Spirit by illuminating, preventing, and exciting grace assists men to repent and believe; and is promised in rich and liberal supplies to all that humbly and ardently pray for it. This our Saviour assures to us by a most tender and endearing comparison: "if ye that are evil, know how to give good things to your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask it?" Luke 11:13.

From hence it follows, that it is from the perverseness of the will, and the love of sin, that men do not obey the gospel. For the Holy Spirit never withdraws his gracious assistance, till "resisted, grieved, and quenched by them." It will be no excuse, that divine grace is not conferred in the same eminent degree upon some as upon others that are converted: for the impenitent shall not be condemned for want of that singular powerful grace that was the privilege of the elect, but for "receiving in vain" that measure of common grace that they had. If he that received "one talent" had faithfully improved it, he had been rewarded with more; but upon the slothful and ungrateful neglect of his duty, he was justly deprived of it, and cast into a dungeon of horror, the emblem of hell. The sentence of the law has its full force upon impenitent sinners, with intolerable aggravations for neglecting the salvation of the gospel.

Concerning the heathens, the scripture declares,

1st. That although the law published by Moses was not communicated to them, yet there was a silent, though less perfect impression of it in their hearts. The law of nature in the fundamental precepts of religion, and society, and temperance, was better known than obeyed by them. Therefore the apostle indicts them for atrocious crimes, Rom. 1:26, 27. such as natural conscience, consenting with the law of God, severely forbids upon the pain of damnation. Thus it is said of the heathens, "who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of

death; not only commit the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Rom. 1:32. And at the last day, "as many as have sinned without the law, as delivered to the Jews, shall be judged and perish, not according to the law of Moses," Rom. 2. but the law of nature that obliged them to do good, and restrain themselves from evil; of which the counterpart was not totally deleted in their hearts.

2dly. Although the revelation of Christ in his person, office and benefits, is not by the preaching of the gospel (that is necessary for the "begetting of faith") extended to all nations; yet the grace of the Redeemer is so far universal, that upon his account the indulgent providence of God invited the heathens to repentance. His renewed benefits that sweetened their lives, Rom. 2:4. and his powerful patience in forbearing so long to cut them off, when their impurities and impieties were so provoking, was a testimony of his inclination to clemency upon their reformation, Acts 14:17. And for their abusing his favours, and resisting the methods of his goodness, they will be inexcusable to themselves, and their condemnation righteous to their own consciences.

Chapter III: Eternal Death is Wisely and Justly Ordained to be the Punishment of Sin.

It is the wisdom of the Lawgiver to appoint such a punishment as might over-weigh all temptations to break the law. It is just to make a proportion between the quality of the offence, and the degrees of punishment. Sin is a contempt of God's majesty that is truly infinite. The obligations of reasonable creatures to the Creator, extremely increase the guilt of sin. The meanness of the motives that induce men to sin, aggravates the offence. The despising of eternal life, and the choosing the pleasures of sin, with hell in its retinue, makes the

punishment to be justly inflicted on them. The obstinate and incurable lusts of men, justly make them objects of revenging justice for ever.

ii. WE are next to consider the sanction of the law that enforces obedience; and it will appear that God is not extreme, but wisely and justly ordained eternal death to be the punishment of sin.

This will appear by considering,

1. The end of the sanction is to preserve the authority of the law in its full vigour, to render it most solemn and awful; and consequently it is the wisdom of the Lawgiver to ordain a punishment so heavy, as to overpoise all temptations that might otherwise induce the subjects to transgress its precepts.

Therefore to Adam, the first and second death was threatened upon his disobedience; and fear, as a sentinel, was planted in his breast, that no guilty thought, no irregular desire, no deceitful suggestion should enter to break the tables of the law deposited therein. Now since, notwithstanding the threatening, man was so easily seduced by the insinuations of the tempter to break the law, and disorder the government of God in the world, it is evident that such a restraint was not over vigorous to secure his obedience. I shall not insist on what is sadly visible since the first apostacy, that there is in mankind such a prodigious propensity to sensual things, that without the fear of hell, no arguments are strong enough to prevent the bold violation of the divine law.

2. It is consented to by common reason, that there ought to be a proportion between the quality of the offence, and the degrees of the punishment.* Justice takes the scales into its hand before it takes the sword. Now sin against God is of such an immense guilt, that an eternal punishment is but equivalent to it. This will appear by considering,

(1.) The perfections of the Lawgiver who is infinitely above us. One act of sin is rebellion against God, and includes in it the contempt of his majesty, before whom the highest angels "cover their faces" with reverence and adoration, as unworthy to behold his glory; and "cover their feet," as unworthy that he should behold them, Isa. 6:2, 3. the contradiction of his holiness that is his peculiar glory; the denial of his omniscience and omnipresence, as if he were confined to the superior world, Job 22:14. and busy in regulating the harmonious order of the stars, and did not discern and observe what is done below; the defiance of his eternal power, and "provoking him to jealousy, as if we were stronger than he."

(2.) If we consider the obligations of the reasonable creatures to obey his commands, the guilt of sin rises prodigiously. They were made by his power, with this special character of excellency, according to his image: they were happy in his love: they were endowed with intellectual faculties capable to understand and consider their obligations to their bountiful Lord. From hence it appears that sin is the most unnatural rebellion against God, and in it there is a concurrence of impiety, ingratitude, perfidiousness, and whatever may enhance a crime to an excess of wickedness.

(3.) The meanness of the motives that induce men to prefer the pleasing their depraved appetites before obedience to his sacred will, extremely aggravates the offence. Of this we have a convincing instance in the first sin committed upon earth. Deceitful curiosity, flattering pride, a secret pleasure of acting according to his will, joined with the low attractives of sense, blinded and transported Adam to eat the mortal fruit, against the express command of God. And ever since, the vanishing shadows of honour, or gain, or pleasure, are the only persuasives to sin. And what can be more provoking, than for a trifle to transgress the law of God, and equally despise his favour and displeasure? Can any punishment less than eternal, expiate such impieties? The rules of human justice may discover to us the equity of the divine justice. It is ordained by the wisest states, that many crimes which may be done in a few minutes,

shall be punished with death, and the offender be deprived of his natural life for ever. And is it not most just that treason against the "great and immortal King," should be revenged with everlasting death?

(4.) That which farther clears the divine justice in punishing sin with hell, is this, that God by his infallible promise assures us, that all who sincerely and uniformly obey him, shall be rewarded with heaven for ever: a blessedness most worthy the greatness and love of the eternal God to bestow on his servants: a blessedness that surpasses our most comprehensive thoughts. Now if everlasting glory be despised, what remains but endless misery to be the sinner's portion? The consequence is remediless. If sin with an eternal hell in its retinue be chosen and embraced, is it not equal that the rational creature should inherit his own choice? How just is it that those who are the slaves of the devil, and maintain his party here, should have their recompence with him for ever? That those who "now say to the Almighty, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," should hear the dreadful "depart from me into everlasting fire?" As there will be no vain boasting in heaven, where the reward is the gift of pure bounty; so there will be no righteous complaint against God in hell, where the punishment is inflicted by powerful justice. He that voluntarily sins, by consequence chooses the punishment due to it.

(5.) The estimation of an offence is taken from the disposition of him that does it. When it is done with pleasure and obstinacy, there is no place for favour. Now final impenitence alone makes sin actually and eternally damning to the sinner. Those that, notwithstanding all gracious means, live continually in rebellion against God; those that impenitently die in their sins; those that desire to live here for ever, that they might enjoy their sweet sins; those that are so hardened and naturalized in their vices, that if they were revived and brought again into this world of temptations, would certainly return to the pleasures of sin;* is it not righteous that their incorrigible obstinacy should be punished for ever? Is it not just that those who would continue under the "dominion of sin," should forfeit all their claim to

the divine mercy? For if we consider them as unrepentant and irreclaimable from their wickedness, there are in them the just provocations and true causes of God's final rejection and hatred: and if we consider God as revealed in his word and works, his essential properties, wisdom, purity, justice, necessarily work upon such objects in such a manner. How zealous an indignation did the Son of God express against the obdurate pharisees? "You serpents, you generation of vipers, how should you escape the damnation of hell?" Mat. 23:33. They in despite of all his miracles, the equal expressions of his goodness and power, resisted his authority, blasphemed his person, and slighted his salvation. Now though other sins are of an inferior nature, and weaker evidence, yet obstinacy added to them, makes a person unworthy and incapable of mercy. From hence the misery of the damned is without redemption, without hope, without allay for ever.

Chapter IV: The Evidence of Facts Produced as the Reason of Judgment

All sins, whether secret or openly visible, shall be brought to judgment. Sins of omission and commission. All the aggravations and circumstances of sin. The manner of this judicial proceeding is by opening the books. The books of the law and gospel shall be unfolded in all their precepts, and men's lives compared with them. The omniscience of God will give convincing evidence of men's works. The book of conscience shall be opened, and accuse or excuse men. Satan will be a principal accuser. The wicked will accuse one another. The saints of God will give testimony against the wicked. The impartiality of the sentence will make the divine justice conspicuous. There will be no distinction of persons in that judgment. There will be a distinction of causes. Every man shall be judged according to the tenour of his good works, and the desert of

his bad. The harvest shall be answerable to the sowing of the seed, both in kind and measure.

II. I Shall now proceed to consider the evidence of the facts that is produced as the reason of that judgment.

The temper of divine justice is very observable in the particular judgments recorded in scripture. In the first process of justice on earth, we read that God made the inquiry of Adam, "hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?" Gen. 3:11. and by palpable evidence convinced him before he condemned him. Thus before the fiery vengeance upon the wicked cities, the memory of which will never be extinguished, the Lord said to Abraham, "because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done according to the cry of it that is come up unto me," Gen. 18:20, 21. viz. whether they were so numerous and excessively wicked; "if not, I will know." God is pleased to incarnate himself in man's expression, to declare more sensibly to us, that he never punishes with precipitation, but after an equal trial of the cause. Thus we read of that profane king of Babylon, Belshazzar, "that he was weighed in the balance, and found wanting," Dan. 5:27. before he was sentenced to be deprived of his kingdom and life. And the destruction of the antichristian state is attended with solemn hallelujahs for the righteousness of that judgment, Rev. 19:2, 3. And in the last day the righteousness of God's proceedings shall be universally manifest and magnified. It is therefore called "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Rom. 2:5. Now in order to this, the scripture informs us, that all the works of men shall be brought into judgment, "even every secret thing, whether good or evil." Eccles. 12. ult. And the apostle saith, "that 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." 2 Cor. 5:10.

All sins, whether secret or open and visible, shall be accounted for. Those sins that have been acted in the most secret retirement, so that no eye of man could take cognizance of them; sins concealed from the eye of the day, the light of the sun, and from the eye of night, the light of a candle, shall then be made manifest. Nay, the sins of the thoughts and affections, of which satan could not accuse men, when the inward fire of lust or malice is not discovered by the least smoke or sparkles, by no expressions, all those shall be brought to judgment: "God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." Rom. 2:16.

The sins of omission of our duty that are so numerous, from carelessness and diversions, from slothfulness and delays, and that now so little affect us; for we are more sensible of what we do, than of what we have not done; the guilt of all these shall then be heavily charged on the conscience of the sinner. "I was an hungry, and you gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink," was the accusation of the reprobates from the Judge himself. "To him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is a sin." James 4. The neglect of improving all the means, advantages, and opportunities of doing or receiving good, will be a great part of that judgment. The Lord called his servants to an account for the talents committed to their trust, and required profit in proportion to their number and worth.

All sins of commission in youth and age, whether "gross sensuality, as lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, and all excess of riot, shall be accounted for to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead," 1 Pet. 4:5. or acts of unrighteousness to others. "He that doeth wrong, shall receive according to the wrong he has done." Col. 3:25. And sins of a lesser guilt, for which the most are not touched with grief or shame, shall then be produced in judgment. All the sins of our words, so easily committed, and not so easily observed, shall then be called to a heavy remembrance. The Judge himself tells us; "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the

day of judgment." Matt. 12. And if vain words, the signs and immediate effects of a vain mind, shall sadly increase our accounts, how much more all the contentious, fierce and revengeful words; the detracting, false, contumelious and injurious words; the impure, filthy and contagious words; the profane, blasphemous and impious words, that "flow from the evil treasure of the heart?" O their dreadful number and oppressing weight!

And all the aggravations and circumstances of men's sins, that raise their guilt to such fearful heights, shall be enumerated in order to judgment. For thus it was foretold; "behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed; and all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Jude 14, 15. And all the good works of the saints shall then be remembered, even to the least work of piety, the "giving of two mites to the treasury of the temple," Luke 21:3, 4. and the least works of charity, the "giving a cup of Cold water to a disciple," Matt. 10:42. upon the account of his relation to Christ. All their secret graces and duties shall then be rewarded.

The manner of this judicial evidence is set forth to us in scripture, by the "opening the books;" congruously to proceedings in human judgment, wherein the information and charge is produced from writings for the conviction of the accused. Thus it was represented to St. John in a vision; "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of the things that were written in the books, according to their works." Rev. 20:12.

1. The books of the law and gospel shall then be opened in all the injunctions and prohibitions, and our lives compared with them. Our Saviour told the Jews, "do not think that I will accuse you to my Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom you trust: not the person, but the law of Moses." John 5:45. And he denounced against those that reject the gospel; "the word that I have

spoken, the same shall judge them in the last day." John 12:48. The law is the exact transcript of God's sacred will, the natural and immutable rule of righteousness; it is pure, forbids all sin, and enjoins universal holiness; it is spiritual, requires not only a conformity in words and actions, but inward sanctity in mind and heart: for the soul is the principal part of man, entirely open to God's eye, the maker and judge of it. And the most enlightened saints have but an imperfect knowledge of it here. This made holy David, after his meditation upon its purity and perfection, to cry but in an agony, "who can understand his errors! cleanse thou me from secret sins." Psal. 19. This, when opened in its spiritual and comprehensive nature, by a wise and zealous preacher, darts a light into the conscience, and discovers many secret sins, that like so many serpents were still and quiet in the dark; but upon the sudden breaking in of the light, fly upon the sinner, and torment him with their mortal stings. But when the Lawgiver himself shall expound the law in its full extent and perfection, with respect to all the duties it commands, and sins it forbids, how guilty will men appear? how unable to answer one article of a thousand charged upon them?

2. The omniscience of God will give most convincing evidence of all our works: "all things are naked and open to his eyes, with whom we have to do in judgment." Heb. 4:13. The psalmist declares the infinite perspicacity of his sight: "the darkness hides not from thee, but the night shines as the day." Psal. 139. As his light and transcendent brightness is invisible to us, 1 Tim. 6:16. so our thickest darkness is visible to him. We cannot see things in the night, because it hinders the reception of the rays, that insinuate into the eyes, and cause sight: but the eyes of our Judge are like a "flame of fire," Rev. 1:14. dispelling all darkness. From his throne in heaven, his piercing eye sees through all the concealments of men's sins. "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, and our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." Psal. 90:8. He discovered the sacrilege of Achan, the lie of Gehazi, the deceit of Ananias. Saul's disobedience in sparing the Amalekites devoted to destruction, 1 Sam. 15:21. had the colourable pretence of piety, and, as a sacrifice, was laid on the altar.

And David's murder of Uriah was imputed to the chance of war as a sufficient excuse, 2 Sam. 11:5. But though they might have deceived others, they could not deceive God. He is intimately present with the souls of men, that are unsearchable to the most discerning angels of light, and knows all their most secret designs and desires, the deepest seeds of their actions. He alone has exact scales to "weigh the spirits of men," all the principles, aims and affections that are inseparable from their works. The pharisees, in whom pride was the first property, and hypocrisy a second nature, could not with all their saintly shows impose on our Saviour; "for he knew what was in man," Matt. 23:14. He discovered their alms to be not the effect of charity but ostentation, Matt. 6:2 and their specious acts of devotion to be a train to surprise some rich prey, Matt. 23:14.

And this divine knowledge of men and their actions, is in order to judgment. Thus the wise king declares, "doth not he that ponders the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?" Prov. 24:12. And God himself testifies, "I the Lord search the heart, even to give to every man according to his works." Jer. 17:10. For this reason he is said to keep a register of men's sins. Thus he speaks of the impure idolatries of the Jews; "behold, it is written before me," Isa. 65:6. to signify his exact and actual knowledge, "I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosoms." And at the day of judgment he will declare his knowledge of their sins before all, and the most secret shall be made evident, as if written in their foreheads in the most plain and legible characters.

And all the goodness of the saints shall then be revealed by the Judge.* Their greatest excellencies are invisible to the eyes of men: the sanctity of their aims and affections, which gives life and value to all the acts of obedience; their secret duties, wherein the sincerity and ardency of their souls is most expressed, are only known to God. And such is the excellent humility of the saints, that the more they are enriched, and abound with the gracious influences of the Spirit, the less they discover to the world; as the celestial bodies, when in

nearest conjunction with the sun, and most filled with his light, are least in appearance to the inhabitants of the earth. But there is a "book of remembrance before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels: and I will spare them as a man spares his son that serves him." Mal. 3:16, 17.

3. The conscience of every man shall then be opened, and "give an accusing or excusing testimony of all things;" Rom. 2:15, 16. for these acts of conscience in the present life, have a final respect to God's tribunal. And though the accounts are so vast, there shall be an exact agreement between the books of God's omniscience and of conscience in the "day of judgment." Now indeed the conscience of man, though never so inquisitive and diligent in examining and revising his ways, is unable to take a just account of his sins. As one that would tell the first appearing stars in the evening, before he can reckon them, others appear and confound his memory with their number: so when conscience is seriously intent in reflecting upon itself, before it can reckon up the sins committed against one command, innumerable others appear. This made the psalmist, upon the survey of his actions, break forth in amazement and perplexity; "Mine iniquities are more than the hairs upon my head, therefore my heart fails me." Psal. 40:12. But it will be one of the miracles of that day, to enlarge the view of conscience to all their sins. Now the records of conscience are often obliterated, and the sins written therein are forgotten; but then they shall appear in so clear an impression, that the wicked shall be inexcusable to themselves, and conscience subscribes their condemnation. And O the formidable spectacle, when conscience enlightened by a beam from heaven, shall present to a sinner in one view the sins of his whole life! Now conscience is a notary in every man's bosom; and though it is not always vocal, yet writes down their actions. "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with a point of a diamond it is graven upon the tables of the heart." Jer. 17:1. But then it shall be compelled to give a full charge against the guilty. Of this we have an infallible presage in this world, when conscience turns the point against the

breast of a sinner, and enforces the tongue, by a secret instigation, to accuse the person. And this information of conscience at the last will make the sinner speechless: for the book of accounts with divine justice, was always in his own keeping; and whatever is recorded there, was written with his own hand. And how will those hardened sinners that now kick against the pricks of conscience, be able to repel its strong and quick accusations before that terrible tribunal?

4. Other numerous witnesses will appear to finish the process of that day. Not as if God that knows all things, wants information, but for the public conviction of the wicked.

Satan will then bring in a bloody charge against them. Such is his malignity, that he is a complainer of God to man, and by calumniating the blessed Creator, seduced our first parents; and he is the accuser of men to God. He is styled the "accuser of the brethren before God day and night." Rev. Sometimes falsely, as when he taxed Job, that his piety was mercenary; and often truly, to provoke the divine displeasure. But though his charge be just against them as sinners, yet as penitent sinners they are absolved by the Judge upon the throne of grace. This we have represented to the prophet Zechary, "Joshua the high priest, a type of the church, standing before the angel of the Lord, and satan standing at his right hand to accuse him;" Zech. 3:1, 2, 3. for that was the place of accusers. But Christ the blessed reconciler interposed; "And the Lord said to satan, the Lord rebuke thee, O satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee." But he will principally act the part of an accuser at the last judgment. This is intimated in that fearful imprecation, "Let satan stand at his right hand: when he is judged, let him be condemned." Psal. 109:6, 7. He is now an active watchful spirit, whose diligence is equal to his malice, and by glittering snares, or violent temptations, draws men to sin. But then he will be their most bitter accuser, not from zeal of justice, but pure malignity. Then he will aggravate their crimes by the most killing circumstances, though in accusing them he indites himself, their sins being usually done by his solicitations.

And the wicked themselves will accuse one another. In this world fellow-sinners usually conceal one another's wickedness, restrained by their own obnoxiousness. But then all that have been jointly engaged in the commission of sin, will impeach each other. The voluptuous sinners that have excited one another to lust or luxury; "Come let us take our fill of love till the morning." Prov. 7:18. "Come I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; for tomorrow shall be as to day, and much more abundant." Isa. 56:12. All the charming companions and associates will with fierceness charge one another. And the malicious cruel sinners that say, "Come let us lay wait for blood, let us swallow them up quick as the grave," Prov. 1. will then, like enraged furies, fly upon one another. In all sins of combination, the inferior instruments will accuse their directors for their pernicious counsel, and the directors will accuse the instruments for their wicked compliance.

And all the holy servants of God, who by their instructions, counsels, admonitions, examples, have endeavoured to make the world better; especially those who by their place and relation were more concerned, and more zealously and compassionately urged and persuaded those under their care to reform their lives, and save their souls, will give a heavy testimony against them. Indeed the very presence of the saints will upbraid the wicked, for their resisting all the warning, melting entreaties, all the grave and serious reproofs, all the tender earnest expostulations, that were ineffectual by the hardness of their hearts.

Briefly, the scripture attributes to the signs and circumstances of men's sins, a vocal evidence against them. Thus the prophet speaking of the house built by rapine and extortion, "The stones of the wall cry, and the beams answer them," Hab. 2:11. and with concurrent testimony accuse the unrighteous builder. And St. James declares, that "the wages of the hireling, kept back by fraud, cry against the oppressor. And the rust of gold and silver treasured up, is a witness against the covetous." Jam. 5:3, 4. And this by the recognition of conscience will be a memorial against them hereafter.

To what the scripture speaks of this kind of evidence of men's sins, I shall add a useful representation framed by a heathen, to signify that wickedness, how secretly soever committed, shall be brought to light in judgment. He tells us, "That the soul of a very guilty wretch was after death arraigned before one of the severe judges below. And at his trial, because his atrocious crimes were done in secret, he stood upon his defence, denying all. The judge commanded his lamp to be produced, that was an eye witness of his wickedness. The lamp appeared, and being demanded what it knew of him? answered with a sigh, would I had been conscious of nothing, for even now the remembrance of his villanies makes me to tremble: I wish my light had been extinguished, that the oil that maintained it had quenched it. But I burnt with disdain, and cast about some sparks to fire his impure bed; and was grieved that my little flame was so weak as not to consume it. I said within myself, if the sun saw these villanies, it would be eclipsed, and leave the world in darkness. But I now perceive why I was constrained to give light to him, that being a secret spy of his uncleanness, his thefts and cruelties, I might reveal them." But we that are enlightened by faith, and know that God is omnipresent, and that whatever sin is done, though in the deepest and darkest recess, is manifest to him,* have no need of Lucian's lamp to make our judge to be feared by us. The impartiality of the sentence will make the justice of God conspicuous before the whole world. This consists in two things. 1. There will be no distinction of persons. 2. There will be a distinction of causes in that judgment; and according to their nature, the sentence will pass upon all.

1. There will be no distinction of persons. In human courts the judges sometimes extend and amplify, sometimes contract or smother the evidence, and are more rigorous or favourable in their sentence, as they are biassed towards the persons before them. But the Righteous Judge of the world is incapable of being inclined to favour or severity upon such base motives. This is frequently declared in scripture, to possess us with his fear. "If ye call upon the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." 1 Pet. 1:17. No spiritual

privileges upon which men are so apt to presume, viz. that they are members of the reformed church, that they are enriched with excellent gifts, that they enjoy the ordinances in their purest administration, will avail them without real holiness in their hearts and lives. The being united to societies of the most glorious profession, of strictest purity, and sublime devotion, does no more prove one to be a real saint, than the being of an eminent company of merchants proves one to be a rich citizen. "Those that bow the knee and not the heart in faithful reverence, that give the empty title of Lord to Christ, without the tribute of obedience, will be rejected by him. Many shall say at the day of judgment, Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, and done many wonderous works." Mat. 7:22. "Then will the Judge say, I know you not; depart from me ye workers of iniquity." No degrees of civil greatness will be of any moment and advantage in that day. Saint John testifies, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God," in an equal line, to receive their trial. Kings shall then be divested of their imperial titles, of their crowns and sceptres, and their robes of state, and only be accompanied with their works. Of this we have an undoubted proof, in that they are no more exempted from the common law of dying than the meanest slave. Death, that rugged officer, arrests them without ceremony, and summons them to appear before that tribunal. The royal purple could not protect Herod from being devoured by worms. The apostle speaks indefinitely in the fore-cited place; "He that does wrong, shall receive for the wrong he has done; and there is no respect of persons." Col. 3. ult. No circumstantial accidents can derive pure worth, or truly debase persons, but inherent qualities, and actions that flow from them: and accordingly, "the high and holy God" will accept or disapprove them. What St. Paul observes of the saving grace of the gospel being indifferently offered to all, is applicable in this case. He tells us, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian nor Scythian, Bond nor Free," Col. 3:11. are preferred or excluded upon a carnal account, but that all may equally partake of the spiritual blessings. Thus the difference of nations will be no privilege or prejudice to any in the day of judgment. The most rude and contemptible shall have as fair and

equal a trial, as the most polite and civilized: the ignorant Barbarians as the learned Grecians, that so much boasted of their vain excellencies above them: the negroes in Africa as the people of Europe; for they have the same relation to God their Maker, and as truly bear the impression of God stamped upon the human nature in the creation, and therefore common to the whole species of mankind. An image may be fashioned in ebony as well as in ivory. Briefly, all men are equally subject to his laws, and shall be equally accountable for their actions. "The rich and the poor shall then meet together, without distinction, before God the Maker and Judge of them all."

2. There shall be a distinction of causes, and every man be judged "according to his works," the tenor of good works, and the desert of bad. The apostle assures us, "That whatsoever a man sows, that shall he reap: he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Gal. 6:7, 8. The harvest shall be according to the seed both in kind and measure.

"Those who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, shall obtain eternal life." Rom 2:7. Indeed, "eternal life is the gift of infinite bounty," Rom. 6. ult. nay of "pure mercy," Jude 21. and mercy excludes merit. It is said of the blessed martyrs, who contended for the truth and purity of the gospel to the death, that "their robes were washed white in the blood of the Lamb," Rev. 7:14. not in their own blood. Their right to heaven was from the application of his merits to them. But the reward is dispensed from God according to the evangelical law; not only as a magnificent prince, but as "a Righteous Judge." All those to whom the gospel promises eternal life, shall infallibly obtain it, and none that the gospel excludes. Those who were sensible of their sins, and cordially forsaking them, did humbly and entirely depend upon the grace of God, through the blessed reconciler and Saviour, shall be justified and glorified. Then the Judge will discern between unfeigned faith and vain presumption, and will justify the faith of the saints by the genuine fruits of it, "the godliness, righteousness, and

sobriety of their lives," and a victorious perseverance in their duty, notwithstanding all the pleasing temptations or tortures to withdraw them from it. Thus the apostle expresses his humble confidence; "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God the Righteous Judge will give me at that day, and not only to me, but to all that love his appearance." 2 Tim. 4:5, 8. We read in the description of the last judgment, that "the book of life was opened: the names of all that were written in heaven," Rev. 20:12. shall then be declared, that it may appear they are "saved by grace." For it was his most free pleasure to select some from the common mass of perdition, who were naturally as guilty and corrupted as others, and to predestinate them to eternal glory, and effectual persevering grace to prepare them for it. "The saints are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that they should walk in them." And the new creation is as undeserved and entire an effect of God's love as the first was. But it is said, "That every man was judged according to his works." For eternal election does not entitle a person immediately to heaven, but according to the order established in the gospel. Thus the King at the last day speaks to the elect; "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye fed me; naked, and ye clothed me." Mat. 25:34, 35.

And according as the saints have excelled in fidelity and zeal in God's service, they shall be rewarded with a more excellent glory. The stars of the supreme heaven are of a different brightness and greatness, as the stars of the visible firmament. Indeed all are perfectly happy, without* jealousy that any is equal or superior to them in that kingdom. But God will crown his own graces as the saints have improved them. Our Saviour valued the widow's two mites, as transcending all the magnificent gifts of others, because of the degrees of love in the giver. There was a richer mine of affection in her heart, gold of a more noble vein, more pure and precious than all their riches. This was of greater price in God's account, who weighs the spirits in his balance. God "will accept and reward according to

what a man has, and not according to what he has not." 2 Cor. 8:12. He that improves but two talents with his best skill and diligence, shall have a greater reward than another that had ten talents, and was remiss and less careful to employ them for his master's profit. The rule will be exactly observed, "He that sows bountifully, shall reap bountifully; and he that sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly."

And if God will be thus impartial in rewarding the saints, much more in punishing the wicked. For the remuneration of our duty is the effect of his most free favour; but the recompences of sin are due, and decreed by justice, in number, weight, and measure. The severity of the sentence will be in proportion, as men's sins have been more numerous and heinous. Although all the damned shall be equally miserable in despair, all broken on an endless wheel, yet the degrees of their torment are different. Sins of ignorance are extenuated in comparison of rebellious sins against knowledge. The first are like a servant's dashing against his master in the dark, the other like the insolent striking him in the light: and as they incur great guilt, will expose to great punishment. Accordingly our Saviour predicts, "That the servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." Luke 12:47, 48. Inactive knowledge is worse than ignorance. For this reason the case of heathens will be more tolerable than that of the Jews: for though some natural principles were strong and quick in their minds, that made them sensible of their duty and danger, yet they were not so clear and perfect as the law delivered by Moses. Those sins that were infirmities in a pagan, were presumptuous in a Jew. And the case of the Jews will be more tolerable than of disobedient christians, who enjoy the gospel less charged with ceremonies, and more abundant in grace than the Mosaical dispensation. Those that have set before them the life of Christ, the model of all perfection, that are excited by such loud calls "to flee from the wrath to come," and yet are deaf and regardless to the commands, nay to the melting invitations and precious promises of the gospel, shall have a more intolerable

judgment than the most guilty sinners, even the Sodomites and Sidonians that were strangers to it. The precious blood of the Son of God despised, induces a crimson guilt. And as sins are committed with pride and pleasure, with eager appetite and obstinacy, the revenge of justice will be more heavy upon persons.

More particularly, sins of consequence, whereby others are drawn to sin, will heighten the guilt, and the retribution of justice will be to every man "according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Jer. 17:10.

This will principally concern superiors in eminency of place, whose dignity has always a concomitant proportion of duty. Their vicious actions are examples, and their examples more powerful rules than their laws, and give countenance to others to sin licentiously. They "sin with a high hand," and involve the ruin of innumerable persons that depend upon them: as the dragon in the revelation, whose fall from heaven drew a train of lesser stars with him. And all inferior magistrates, who by personal commission, or partial connivance, encourage and harden others in sin, and by their power discountenance serious religion, and obstruct the progress of it, heap up damnation to themselves.

And the ministers of the word, who are obliged to "watch for the souls of men;" and should, like the heavens, by their light, influence and motion, their doctrine and lives, guide and quicken others in the ways of holiness; if by their neglect and wickedness others are lost for ever, their account will be most heavy and undoing.

Of this number are those, who by their unholy conversation weaken the authority and efficacy of the word, and more successfully persuade men to do evil, than by their preaching to do well: for we are apt to take deeper impression through the eye than through the ear, and to follow the physician's practice rather than his counsel. These "perish not alone in their iniquity." And such who are unfaithful dispensers of the treasures of their Lord, and by loose

doctrines corrupt the minds of men, to fancy a mercy in God derogatory to his holiness, that although they live indulgently in sin, they may obtain an easy pardon and happiness at last: and such who employ their high commission for low and base ends: those who instead of "preaching Jesus Christ, and him crucified," the pure and saving truths derived from the fountain of the gospel, entertain their hearers with flashy conceits, and studied vanities, to give a relish to curiosity, and to have the applause of fools, and obscure the native majesty of the word, enervate its force, and render it powerless to conscience.

And those who spend their zeal in things of no moment to salvation, and let fly bitter invectives against those that dissent from them in unconcerning matters, by which they harden atheistical scorers in vilifying the office of the ministry as a carnal invention, set up and wed for secular ends; and induce others to place religion in formalities, and slight colours of it, as if conformity to needless rites would exclude the defects of substantial holiness.

It is observed in the Chaldee paraphrase, when God was inquiring of Cain concerning Abel, that he charges him, "The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me:" as if Cain were a murderer, not of a single man only, but of a numerous race that might have descended from his brother. Thus a wicked minister will be charged, not only for murdering himself, but as many precious souls as might have been converted and saved, if he had faithfully performed his duty.

And parents that should instil the principles of godliness into their children in their early age, and season their minds with the knowledge of the divine laws, to regulate their lives, and make them sensible of their obligations to obey them; that should recommend religion to their affections by an holy and heavenly conversation, if by the neglect of their duty their children are exposed as a prey to the tempter, and ruined for ever, it will enhance their last reckoning, and increase the score of their guilts beyond expression.

And masters of families, and all others that have authority and advantage to preserve or reform, from evil those that are committed to their care, and to instruct and command them to do what is pleasing to God, and profitable to their souls, will be sadly accountable for those that perish by their neglect.

In short, we see by common experience, that company and mutual consent is a usual motive to sin; and many persons that alone would with abhorrence reject some temptations, yet are sociably sinful. Now all those who by excitation or example, lead others to destruction, as they are first in sin, will be chief in punishment. We read in the parable of the rich voluptuary, Luke 16:28. that being in hell, he desired a messenger might be dispatched from the dead to warn his brethren, lest they should come to that place of torment. Is there such charity in hell to the souls of others?* No, that furnace always burns with its proper flames, there is not a spark of that divine fire there: but remembering how guilty he had been of their sins, feared that his torments would be increased by their coming thither. Society in endless sorrows does not divide, but reflect them.

Now if damnation for sin be such a misery as is expressed in the scripture by the most violent figures, and words of the heaviest signification; if all the possible tortures suffered here are but a lenitive to the preparations of wrath in hell; how miserable shall those be, who, as if a single damnation were a light matter, do not only commit sin in their own persons, but are in combination with satan to corrupt and destroy others, and multiply damnation against themselves? These "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath."

Briefly; The whole process of that day, the arraignment and sentence will be so ordered, the righteousness and reasonableness of the proceedings will be so manifest, as to clear the Judge, and confound the guilty. "God will be justified in his sentence, and overcome when he judgeth."

Chapter V: An Excitation to Confirm our Faith of the Eternal Judgment.

Reason sees the necessity of a future judgment. Divine revelation expressly declares it. Considerations requisite to make faith effectual. The belief of a future judgment clears the honour of God's governing the world, from the imputation of unrighteousness, with respect to the prosperity of the wicked, and the sufferings of the saints. It is a powerful support to the saints in their persecutions. The belief of this is effectual to restrain from secret sins. It is a powerful remedy against the pernicious pleasures of sin. The consideration that the Son of God clothed with our nature shall judge the world, affords great consolation to his people, and is a motive of great terror to the wicked.

III. I Now come to the application of this great doctrine.

1. Let us from what has been discoursed of judgment to come, be excited to confirm our faith in this great and useful doctrine; and by serious and frequent thoughts to apply it to ourselves. Some within the church have only a superficial belief of this, as a point of the religion wherein they were educated; but carnal affections, fear, hope, love, and desire, control their assent as to its operation upon them. They believe in the general that God is the Judge and rewarder of our actions, and in the absence of temptation resolve to obey him: but when a strong trial comes from some temporal good or evil that is present, their faith is negligent and inactive to keep them from sin. Now to make our faith powerful, we must,

(1.) Confirm it by convincing arguments, that it may be an undoubted assurance, a certain light, directive and persuasive in the course of our lives. Some doctrines of religion that are of an incomprehensible nature, and should be received with silent adoration for the authority of the revealer, are obstinately contradicted by some, upon a vain

pretence that nothing is to be believed that will not endure the rigorous inquisition of reason, and be comprehended by our narrow minds: but reason, though darkened, sees the necessity of a future judgment. Nature and scripture testify there is a God, and that he has a right, and power, and will to distribute the rewards of virtue, and the penalties of vice to his subjects. To deny this, is directly against the implanted notion of the Deity in the heart of man. There is a real difference between moral good and evil, not depending upon opinion, but arising from the immutable nature of things, and the eternal law of God. Otherwise considered in itself, it were no more faulty to murder a parent, than to kill a fly; nor to rob a traveller, than to chase a deer. But the conscience of the most profligate wretch would startle at such an assertion. The disposition and admirable order of the world in its various parts, and the vicissitude of seasons, declare to the observing mind, that a most wise, good and powerful God governs and preserves all things by his vigorous influence. And can it be that the divine providence, so visibly wise and good in regulating the course of nature, should be defective towards man, the most noble part of the world? And can it be extended to human affairs, if there be no other than the present state, wherein the righteous are afflicted, and the wicked prosper? where sins of the deepest stain and the loudest cry are unpunished; and the sublime and truly heroic virtues are unrewarded? nay, where vice receives the natural reward of virtue, honour and felicity; and virtue the just wages of vice, disgrace and sufferings? It is necessary therefore that there be a future state, and a righteous distribution of rewards, according to the good and evil of men's actions here.

The heathens disguised this terrible truth under the fictions of the infernal judges, Minos, and Rhadamanthus, and Eacus. And the furies and vultures, and fiery lake, which they thought tormented the wicked in the next world,* discover what apprehensions they had of the desert of sin, and the punishment that certainly attended it. The guilty would fain be freed from the terrors of it, and strangle conscience, that is bound over to give testimony in the day of judgment, that they may sin without scruples. But though fear be a

troublesome and involuntary passion, they cannot totally extinguish the internal sense and presages of future judgment: but as the motions of courage came upon Samson at times; so conscience awakened by sharp afflictions, by sudden dangers, and the approaches of death, makes a sad deduction of past sins, and forecasts cruel things: it cites the offender before the enlightened tribunal of heaven, scourges with remorse, and makes him feel even here the strokes of hell. Though the sin be secret, and the guilty person powerful, not within the cognizance or reach of human justice, yet conscience has a rack within, and causes pain and anxiety, by fearful expectations of judgment to come.

And divine revelation is most express in declaring this great truth. The light of faith is more clear and certain from the infallible word of God, than the light of reason. Before the flood, Enoch in the early age of the world foretold it; "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all." Jude 14, 15. Solomon under the law repeats this doctrine, that "every secret thing shall be brought into judgment, whether good or evil." Eccl. 12. And God himself speaks in the sublimest style of majesty, and swears by himself, for our firmer belief, "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue confess to God," Isa. 45:2, 3. the glory of his justice. From whence the apostle infers, "So then every one of us shall give an account to God for himself." Rom. 14:10, 11. In the gospel we have distinctly described the person of the Judge, the glorious attendants of his coming, and the manner of his proceedings in that day, Mat. 13:42, 43. & 24:30, 31. Now the many predictions in scripture, so visibly accomplished in the person of Jesus Christ, and by him, give infallible assurance, that all his promises and threatenings are equally certain, and shall be fulfilled.* As sure as our Saviour is come in his humble state, and has accomplished the prophecies of his sufferings, he will come in his glory to judge the world.

(2.) That the belief of eternal judgment may be powerful in our hearts and lives, it must be actuated by frequent and serious

thoughts. Faith gives life and efficacy to our notions of eternal things, and consideration makes our faith effectual. As the natural life is preserved by the activity of the vital principles, the circulation of the blood, the drawing of the breath, the motion of the pulse; so the spiritual life is maintained by the exercise of grace. The carnal affections dare not appear before reason and conscience, when awakened by the serious believing consideration of eternal judgment. The evangelists relate, that when our Saviour was asleep in the ship, a sudden tempest arose that was likely to over-set it in the sea: but awakened by the cry of his disciples, "Lord, save us, we perish; he presently rebuked the wind, and a calm ensued." Thus whilst the habit of faith is asleep in the soul, there will be great danger from the concurrent violence of temptations and corruptions; but when it is awakened by lively and powerful thoughts, it does miracles in subduing the strongest lusts. It is monstrous and beyond all belief, did not sensible experience make it evident, that notwithstanding the minds of men are convinced of the certainty of the divine judgment, and the recompences that immediately follow, yet their wills remain unconverted, and their affections cold and inactive in their preparations for it: that such numbers who have so much Christianity as to believe that an irrevocable doom will pass upon the wicked, and so little Christianity, that they cannot justly hope to escape from it, yet are so careless of their duty, nay joyful in their sinful courses, as if judgment were a dreadless thing. What is the cause of this prodigious security? It is the neglect of considering that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive according to the things done in the body, whether good or evil."

The next cause of this stupidity is, that they put "the evil day" at a remote distance: as the scorers said, "The vision is for many days:" they study to be secure, and delay their preparations, presuming to have time enough before them. Their senses and faculties are so employed abroad in the world, that they have neither leisure nor desire to think seriously of it. Their hearts are so ravished with dreams of sensuality, and engaged in terrene affairs, that they are

very averse from exercising their minds upon such displeasing objects.

Vain men! how willingly do they deceive themselves? The Judge himself declares, "Behold, I come quickly: his throne is like a fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire;" an emblem of his swift coming to judgment. Can they be assured of life one hour? The day of death is equivalent to the day of judgment; for immediately after there is a final decision of men's states for ever.

I have read of an excellent preacher, that in a sermon described the last judgment in all its terrors, with such ardent expressions, and those animated with such an affecting voice, such an inflamed countenance and action, that his hearers broke forth into passionate cries, as if the Judge himself had been present to pass the final sentence upon them. In the height of their commotion, the preacher bid them stop their tears and passions, for he had one thing more to add, the most afflicting and astonishing consideration of all the rest, that within less than a quarter of an hour, the memory and regard of that which so transported them would vanish, and their affections return to carnal objects in their usual manner.

The neglect of consideration makes even the doctrine of judgment to come to be without efficacy. It is necessary therefore that the belief of this be so firmly seated in the heart as its throne, that it may command the thoughts to be very attentive to it, and may have regal power over our wills and affections, that our lives may be ordered according to its rules.

2. The consideration of eternal judgment will vindicate the proceedings of divine providence, and the honour of God's governing this world, from the imputation of unrighteousness. God is provoked every day, yet spares the wicked, and heaps an abundance of favours on them. His patience and goodness they profanely abuse, and become more obdurate and inflexible. They are apt to blaspheme the excellency of his nature in their hearts, Psal. 14:1. thinking that he is

ignorant or careless, impotent or unjust. They implicitly deny his providence and judgment, that he does not observe their sins, and will not require an account for them: or else they interpret his permission to be an approbation of their sins. "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest I was such an one as thyself." Psal. 50. Thus the heathens transplanted the vices of earth to heaven, and represented their gods to be sensual, jealous, furious as men, and accordingly expect an easy absolution for their sins. Or else the distance of judgment to come so hardens them, that they hear God's thunder with less fear, than boys do their squibs and crackers. "Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil." Eccles. 8:2. But how desperate is the madness of sinners? God now "seems to wink at their sins," Acts 17:30. but hath appointed a day of accounts. He suffers them to live in prosperity, "but they are reserved to the day of judgment to be punished," 2 Pet. 2:4. and possibly sooner: for sometimes they are cut off by visible vengeance, to convince the world that the Supreme Judge does not "bear the sword in vain." But though it is delayed for a time, yet he declares, that "their sins are laid up in store with him, and sealed up among his treasures. To him belongs vengeance and recompence." Deut. 32:34. He is a mild Judge now, and his clemency suspends their punishment; but justice will not forget it, Amos 8:7. He threatens the secure sinner, "I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thine eyes." Psal. 50:21. How will the scornful obstinate sinner change complexion, and tremble, when an army of sins more terrible than so many, furies shall be ranged in battle, and with fiery darts wound his naked soul? How will the stubborn atheist, that pleases himself with vain imaginations of the eternity of the world, and the mortality of the soul, be confounded when he feels the truth of scripture threatenings to his eternal sorrow? then all their railleries will be turned into lamentations. It is not for* want of power that God spares the wicked, but because they are always in his hands, and he can make them as miserable as they are sinful when he pleases. It is not through the neglect of justice, but for most wise and holy reasons, as shall appear in the last day, when a decisive

irreversible judgment shall be pronounced, and immediately inflicted upon them before the world. When an[†] actor at Athens spoke with admiration of riches, as the most valuable acquisition, and of the felicity of rich men; the people were in an uproar at the immorality of the speech, and were ready to chase him from the stage. But the poet himself appeared, and desired them to stop their fury till they saw the catastrophe,[‡] the wretched end of that sordid miser. Thus we are apt to accuse the ways of God when the wicked flourish; but we should stop our tumultuous thoughts, for their end will absolve divine providence from all undue reflections upon the account of their temporal happiness.

And the sound belief of this will rectify all mistaking apprehensions, and clear all perplexing appearances about the sufferings of the righteous here.

Indeed if we consider the holiest men as they are sinners, their afflictions are so far from blemishing the justice of God, that they are the signs of his mercy: for all is a favour on this side hell to those that deserve it. David, an excellent saint, acknowledgeth the righteousness of God's judgment with respect to himself. But when the saints suffer for a righteous cause; and as the psalmist expresses it, "For thy sake are we killed all the day long, and are counted as sheep for the slaughter," Psal. 44. there is not a visible correspondency between the providence of God in his governing the world, and the unchangeable rules of justice, that those who do evil should suffer evil, and those who do well should be happy. As the apostle speaks to the persecuted christians, "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us." 2 Thess. 1:7. Now there is a day coming when the persecutors shall be punished, and the saints be rewarded for all their sufferings, and the distribution of recompences shall be in the presence of the world, for the glory of divine justice. For the distinction that is made between men at death is private and particular, and not sufficient for the honour of God's government. But at the last day all men that have lived in several successions of

ages shall appear, and justice have a solemn process and triumph before angels and men. As some excellent piece that is to be exposed to public view, is covered with a traverse, to prevent the disturbance in the working, and the discovery of the work till brought to such perfection as will surprise with wonder those that see it: so God is pleased to cover his proceeding for a time: but in the last day there will be "such a revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom. 2:7. that those who now doubt, or complain of his justice, shall admire and adore it.

3. The belief of this doctrine, as it vindicates divine providence, so it is powerful to comfort the saints under persecutions for righteousness sake; especially when innocence is wounded with slanderous darts, and calumnies are joined with cruelties, representing them as worthy of public hatred. It was one of the subtle artifices of Julian the apostate, to mingle the images of the heathen gods with those of the emperors, that die doing reverence (as the christians were commanded) to all together, might imply a dereliction and renouncing of their religion, and their simplicity seem impiety: or if, jealous of slipping from their profession, they refused to do it, they might seem to deny the expressions of honour due to their emperors, and lie reputed to suffer not as christian martyrs, but as rebels. But the believing consideration of God's righteous judgment will make them despise the censures and reproaches of malicious adversaries. "With me," saith the apostle, "it is a very small thing that I should be judged by man's judgment; he that judgeth me is the Lord." 1 Cor. 4:5. The severest censure was of no more weight, compared with the approbation of God, than the lightest feather that flies in the air, put in the scales against the globe of the earth.* The assurance of a righteous cause, and a righteous Judge, will preserve an inward and joyful, tranquillity of soul in the midst of all the storms of reproach and scandalous imputations; like the calmness of a haven when the sea is tempestuous without. And this will fortify believers to bear with an invincible courage all the violence that is offered to them for their fidelity to; God. All the wrongs and injuries they endure, shall be redressed with infinite

advantage. The extremest evils to which they are exposed for Christ, are like the chariots of fire sent from God, not to consume but conduct Elias in triumph into the highest heaven God will give them present support; inward consolations, and a future crown. There is an appointed day when oppressed innocence shall obtain the noblest victory, and disgraced godliness the most public and highest honour. "The faith of sincere christians shall be found to praise and glory." 1. Pet, 1:7. They may suffer under the tyranny of time, but shall reign in the kingdom of eternity. The belief of this, when firmly radicated in the hearty is so powerful as to make them "glory in the sharpest tribulations," and joyfully triumph over satan, with his perverted malignant world. Cantando rumpitur anguis. But alas, the sin, and a great part of the trouble of the saints, arises from their weakness of faith, and not patiently waiting for the day of the Lord. When heavy persecutions and great distresses are continued by the restless adversaries, they are apt, through impatience and instability of mind, to be full of sorrowful complaints that God delays their particular deliverance. And as sometimes the clock outruns the motion of the sun, that is the true measure of time; so their hasty desires prevent the eternal counsel of his will, that has determind the period of the miseries of his people, and of the prosperity of the wicked in the fittest time. And that he suspends his glorious coming to judge the world in righteousness, discourageth weaker christians, and makes them ready to faint "in the day of adversity. But the Lord is not slack in performing his promise, as men count slackness." 2 Pet. 3:9. There is not the least reason to question his fidelity and power, or to suspect his love and remembrance of his people, And as the stars of heaven enlighten the earth, but the candles on earth, cannot enlighten the heavens: so the wisdom of God's counsel and providence should direct us patiently to expect his appointed time, but our glimmering reason cannot direct him.

4. The serious belief of future judgment is the most effectual restraint from secret sins. Men are apt to encourage themselves in evil upon the account of secrecy; it is the usual tinder of temptations. If solitude and silence, if the darkness of the night, or any disguises

may conceal their wickedness from human eyes, they are bold and secure as to God. The psalmist declares what is the inward principle that actuates them, what is the language of their hearts: "all the workers of iniquity boast themselves; they say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." Psal. 94:5, 6. But O the brutish folly of men, to think, because they do not see God, that he does not see them. As if one should shut his eyes in the face of the sun, and do some foul abominable thing, thinking himself to be unseen, because he sees no person. How vain is the impure diligence of the adulterer, the crafty diligence of the deceiver, the solicitous diligence of other sinners to hide things from the Judge of all? "Shall not God search it out, for he knows the very secrets of the heart?" What a confounding discovery will be made of secret wickedness at the last day? Here obscurity is the mask of shame that conceals it from the world. Or if only children and fools that are not capable to judge of the indecency and turpitude of actions, be spectators, men are not touched with shame for foul things. But then their wickedness shall be displayed before God, the holy angels and saints. The actual belief of this would deprive satan of one of his greatest advantages, and be a blessed preservative from many sins that allure the consent by the temptation of secrecy. A considering christian will reject them with indignation, saying with Joseph, "how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" The sins undiscovered and unpunished by temporal tribunals, shall then receive a just recompence.

5. The remembrance of that strict judgment is the most natural and powerful remedy against sensual temptations that so easily insinuate and engage the hearts of men. St. Peter reckoning up the heathens' sins, "lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings," and "abominable idolatries" tells the christians, "that the Gentiles thought it strange that they did not run with them to the same excess of riot." 1 Pet. 4:3, 4. As the disciples when our Saviour walked upon the waters, thought he had been a spirit, judging that no real body could tread on them without sinking: thus men are apt to think it impossible to restrain their carnal appetites when allured by pleasing

objects. But the belief of the terrors of the Lord will damp the sensual affections when most strongly inclined to forbidden things, and extinguish delight in sin: for delight and fear are inconsistent. Therefore the wise preacher gives this counsel, "rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and sight of thine eyes: but know thou for all these things God will bring thee to judgment." Eccles. 11. This will change the apprehensions of the mind, and alter the taste of the appetite, and make the most enticing and irresistible lusts the objects of our greatest detestation.

6. The consideration that the Son of God, clothed with our nature, shall judge the world, "affords strong consolation" to his people, and is a motive of great terror to the wicked. How comfortable is it to his people that he who loved them above his life, and was their Redeemer on the cross, shall be their Judge on the throne? "He is the same Jesus Christ, yesterday, today, and for ever;" the same indulgent Saviour in the exaltation of his glory, as when under sufferings, reproach and shame. He is described in that glorious appearance, by the conjunct titles of his majesty and power, "the Great God," Tit. 2:12, 13. and of his compassion and mercy, "our Saviour," to signify his ability and affection to make them happy. When he comes with a heavenly train of angels to judgment, he will be as tender of his servants, as when he suffered for them in his humble state. He that paid their debt, and sealed their pardon with his own blood, will certainly publish the acquittance. How is it possible he should condemn those for whom he died, and who appear with the impressions of his reconciling blood upon them? How reviving is it that Christ, whose glory was the end and perfection of their lives, Phil. 1. shall dispose their states for ever? that he, who esteems every act of their charity and kindness done to his servants as done to himself, shall dispense the blessed reward? "Then the King will say to them placed on his righthand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt. 25. O the transports of joy to hear those words from his life-breathing lips! The prophet breaks forth in

an ecstasy, "how beautiful are the feet of the messengers of peace, those that bring glad tidings of salvation! but how much more beautiful is the face of the Author of our peace and salvation!" O how full of serenity, and clemency, and glory! The expectation of this makes them languish with impatience for his coming. Though the preparations of that day are so dreadful, when "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon turned into blood," Acts 2. and the stars fall like leaves in autumn, yet it is styled a "day of refreshment" to the saints.

But how dreadful will his coming in majesty to judgment be to the wicked!* "They shall see him whom they have pierced," and with bitter lamentation remember the indignities offered to him. What excuses can they alledge, why they did not believe and obey the gospel? Our Saviour revealed high mysteries, but confirmed them with great miracles. He required strict holiness, but offered divine grace to enable men to do his will. "He poured forth his Spirit upon them," but their hearts were as hard as rocks, and as barren as the sands. Then he will reproach them for their insolent contempt of all the perfections of his divine nature, and the bleeding sufferings of his human nature to reconcile them to God: for their undervaluing "neglect of the great salvation," so dearly purchased, and so freely and earnestly offered to them: for their obstinacy, that the purple streams that flowed from his crucified body, that all the sorrows and agonies of his soul were not effectual persuasives to make them forsake their sins: for their "preferring the bramble to reign over them," satan the destroyer of souls, and ungrateful "rejecting the true vine," the blessed Saviour, who by so many miraculous mercies solicited their love, and deserved their service; this will make the sentence as just as terrible, and the more terrible because just. This will exasperate the anguish, that the gospel shall be a "savour of death to them;" and the blessed Redeemer pronounce them "cursed," and dispatch them "to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels for ever." The judgment of the Redeemer will be more heavy than that of the Creator. For all the riches of his goodness which they despised, shall be the measure of their guilt and woes. All the means

of grace used for their conversion, but frustrated by their perverseness, shall be charged upon their score. What consternation will seize the wicked, when ten thousand accusers shall rise up in judgment against them, and not one advocate appear for their defence? Satan will be ready to aggravate their sins above his own: for although the superior excellence of his nature and state did heighten his obligation, and consequently his disobedience to his Creator, and that he sinned of himself, derived a guilt upon him exceeding that of man's original sin, who was seduced to his ruin; yet in that justice was so quick and severe, that the angels after their sin were immediately expelled from their blessed habitation, no space of repentance was allowed; and no mediator interposed to obtain terms of reconciliation with the incensed Deity, their doom was final and irrevocable: but after our rebellious sin, the Son of God, such was his immortal love, was willing to be mortal to redeem sinful men, and freely offered himself a sacrifice to atone the divine displeasure: and a day of grace and long-sufferance was granted, and many compassionate invitations were sent from heaven to soften their stony hearts: but they neglected and despised the grace of the gospel, and wilfully excluded themselves from mercy. In this respect they are more guilty than the fallen angels; and justice will revenge the abuse of mercy. Do they hope to soften the Judge by submissions and deprecations? Alas! he will be inflexible to all their prayers and tears. The Lamb will be then a lion armed with terrors for their destruction. Or can they appeal to a higher court to mitigate or reverse the sentence? No, his authority is supreme, and confirmed by the immutable oath of God. Or, do they think to resist the execution of the sentence? Desperate folly! The angels, notwithstanding their numbers and strength, could not for a moment escape his revenging hand. The whole world of sinners is of no more force against his wrath, than the light dust against a whirlwind, or dry stubble against devouring fire. Or do they think, by a stubborn spirit, to endure it? Self-deceiving wretches! If the correction of his children here, though allayed, and for their amendment, make "their beauty and strength consume away as a moth," how insupportable will the vengeance be

on his obstinate enemies? "Who knows the power of his anger?" Who can sound the depths of his displeasure?

Chapter VI: The Consideration of Eternal Judgment Should Powerfully Move us to Prepare for It.

Rules of our acceptance in that day. Unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus is absolutely necessary for our acceptance. The pardon of our sins, and the rewarding our services, is upon the account of our Saviour's meritorious obedience and sufferings. Sincere and uniform obedience will be only accepted of our Judge. The frequent trial of conscience prepares us for the last judgment. This leads to repentance for past sins, and preserves from sins afterwards. The improving of our talents will make the last judgment comfortable. The zealous maintaining the truth and cause of Christ, will be rewarded in the last judgment. A beneficent love to the afflicted saints shall then be rewarded. An excitation to watch and pray, that we may with comfort appear before the everlasting Judge.

7. THE consideration of eternal judgment should be a powerful incentive to prepare ourselves for it. The affair is infinitely serious, for it concerns our salvation or damnation for ever. Yet the pleasures and business of the world fasten men in security, and hinder the entire application of their minds to prepare for their last account. It is an awful caution of our Saviour to his disciples, "take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares: for as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the earth." A dissolute voluptuous course of life is joined with a brutish neglect of God and the soul: and the indulging the carnal appetite, though not in such enormous excesses as the profane are

guilty of, alienates the minds of men from due considering their spiritual state, and lessens the preventive fear that makes us serious and diligent "to be found of God in peace." And others are so involved in secular business, that they are not at leisure to regard the "one thing necessary:" their minds are so overshadowed with the cares of the present world, they cannot take a right aspect of the world to come. The flood broke in upon the old world whilst they "were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling," and destroyed them all. The last fire will devour this world in the same wretched incogitancy, and stupid neglect to prepare themselves for judgment. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man." It is a divine and solemn warning, "Behold, I come as a thief in the night: blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he be found naked," without the robe of holiness, and be exposed to confounding shame in that day. When secure and careless sinners shall say, "peace and safety, sudden destruction will come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child," as surprisingly, as irresistibly; "and they shall not escape." But the "wise foresee the evil," and esteem it their incomparable interest to secure the favour of the Supreme Judge. It is the inference the apostle makes from the certainty of our appearing before the Righteous Judge, "wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent," in this or the next life, "we may be accepted of him." 2 Cor. 5:9. This was his great design, his chief care, his duty and his glory: never did any person more ardently aspire, and ambitiously endeavour for the obtaining a kingdom, than he did to secure his own acceptance with the Lord. In order to this, I will lay down the rules of our acceptance in that day, and conclude the argument.

First. Unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus is absolutely necessary, that we may be accepted. This is such a belief of his all-sufficient merits, and his merciful inclination to save us, that the guilty and self-condemned sinner entirely consents to the terms of the gospel, as well as to the privileges of it, with a reliance upon his merits, and a resolution to obey his precepts. He is a "Priest on a throne, a Prince,

and a Saviour," and so must be acknowledged and received. Upon this condition his righteousness is freely imputed to us for our justification unto life, without which we must perish in our sins. For,

(1.) The best saints are guilty, and deeply obnoxious to the law, and the judgment of God is invariably according to truth; so that appearing in their sins, they will be cast for ever. God's tribunal, like that of the severe Roman judge, is reorum scopulus, a rock that dashes in pieces all the guilty that come to it. Therefore the psalmist so earnestly deprecates; "enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." And the apostle, though a transcendent saint, divests himself of his own righteousness, that he may be entirely covered with the righteousness of Christ; and renounces all things, that "he may be found in him as his surety" in that day of accounts, and obtain pardon by virtue of his satisfaction for sin. We cannot perfectly obey the commands, nor appease the displeasure of God: but the expiatory sacrifice of Christ propitiates the divine justice. This alone can make us stand in judgment before the "fiery law," and "the fiery tribunal," and the "Judge who is a consuming fire," to all the guilty that appear in their sins before him. The blood of the Mediator has sprinkled the throne of God in heaven; and our consciences being sprinkled with it by an unfeigned faith, we may appear before God the judge of all with a humble confidence, and enter into the holy of holies, the celestial sanctuary, with joy.

(2.) Not only the pardon of our sins, but the acceptance and rewarding of our services with eternal glory, is upon the account of our Saviour's complete righteousness. There are defilements in the persons, and defects in the works of the saints. Their most holy and fervent prayers are perfumed by the incense of his intercession, and so become grateful to God, Rev. 8:3. Our best virtues are mixed and shadowed with imperfections; but in him all graces were conspicuous in their consummate degrees. Our obedience, supposing it perfect, is of no desert: "when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants:" but his obedience was infinitely meritorious by the union of the Deity

with his human nature, and is the foundation of the excellent reward. Not that his merits derive a value to our works to make them worthy of eternal glory: as some noble mineral infused into water, that is in itself without taste or efficacy, gives it a medicinal tincture and virtue; for this is impossible, since the infinite dignity of his person, and his most perfect habitual and actual holiness, that are the fountains and reasons of his merits, are incommunicable to our persons and works. But the active and passive obedience of Christ is so satisfactory and meritorious, that God is pleased graciously to reward with the crown of life the mean services of those who are by a lively and purifying faith united to him.

Secondly. Sincere obedience, that is a uniform and entire respect to all the commands of God, will alone be accepted in that day: for his authority runs through all, and binds them on the conscience. David had this testimony from God himself, that he "was a man after his own heart, that fulfilled all his will." And St. John refers the decision of our state to this, "if our hearts condemn us" of any allowed sin of omission or commission, much more "God will, who is greater than our hearts, and knows all things." 1 John 3:20, 21. But if the illuminated tender conscience doth not condemn us of insincerity, "we have confidence towards God," that he will spare and accept us notwithstanding our frailties, and give free and safe access into his presence. The lives of many are chequered with a strange disparity, they are restrained from some sins of apparent odiousness, but indulgent to others; they are strict in some duties, but loose and slack in others, as if they hoped by way of commutation to be accepted of God; to expiate their delinquencies in one kind by supererogating in another. Some are painted pharisees in the duties of the first table, very exact in the formalities of outward devotions, but gross publicans in the duties of the second; careless of justice and equity, and charity to men; others are in appearance strictly moral in the discharge of their duties to men, and negligent of their obligations to God. But partial obedience can never endure the trial of conscience, much less of God. For what is the weak light of our minds, to the pure eyes of his glory? It will make us liable to inward

rebuke now, and to open confusion at the last. St. Paul's "rejoicing was from the testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity he had his conversation in the world." 2 Cor. 1:12. And, as he expresses it in another place, it was his "daily exercise to have a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men." Though our conquest of sin be not complete, yet our resolution and endeavours must be to mortify it in every kind. Though our obedience has not the perfection of degrees, we must be equally regarding the divine law. If there be any secret favoured sin, either of omission or commission, it will render our petitions unacceptable at the throne of grace, and our persons at the throne of judgment; "if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer." The law requires the performance of our duty without abatement, or denounceth the penalty without allay or mitigation: the gospel has not relaxed the strictness of the law as it is the rule of life, but as it was the condition of obtaining life. Sincere obedience is accepted by that gracious covenant, where the legal perfection is wanting; but that is indispensably required of all. I may illustrate this by a passage of Alexander the Great, who being desirous to learn geometry, applied himself to a skilful instructor in it. But his warlike disposition made him more capable to conquer, than to measure the earth; so that tired with the first propositions, he desired his master to make the scheme more clear and plain, and easy to him.* To whom the master replied, that the theorems of that science were equally difficult to all, and required the same attention of mind to understand them. Thus the gospel of mercy requires of all sincere sanctification, and serious endeavours to perfect holiness in the fear of God, and without this none shall be exempted from condemnation.

To the sincerity of obedience, I shall add a more restrained notion of it as respecting religion. The duties of piety consist of an outward and inward part; and the one without the other, is but as a carcass without a quickening soul. Now there will be an exquisite anatomy of the heart in that judgment, a discovery of all the principles and motives by which men were actuated; and then he that is a saint

inwardly, "in the spirit," who with pure aims and holy affections hath served God, shall have "praise of him." And those who have used God to enjoy the world, that have assumed pretences of piety for secular ends, shall be reprov'd. This will be a cause of wonder in that day, that many "who are highly esteemed by men" as excellent saints, "shall be an abomination to God." That in the broad way to hell thousands go thither is sad beyond expression, but not strange at all: but that in the path of heaven any should descend to hell, is astonishing. That those who live without God in the world, in the profane neglect of his worship, in a dissolute disorderly course, should fall under condemnation, is believed of all: but that those who have appeared zealous in religion, shall be at last rejected, is contrary to universal expectation. And not only the gross hypocrite that deceives others, but he that deceives himself by the external practice of holy duties, without correspondent lively affections; that prays with that coldness as if he had no desire to be heard, and hears with that carelessness as if he had no desire to be sanctified by the word, and is conversant in other parts of divine service in that slight manner, as if he had no design to be saved, shall by a convincing upbraiding light see his wickedness, in dishonouring that God whom he pretended to worship, and neglecting his soul. When the upright as pure gold shall be more radiant by the fire, the insincere like reprobate silver shall not endure that severe trial.

Thirdly. The frequent discussion of conscience, and reviewing our ways, is necessary in order to our comfortable appearing before our Judge. This is a duty of constant revolution: for while we are in flesh, the best saints, notwithstanding all their vigilance and diligence, are overtaken by surprisal, and sometimes overborne by strong temptations; and it is more necessary to beg for daily pardon, than for our daily bread. Under the law, if any one had by touching a dead body contracted uncleanness, he was to wash his clothes in the evening, and not to lie down in his uncleanness. This was typical of our duty, that we should wash away our sinful defilements every day in the purifying fountain of Christ's blood, "that is set open for sin and for uncleanness." And the method of the gospel to obtain the

grant of pardon, and our comfortable sense, and the blessed effects of it is this, there must be a mournful sight, and serious acknowledgment of our daily sins, and a judging ourselves by the domestical tribunal in our breasts as worthy of condemnation. For though we cannot satisfy divine justice for the least sin, we must glorify it; and with humility and fervency desire that God would graciously forgive our renewed sins, with unfeigned resolutions and care against them for the future. Thus we are to sue out our pardon for sins committed every day. And whereas many errors in regard of our frailty, and their fineness, do slip from us, we should with contrite spirits implore the divine majesty "to cleanse us from our secret sins," Psal. 19:12. such as through ignorance or inadvertency escape from our observation. If we are obliged to be reconciled to an offended or offending brother before the night, and "the sun must not go down upon our wrath," much more to be reconciled to an offended God, that his displeasure may be atoned. The morning and evening sacrifice was a figure of the constant use of Christ's merits and mediation for us. The secure neglect of renewing our repentance for our renewed sins, deprives us of the comforts of the covenant, and will make the thoughts of judgment as heavy as mountains upon the conscience, when it is awakened out of its slumber. But when the soul's accounts are kept clear with heaven every day, O what a blessed rest does the penitent believer enjoy in the favour of God! O the divine calm of conscience, when our debts are cancelled in the book of God's remembrance! If we should be unexpectedly summoned to appear "before the Judge of all," the sight of our sins will rather excite thankful affections, and joyful praises of God for his mercy, that he hath pardoned them, than fearful despairing thoughts of his mercy, that he will not pardon them.

And as this considering our ways leads to repentance, and is a remedy for past sins, so it is a powerful preservative from sin afterwards. For as in war the greatest care is to fortify the weakest part of a besieged town, and make it impregnable; so a christian, by the experience of his infirmity and danger, will be more wise and wary, more circumspect and resolved against those sins whereby he

has been often foiled, to prevent the daily incursion, and sudden surreption by them. And according to the degrees of our innocence, we have confidence of acceptance with God in judgment.

Fourthly. Let us improve with a wise and singular diligence the talents committed to our trust: for in that day we shall be responsible for all that we have received. All the blessings we possess, whether natural, our life, our faculties, our endowments, our health and strength; or civil, honour and dignity, riches and reputation; or spiritual, the gospel in its light and power, the graces and assistance of the Holy Ghost, as they are gifts from God's love, so they are talents to be employed for his glory. We are stewards, not proprietaries: for the supreme Lord does not relinquish his right in our blessings, that we may dispose of them at our own pleasure, but hath prescribed rules for our using them in order to his glory, our own good, and the benefit of others. And it is sad to consider that usually those who enjoy the greatest gifts, render the least acknowledgments, and the most abundant in favours are most barren in thankfulness. Time, that invaluable treasure, that is due to God and the soul, the price of which arises from the work of salvation to be done in it, how is it squandered away? Conscience would blush at the serious reflection, that every day so much is spent in the business of the world, or pleasures, and so little redeemed for communion with the holy God: that as in the prophetic dream the lean kine devoured the fat, so unconcerning vanities take up that time that should be employed for our last and blessed end. While time is miserably wasted, the soul lies a bleeding to everlasting death. More particularly, we shall be accountable for all the days of "the Son of Man" that we have seen, all the special seasons of grace: these we should improve for our eternal advantage, to prepare us for the divine presence above. But alas, the Lord's day that is consecrated for the immediate service of God, and should be entirely spent in it, and in things that have a necessary subordination to it, yet neither the enforcement of duty, nor incitations of love prevail upon the most, conscientiously to employ it in spiritual affairs. If they afford their presence at the public worship, it is thought enough;

and as if the rest of the day was unsanctified time, they waste it either in complimentary visits, or secular business, in recreations, or things impertinent to their salvation.

Riches are an excellent instrument of doing good: gold is the most precious and extensive metal, and by a marvellous art an ounce may be beaten out into some hundred leaves: but it is a more happy art by giving it, to enrich our own souls, and supply the necessities of many others. But great estates are often used to foment men's vicious guilty affections, pride, and sensuality; and it is called* greatness and magnificence to waste them in sumptuous vanities. I instance in these talents, because they are usually abused to the dishonour of the donor. If the slothful servant that hid his single talent in a napkin, and returned it without advantage to his Lord, was "cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth;" a fearful image of what will befall all unprofitable persons: how severe will their accounts be who lavish out their numerous talents to gratify their carnal appetites, and betray the blessings of God to his enemy the devil? Only the wise and good servant, that with prudent contrivance, and zealous endeavours, improves his talents, shall from the gracious Lord, in whom are all attractives and remuneratives of our service, receive an excellent reward.

Fifthly. Another rule of our acceptance at the last day is, that we must with courage and zeal maintain in our rank and places the cause of Christ. For thus he declares expressly, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him also will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him also will I deny before my Father which is in heaven." Mat. 10:33, 34. When the truth, purity, and power of religion, in doctrine, worship and practice, is discountenanced and overborn, our Saviour commands, and will reward our undiscouraged visible constancy in it. He will not only reign in our hearts, but be honoured with our lips, and in our conversations. Rom. 10. We usurp the title of christians, unless we adhere to our duty in despite of all opposition. The temptations that usually withdraw men from confessing and

glorifying Christ, are such as work upon the passions of fear and shame. And the consideration of the last judgment will fortify us against both.

(1.) Sometimes religion exposes the professors of it to the loss of all temporal enjoyments, and of life itself. And when the honour of our Saviour requires such a service of us, when that confirmation is necessary to recommend divine truth to the belief and affections of others, when our cheerful and courageous example in suffering would animate those that are fearful to constancy and confession, then from cowardice to withdraw our testimony, is to betray him again. When our duty is attended with extreme dangers, then the sincerity and perfection of our love to Christ is brought to the strictest trial. As true carbuncles are discovered in the night, for the darkness redoubles their splendour; so the fidelity of christians is evident in persecutions, that inflame and excite their zeal to magnify the name of Christ in the sight of the world. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." 1 John 4:18. But fearfulness hinders the expressing acts of love to Christ, and betrays to apostacy. For as every passion is a perturbation, so especially carnal fear, that blinds and disturbs the mind, and hinders the serious consideration of the reasons of our duty, and those motives to persevere in it, that are the fountains of our strength. From hence the timorous are often treacherous, and faith lies buried under the cold pale ashes of fear. Now the irregularity of this passion is best cured by directing it to the most powerful object. As the rod of Moses swallowed up the rods of the magicians; so a stronger fear will subdue that which is in a weaker degree. Our Saviour therefore threatens those that for the fear of men ("who can but kill the body") dare not own and defend his truth and cause, that he will renounce them before his Father in the great day, the immediate consequence of which will be the "destruction of body and soul in hell." Mat. 10:31, 32, 33. If earthly potentates had a jurisdiction over heaven, if men were to be tried by their laws at the last day, if their power extended to eternity, they might exact unlimited obedience to their wills; but conscience is a more desirable friend and terrible enemy than Cesar; and all

temporal tribunals are subordinate and accountable to the supreme and eternal: there is "one Lawgiver and Judge, who is able to save, and to destroy for ever." It is the worst perdition to secure ourselves by the neglect of our duty, when we ought to perish for the glory of our Saviour. "He that saves his life, shall lose it."

(2.) Shame wounds deeper the breasts of some than violence. Zedekiah would rather expose his kingdom and life to the fury of the Chaldean armies, than be himself exposed as an object of derision by surrendering it. And satan, who understands the temper of men's spirits, suits his temptations accordingly. The purity and holiness of religion, expressed in the actions of the saints, is by the scurrilous reflections and bitter sarcasms of profane persons made contemptible. This is as foolish and malicious, as if a slave should reproach the son of a king, that he was like his father in his countenance and actions: for by how much the resemblance of God's holiness appears with more evidence and eminence in their lives, their divine relation is more certainly and justly to be acknowledged. Yet how many are ashamed of this glory? And zeal to vindicate the honour of religion is traduced and vilified, either as the effect of designing faction, or of the indiscretion and rashness of a weak judgment and strong passions. In every age the faithful servants of God are by scornful titles despised: "We are accounted," saith the apostle, "the off-scouring of the world." 1 Cor. 4:17. But a generous christian looks upon disgrace for the sake of Christ as his honour. The apostles "rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Acts 5:41. It is said of the baptist, "He was not that light, but came to bear witness of that light:" intimating as if that were the next degree of dignity to it. And our Saviour, speaking of the proofs of his divine mission, reckons up the witnesses of such dignity, that it is not possible for sacred ambition to aspire to higher honour, than to be in conjunction with them: "they are John the baptist, his miracles, his Father, and the scriptures." John 5:33, 36, 37, 39.

Let us appeal then from the tight depraved fancies of carnal men, to the wise and faithful judgment and authority of the Son of God. He will at the last day, in the presence of his Father and all the court of heaven, give an incomparable crown to all that have despised shame for his sake. But those vile spirits, whose courage of straw is quelled by vain opinion, and the reproaches of fools, and have deserted the cause of Christ, shall then be clothed with confusion: for this we are assured by our Judge, that "whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." Mark 8:38. If the unnatural brothers were astonished when the governor of Egypt told them, "I am Joseph, whom ye sold;" how much more will false christians, when the Lord of glory shall tell them, I am Jesus, whom for base shame ye denied? How will it confound those abject wretches to be a spectacle of abhorrence and scorn before that universal glorious confluence? They would choose rather to be covered under the ruins of the world. If we value and desire the approbation of the King of angels, if we fear a final rejection from him, to obtain the one and avoid the other, we must entirely adhere to his interest, without any respect to the eyes and esteem of the perverse deceived world.

Sixthly. A cordial beneficent love to the saints, is a requisite qualification of our acceptance in the day of judgment. "Then shall the King say to 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 hungered, 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, 35, 36. The union and endearments betwixt Christ and his people, are mutual and reflexive; as they are extremely tender of his glory, so he is concerned in all that is done to them. And though the perfection of love consists more in the affection of the heart than in outward offices, yet our Saviour most congruously produces in judgment the conspicuous effects of love to them, the supplying their wants, allaying their sorrows,

owning them when obscured and depressed by afflictions, and injuriously treated by others. This love of service that is directed and exercised towards the saints for the image of God shining in them, because they are the children of God, and members of Christ, and therefore extended to all in whom the reason of that love appears, shall be gloriously rewarded; for he interprets what is done upon his account to those who are his own by so many dear titles, as done to himself. And what is more becoming his excellent goodness, than to reward the works of mercy with saving mercy? But those who when Christ presents himself to them in his poor distressed members, and solicits their assistance, to protect them from injuries, to refresh their sorrows, to support them in their exigencies; those that have ability, but want affection to do them good, and incompassionately neglect the suffering saints, shall be sentenced to be tormented with the apostate angels for ever. What indignity is it to the Son of God, that those for whom he shed his most precious blood, should be in less value and regard with many, than the dogs and horses maintained for their pleasure? And if those on the left hand shall be condemned to eternal fire for the coldness of their love; how terrible will the judgment be of those that from the heat of their enmity outrageously persecute the servants of Christ for his sake, in their persons, estates, reputations, that with a worse than barbarous inhumanity seek their ruin? Is there any sin of a more mortal guilt? The infernal furnace is seven-fold heated for the punishing such wickedness.

To conclude this argument; let us observe the command of our Saviour, "To watch and pray always, that we may be counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man." These are duties of universal influence into our lives, the one prevents carelessness, the other vain confidence in ourselves: and the consideration of judgment to come, is the greatest motive to them, and the first principle of holiness. This should work more powerful in us, considering the day of death is equivalent to the day of judgment to every person; for then a particular sentence decisive and irrevocable passes, that shall be published at the last day. Methinks the terrors of the Lord should

engage our souls and senses to a continual preparation for his coming. It is represented so as to affect the eye, and keep it vigilant, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all," Jude 15. Behold, he comes in the clouds, and every eye shall see him," Rev. 1:9. And to call the ear, and make it attentive; "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." 1 Thess. 4:16. How circumspect should we be in all our ways, since every action shall be reviewed by our Judge? St. Peter strongly infers from the dissolution of the world, as a most cogent argument, that we should be exactly and universally holy: "Seeing then all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" 1 Pet. 3:11, 12. But the consideration of the eternal judgment immediately succeeding the destruction of the world; O how powerful should it be upon conscience and the affections, to regulate the whole course of our lives with a final respect to God's tribunal!

In short, that which we read of the success of the apostles preaching to the Athenians upon the present subject, the immortality of the soul, comprised in the resurrection of the body and future judgment, is the same in all times and places. "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; and others said, we will hear thee again of this matter; and others believed." Acts 17:32, 34. There are three differences of the hearers of this doctrine of so great importance: some deride it as an extravagant fancy; some believe it, and yield up themselves entirely in obedience to it; others do not absolutely reject it as the first, nor accept it as the second, but have a conjecture, or slight superficial opinion of it, or a speculative assent as to a history of things that do not concern them, and defer the serious consideration and applying of it to themselves. And of this third sort (O grief!) are the most of those who are christians in name. They delay till death the solemn reflecting upon the final judgment, and the inevitable consequence of it, a blessed or miserable estate for ever. And whereas the apostle, who had infallible assurance of God's love, did with a holy severity and self-denial abstain from all carnal

complacencies that might hazard the never-fading crown; "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means when I have preached to others, I should be a cast-away." 1 Cor. 9:27.* Yet the most live and die in a secure state, without a preparation to appear before the presence of his glory.

ON HEAVEN

Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. PSAL. 16:11

Chapter I: The Saviour of Men Was Before and Under the Law

The Saviour of men was before and under the law by various predictions and types described, to prepare the world for his reception with faith and obedience. In this psalm, a mixture of history and prophecy. The words of the text applied by the apostle to Christ's resurrection and ascension, and glory in heaven. The divine presence is the supreme and eternal felicity of the saints in heaven. The glory of the place considered. The happiness of heaven illustrated by sensible representations.

THE divine wisdom and goodness was pleased, before and during the legal dispensation, by various predictions and types to delineate

the person of our Redeemer, and the work of redemption, to prepare the minds of men for his reception at his coming into the world. All the evangelical prophecies recorded in the Old Testament, as dispersed rays, are conspicuously united in him, "the Sun of Righteousness;" and as in a curious piece of Mosaic work, each stone according to its natural vein and colour is so exactly disposed, and with that proportion joined to another, that the lively figure of the human body results from the composure; so by variety of types, the entire image of our Saviour's life is represented from his first appearing on earth, to his ascending to heaven.

Now the due comparing and observing the harmonious agreement between the prophecies and types of the Old Testament, and the history of the New, is a powerful means to produce and establish a true lively faith in the blessed Jesus as the promised Messiah: for it is an infallible argument of the divine providence, in disposing times and things so, as the oracle should be verified in the event, and the mysterious figures substantially exhibited in the manifestation of the Son of God. It is true, his miracles raised admiration, and argued the concurrence of power truly divine: for the exercise of an absolute dominion over the order of nature, is a royalty reserved to God; but that his miraculous operations were foretold, added more authority to his person, and efficacy to his doctrine. Therefore our Saviour himself, in answer to the public question sent from John the baptist, whether he were the expected Saviour of the world, commanded the messengers to tell him what they heard and saw, "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up," Matt. 11. Which healing miracles were foretold by the prophet Isaiah, Isa. 35. as the clear and distinguishing characters of the Messiah from all seducers, when he should come. The fulfilling God's word by the works of Christ, of which there was sensible evidence, was an irrefutable testimony that his miracles were true, and performed for the confirmation of the truth.

Now of all the chosen saints that foretold the coming of Christ, the new law of grace, and the new kingdom of glory, that he should

reveal and establish:* of all that represented him in various particularities, concerning his person and offices, there was not a more illustrious type than David, that by prophetic words, and by prophetic actions did so clearly describe him.

In this psalm composed by him, there is a mixture of history and prophecy; some things in the literal and immediate sense referring to David: "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Our being at God's right hand, implies the highest honour; his being at our right hand, implies present and sure protection and defence. And of this David had the infallible promise of God to secure his hope, notwithstanding all his unrighteous and implacable enemies. But the following verses are applicable to David, but in a lower sense, and by a remote metaphor, and have their literal and principal accomplishment in our Saviour. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;" that is, in the state of the dead; "nor suffer thy holy One to see corruption:" that is, the body of our Saviour should be exempted from the corrupting power of the grave, and restored the third day to life. In this propriety and perfection of sense, the prophecy is applied by St. Peter to our Saviour's alone: for David died, "and saw corruption," Acts 2:27, 29 and his body still remains under the dominion of death. And this last verse, "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore;" is applied by the apostle to Christ, his resurrection, ascension to heaven, "and sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Thou wilt show me the path of life;" that is, introduce him into the kingdom of glory, and by experimental fruition make him partaker of it: "In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

In these words the causes and excellencies of the heavenly life are expressed. The causes, are the glorious presence of God, and the intimate application of his presence, and discovery of his peculiar love to the saints. This our blessed Saviour had respect to, as the complete reward of his sufferings: "Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." And his right hand implies his bounty that

dispenses, and his power that secures our happiness. The excellencies of it, are "fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

From the words I shall observe one proposition.

The enjoyment of the divine presence in heaven, is the supreme and everlasting felicity of the saints, and

In discoursing of this point, I will consider;—The place wherein the divine presence is gloriously revealed;—Show that the enjoyment of the divine presence is the supreme felicity of the saints;—and lastly, Prove that the felicity shall be everlasting.

I. The place wherein the divine presence is revealed. It is consistent with the divine immensity, to be differently present in some places. The essential presence of God is the same every where; the influxive declarative presence of God is special, and otherwise in one place than another. He is more excellently present in the living temples, his saints on earth, by the gracious and eminent operations of his Spirit, than he is in the rest of the world: he is most excellently present in heaven, by the clearest manifestation, and the express characters and effects of the divine perfections.

This inferior world is framed with exquisite order; "The earth is full of the glory of the Lord:" yet it is but the sediment of the creation, the habitation of birds and beasts, nay of rebellious sinners: and by this we may raise our thoughts to conceive something of the glorious sanctuary of life, and blessedness above. It is called the "heaven of heavens," which is the highest comparison to instruct and astonish us with the amplitude and glory of the place. It is a place becoming the majesty of God, the image of his immensity. Our Saviour assures us,

In his Father's house are many mansions," to receive the innumerable company of glorified saints. It is called "the excellent glory," 2 Pet. 1:17.

The shining firmament, with all the luminaries that adorn it, are but the frontispiece to the highest heaven. All the lustre of diamonds, the fire of carbuncles and rubies, the brightness of pearls are dead in comparison of its glory. "It is the throne of the God of glory," wherein his majesty is revealed in the most illustrious manner. For pleasantness it is called paradise, in allusion to the delightful garden planted by the hands of God himself for Adam, his favourite, whilst innocent. There is "the tree of life." There are rivers of pleasure springing from the divine presence. "It is called the inheritance of the saints in light;" to signify the glory and joy of the place: for light has splendour, and conciliates cheerfulness, and is a fit emblem of both. As on the contrary, hell is described by "the blackness of darkness for ever," to signify the sadness and despair of the damned; and because in that centre of misery, a perpetual night and invincible darkness increases the horror of lost souls.

Heaven for stability is called "a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The present world is like a tent or tabernacle set up for a time, whilst the church is passing through the wilderness: but heaven is the "City of the living God," the place of his happy residence, the seat of his eternal empire. The visible world, with all its perishing idols, shall shortly fall, this beautiful scene shall be abolished: but the supreme heaven is above this sphere of mutability, wherein all bodies compounded of the jarring elements are continually changing and dissolving: it is truly called "a kingdom that cannot be shaken." Briefly, the wise maker has framed it correspondently to the end for which it was designed: it is the seat of his Majesty, his sacred temple wherein he diffuses the richest beams of his goodness and glory, and his chosen servants see and praise his adorable excellencies for ever.

II. I will endeavour to show that the enjoyment of the divine presence in heaven, is the supreme felicity of the saints.

To make this supernatural blessedness more easy and intelligible to us, the scripture describes it by sensible representations. For while

the soul is clothed with flesh, fancy has such a dominion, that we conceive of nothing but by comparisons and images taken from material things. It is therefore set forth by a "Marriage-Feast," Rev. 17:7. to signify the joy and glory of the saints above. But to prevent all gross conceits, we are instructed, that the bodies of the saints shall be spiritual, not capable of hunger or thirst, nor consequently of any refreshment that is caused by the satisfaction of those appetites. The objects of the most noble senses, seeing and hearing, the pleasure of which is mixed with reason, and not common to the brutes, are more frequently made use of to reconcile the blessed and heavenly state to the proportion of our minds. Thus sometimes the saints above are "represented on thrones, and with crowns on their heads: sometimes clothed in white, with palms in their hands: sometimes singing songs of triumph to him that sits on the throne." But the real felicity of the saints infinitely exceeds all those faint metaphors. The apostle, to whom the admirable revelation was exhibited of the sufferings of the church, and the victorious issue out of them in the successive ages of the world, tells us, "it does not appear what the saints shall be in heaven. The things that God has prepared for those that love him," are far more above the highest ascent of our thoughts, than the marriage-feast of a king exceeds in splendour and magnificence, the imagination of one that has always lived in an obscure village, that never saw any ornaments of state, nor tasted wine in his life. We can think of those things but according to the poverty of our understandings. But so much we know as is able to sweeten all the bitterness, and render insipid all the sweetness of this world.

Chapter II: Whatever is Requisite to our Complete Blessedness, is Enjoined in Heaven.

There is an exemption from all evils. Sin and all the penal consequences are abolished in heaven. The concurrence of all positive excellencies is enjoyed there. The body is revived to a glorious life. The soul lives in communion with God. The excellence of the object, and vigour of the actings upon it, the principal ingredients of happiness.

THIS will appear by considering that whatever is requisite to constitute the complete blessedness of man, is fully enjoyed in the divine presence.

i. An exemption from all evils is the first condition of perfect blessedness. The sentence of the wise Solon is true,

—Dicique beatus

Ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet.

No man can be called happy whilst in this valley of tears. There are so many natural calamities, so many casual, which no human mind can foresee or prevent, that one may be less miserable than another, but none perfectly happy here. But upon the entrance into heaven, all those evils, that by their number, variety or weight, disquiet and oppress us here, are at an end.

Sin, of all evils, the worst and most hateful, shall be abolished, and all temptations that surround us and endanger our innocence, shall cease. Here the best men lament the weakness of the flesh, and sometimes the violent assaults of spiritual enemies. St. Paul himself breaks forth into a mournful complaint, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!" And when harassed by the buffets of satan, renews his most earnest addresses to God to be freed from them. Here our purity is not absolute, we must be always cleansing ourselves from the reliques of that deep defilement that cleaves to our nature. Here our peace is preserved with the sword in our hand, by a continual warfare against satan and the world. But in heaven no ignorance darkens the mind, no passions rebel against the

sanctified will, no inherent pollution remains. "The church is without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing:" and all temptations shall then cease. The tempter was cast out of heaven, and none of his poisoned arrows can reach that purified company. Glorious Liberty! here ardently desired, but fully enjoyed by the saints above. And as sin, so all the penal consequences of it are quite taken away. The present life is a continual disease, and sometimes attended with that sharp sense, that death is desired as a remedy, and accepted as a benefit. And though the saints have reviving cordials, yet their joys are mixed with sorrows, nay caused by sorrows. The tears of repentance are their sweetest refreshment. Here the living stones are cut and wounded, and made fit by sufferings for a temple unto God in the New Jerusalem. But as in building of Solomon's temple, the noise of a hammer was not heard, for all the parts were framed before with that exact design and correspondence, that they firmly combined together; they were hewn in another place, and nothing remained but the putting them one upon another, and then as sacred they became inviolable: so God the wise architect, having prepared the saints here by many cutting afflictions, places them in the eternal building, where no voice of sorrow is heard. Of the innumerable assembly above, is there any eye that weeps, any breast that sighs, any tongue that complains, or any appearance of grief? The heavenly state is called life, as only worthy of that title. There is no infirmity of body, no poverty, no disgrace, no treachery of friends, no persecution of enemies. "There is no more death, nor sorrow; nor shall there be any more pain; for former things are passed away. God will wipe away all tears from the eyes of his people." Their salvation is complete in all degrees: pure joy is the privilege of heaven, unmixed sorrows the punishment of hell.

ii. A concurrence of all positive excellencies is requisite to blessedness. And these are to be considered with respect to the entire man.

1. The body shall be awaked out of its dead sleep, and quickened into a glorious immortal life. The soul and body are the essential parts of

man; and though the inequality be great in their holy operations, yet their concourse is necessary. Good actions are designed by the counsel and resolution of the Spirit, but performed by the ministry of the flesh. Every grace expresses itself in visible actions by the body. In the sorrows of repentance it supplies tears; in religious fasts, its appetites are restrained; in thanksgivings the tongue breaks forth into the joyful praises of God. All our victories over sensible pleasure and pain are obtained by the soul in conjunction with the body. Now it is most becoming the divine goodness, not to deal so differently, that the soul should be everlastingly happy, and the body lost in forgetfulness; the one glorified in heaven, the other remain in the dust. From their first setting out into the world to the grave, they ran the same race, and shall enjoy the same reward. Here the body is the consort of the soul in obedience and sufferings, hereafter in fruition. When the crown of purity, or palm of martyrdom shall be given by the great Judge in the view of all, they shall both partake in the honour. The apostle assures us, the bodies of the saints shall be revived and refined to a spiritual and glorious perfection. "Flesh and blood," the body with its terrene qualities, is mutable and mortal, and "cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven;" it cannot breathe in so pure an air. God tells Moses, "No man can see my face and live:" the sight of the divine glory is not consistent with such tempered frail tabernacles of flesh. Nay, the body must be freed from the innocent infirmities that were inseparable from Adam in paradise: for "he was made a living soul," that is, the soul united to the body was the fountain of the natural sensitive life, which was in a perpetual flux, the vital heat wasting the radical moisture, from whence there was a necessity of food and sleep to repair the substance and spirits, and preserve his life in vigour: but in the divine world, the body shall be spiritual in its qualities and the principle of its life; it shall be supported by the supernatural power of the Spirit, without the supplies of outward nourishment, and exempted from all the low operations of nature: therefore our Saviour tells us, "the children of the resurrection shall be equal to the angels," prepared for the employment and enjoyments of those blessed spirits.

And a substantial unfading glory will shine in them infinitely above the perishing pride of this world, "and the glory of the flesh," that is but an appearance, like the false colours painted on the feathers of a dove, by the reflection of the light, which presently vanishes, when the posture is changed, or the light withdrawn. Of this we have a sure pledge in the glorified body of Christ, who is the "firstfruits of them that sleep: he shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like to his glorious body, according to the working of his power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself." What can be more glorious, than to be conformed to the humanity of the Son of God? This conformity shall be the work of his own hands: and when omnipotence interposes, nothing is difficult. The raising the body to an immortal state of glory, is as easy to the divine power, as the forming it first in the womb. As the sun labours no more in the mines, in the forming gold and silver, the most precious and durable metals, than in the production of a short-lived flower.

2. The supreme happiness of man is in the soul's communion with God. This will appear by considering the principal ingredients of happiness: they are the excellence of the object, and the vigour of the actings upon it. The life and blessedness of God is to know and love himself according to his infinite perfections. And it is the highest happiness of the reasonable creature, to know and love God: for he is a spiritual, infinite, unchangeable good, and can fully communicate all that is requisite to entire blessedness, supply all the wants, and satisfy all the wishes of the immortal soul. The understanding and will are our most comprehensive faculties, the principles of our most eminent operations. To know and to love, are essential to the reasonable soul; and in directing those acts upon God, the rectitude, the perfection and felicity of man consists. As the intellectual creature by setting its mind and heart upon earthly thing, is degraded into a lower order, the thoughts and desires that are spiritual with respect to the principle from whence they proceed, are sensual and perishing with respect to their objects: so when our noble faculties are exercised in their most lively and vigorous perceptions upon the Supreme Good, man is advanced to an equality

of joy and perfection with the angels. Now in heaven, God by his most evident and effectual presence, excites and draws forth all the active powers of the soul in their highest degrees; and, such is the immensity of his perfections, fills their utmost capacity, from whence a divine pleasure, a perpetual satisfaction springs, a joy that is as unspeakable as it is eternal.

Chapter III: The Understanding Shall be Clearly Enlightened with the Knowledge of God.

Here the revelation of God in his works and word is according to our capacities. In heaven it is most glorious, and our faculties raised and refined to receive it. The nature of God, his decrees and counsels, his providential dispensations are revealed to the blessed.

TO unfold this more particularly. The understanding shall clearly see the most excellent objects. "Now we know but in part." 1 Cor. 13. The naked beauty of divine things is veiled, and of impossible discovery: and by natural or accidental weakness, the mind is not proportionable to sustain that dazzling brightness. "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." In that enlightened state, the manifestation of the objects shall abundantly exceed the clearest revealing of them here. And the understanding shall be prepared in proportion to take a full view of them. Therefore the apostle compares the several periods of the church in respect of the degrees of knowledge, to the several ages of human life. "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." In children the organs, either from the excess of moisture, or their smallness, are indisposed for the vigorous exercise of the mind: some strictures of reason appear, a presaging sign what

will be, but mixed with much obscurity. But when the organs are come to their just proportion and temperament, the soul displays its strength and activity.

To explicate this, it is requisite to consider the expressions in scripture, that signify the eminent degrees of knowledge in the blessed. Our Saviour assures us, that "the pure in heart shall see God." Sight is the most noble, extensive, and affective sense, and therefore fit to notify the clear, sweet and satisfying intuition of God in heaven. It is true, the Deity is spiritual, and invisible to the eye of the body, infinite, and incomprehensible to the eye of the soul; but the glorified saints so clearly understand the divine perfections, that our present knowledge of God, compared to that vision, is but as the seeing of a dark shadow in a glass, to the immediate view of the living substance and person. The discovery of the Deity to us in the present state, is by his works and word: and both are imperfect, and far inferior to the manifestation in heaven. The absolute fulness of perfection that is inseparable from the Godhead, is inimitable by any creature; for the perfection of any creature is limited in its kind as well as degrees. Therefore God was pleased by variety of effects and resemblances, to express and represent his attributes, that our minds might ascend by those steps to contemplate those perfections that are in him eminently and beyond all comparison. The light of heaven in all its purity and lustre, is but a shadow of his unapproachable brightness: all the excellencies of visible things are but a weak representation of the glory of his attributes, like the describing with a coal the beautiful colours of the morning: and compared with the immensity of his perfections, are like the describing in a sheet of paper the vast celestial spheres.

In his word there is a more clear and full discovery of his nature and will, but according to our capacity of receiving. The divine attributes in scripture are masked and shadowed under sensible comparisons: for no light shines into our minds here, but through the windows of sense. The intellectual powers depend, as to the first notices of things, on the lower faculties and senses: therefore as Elisha in

reviving the Shunamite's child, contracted himself to the proportion of the child, and "put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands;" so God is pleased to condescend to our capacity, and to adapt the expressions of his majesty to the narrowness of our imaginations. But in heaven the revelation of the Deity is much more glorious: and the mind is clarified from those terrene images that flow through the gross channels of the senses. In this present state our purest conceptions of God are mixed with dross, and very imperfect; but there the gold shall be separated from the dross, and our conceptions be more proper and becoming the simplicity and purity of God. Here the objects of glory are humbled to the perception of sense: hereafter, the sensible faculties shall be raised and refined, and made the subjects of glory. Now when divine light shines with direct beams, and the thick curtain of flesh is spiritualized and transparent, the soul enjoys the clearest vision of God. The light of nature was so defective as to the discovery of God's compassionate counsels to save the lost world, and the minds of men were so darkened from the fumes of their lust, that that light was but the hemisphere of the night in comparison of the revelation of the gospel: as St. Peter expresses the happy privilege of christians, and their consequent duty, "that they should show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." And the glorious gospel, compared to the revelation of God in heaven, is but as the twilight of the morning, wherein the light of the day is checkered with the shadows of the night, to the sun in its full lustre. In heaven we shall "see God face to face;" which signifies the clearest manifestation of his glory, and of his favour to the blessed: for the face is the throne of majesty and beauty, and the crystal wherein the affections are conspicuous. Accordingly when Moses prayed, "I beseech thee show me thy glory;" God answered him, it was impossible, "for no man could see his face and live." And the form of divine blessing to the people of Israel was, "the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious to thee." Whether the immediate essence of God can be seen by the intellectual creature, is a question; but we are sure "in the heaven of presence," God exhibits himself to

the blessed in a most glorious manner: for according to the degrees of excellency an the work, are the impressions and discoveries of the cause. Now all gross material things in the low order of nature, are but weak resultances from his perfections, in comparison of their glorious effects in the divine world. The glories of the place, and of the inhabitants the angels and saints, are the most noble effects and expressions of the divine attributes. But in a transcendent manner God exhibits himself in the glorified Mediator. He is styled "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" to signify that God, in the person of the incarnate Mediator, is so fully represented to us, that in him we have a view of God's unchangeable perfections. This appears by the following words, "that having purged us from our sins, he sat down on the majesty on high:" for they respect the Son of God as united to the human nature, in which he performed the office of the priesthood, and took possession of his kingdom. During his humble state, though darkened with many afflicting circumstances, the divine virtues, wisdom, goodness, holiness, power, were so visible in his life, revelations, and miraculous works, that when Philip with that ardency of affection desired the sight of the Father, the only consummate blessedness, "show us the Father, and it suffices;" he told him, he "that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." But how brightly do they appear in his exaltation? We shall "see him as he is," in the majesty and glory of the Son of God. The apostle says, "we shall know as we are known:" this we are not to understand according to the exactness of the expression; for the sun may be as well included in a spark of fire, as God may be comprehended by our finite faculties. Beyond the fullest discoveries we can receive of the Deity, there remains an entire infinity of perfections, not to be known by the most intelligent spirits: but "as we are known," is a note of similitude, not of equality. The light of a candle as truly shines as the light of the sun, but not with that extent and splendour. We shall have such a perfect knowledge of God, as our minds can receive, and our hearts desire.

We shall then see what we now believe concerning the glorious nature of God, his decrees and counsels, his providence and

dispensations. The sublimest doctrine of the christian religion, above the disquisition and reach of reason, is that of the sacred Trinity, upon which the whole economy of the gospel depends. In assenting to this, faith bows the head and adores. But such is the pride of the carnal mind, that it disdains to stoop to divine revelation: and the seeming wise philosophers despised the primitive christians as captives of a blind belief. But this foul reproach was as unjust as many others wherewith they designed to disgrace christianity; for the humility of faith does not extinguish or darken the light of reason, but revives and increases it. What is more suitable to incorrupt reason, than to believe the revelation God affords of his own nature, who cannot deceive us? In the state above, where reason is rectified and enlarged, we shall understand that from eternity God was sole existing, but not solitary; that the Godhead is not confused in unity, nor divided in number; that there is a priority of order, yet no superiority among the sacred Persons, but they are all equally possessed of the same divine excellencies, and the same divine empire, and are the object of the same adoration. Our Saviour tells his disciples, "in that day ye shall know that I am in the Father," that is by unity of essence, and as naturally and necessarily God as the Father. This promise immediately refers to the time of pouring forth the Holy Ghost upon them after the resurrection of our Saviour, but shall be fully accomplished in heaven.

All things of a supernatural order shall be revealed. The "great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," the union of the high perfections of the divine nature with the innocent imperfections of the human nature, the contrivance of our redemption, wherein there is an harmonious concurrence and concord of the principal attributes of the Deity that seemed irreconcilable; that product of the divine wisdom that is so adored by the angels, that astonishes and saves us, shall be unfolded. The divine counsels in governing the world, the designs, the ways, the orders and operations of God's providence shall be conspicuous. In some dispensations of God, we discern the eye in the top of his sceptre: the wisdom, the rectitude, the equity of his providence, is so visible in the defence of the

innocent, and his justice and power in the punishment of the guilty, that it may convince the atheists who deny a providence, and causes all sincere believers to admire and reverence it. But there are other dispensations, the immediate reasons of which are so concealed in the bosom of God, that only the Lamb, with whose blood the elect to glory are written in the book of life, can reveal: why the light of the gospel was never visible to so many kingdoms; "why many are called, and few chosen;" the unsearchable ways, and incomprehensible judgments of God, which St. Paul in an ecstasy admires, which it is not lawful to inquire into here, we shall then understand in such a manner, that light itself is not more clear. How often are the people of God here in miserable perplexities? and say with the prophets, "verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel the Saviour!" It is true, a steadfast faith in the providence of God, that all that he does, and all that he permits and disposes is best, will quiet their passions, and change the tempestuous ocean into the pacific sea: but when they are admitted into the council of state above, and see the immediate reasons of his decrees, what a heavenly wonder, what an exquisite pleasure will fill their minds? When the original fountains of wisdom, as clear as deep, shall be opened, what sweet satisfaction will be shed abroad in their spirits? They will see the beauty of providence in disposing temporal evils in order to their eternal felicity: that as in a curious picture the darkest tinctures are so, disposed, as to give life and grace to the orient colours; so all the afflictions of this state were but shadows or foils, to make their faith, and love, and patience more resplendent, and their reward more excellent. What our Saviour said to Peter, is applicable to the impenetrable dispensations of providence to us in our mortal state: "what I do, thou knowest not now, but shalt know hereafter." Then the *arcana imperii*, the secrets of his counsels shall be unsealed, and we shall be able to expound the perplexing riddle, how "out of the eater came meat, and out of the strong came sweetness:" we shall understand that his overruling providence is most eminently glorified in extracting good out of evil; "for we shall know as we are known."

Chapter IV: The Blessed Effect of the Vision of God in the Saints.

It is productive and conservative of his glorious likeness. It affects them with the most humble veneration of God's excellencies. It inflames then with the most ardent love of God, and of our Saviour.

I Will consider the blessed effects of the vision of God in heaven upon the saints. Our Saviour tells us, "this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The beginning and introduction of our felicity, is by a lively faith here, the consummation of it is by present sight in heaven.

1. From the vision of his glory there will be a resemblance of his likeness impressed on us. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." All the perfection and happiness of the saints is comprised in that promise. The sun, when the sky is clear and serene, forms its image on a cloud tempered to receive it, with that orient brightness, that the eye cannot distinguish between the copy and the original. Thus the uncreated sun by powerful emanations transforms the soul into its likeness, in that divine degree of holiness and felicity, as gloriously resembles God. Moses by conversing with God in the mount, and seeing his back-parts, returned to the Israelites with such a radiancy in his face, that they could not look on it without a veil. What an impression of glory is in the saints, who see his perfections in their infinite lustre? It is the privilege of christians in this life, above the church under the law; "they behold in the gospel as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory;" they become more holy and heavenly, more purified and adorned with his virtues and graces. Now if the vision of Christ here in a glass, an eclipsing medium, be so influxive upon believers, what an illustrious and infallible efficacy has the immediate, clear, and permanent view of his glory upon the saints in

heaven? That sight is productive and conservative of his image in its purity and perfection for ever.

2. The divine presence affects the saints with the most humble reverence and solemn veneration of God. This is an eternal respect due from the intellectual creature to the Creator, upon the account of his infinite and incommunicable excellencies. He is distinguished not only from idols, but from creatures of the highest order, by his essential, supreme and singular name, "I AM." Every kind of being, every spark of life, every degree of perfection is from his efficiency, and depends entirely upon his supporting power. The most eminent qualities of the creatures are but in show and appearance compared with the reality and stability of his glorious nature. In the scripture, wisdom, holiness, goodness, power, truth, immortality, are attributed to God, with the exclusion of all creatures from those prerogatives; they being his essential, infinite and incomparable perfections. They are separable qualities in the creatures, like the gilding and enameling of baser metal: but in the Deity, they are like substantial massy gold. There is a vast distance between created beings; but the distance between a fly, or a worm, and an angel, is nothing to the distance between an archangel and God, there being no comparison between finite and infinite. All creatures equally vanish, and disappear as nothing, compared to the glorious Creator. As if one from the region of the stars should look down upon the earth, the mountains and hills with the vallies would appear one flat surface, an equal plain, the height and the lowness of the several parts being indiscernible at that immense distance.

Now in heaven the divine majesty is most visible, and most awful and adorable. The sublimest spirits "cover their faces" before his glorious brightness. The prophet Isaiah had a representation of heaven: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, with twain he did fly. And one cried to another, and said, holy, holy, holy Lord of host, the whole earth is full of his glory." They highly

honour him, by the reflection of his separate and peerless excellencies, his almighty power, his infinite supremacy and eternal empire, in their concert, of praises.

3. In heaven the saints as perfectly love God, as they know him. This is the principal duty of angels and men to the blessed Creator for his admirable perfections, and his excellent benefits. The evidence of it is so entire, that the reasonable mind cannot suspend its assent: for goodness and beauty, the fruit and the flower of amiable things, do so recommend them to the understanding and will, that they powerfully allure and engage the affections. Now these are in God in unspeakable degrees of eminence. The prophet breaks out in a rapture, "how great is his goodness, how great is his beauty!"

It was a precept of the ceremonial law, that the firstlings of the flock, and the first and best fruits of the earth should be offered to God; not as if the first that opened the belly was more valuable in his account than the last, or the most early fruits in the spring more pleasing to him than the later in the autumn; but it was instructive, that our love, the "first-born of the soul, and the beginning of its strength," should be consecrated to God.

The love of God is the essential character of a saint, that distinguishes him from the unregenerate. Indeed, it is strange that God, who is infinitely lovely, and infinitely liberal and beneficent, should not prevail on the hearts of all men; but if we consider the degeneracy of mankind, how their minds are depraved and deceived, and their affections are vitiated, the wonder will cease. Carnal men have not due conceptions of God, and will not attentively observe his amiable perfections. St. John tells us, "he that loveth not, doth not know God." Knowledge is the leading principle in the operations of the soul. There must be a heavenly eye to discover the heavenly beauty, before there can be love of it. Now men are in ignorant darkness, and are defiled in flesh and spirit, and therefore cannot love God who is glorious in holiness. Without resemblance there can be no affectionate union which is the essence of love. The contrariety

of dispositions infers a contrariety of affections. The scripture expresses this in dreadful colours: "the carnal mind is enmity against God: the friendship of the world is enmity with God;" that is, pride, and covetousness, and sensuality, which are the lusts of the carnal mind, and are terminated upon worldly things, are inconsistent with the love of God. The justice of God is terrible to the consciences, and his holiness odious to the affections of the unrenewed. Till by divine grace the understanding is enlightened and purified to have right apprehensions of God; till the will and affections are cleansed and changed; till there be a resemblance of God's holy nature, and a conformity to his holy laws, they are not capable of delightful adhering to him, which is the internal essential property of love.

But those who are partakers of the divine nature, the holy and heavenly, "taste and see how good the Lord is:" and according to the illustrations of the mind, such are the impressions upon the heart; the love of God in their breasts here is like smoking flax, but in heaven it is a triumphant flame. God is the first fair, the original of all amiable, excellencies, in whom they shine in their unstained lustre and perfection. When he fully reveals himself, and displays the richest beams of his love and glory, how transporting and endearing is that sight? Our affections that are now scattered on many things, wherein some faint reflections of his goodness appear, shall then be united in one full current to him. "who is all in all." In heaven the immense treasures of his grace are revealed. That when man for his rebellious sin was justly expelled from paradise, and under the sentence of eternal death, God should not only pardon, but prefer us to the dignity of his children, and prepare such a glory for us, and us for such a glory; this will inspire the saints with such ardent affections, that will make them equal to the angels, those pure and everlasting flames of love to God.

In heaven we shall be with "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, who is seated at the right hand of God." And how admirable will he appear to the sense and soul of every glorified. saint? for "we shall see the King in his beauty." When our Saviour, was upon the holy

mount, and one vanishing beam of glory appeared in his transfiguration, Peter was so transported at the sight, that he forgot the world and himself: how ravishing then will the sight of him in his triumphant majesty be, when we shall be transfigured ourselves? Now while believers are in the shadows of the earthly state, they "love their unseen Saviour" with such intense degrees of affection, as deface all the washy colours, all the vain loves of things in this world: but when they are admitted into his shining presence, and see him in the day of celestial glory, with what an ecstasy of affection will they be transported?

We shall then feel the endearing obligations our Saviour has laid upon us, who ransomed us with so rich a price, and purchased for us such an invaluable inheritance. For in proportion as we shall understand his greatness in himself, we shall his goodness to us. The eternal Son of God descended from the heaven of heavens to our lowly earth; and, which is more, from the majesty wherein he there reigned, and was visible to the angels; he became man that he might die, to redeem us from the most woful captivity, from "death, and the sting of death, sin, and the strength of sin, the law," and obtain a blessed life and immortality for us, O unexampled love! "Greater love hath no man than this, to lay down his life for his friend:" and what is the life of a sinful man, a vanishing vapour, a life mixed with troubles and vexation? and to lay down this for a friend deservedly dear, is the highest expression of human love: but for the Son of God to lay down his life, a life without sin, and without end, far immortality was a privilege due to his innocence, and for enemies, for the worst enemies, rebels by revolture from obedience to their Creator and King, is a love truly divine, and infinitely surpassing, not only the affections, but the "understanding and knowledge of all creatures." Ephes. 3. Briefly, he gave his life for us, and gives himself to us, the most excellent testimonies of love that we can receive from love itself; and we shall love him with all the strength of our glorified spirits.

Chapter V: Union with God Causes the Perfection and Felicity of the Saints.

Union with God by knowledge and love, causes the perfection and felicity of the saints. That union briefly unfolded. The pleasure that springs from knowledge. In heaven the knowledge of the saints incomparably excels the knowledge acquired here. The felicity that flows from the enjoyment of God, that fully satisfies the love of the saints. The blessed communion between the saints and Christ in heaven. The love of the saints is most fully pleased in the glory of God.

UNION with God by knowledge and love, accomplishes the perfection and happiness of the saints. The most pernicious effect of sin is the separation of the soul from God: and the restoral of us to happiness, is by reunion with him. This we obtain by Christ, who is Emanuel in his nature, and by office; who took our flesh, which he offered as a sacrifice to God to atone his displeasure, and gives his "Spirit to dwell in us," as a permanent active principle, by whose special operation faith is produced in our hearts; that is, such a belief of his love in redeeming us, as inspires us with a sincere and superlative love to him. And by these vital bands we are united to him, and as his true members, live the same life with him in grace and glory.

Now in heaven our union with God is more near and noble, more intimate and influential, more inseparable and eternal. It is observable in natural causalities, that what is of a more refined and purer nature, is more active and penetrating, and more closely unites with other things, than what is more gross and material. Light, which is the purest quality in the world, actuates all colours, and makes them visible, and actuates the eye, and conveys the lively image of the object with shining evidence into it. The sun shoots its invisible virtue into the deepest mines. Fire is more subtile and pure than water, and will pierce into solid metals, which the water cannot soak

into. The glowing iron seems to be all fire. Now God is the purest Spirit, and of infinite energy, and can unite himself to our spirits more intimately than the closest union between any creatures in the world. He unites himself to the understanding by an immediate irradiation, and discovery of his glorious excellencies. "In thy light," saith the psalmist, "we shall see light." He unites himself to the will, by the infusion of his love, and by that drawing forth our love to him. This union is complete in heaven, and most communicative of the divine influences to the saints, and consequently their conformity and fruition of God is in the highest degrees that created spirits are capable of. This is the most desirable and perfect state of reasonable creatures; for God is the ever-flowing fountain of felicity, the only stable centre of the soul, wherein it reposes itself for ever. Accordingly the psalmist speaks, "Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

When the soul opens its eyes to the clear discoveries of the first truth, in which is no shadow of error, and its breast to the dear and intimate embraces of the supreme good, in which is no mixture of evil, and beyond which nothing remains to be known, nothing to be enjoyed, what a deluge of the purest and sweetest pleasures will overflow it? We cannot ascend in our thoughts so high, as to conceive the excess of joy that attends those operations of the glorified soul upon its proper object. But something we may conjecture.

Those who are possessed with a noble passion for knowledge, how do they despise all lower pleasures in comparison of it? how do they forget themselves, neglect the body, and retire into the mind, the highest part of man, and nearest to God? The bare apprehension of such things that by their internal nature have no attractive influence upon the affections, is pleasant to the understanding. As the appearance of light, though not attended with any other visible beauties, refreshes the eye after long darkness: so the clear discovery of truths, how abstract soever, that were before unknown, is grateful to the intellective faculty. Thus some have been strangely transported with the pleasures of a mathematical demonstration,

when the evidence, not the importance, of the thing was so ravishing; for what is more dry and barren of delight than the speculation of figures and numbers? Solon when near his end, and some of his friends that visited him were speaking softly of a point of philosophy, by that sound of wisdom was awakened from the sleep of death that was just seizing on him; and opening his eyes, raising his head to give attention, being asked the reason of it, answered,* 'That when I understand what you are discoursing of, I may die.' Such was his delight in knowledge, that a little of it made his agony insensible.

But here are many imperfections that lessen this intellectual pleasure, which shall cease in heaven. Here the acquisition of knowledge is often with the expence of health; the flower of the spirits, necessary for natural operations, is wasted by intense thoughts. How often are the learned sickly? As the flint when it is struck, gives not a spark without consuming itself; so knowledge is obtained by studies that waste our faint sensitive faculties. But then our knowledge shall be a free emanation from the spring of truth, without our labour and pains. Here we learn by circuit, and discern by comparing things; ignorant darkness is dispelled by a gradual succession of light: but then perfect knowledge shall be infused in a moment. Here, after all our labour and toil, how little knowledge do we gain? Every question is a labyrinth, out of which the nimblest and most searching minds cannot extricate themselves. How many specious errors impose upon our understandings? We look on things by false lights, through deceiving spectacles: but then our knowledge shall be certain and complete. There is no forbidden tree in the celestial paradise, as no inordinate affection. But suppose that all things in the compass of the world were known, yet still there would be emptiness and anguish in the mind: for the most comprehensive knowledge of things that are insufficient to make us happy, cannot afford true satisfaction. But then we shall see God in all his excellencies, the supreme object and end, the only felicity of the soul. How will the sight of his glorious perfections in the first moment quench our extreme thirst, and fill us with joy and admiration! It is not as the naked conception of treasures, that only makes rich in

ideas, but that divine sight gives a real interest in him. The angels are so ravished with the beauties and wonders of his face, that they never divert a moment from the contemplation of it.

The pure love of the saints to God, is fully satisfied in the possession and enjoyment of him, and consequently the greatest delight and complacency is shed abroad in their hearts. Love considered as an affection of friendship, is always attended with two desires; to be assured of reciprocal love, and to enjoy the conversation of the person beloved, the testimony of his esteem and goodwill. This kind of* affection seems to be inconsistent with that infinite distance that is between God and the creature. But though it is disproportionable to the divine majesty, it is proportionable to his goodness. Accordingly our Saviour promises, "He that loves me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him:" and to confirm our belief of this astonishing condescension, repeats it, "If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." In the present state, the signs of God's special favour are exhibited to his friends. Now he bestows on them the honour of being his sons, the graces and comforts of his Spirit, the precious earnest of his love, "and seal of their redemption." But in eminency of degrees, the emanation of his love, and the effects of his beneficence, are incomparably more glorious in heaven. Here the saints are adopted, there crowned: there he opens all the bright treasures of his wisdom, the riches of his goodness, the beauties of his holiness, the glories of his power, and by the intimate application of his presence makes his love most sensible to them. Infinite goodness excites and draws forth all the powers of the soul, and fills the utmost capacity and expansion of the spirit: from hence perpetual pleasure and satisfaction spring. O the pure delights between God and glorified souls! God looks on them with an engaged eye, as his own by many dear titles, and is ravished with the reflex of his own excellencies shining in them. "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride" (it is the language of the divine love) "so their God rejoices over them. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy: he will rest in his love;

he will rejoice over thee with singing." He is infinitely delighted in the communication of his goodness to them. And what a blessed rest do they find in the complete fruition of his goodness? All their desires quietly expire in his bosom. What triumphs of joy follow? Can we frame a fuller conception of happiness, than to be perfectly loved by the best and most blessed being, and perfectly to love him, and to partake of the richest emanations of his "Loving-kindness, that is far more valuable and desirable than life itself?"

How precious and joyful will the presence of Christ be to the saints? It was his prayer on earth, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." When the saints are received into the everlasting kingdom, the first object that draws their admiring regards, is Christ on the throne. Inestimable felicity! whether we consider him as the Son of God, in whose conspicuous countenance all the glory of his Father shines; or as the Saviour of men, and the head of the elect, upon a double account: partly, that "he that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood," after suffering all indignities and cruelties for our sake, has received the reward of his meritorious sufferings, the triumph of his victory, being "glorified with the Father with the glory he had before the world was:" and partly, because every member shall be conformed to him in glory. The sight of the face of Moses when radiant, had no transforming efficacy, for the light of it was not in him as its spring, but by derivation. But the Son of God is light essentially, and the sight of his glory will transform us into his likeness. And how dear and joyful is the presence of the saints to Christ? "He then sees of the travail of his soul, the fruit of his sharp sufferings and bleeding love, and is satisfied." How delightful is it to him to see all his spiritual progeny safely brought to heaven, and made partakers of his glory and joy in the everlasting kingdom? For according to the extent of the object, and dearness of the affection, joy rises. He will then present them to his Father with infinite complacency; "Behold, here am I, and the children whom thou hast given me."

The dearest affections of Christ and the saints in heaven, are mutual and reflexive. In the sacred song, the expressions of love, desire, and joy, borrowed from the espousals of Solomon and his beloved wife, are, as it were, characters in the bark, to be understood in a spiritual sense, of the mystical marriage of Christ and the church. What endearing intercourse is there between the most perfect lover, and his spouse inspired with the same pure flame? Here amiable perfections attract his eye and heart: "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee," Cant. 7. His propriety in the church is his invaluable treasure: "My vineyard which is mine, is ever before me." He repeats the word "Mine," in the sweetest and most tender manner. And the church, with the same harmonious affections, speaks of Christ. She contemplates in a soft ecstasy in ever-satisfying beauty. "My beloved is the chiefest of ten thousand, he is altogether lovely," Cant. 5:10. She breaks forth in triumph, "My beloved is mine, and I am his," Cant. 6. By all their expressions of joyful love and union, we may ascend in our thoughts, what are the joys of heaven, where the communion of Christ and the church is entire and uninterrupted for ever. If faith and love of our unseen Saviour produce "a joy unspeakable and glorious," as if believers were wrapped up to paradise, or paradise descended into them, what will the sight and fruition of him? There is as great a difference in degrees between the joy that flows from the assurance and application of faith, and the joy from vision and full possession, as between the impression of joy the forerunner of Christ felt, when he sprang in the womb at the coming of our Saviour; and his ravishing joy, when he saw Christ, and pointed him out to his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world."

3. The supreme joy of the saints is for the felicity and glory of God himself. For as the holy soul feels no more powerful motive to love God, than because he is most worthy of it, as he is God, a being of infinite excellencies, and therefore to be loved above the dearest persons and things, even itself; so the highest joy it partakes of is from this consideration, that God is infinitely blessed and glorious. For in this the supreme desire of love is accomplished, that the most

beloved object is perfectly honoured and pleased. In heaven the love of the saints to God is in its highest perfection, and they see his glory in the most perfect manner, which causes a transcendent joy to them. And this is one reason why the saints, though shining with unequal degrees of glory, are equally content. For their most ardent love being set on God, that he is pleased to glorify himself by such various communications of his goodness, is full satisfaction to their desires. Besides, in those different degrees of glory, every one is so content with his own,* that there is no possible desire of being but what he is.

Chapter VI: The Communion of the Angels and Saints in Heaven Affords the Purest Pleasure.

Love unites them. The allays of love cease there. As love is enlarged in its object and degrees, such is the delight that results from it. The joy of heaven is without defect or end. The productive causes of it are always equal. The face of God always shines there, and the contemplation of it is fixed. The constant enjoyment of God in heaven does not lessen the delight of the saints. The reasons why the fruition of sensible things without change is tedious. All those causes of dissatisfaction cease in heaven. The saints have as lively a perception of their happiness for ever as in the beginning of it.

IN heaven "the innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly of the church of the first-born," as they receive happiness from the sight of God, so they communicate the purest pleasure to one another. An unfeigned ardent affection unites that pure society. Our love is now kindled, either from a relation in nature, or a civil account, or some visible excellencies that render a person worthy of our choice and friendship: but in heaven the reasons are greater, and

the degrees of love incomparably more fervent. All carnal alliances and respects cease in that supernatural state. The apostle tells us, "If I have known Christ after the flesh, I know him so no more." By the resurrection and ascension of Christ he was transported into another world, and had communion with him as a heavenly king, without low regards to the temporal privilege of conversing with him on earth. The spiritual relation is more near and permanent than the strictest band of nature. The saints have all relation to the same heavenly Father, and to Jesus Christ the Prince of peace, and head of that happy fraternity. The principal motives of love here, are the inherent excellencies of a person. Wisdom, holiness, goodness, fidelity are mighty attractives, and produce a more worthy affection, a more intimate confederacy of souls, than propinquity in nature, or any carnal respects. Virtue is amiable in an old person, though wrinkled and deformed: vice is hateful in a young person, though beautiful. There are clearer eyes than those of flesh, a purer light than what is sensible, a diviner beauty than what is corporeal, and a nobler love than what is sensual. David declares that "all his delight was in the excellent." But there are allays of this spiritual love here. For,

1. There are relics of frailty in the best men on earth, some blemishes that render them less amiable when discovered. Here their graces are mixed with infirmities, and but ascending to glory. Accordingly our love to them must be regular, and serene, not clouded with error, mistaking defects for amiable qualities. But in heaven, the image of God is complete by the union of all the glorious virtues requisite to its perfection. Every saint there exactly agrees with the first exemplar, a divine beauty shines in them ever durable, a beauty that darts no contagious fire, that is inviolable and can suffer no injury. The apostle tells us, "The church shall be glorious in holiness, without spot or wrinkle," or any thing that may cast an aspect of deformity upon it.

2. In the present state the least part of the saints' worth is visible. As the earth is fruitful in plants and flowers, but its riches are in mines of precious metals, and the veins of marble hidden in its bosom. True

grace appears in sensible actions, "but its glory is within."* The sincerity of aims, the purity of affections, the impresses of the Spirit on the heart, the interior beauties of holiness, are only seen by God. Besides, such is the humility of eminent saints, that the more they abound in spiritual treasures, the less they show. As the heavenly bodies when in nearest conjunction with the sun, and fullest of light, make the least appearance to our sight. But all their excellencies shall then be in view, "The glory of God shall be revealed in them." And how attractive is the divine likeness to a holy eye? How will it ravish the saints to behold an immortal loveliness shining in one another? Their love is reciprocal, proportionable to the cause of it. An equal, constant flame is preserved by pure materials. Every one is perfectly amiable, and perfectly enamoured with all. How happy is that state of love? The psalmist breaks out in a rapture, "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Love is the beauty and strength of societies, the pleasure of life. How excellent is the joy of the blessed, when the prayer of Christ shall be accomplished, that they all may be one; "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." God is absolutely one in his glorious nature and will, and therefore unalterably happy: and their inviolable union of love is a ray of the essential unity between the sacred persons. There are no divisions of heart and tongues, as in this Babel; but the most perfect and sweetest concord, an eternal agreement in tempers and inclinations. There are no envious comparisons; for love that affectively transforms one into another, causes the glory of every saint to redound to the joy of all. Every one takes his share in the felicity of all, and adds of it. Such is the power of that celestial fire wherein they all burn, that it melts and mixes souls in such an entire union, that by complacence, and an intimate joy, the blessedness of all is, as it were, proper to every one; as if every one were placed in the hearts of all, and all in the heart of every one. If in the church of the firstborn christians in the earthly Jerusalem, the band of charity was so strict, that it is said, the "Multitude of believers were of one heart, and one soul;" how much more intimate and inseparable is the union of the saints in Jerusalem above, where every one loves another as himself? It is

recorded of Alexander, that entering with Hephestion his favourite into the pavilion of the mother of Darius, then his prisoner, she bowed to the favourite, as having a greater appearance of majesty, thinking him to be Alexander: but advised of her error, she humbly begged his pardon. To whom the generous king replied,* 'You did not err, mother, this is also Alexander.' Such was their affection, that whoever was taken of them, the other was taken in him; the less ascending in the greater, without degrading the greater in the less. This is a copy of the holy love of the blessed; but with the same difference, as between the description of a star with a coal, and its beauty in its proper aspect. And where all is love, all is delight. The act itself is its own reward. As that benign and pleasant affection is enlarged with respect to the object, and its degrees, such is the complacence and delight that results from it. In that blessed society there is a constant receiving and returning of love and joy. And that double exercise of the saints, in the perfect circle of love, is like the pleasant labour of the bees, who all the day are flying to the gardens, and returning to their hives, and all their art is in extracting the purest spirits from fragrant flowers, and making sweet honey. O how do they rejoice and triumph in the happiness of one another? With what an unimaginable tenderness do they embrace? What reciprocations of endearments are between them? O their ravishing conversation, and sweet intercourse! for their presence together in heaven is not a silent show. In the transfiguration, Moses and Elias talked with Christ: we may understand a little of it, by the sensible complacence that is among sincere friends here. In pure amity there is a threefold union: a union of resemblance, that is the principle of it; likeness causes love: a union of affection, that is its essence; it is said of Jonathan, that incomparable friend, "his soul was knit with the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul:" the union of conversation, that is requisite to the satisfaction of love. What an entertainment of love and joy is there in the presence and discourses of dear friends! their mutual aspects, like a chain composed of spirits luminous and active, draw and fasten their souls to one another: the felicity of love consists in their conversation. Now in heaven whatever is pleasant in friendship is in perfection; and whatever is

distasteful by men's folly and weakness is abolished. With what excellent discourses do they entertain one another? If David felt such inward pleasure from the sense of God's favours, that he could not restrain the expression of it, but invites the saints, "Come and hear, all ye that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul:" certainly in heaven, the blessed with overflowing affections recount the divine benefits; the admirable methods, whereby the life of grace was begun, preserved and carried on in the midst of temptations; the continual succession of mercies in the time of their hopes, and the consummation of all in the time of their enjoyment. How joyfully do they concur in their thanksgivings to God for the goodness of creation; in making them reasonable creatures, capable to know, love and enjoy him, when they might have been of the lowest order in the whole spheres of beings; for his compassionate care and providence over them in this world, but especially for his sovereign and singular mercy in electing them to be vessels of honour; for his powerful grace, in rescuing them from the cruel and ignominious bondage of sin; for his most free love, that justified them from all their guilt by the death of his only Son, and glorified them with himself. They are never weary in this delightful exercise, but continually bless him for his "Mercy that endures for ever" We may judge by the saints here, when they are in a fit disposition to praise God, what fervours they feel in their united praises of him in heaven. The psalmist in an ecstasy calls to all the parts of the world to join with him: "The Lord reigns, let the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad; let the sea roar, let the fields be joyful and all that dwell therein." He desires that nature should be elevated above itself, that the dead parts be inspired with life, the insensible feel motions of joy, and those that want a voice break forth in praises, to adorn the divine triumph. With what life and alacrity will the saints in their blessed communion celebrate the object of their love and praises? The seraphims about the throne "cried to one another," to express their zeal and joy, in celebrating his eternal purity and power, and the glory of his goodness. O the unspeakable pleasure of this concert! when every soul is harmonious, and contributes his part to the full music of heaven. O could we hear but some echo of those songs

wherewith the heaven of heavens resounds, some remains of those voices wherewith the saints above "triumph in the praises," in the solemn adoration of the King of spirits, how would it inflame our desires to be joined with them? "Blessed are those that are in thy house, they always praise thee."

III. The fulness of joy in heaven is everlasting, without defect, and without end.

1. It is undecaying, the productive causes are conservative of it, being always equal. Those are the beatific object, and the continual fruition of it. Whilst we are here below, the Sun of Righteousness, as to our perception and sense, has ascensions and declinations, accesses and recesses. And our earth is not so purified, but some vapours arise that intercept his cheerful refreshing light. From hence there are alternate successions of spiritual comforts and sorrows, of doubts and filial confidence in the saints. It is a rare favour of heaven, when a humble believer in his whole course is so circumspect, as not to provoke God to appear displeased against him: when a christian (as those tutelar angels spoken of in the gospel) always behold the face of his heavenly Father, and converses with him with a holy liberty. And what a torment the "hiding of God's face" is to a deserted soul, only they know who feel it. External troubles are many times attended with more consolations to the Spirit, than afflictions to sense; but to love God with a transcendent affection, and to fear he is our enemy, no punishment exceeds, or is equal to it. As his loving-kindness in their esteem is better than life, so his displeasure is worse than death. How do they wrestle with God by prayers and tears, and offer, as it were, a holy violence to the King of heaven, to recover their first serenity of mind, the lost peace of heart? How passionately do they cry out with Job in the book of his patience, "O that I was as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle!" Job 29:2, 3. And sometimes God delays the revealing himself even to his dearest children; not

that he does not see their necessities, and hear their prayers, or is so hard that till their extremities he is not moved with compassion, but for wise and holy reasons: either "that they may not return to folly," if by any presumptuous sin they forfeited their peace; or if they have been careful to please him, yet he may deprive them of spiritual comforts for a time, to keep them humble, and that with an obedient resignation to his sovereign pleasure they may wait for his reviving presence. And then joy returns greater than before: for thus God usually renders with interest what he suspended only for trial. But the saints above are for ever enlightened with the vital splendour, and dear regards of his countenance, always enjoy his beamy smiles. A continual effusion of glory illustrates heaven and all its blessed inhabitants.

And their contemplation of God is fixed. If the object, though extraordinarily glorious, were transient, or the eye so weak that it could only see it but by glances, the height of joy would not be perpetual. But the mind is prepared with supernatural vigour, to see the brightness of God's face, and by the most attentive application always converses with that blessed object: so that the joy of heaven is never intermitted for a moment. They always see, and love, and rejoice, and praise him.

It is possible a carnal suspicion may arise in some, as if the uniform perpetual vision of the same glory might lose its perfect delightfulness. For those who seek for happiness in the vanity of the creatures, are always desirous of change, and have their judgments so corrupted, that while they languish with a secret desire after an unchangeable good, yet they conceive no good as desirable, that is not changed.

But to correct this gross error of fancy, let us a little inquire into the causes of dissatisfaction, that make the constant fruition of the same thing here to be tedious.

(1.) Sensible things are of such a limited goodness, that not any of them can supply all our present wants, so that it is necessary to leave one for another. And the most of them are remedies of our diseased appetites, and if not temperately used, are destructive evils. Eating and drinking are to extinguish hunger and thirst, but continued beyond just measure, become nauseous. Besides the insufficiency of their objects, the senses themselves cannot be satisfied all at once. The ear cannot attend to delightful sounds, and the eye be intent on beautiful colours at the same time. The satisfaction of one sense defeats another of enjoying its proper good; therefore the same object is not constantly pleasant, but the heart is distempered from as many causes, as there are desires unaccomplished. Add farther, all things under the sun afford only a superficial delight, and miserably deceive the expectations raised of them: and many times there is a mixture of some evil in them, that is more offensive than the good is delightful. The honey is attended with a sting, so that often those very things we sigh after through vehement desire, when they are obtained, we sigh for grief. Now all these causes of dissatisfaction cease in heaven;* for there is an infinite variety in God, and whatever is truly desirable, is eminently enjoyed in him. And in his presence all the powers of the soul are drawn out in their most pleasant exercise, and always enjoy their entire happiness. The fruition of him exceeds our most raised hopes, as much as he is more glorious in himself than in any borrowed representations. God will be to us incomparably "above what we can ask or think." The compass of our thoughts, the depth of our desires are imperfect measures of his perfections. And as he is a pure good in himself, so he is prevalent over all evil. It is evident therefore, that nothing can allay the joys of saints, when they are in God's presence.

(2.) Novelty is not requisite to ingratiate every good, and make it perfectly delightful.† God is infinitely happy, to whom no good was ever new. It is indeed the sauce that gives a delicious taste to inferior things. For men relish only what is eminent; and the good things of this world are so truly mean, that they are fain to borrow a show of greatness by comparison with a worse estate preceding. But an

infinite good produces always the same pure equal complete joy, because it arises from its intrinsic perfection, that wants no foil to commend it. The psalmist breaks forth, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" This is no vanishing rapture, but a constant joyful height of affection. God, the essential happiness of the saints, is always perfectly lovely and delightful to them.

(3.) The glorified saints in every period of their happy state, have as lively a perception of it as in the beginning. To make this evident, we must consider that the pleasure of novelty springs from a quick sense of the opposite terms, between our condition in the want of some desired good, and after our obtaining it. Now the mind is more intense on the advantage, and more strongly affected at first. One newly freed from the torments of a sharp disease, feels a greater pleasure than from a constant tenour of health. Those who are raised from a low state to eminent dignity, are transported with their first change, but in tract of time the remembrance of their mean condition is so weakened and spent, that it is like the shadow of a dream, and proportionably their joy is lessened. Honours, like perfumes, by custom, are less sensible to those that carry them. But the saints above always consider and feel the excellent difference between their suffering and triumphant state. They never lose that ravishing part of felicity, the vivid sense of past evils. Their reflections are always as strong on the misery from whence they were raised to the pitch of happiness, as in their first glorious translation. In what an ecstasy of wonder and pleasure will they be, from the fresh memory of what they were, and the joyful sense what they are? "I was (says the admiring soul) poor, blind, and naked;" but O miraculous and happy alteration! I am full of light, enriched with the treasures of heaven, adorned with divine glory. I was under the tyrannous power of satan, "but he is bruised under my feet." I was sentenced to an everlasting separation from the presence of God, my only life and joy; but now am possessed of my supreme good. O how transporting is the comparison of these wide and contrary extremes? How beautiful and pleasant is the day of eternity, after such a dark tempestuous night! How does the remembrance of such evils

produce a more lively and feeling fruition of such happiness! how strangely and mightily does "Salvation with eternal glory affect the soul!" This gives a sprightly accent to their everlasting hallelujahs: this preserves an affectionate heat in their thanksgivings to their victorious deliverer. And thus their happiness is always the same, and always new. Their pleasure is continued in its perfection.

Chapter VII: The Number of Possessors of Heaven Cannot Lessen its Felicity.

The blessedness of the saints is without end. In the first creation, the happiness of angels and men was mutable. The happiness in heaven as unchangeable as the love of God to the saints, and the love of the saints to him. The woful folly of men in refusing such a happiness. An excitation to seek this happiness. The original moving cause of conferring this happiness, is the mercy of God: the meritorious cause, is the obedience and passion of Christ. It is impossible for an innocent creature, much more for the fallen creature, to deserve any good thing from God. Our Saviour expiated the guilt of sin, and by the merits of his obedience purchased the kingdom of heaven for believers.

THE number of possessors cannot lessen their felicity. The divine presence is an unwasted spring of pleasure, equally full and open to all, and abundantly sufficient to satisfy the immensity of their desires. Envy reigns in this world, because earthly things are so imperfect in their nature, and so peculiar in their possession, that they cannot suffice, nor be enjoyed by all. But in heaven none is touched with that base, low passion: for God contains all that is precious and desirable in the highest degrees of perfection, and all partake of his universal goodness, without intercepting one another. In the kingdom of heaven there is no cause for the elder brother to repine at the Father's bounty to the younger, nor for the younger to

supplant the elder to obtain the birthright. "The heirs of God" are all raised to sovereign glory; and every one enjoys him as entirely and fully as if solely his felicity. God is as good as indivisible as infinite, and not diminished by the most liberal communications of himself. We may illustrate this by comparing the price of our redemption, and the reward. The death of Christ is a universal benefit to all the saints, yet it is so applied to every believer for his perfect redemption, as if our Saviour in all his agonies and sufferings had no other in his eye and heart, as if all his prayers, his tears, his blood were offered up to his Father only for that person. The common respect of it the apostle declares in those admirable words, that signify such an excess of God's love to us; "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" But to imagine that the* propriety of every believer is thereby prejudiced, is not only false, but extremely injurious to the merit and dignity, and to the infinite love of Christ. Therefore the same apostle tells us, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me;" as if he were the sole object of Christ's love, the end and reward of his sufferings. And this appropriating of it to himself, is no prejudice to the rights of all others. St. John describes himself by truly that glorious title, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Could he speak this of himself, without the injury and indignation of the other disciples? Certainly he might. For if we consider that incomprehensible love of Christ, expressed to them all at his last supper, after Judas was gone forth; "As the Father hath loved me, so I have loved you;" we may easily understand, that every one of them might justly believe that he was singularly beloved of Christ. They were all received in the heart, though (with John) they did not all lean on the breast of their divine master. Thus in heaven God is the universal treasure of all the saints, and the peculiar portion of every one, not engrossed by possessing, nor wasted by enjoying.† As by his essence he equally fills the whole world, and every part of it; and by his providence equally regards all and every particular creature: so in heaven he dispenses the riches of his love to all, that they cannot desire more, if every one of them

were the sole heir of all their merits of his Son, and enjoyed him alone for ever.

The blessedness of the saints, as it is without diminution, so it is without end: it is complete and continual for ever. This makes heaven to be heaven; the security is as valuable as the felicity. There is no satiety of the present, no solicitude for the future. Were there a possibility, or the least suspicion of losing that happy state, it would cast an aspersion of bitterness upon all their delights; it would disturb their peaceful fruition, and joyful tranquillity: as hope in misery allays sorrow, so fear in happiness dashes joy: and the more excellent the happiness is, the more stinging would be the fear of losing it. "But the inheritance reserved in heaven, is immortal, undefiled, and fades not away." And the tenure of their possession is infinitely firm, by the promise of God, who is truly immutable, and immutably true, and by the divine power, the support of their everlasting duration. Our Saviour assures his disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also: and he lives for evermore." This blessed privilege the saints have by Jesus Christ (who obtained eternal redemption for them) above the grace given to angels and men in the first creation. The angels were upon trial of their obedience, not in a determined state of felicity. The first declination of love and subjection, was fatal to them. Woful change! how unlike to themselves in their original purity and glory! an unparalleled example of the frailty of the creature, and the divine severity. Man did stand in paradise for a little while, and had a ruinous fall with all his progeny. "But the glorified saints sit with Christ in heavenly places," and enjoy an unchangeable happiness, as permanent as the everlasting author of it, and the everlasting soul the subject of it. "With God is the fountain of life." Who can pluck them out of the hands and bosom of a gracious God? He will never withdraw his love, and they shall never forfeit it: for sin is from the perverseness of the will and the disorder of the affections, joined with some error of the mind. But in the light of glory, and full enjoyment of God, the understanding is so perfectly illuminated, the will and affections so exceedingly satisfied, that it is impossible they should apprehend

erroneously, or desire irregularly. God is love, and will kindle in the saints a pure affection that eternity shall not lessen. In the present state, our love is imperfect; and as fire out of its sphere dies away by our neglect to feed it by proper materials, enamouring considerations of God. But in heaven the uncreated sun attracts every eye with the light of his beauty, and inflames every heart with the heat of his love. The glorious presence of God is in different respects the cause and effect of our love to him; for the sight of God is the most powerful attractive to love him, and love fixes the mind upon him. And the persevering love of God assures the constant fruition of him: for by love the supreme good is possessed and enjoyed. The apostle tells us, "charity never fails," and therefore the happiness of heaven never fails. They enjoy a better immortality, than the tree of life could have preserved in Adam. The revolutions of the heavens, and ages, are under their feet, and cannot in the least alter or determine their happiness. After the passing of millions of years, still an entire eternity remains of their enjoying God. O most desirable state! where blessedness and eternity are inseparably united. O joyful harmony! when the full chorus of heaven shall sing, "this God is our God for ever and ever." This adds an infinite weight to their glory. This redoubles their joys with infinite sweetness and security: for the direct pleasure of enjoying God, is attended with the pleasant reflection it shall continue for ever. They repose themselves in the complete fruition of their happiness. God reigns in the saints, and they live in him for ever. Eternity crowns and consummates their felicity.

THE APPLICATION

From what has been discoursed we should,

1. Consider the woful folly of men in refusing such a happiness, that by the admirable favour of God is offered to their choice. Can there be an expectation, or desire, or capacity in man of enjoying a happiness beyond what is infinite and eternal? O blind and wretched world! so careless of everlasting felicity. Who can behold without

compassion and indignation, men vainly seeking for happiness where it is not to be found, and after innumerable disappointments flying at an impossibility, and neglect their sovereign and final blessedness? An error in the first inquiry might have some colour of an excuse; but having been so often deceived with painted grapes for the fruits of paradise, that men should still seek for substantial blessedness to fill the soul, in vain shows that can only feed the eye, is beyond all degrees of folly. Astonishing madness! that God and heaven should be despised in comparison of painted trifles. This adds the greatest contumely to their impiety. What powerful charm obstructs their true judging of things? What spirit of error possesses them? Alas, "eternal things are unseen!" not of conspicuous moment, and therefore in the carnal balance are esteemed light, against temporal things present to the sense. "It does not appear what we shall be:" the veil of the visible heavens covers the sanctuary, where JESUS our high-priest is entered, and stops the inquiring eye.

But have we not assurance by the most infallible principles of faith, that the Son of God came down from heaven to live with us, and die for us, and that he rose again to confirm our belief in his "exceeding great and precious promises" concerning this happiness in the future state? And do not the most evident principles of reason and universal experience prove, that this world cannot afford true happiness to us? How wretchedly do we forfeit the prerogative of the reasonable nature, by neglecting our last and blessed end? If the mind be darkened, that it does not see the amiable excellencies of God, and the will be depraved, that it does not feel their ravishing power; the man ceases to be a man, and becomes like the beasts that perish. As a blind eye is no longer an eye, being absolutely useless to that end for which it was made. And though in this present state, men are stupid and unconcerned, yet hereafter their misery will awaken them, to discover what is that supreme good wherein their perfection and felicity consists. When their folly shall be exposed before God, angels, and saints, in what extreme confusion will they appear before that glorious and immense theatre? Our Saviour told the unbelieving Jews, "There shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall

see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves turned out." They shall be tortured with the desire of happiness without possible satisfaction. It is most just that those who err without excuse, should repent without remedy.

Let us be seriously excited to apply ourselves with inflamed desires, and our utmost diligence to obtain this unchangeable happiness. In order to this, we shall consider the causes of it, and the means whereby it is obtained.

The original moving cause is the pure rich mercy of God that prepared it for his people, and prepares them for it. The procuring cause is the meritorious efficacy of Christ's obedience and sufferings. This is expressly declared by the apostle; "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

i. The designing, the preparation, and actual bestowing of the heavenly glory, is from the mercy of God. This will appear by considering,

1. That it is absolutely impossible that a mere creature, though perfect, should deserve any thing from God: for enjoying its being and powers of working from his goodness, the product of all is entirely due to him; and the payment of a debt acquires no title to a reward: he is the proprietary and Lord of all by creation. Hence it is clear, that in the order of distributive justice nothing can be challenged from him.

2. Besides, such is the infinite perfection of God in himself, that no benefit can redound to him by the service of the creature. "When you have done all, say you are unprofitable servants, for we have done but what we ought to do." The neglect of our duty justly exposes to punishment; but the performance of it deserves no reward, because no advantage accrues to God by it. "Who hath first given unto him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" He challenges all

creatures, even of the highest order. To speak strictly therefore, when God crowns the angels with glory, he gives what is merely his own, and does not render what is theirs. If he should leave them in their pure nature, or deprive them of their being, he were no loser, nor injurious to them. For what law binds him to enrich them with immortal glory, who are no ways profitable to him, or to preserve that being they had from his unexcited goodness? No creature can give to him, therefore none can receive from him, by way of valuable consideration.

3. There is no proportion between the best works of men, and the excellency of the reward, much less an equivalence. It was the just and humble acknowledgment of Jacob to God, "I am less than the least of all thy mercies," those that common providence dispenses for the support and refreshment of this temporal life. But how much less than the glorious excellencies of the supernatural divine life, wherein the saints reign with God for ever? The most costly, the most difficult and hazardous services, are equally nothing in point of merit, with the giving but "a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ," there being no correspondence in value between them and the kingdom of heaven. The apostle tells us, "I count the sufferings of this present life are not to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us:" and suffering is more than doing. God rewards his faithful servants, not according to the dignity of their works, but his own liberality and munificence. As Alexander having ordered fifty talents of gold to be given to a gentleman in poverty to supply his want: and he surprised with that immense bounty, modestly said, ten were enough; he replied, 'if fifty are too much for you to receive, ten are too little for me to give; therefore do you receive as poor, I will give as a king.' Thus God in the dispensing his favours does not respect the meanness of our persons or services, but gives to us as a God. And the clearest notion of the Deity is, that he is a being infinite in all perfections, therefore all-sufficient and most willing to make his creatures completely happy.

4. If a creature perfectly holy, that never sinned, is incapable to merit any thing from God, much less can those who are born in a sinful state, and guilty of innumerable actual transgressions, pretend to deserve any reward for their works. This were presumption inspired by prodigious vanity. For,

(1.) By his most free grace they are restored in conversion to that spiritual power by which they serve him. The chaos was not a deader lump before the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters, than the best of men were before the vital influences of the Spirit wrought upon them. And for this they are so deeply obliged to God, that if a thousand times more for his glory were performed, yet they cannot discharge what they owe.

(2.) The continuance and increase of the powerful supplies of grace to the saints, who even since their holy calling by many lapses have justly deserved that God should withdraw his grieved Spirit, are new obligations to thankfulness: and the more grace, the less merit.

(3.) The best works of men are imperfect, allayed with the mixtures of infirmities, and not of full weight in the divine balance. If God should strictly examine our righteousness, it will be found neither pure nor perfect in his eyes, and without favour and indulgence would be rejected. And that which wants pardon, cannot deserve praise and glory. "He shows mercy to thousands that love him, and keep his commandments." If obedience were meritorious, it were strict justice to reward them. The apostle prays for Onesiphorus, who had exposed himself to great danger for his love to the gospel; "the Lord grant he may find mercy in that day." The divine mercy gives the crown of life to the faithful in the day of eternal recompence.

ii. The meritorious cause of our obtaining heaven, is the obedience of Jesus Christ, comprehending all that he did and suffered to reconcile God to us. From him as the Eternal Word we have all benefits in the order of nature; "for all things were made by him," and for him, as the incarnate Word, all good things in the order of grace. What we

enjoy in time, and expect in eternity, is by him. To show what influence his mediation has to make us happy, we must consider;

1. Man by his rebellion justly forfeited his happiness, and the law exacts precisely the forfeiture. Pure justice requires the crime should be punished according to its quality, much less will it suffer the guilty to enjoy the favour of God: for sin is not to be considered as an offence and injury to a private person, but the violation of a law, and a disturbance in the order of government: so that to preserve the honour of governing justice, an equivalent reparation was appointed. Till sin was expiated by a proper sacrifice, the divine goodness was a sealed spring, and its blessed effects restrained from the guilty creature. Now the Son of God in our assumed nature offered up himself a sacrifice in our stead, to satisfy divine justice, and removed the bar, that mercy might be glorified in our salvation. The apostle gives this account of it; "we have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Christ, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Heb. 10:19, 20.

2. Such were the most precious merits of his obedience, that it was not only sufficient to free the guilty contaminated race of mankind from hell, but to purchase for them the kingdom of heaven. If we consider his human nature, all graces were born with him, as rays with the sun, and shined in the whole course of his life in the excellence of perfection. And the dignity of his divine person derived an immense value to all he performed as Mediator. One act of his obedience was more honourable to God, than all the lives of the saints, the deaths of the martyrs, and the service of the angels. God was more pleased in the obedience of his beloved Son, than he was provoked by the rebellion of his servants. Therefore, as the just recompence of it, he constituted him to be universal Head of the church, supreme Judge of the world; invested him with divine glory, and with power to communicate it to his faithful servants: "he is the Prince of life." In short, it is as much upon the account of Christ's sufferings that we are glorified, as that we are forgiven. The wounds

he received in his body, the characters of ignominy, and footsteps of death, are the fountains of our glory. His abasement is the cause of our exaltation.

If it be said, this seems to lessen the freeness of this gift. The answer is clear:

This was due to Christ, but undeserved by us. Besides, the appointing his Son to be our Mediator in the way of our ransom, was the most glorious work of his goodness.

Chapter VIII: Qualifications in all that Shall Obtain the Kingdom of Heaven

The gospel requires qualifications in all that shall obtain the kingdom of heaven. The renovation of man according to the likeness of God, is indispensably requisite for the enjoying of God, Renewing grace described. The wisdom and justice of God require that men be sanctified before they are admitted into heaven. Without sanctification, there is a moral incapacity of enjoying the beatific vision.

THE means of our obtaining heaven are to be considered. Though the divine goodness be free in its acts, and there can be nothing in the creature of merit, or inducement to prevail upon God in the nature of a cause, yet he requires qualifications in all those who shall enjoy that blessed unchangeable kingdom. The apostle expressly declares, "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that showeth mercy." Rom. 9:16. But we must distinguish the effects of this mercy, which are dispensed in that order the gospel lays down. The first mercy is the powerful calling the sinner from his corrupt and wretched state; a second mercy is the pardoning his sins; the last and most eminent is the glorifying him in heaven. Now it is

clear, that in this place "the showing mercy," signifies the preventing grace of God in conversion; for in the 18th verse it is said, God shows mercy to "whom he will, and whom he will he hardens." Where it is evident that showing mercy is opposed not to condemning but to hardening; and consequently the intent of the words is this, that divine grace overcomes the rebellious will, softens the stiff and stubborn heart, and makes it pliant to obedience. This flows from his pure good will and pleasure, without the least motive from the inclinations or endeavours of sinful men. But the other effects of God's mercy require conditions in the subjects that receive them: for he pardons only penitent believers, and glorifies none but persevering saints.

To make this clear, it is worthy of observation, the gospel has several denominations. 1. It is called "a law, a covenant," and "a testament." Rom. 3:27. It is called "the law of faith," and "the law of the spritual life." As a law, it signifies a new right that God has most freely established in favour of lost man, that commands certain duties, and sets before them eternal life as the reward of obedience, and eternal death the punishment of disobedience. According to this the trial and decision of men's everlasting states shall be, which is the character of a true law. This law of grace is very different from the law of nature, that required entire innocence, and for the least omission, or accusing act, passed an irrevocable doom upon the offenders; for that strictness and severity is mollified by the gospel, which accepts of sincere persevering obedience though imperfect; accordingly it is called "the law of liberty." James 2. But "the law of faith" is unalterable, and admits of no dispensation from the duties required in order to our being everlastingly happy.

2. The gospel is styled "a covenant," and that imports a reciprocal engagement between parties for the performance of the matter contained in it. The covenant of grace includes the promise of pardoning and rewarding mercy on God's part, and the conditions on man's, with respect to which it is to be performed. There is an inviolable dependance between them. He will be "our God," to make

us happy, "but we must be his people to yield unreserved obedience to him." Heb. 9. "He will be our Father, and we shall be his sons and daughters;" but it is upon the terms of "purifying ourselves from all pollutions of the flesh and spirit," and unfeigned endeavours to "perfect holiness in his fear." 2 Cor. 7. It is astonishing goodness, that he is pleased to condescend to such a treaty with fallen creatures: by a voluntary promise he encourages them; but though most free in making, it is conditional in the performance. The constancy of his holy, nature obliges him to fulfil his word, but it is if we do not fail on our part by carelessness of our duty. A presumer may seal assurance to himself, and be deceived in this great matter; but "God will not be mocked." If we prove false in the covenant, he will be faithful, and exclude those from heaven that were neglectful of the conditions to which it is promised.

3. The gospel is styled, "a testament" sealed in the blood of Christ, confirmed by his death. The donation of eternal blessings in it, is not absolute and irrelative, but the heirs are admitted to the possession of the inheritance according to the will of the rich, liberal, and wise Testator. There can be no regular title or claim made out without performing what is required. And this "is the will of God and Christ, our sanctification," without which we cannot enjoy it.

Now from hence we may see the admirable agreement between these two notions, that heaven is a gift, and a reward. It is a reward in the order of giving it, not due to the work, but from the bounty of the giver. God gives heaven to those that faithfully serve him. But their service was due to God, of no worth in respect of heaven; so that man's work is no merit, and God's reward is a gift. Our everlasting glory must be ascribed to his most free grace, as much as the pardon of our sins.

I shall now proceed to consider, what the gospel declares to be indispensably requisite in order to our obtaining heaven: this is comprised in the holy change of man's nature, which I will briefly unfold, and show how necessary it is to qualify us for celestial glory.

1. This holy change is expressed in scripture by the new birth. Our Saviour, with a solemn repeated asservation, tells Nicodemus; "verily, verily, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3. Sin is natural to man from his conception and birth, and infects with its contagion all his faculties. This is fomented and cherished by temptations that easily encompass him. The understanding is polluted with evil principles, full of strong prejudices, and lofty imaginations against the supernatural mysteries of salvation. It is full of ignorance and folly, and from hence either rejects them as incredible, or despises them as impertinent or unprofitable. The will is depraved and perverse, full of unruly and unhallowed affections. The senses are luxurious and rebellious. In short, man is so viciously and sensually inclined, so "alienated from the life of God," as if he had no diviner part within him, that should aspire to a spiritual blessedness, that should regulate and control the excess of the inferior appetites. This is the unhappy character satan impressed on him in his fall, and without renovation upon an infinite account he is incapable of seeing God. This renovation consists not in the change of his substance, as the water was miraculously turned into wine at the marriage in Cana of Galilee: the same soul with its essential powers, the same body with its natural senses, the work of the Creator, remains; but in the cleansing of his stained nature, in the sanctifying his faculties that are the springs of his actions, the whole man is quickened into a divine life, and enabled to act in conformity to it. And of this the new birth is a convenient illustration. An active principle of holiness is planted in him, that springs up into visible actions. The apostle particularly expresses it in his earnest prayer for the Thessalonians, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and preserve your whole spirit, soul and body blameless, till the coming of Jesus Christ." Every faculty is renewed, and every grace infused that constitutes the divine image. The mind is renewed by spiritual light, to believe the truth and goodness of unseen things promised, the reality and dreadfulness of things threatened in the word of God. It sees the truest beauty in holiness, the highest honour in obedience to God, the greatest equity and excellence in his service. The will is renewed

by holy love, a purifying flame, and feels the attractive virtue of our blessed end before all desirable things on earth, and determines to pursue it in the vigorous use of proper means. The body is made a holy instrument fit for the renewed soul. In short, the natural man becomes spiritual in his perceptions, resolutions and actions. "All things are become new." There is a firm assent, an inviolable adherence to those most precious objects revealed in the scripture, and a sincere chosen constant obedience flows from the renewed faculties. And from hence we may distinguish between regenerating grace, and formal hypocrisy in some, and the proficiency of nature and power of common grace in others. A hypocrite in religion is actuated from without, by mercenary base respects; and his conscience being cauterized, handles sacred things without feeling: a regenerate person is moved by an internal living principle, and performs his duties with lively affections. Natural conscience under the compulsion of fear, may lay a restraint upon the outward acts of sin, without an inward consent to the sanctity of the law. Renewing grace cleanses the fountain, and the current is pure. It reconciles the affections to the most holy commands. "I love thy law because it is pure," saith the psalmist.

A moral principle may induce one to abstain from many sins, and to perform many praiseworthy things in conformity to reason. But this is neither sanctifying nor saving; for it only prunes sin as if it were a good plant, and does not root it up; it compounds with it, and does not destroy it. There may be still an impure indulgence to the secret lustings of the heart, notwithstanding the restraint upon their exercise. And many duties may be done on lower motives, without a divine respect to the commands and glory of God.

But renewing grace subjects the soul to the whole royalty of the law, uniformly inclines it to express obedience to all its precepts, because they are pure, and derived from the eternal spring of purity. It mortifies concupiscence, and quickens to every good work, from a principle of love to God, and in this is distinguished from the most refined unregenerate morality. In short, there may be a superficial

tincture of religion from common grace, a transient esteem, vanishing affections, and earnest endeavours for a time after spiritual things, and yet a person remain in a state of unregeneracy. But renewing grace is a permanent solid principle, that makes a man partaker of the divine nature, and elevates him above himself.

This holy change is wrought by divine power. Our Saviour tells Nicodemus, "except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The analogy of a new birth signifies, that it is entirely the work of the sanctifying spirit, that conveys a principle of life in order to the functions of it. It is the living impression of God, the sole efficient and exemplar of it, the fruit and image of the divine virtues. It is expressed by the new creature. The production of it is attributed to God's power displaying itself in a peculiar excellent way, even in that precise manner, as in making the world. For as in the first creation all things were made originally of nothing, so in the second, the habit of grace is infused into the soul that was utterly void of it, and in which there was as little preparation for true holiness, as of nothing to produce this great and regular world. And although there is not only an absolute privation of grace, but a fierce resistance against it, yet creating invincible power does as infallibly and certainly produce its effect in forming the new creature, as in making the world. From hence it appears that preventing renewing grace is so entirely the work of God, as his forming the human body from the dust of earth at first; but with this difference, the first creation was done without any sense in the subject, of the efficiency of the divine power in producing it: but in the new creation, man feels the vital influence of the Spirit, applying itself to all his faculties, reforming and enabling them to act according to the quality of their nature.

And by the way, we may observe the admirable grace showed to man in the renovation of his corrupted nature. In the composition of his being are united a spirit like the angels, and a body like terrestrial animals, by which he partakes of the spiritual and natural life: but he has peculiar favours conferred upon him. For, whereas his soul

sinned with the angels, and his body dies with the beasts, yet God is pleased to restore them by his glorious power. An angel after sin never repents, and is therefore incapable of pardon, and irrecoverably disinherited of heaven: a beast after death never revives; but though man sins and dies, yet his soul may be renewed by divine grace, and his body shall be raised in an incorruptible glory.

2. Now the indispensable necessity of this holy change is evident from the words of our Saviour, for he speaks universally, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He does not simply declare that an unregenerate man shall not, but with the greatest emphasis, cannot, to signify an absolute impossibility of it. The Jews highly presumed of the privilege of their carnal birth, they sprang from the pure and noble blood of Abraham, God's friend; they had the seal of the holy covenant marked in their flesh: and hence it was proverbial amongst them, that every Israelite should have a part in the world to come. But our Saviour overthrows this vain conceit, and tells them, that the supernatural birth entitles to the supernatural inheritance. Circumcision then, and baptism now, without real grace, is an ineffectual sign, of no avail to salvation. In the quality of sons, we are heirs of God's kingdom, Rom. 8:17. And that honourable relation we have upon a double account, by adoption and regeneration, Gal. 4:7. Divine adoption is not a mere change of our state, a naked declaration that one shall be dignified with the title of God's Son; but a holy nature is always infused into the person, whereby he is made like to God in his excellencies. In this it differs from human adoption, that gives the name and arms, the honour and estate of the adopter to a person, without conveying any of his intellectual or moral endowments. Whom God adopts, he begets to a divine life. Besides, our Saviour purchased this high privilege for us: "God sent his Son made of a woman, under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons:" by union with him we receive the investiture of this dignity. "Now whoever is in Christ, is a new creature." For the quickening spirit, that is to the soul what the soul is to the body, the principle of life

and strength, of beauty and motion, and an active purifying faith that is influential upon all other graces, are the band of that vital union: so that as all in Adam are universally corrupt by the first birth, all that are in Christ are made holy by a new birth. But of this I shall speak in the next chapter more fully, under a distinct head. Briefly, the spirit of grace that sanctifies, is the spirit of adoption that seals our right to that kingdom.

Now the reasons why this change must be in order to our obtaining of heaven, are these:

1. There is an exquisite wisdom shines in all God's works, in disposing them for the ends to which they are appointed: and is it not monstrously absurd to imagine, he will admit into his presence and kingdom those that are absolutely unqualified for its blessedness, and opposite to its purity?

2. His invariable justice excludes for ever all unholy persons from heaven. For in the last judgment God will be glorified as a governor, in the distribution of rewards with respect to the obedience and disobedience of men. It is worthy of observation, that the actions of God on the reasonable creatures are of two sorts. Some proceed from his sovereign good pleasure, of which there is no motive or reason in the subjects on which they are terminated. Thus by a free and insuperable decree (when all mankind, lapsed and miserable, was in his view) he chose some to be "vessels of mercy," and by privilege separated them from the rest that finally perish. Now what induced him to place a singular love on the elect? There was nothing in them to incline his compassion, being equally guilty and depraved with the rest of the progeny of Adam. This difference therefore is to be resolved into his unaccountable and adorable will, as the sole cause of it. Thus God declares it to be his glorious prerogative, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." And this is no unjust acceptance of persons: for as a benefactor, he may dispense his own favours as he pleases. A gift from mere and arbitrary bounty may be bestowed on

some, and not on others, without injustice. But there are other actions of God for which there is an evident reason in men on whom they are terminated. Thus, as the supreme Judge, "without respect of persons," 1 Pet. 1:17. he will judge and reward "every man according to his works," Rom. 2:16. Acts 26:18. The evangelical law (as was touched on before) is the rule of eternal judgment, and gives a right from the gracious promises of God to all penitent believers in the kingdom of heaven, and excludes all impenitent infidels. Divine justice will illustriously appear then, in distinguishing believers from unbelievers by their works, the proper fruits either of faith or infidelity: all the thick clouds of disgraces, calumnies, persecutions, that often oppress the most sincere christians here, shall not then darken their holiness; and all the specious appearances of piety, which the most artificial hypocrites make use of to deceive others, shall not conceal their wickedness. And accordingly the one shall be absolved and glorified, the others condemned and punished for ever. In short, without violation of his own righteous establishment in the gospel, God cannot receive the unholy into his glory, Heb. 12:14.

3. Besides the legal but that excludes unsanctified persons from the beatific vision of God, there is a moral incapacity. Suppose that justice should allow omnipotence to translate such a sinner to heaven, would the place make him happy? Can two incongruous natures delight in one another? The happiness of sense is by an impression of pleasure from a suitable object: the happiness of intellectual beings arises from an entire conformity of dispositions. So that unless God recede from his holiness, which is absolutely impossible, or man be purified, and changed into his likeness, there can be no sweet communion between them. Our Saviour assigns this reason of the necessity of regeneration in order to our admission into heaven: "that which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit. According to the quality of the principle, such is what proceeds from it. The flesh is a corrupt principle, and accordingly the natural man is wholly carnal in his propensions, operations and end. The disease is turned into his constitution. He is dead to the spiritual life, to the actions and enjoyments that are

proper to it: nay, there is in him a surviving principle of enmity to that life; not only a mortal coldness to God, but a stiff aversation from him, a perpetual resistance and impatience of the divine presence, that would disturb his voluptuous enjoyments. The exercises of heaven would be as the torments of hell to him, while in the midst of those pure joys his inward inclinations vehemently run into the lowest lees of sensuality. And therefore till this contrariety, so deep and predominant in an unholy person, be removed, it is utterly impossible he should enjoy God with satisfaction. As it was necessary that God should become like man on earth, to purchase that felicity for him, so man must be like God in heaven before he can possess it. Holiness alone prepares men for celestial happiness; that is against the corruption, and above the perfection of mere nature.

I shall now proceed to consider more particularly what is requisite in order to our obtaining of heaven.

Chapter IX: Faith in the Redeemer Required for Salvation

Faith in the Redeemer is indispensably required of all that will partake of salvation. Heaven must be chosen as our supreme happiness, and sought at our last end. The choice of heaven must be sincere, early, firm and constant. The sincerity of the choice discovered by the zealous use of means to obtain it. The sincerity of the choice will regulate our judgments and affections, with respect to temporal things that are so far good or evil to us, as they conduct or divert us from heaven. The sincere choice of heavens will make us aspire to the highest degrees of holiness we are capable of in the present state. The vanity of the hopes of the lukewarm in religion discovered.

1. FAITH in the Redeemer is absolutely required of all that will partake of the salvation purchased by him. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him, should not perish, but have eternal life, John 3:16. This is the spirit and substance of the gospel, therefore I will briefly unfold it. The Son of God having assumed the human nature, and performed what was necessary for the expiation of sin, Phil. 2:8, 9. the Father was so pleased with his obedience, that from his lowest state he raised him to divine glory, and gave him supreme authority, and all-sufficient power to communicate that glory to others. Thus our Saviour declares; "thou hast given him (i. e. the Son) power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him," John 17:2. And he exhorts the people, "labor for that meat that endures unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed." John 6. Now this glorious life is not given to all, but only to those who are united to him. As Adam, the principle of the carnal corrupt nature, derives guilt and death to all his progeny: so Jesus Christ (who is opposed to him) the head and prince of the renewed state, communicates life and glory to his

people. The apostle expresses it, "as in Adam all die" (his natural descendants are involved in his condemnation) "even so in Christ shall all be made alive," 1 Cor. 15:22. that is, all that are spiritually united to him, shall partake of his glorious resurrection. And St. John tells us, "he that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life, 1 John 5:12. The having the Son, upon which our right to eternal life depends, is believing in him. Faith has a principal efficiency in receiving Christ; therefore it is expressed by that act, "but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God," John 1:12. (and consequently heirs of glory) to as many "as believed on his name." And Christ is said "to dwell in our hearts by faith," Ephes. 3:17. This is not a mere assent to the doctrines of the gospel concerning the dignity of his person, that he is in so high and glorious a relation of being the eternal Son of God, and the infinite value of his merits, whereby he is able to save all that come unto God by him, and his merciful compassionate nature to embrace returning sinners, and the excellency of the benefits purchased by him, but such a belief as sways the will and affections to receive him upon God's terms for our salvation. Faith is seated in the whole soul, in the mind and heart, and accepts of Christ entirely as Prophet, Priest, and King. The parts of the Mediator's office are inseparably connected, and all the effects of them are communicated to the same persons. "Jesus Christ is made of God to believers, wisdom," to cure their ignorance and folly; "righteousness," to abolish their guilt; "sanctification," to renew their natures; and "redemption," to free them at last from the grave, and bring them to glory, 1 Cor. 1. From hence it is clear, that the faith which is justifying and saving, includes in its nature, a dependence and trust in Christ as a powerful and merciful Mediator, that is able and willing to reconcile us to God, and make us for ever happy in his favour; so a sincere resolution of obedience and subjection to all his holy commands, even to the plucking out of the right eye, and the cutting off the right hand, the parting with the most pleasing or profitable sins. For the promises of God that are the rule of faith, make an offer of Christ upon these conditions to us: "him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give

repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins, Acts 5:31. And only "the justified shall be glorified. Rom. 8. Those therefore who desire a partial interest in him as a Saviour, out of absolute necessity to escape hell, and will not out of love submit to him as their prince, have not "that faith that is unfeigned," and gives a title to eternal life by the promises of the gospel.

2. We must choose heaven as our supreme happiness, and regard it as the main end of our lives. Man fell from his duty and felicity by preferring sensual pleasure before the favour of God, and became guilty of the greatest disobedience and dishonour to his Maker, and is restored by the holy change of his will, the setting his affections on a pure spiritual blessedness. This subliming the will, and turning its love and choice from the creatures to God, is the effect of divine grace, and wrought in a rational way. For man is not moved as artificial engines by force, nor as brutes from necessity, their faculties being determined by the outward application of objects: he is not drawn up to heaven by such a natural impression, as steel by the loadstone, nor forced by a violent motion as a stone ascends, but as an understanding free agent, by the direction of the enlightened mind, and the consent of the will, an elective unconstrained faculty. And herein the wisdom, goodness and equity of God's transactions with man appear. His wisdom, in that as he has ordered in the whole sphere of nature, that the active powers of every creature be drawn forth into exercise for their preservation, and accordingly he is pleased to work in and by them; so the understanding and will, the principles of operation in man, are to deliberate and choose in order to his happiness: otherwise the rational faculties would be in vain. His goodness and equity, in that he sets before them eternal life as the reward of obedience. God will be glorified by him as a law-giver and a benefactor, and has ordained in the gospel that all who choose and diligently seek the kingdom of heaven, shall infallibly obtain it, and none be deprived of it but for their neglect. The decree of a final state of misery, though not in time, yet is consequent in the order of causes to the obstinate reluctancy of sinners against restoring grace, and the wilful forsaking their own mercies. Therefore God vindicates

the equity of his proceedings with men by their own principles, and with tender pity expostulates, "why will ye die?" The corrupt will, declining from God, and adhering to the creature as its happiness, is the true cause of man's ruin. This will infinitely clear the wisdom and justice, the purity and goodness of God from all imputation.

The choice of heaven for our felicity is primarily to be determined, for it is from the prospect of it that all holy counsels derive their life and vigour. As in drawing the picture of a man, the first work is to delineate the head, not only as the part that in dignity and eminence is above the rest, but as it regulates the drawing of the other parts, and gives a just proportion and correspondence between them, without which the whole figure becomes disordered and monstrous. Thus in the moral consideration of man, that which is primarily to be considered is the soul, and its final felicity, as incomparably more excellent than the body and its pleasures: for this will have a powerful influence upon the whole life, directing to avoid what is inconsistent and impertinent, and to do what is conducive to it.

Now this being a matter of unspeakable importance, I will,

- i. Show what the regular choice of heaven includes, as to its qualities and effects.
 - ii. Direct how to make this choice.
 - iii. Present some powerful motives to excite us to it.
- i. The qualities of this choice are three.
 1. It must be sincere and cordial.
 2. Early, in our first and best days.
 3. Firm and constant.

1. It must be sincere and cordial. The most essential and active desire in human nature is to happiness; but there being two kinds of good things presented to the will that solicit the affections, the pleasures of sense, and spiritual joys, from hence it is that that which makes men happy is the object of election. And although there is nothing more uniform and inviolable than the natural inclination to happiness, yet the great distinction of mankind arises from this source, the regular or perverse use of this inclination, the wise or mistaken choice of happiness. Now the sincerity of our choice is discovered, when it is clear and entire, arising from a transcendent esteem of the favour and enjoyment of God as our chief good, and absolutely requisite for us. And from hence it is evident that the choice of true happiness, necessarily includes the despising and rejecting of the false happiness that stands in competition with it. There cannot be two reigning principles in the soul: for it cannot vigorously apply itself to two objects at the same time. Our Saviour has decided it, "no man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or hold to the one and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and mammon." The masters are irreconcilable, and their commands are directly opposite. It was as possible to place upon the same altar the ark of God, and the idol of the Philistines, as that heaven and the world should compound and take equal shares in our affections. Indeed, if the conceptions in the mind are but faint and floating of the universal satisfying goodness of the object proposed to make us happy, the will remains in suspense; but when it is clearly and strongly represented, the heart is drawn entirely to embrace it. Divine grace by the illumination of the understanding, purifies and changes the depraved will, and heals the distempered affections. The wise merchant, that had a discerning eye, saw reason enough to part with all, that he might gain the "pearl of price," the grace and glory of the kingdom of heaven. The apostle declares his resolute contempt of the concurrence of all the prerogatives either the law or the world could afford him, that he might have an interest in Christ, the Reconciler and Restorer of man to the favour and fellowship of God. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the

knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I might win Christ." The glorious gospel is the brightest and most pleasant light that ever shone upon the world, a revelation of the deepest wisdom and most admirable love, wherein the combination of God's holy and wonderful counsels for our salvation is unfolded; and accordingly St. Paul, with the greatest life of affection, sets forth his value of it, and by full and most vilifying expressions, rejects all things in comparison of it.

2. The sincerity of the heavenly choice, is discovered by a zealous observance of the means requisite in order to it. Inanimate things incline to rest in their centre, the rational intend and pursue it. The blessed end, when valued and respected according to its worth, excites and directs the affections and endeavours in that order and measure as is proportionable to its excellency, and the difficulties of obtaining it. There may be a naked estimation, and some desires of eternal happiness simply considered, yet the will remains incomplete and undetermined in its choice: for the end in conjunction with the means is propounded to us, and the carnal man will not consent to the means. He dislikes the holiness of religion, and will rather forfeit heaven than submit to such strict terms. Though with Balaam, in a fit of devotion, he says, "O that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my last end might be like his;" yet from indulgence to his sensual inclinations, he will not live as the righteous. All his wishes of true happiness are soon strangled by the predominant love of some vanity. It is said of the Israelites, "they despised the pleasant land," Psal. 106:14. not absolutely in itself, for it was "the glory of all lands" abounding with things for the support and delight of man; but considering its distance, a wilderness waste and wild interposing, and the enemies to be encountered, they did not think it worthy of undergoing such hazards and difficulties. The land of Canaan was a type of heaven, both with respect to its pleasantness, and the manner of the Israelites obtaining it. Their title to it was from the rich bounty of God, therefore it is called the "Land of Promise;" but it was to be possessed by conquest. Thus the celestial Canaan is the pure gift of

God, but the actual enjoyment of it is obtained by victorious resistance against the enemies of our salvation. And carnal men despise this pleasant land, the promise being inseparably joined with precepts of duty and obedience, from which they are averse. But he that chooses sincerely, is joyful and vigorous in the use of means for acquiring his most desired good. Ardent affections, like Elijah's chariot of fire, ravish the soul above this sensible world, to the place where God dwells in glory. Zeal animates his endeavours, as the motion of the heart diffuses the spirits into the arteries, to convey life to all parts of the body. "One thing (saith the inflamed psalmist) have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." The sensual man is ranging abroad for satisfaction, and shoots all the game that crosses his eye; but the soul that has a discovering light, and feeling heat of the divine beauty, unites all its desires in God, and with affection to an ecstasy, longs for the enjoyment of him; and the endeavours are in some proportion to the desires. Our Saviour tells us, "That from the days of John the baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Some previous rays of the Sun of Righteousness appeared in his ministry, and produced such a holy ardency in those converts, that with all resolution, diligence and earnestness, they sought to be partakers of the blessedness revealed. Lazy desires, easy prosecutions, sluggish attempts, discover that the heart is not throughly engaged for the spiritual eternal good. When the end is truly designed, it will give law to the actions. This is visible in carnal worldly men, how sagacious, how solicitous are they to accomplish their ends and base designs? They try all ways, either by fine dissimulation, or toilsome industry, to obtain their desires. No time is too much in their gainful affairs, or voluptuous enjoyments. They transform the night to lengthen out the day for their profit, they veil the day to lengthen out the night for their ease and pleasure. But, alas, heaven is only regarded by the bye; as if the intellectual soul were only given to dwell with the body on earth, the place of its banishment, and direct affairs here below, and not to lead in the way to heaven, the place of its nativity, and prepare for another world.

The work of salvation is followed with that remiss degree of affection, as if it were a slight matter whether performed or neglected. These persons carry their conviction in their bosoms; for they are ardent and active to obtain inferior and infinitely less concerning ends, but with that cold application mind the superior nobler end of man, that it is wholly frustrate, which plainly shows it was never seriously intended by them.

The sight of worldly men so active and vigilant to prosecute their low designs, should quicken us to seek with greater diligence and alacrity the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof. A carnal wretch, urged by the sting of a brutish desire, with what impatience doth he pursue "the pleasures of sin that are but for a season?" An ambitious person, with what an intemperate height of passion does he chase a feather? A covetous man, how greedily does he pursue the advantages of "the present world that passes away, and the lusts thereof." Ah! how do they upbraid our indifferent desires, our dull delays and cold endeavours, when such a high prize is set before us? Who is able to conceive the ravishing pleasures of the soul when it first enters through "the beautiful gate" of the celestial temple, and sees the glory of the place, and "hears a voice from the throne, enter into thy master's joy," to be happy with him for ever? The serious belief of this will draw forth all our active powers in the service of God.

3. The sincerity of our heavenly choice declares itself in the temper and frame of our hearts, with respect to all temporal things in this world. For our main and happy end being established, that it consists not in secular riches and honours, and the pleasures of sense, but in the clear vision of God, the blessedness of the Spirit; it follows that all present things are in our use so far good or evil, and to be desired or not, as they are profitable or prejudicial to our obtaining salvation, as they conduct or divert us from heaven. A wise christian looks on temporal things not through the glass of disordered passions, that are impetuous and impatient for what is grateful to them, but with reference to his future happiness. He considers the train of

temptations that attend an exalted condition, and desires such a portion of these things, as may redound to the glory of the giver, and be improved for his own salvation. This purity of affections our Saviour teaches us: for in his divine form of prayer, the true directory of our desires, are set down in an admirable order all things we are to pray for. And they respect the end, or the means. The end is the primary object of our desires; accordingly the two first petitions concern our blessed end, as it respects God and ourselves. We pray, "Hallowed be thy name," that is, by the reverence and adoration of all his subjects: and, "Thy kingdom come," that is, for the manifestation of his eternal glory in the next world, that we may reign with him. The means in order to this end are of two sorts. Some conduct to it by themselves, those are the good things desired in the third and fourth petitions; and some lead to it by accident, and those are the freedom from evils expressed in the last petition. The good things desired, either have a direct influence upon our obtaining happiness; and they are summed up in our universal obedience to God's will, expressed in the third petition, "Let thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven:" or they are such as by way of subserviency promote our happiness, and those we pray for in the fourth petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." And it is observable there is but one petition for temporal blessings, and it is the last in the order of those that concern good things. And that single petition is so restrained, that it is evident by its tenour, that earthly things are not absolutely good to be desired for themselves, but relatively and subordinately to our eternal good. Daily bread we must ask of our heavenly Father, the necessary support of the present life, without which we cannot exercise our internal or external powers and faculties in his service; but not delicacies and abundance for the luxurious appetite.

The difference of conditions in the present world is very great: as in Pharaoh's dream, some ears of corn were so full and weighty, that they bended with their weight; others so thin and blasted, that they were as stubble for the fire. Thus some abound in all felicities possible in this life, others are "chastened every morning" under

various and continual afflictions. Now this infallible principle being planted in the heart, that all present things are to be improved with respect to our future happiness, will moderate the affections in prosperity, so to use the world that we may enjoy God, and make us not only patient, but pleased in adversities, as they are preparatory for heaven.

The original of all the sins and misery of men,* is their perverse abuse of things, by turning the means into the end, setting their affections of love, desire, and joy upon sensible things, as their proper happiness, with inconsiderate neglect of the spiritual eternal state, to which all other things should be subservient. As if one diseased and sickly in a foreign country, that could not possibly recover health but in his native air, in his return thither, invited by the pleasantness of the way, should take up his residence in it, and never arrive to his own country. Among the West Indians some are† reported to be swift in running, that no horse can keep pace with them; and they have a constant rule in their diet, to eat of no beast, or bird or fish that is slow in motion, fancying it would transfuse a sluggishness in them. The christian life is by the apostle compared to a race, and earthly things by an inseparable property of nature load and depress the soul, that it cannot with vigour run the "Race set before it." The believer therefore who intends "for the high prize of his calling," and is true to his end, will "be temperate in all things." Nay, he will not only be circumspect, lest they should check with his great design, but wisely manages them in subserviency to it. St. Paul "charges them that are rich in this world, to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life." 1 Tim. 6:18, 19.

And the fixed aim at heaven, as our felicity, will reconcile an afflicted state to us. When temporal evils are effectual means to promote our everlasting happiness; the amiableness and excellency of the end changes their nature, and makes those calamities that in themselves are intolerable, to become light and easy. "The poor, the mourners,

the persecuted are blessed now, because theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The apostle, though under variety of sharp troubles, yet expresses his sense with that mitigation, as but lightly touched with them: "as sorrowful, but always rejoicing." From hence he tells us, that with unfainting courage, he prosecuted his glorious end. "For our light afflictions that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding weight of glory." This seriously believed and considered, will make us understand the harmony and consent of the most discordant parts of God's providence. This will reconcile the severity and roughness of his hand, with the tender compassions of his heart towards his servants. This will dry up rivers of unprofitable tears that flow from the afflicted, and make the cross of Christ a light burden. For their heaviest afflictions are not only consistent with his love, but the effects of it are influential upon their happiness. We are now tossed upon the alternate waves of time, but it is that we may arrive at the port, the blessed bosom of our Saviour, and enjoy a peaceful calm; and "so we shall be ever with the Lord." Words of infinite sweetness! This is the song of our prosperity, and the charm of our adversity: well might the apostle add immediately after, "Therefore comfort one another with these words."

4. The sincere choice of heaven as our final happiness, will make us aspire to the greatest height of holiness we are capable of in the present state. For the end has always a powerful virtue to transform a man into its likeness: and heaven is a state of perfect conformity to the holy God. This difference is observable between the understanding and the will in their operations: the understanding in forming conceptions of things, draws the object to itself. The will is drawn by the object it chooses, and is always fashioning and framing the soul into an entire conformity to it. Thus carnal objects, when propounded as the end of a man, secretly imprint on him their likeness; his thoughts, affections, and whole conversation is carnal. As the psalmist speaks of the worshippers of idols, "they that make them are like unto them, so is every one that trusteth in them:" whatever we adore and esteem, we are changed into its image. Idolaters are as stupid and senseless, as the idols to which they pay

homage. Thus when God is chosen as our supreme good and last end, by conversing with him, the image of his glorious holiness is derived on the soul, and it becomes godly: the heart is drawn by his attractive excellencies, and the life directed to him. This being a point of great importance, I shall further prove and illustrate it. There is no deliberating about the degrees of that which is loved for itself as our end. More or less may respect the means that are valued and used to obtain it, but the love of the end is vast and unlimited. A physician endeavours to recover his patient to sound and perfect health, that being the end of his art. He that seeks for honour or riches, is not content with a mediocrity of success, but drives on his affairs to the full period of his desires. An ardent lover of learning with a noble jealousy strives to excel others in knowledge. In short, no man designs and longs for a thing as his happiness, but will use all diligence to gain the present and full possession of it. Therefore it cannot be imagined that any person sincerely propounds the enjoyment of heaven as his end, but love will make him fervent and industrious to be as heavenly as is possible here. He will strive by blessed and glorious gradations, to ascend to the perfection of his aims and desires, "to be holy as God is holy in all manner of conversation, to be pure as Christ is pure." We have an admirable instance of this in St. Paul, who declares, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:13, 14. His progress was great, yet that did not make him slack in the prosecution of his end. He laboured to attain the precedent of our Saviour, to feel the power of "his death and life, to apprehend Christ" entirely and perfectly as "Christ had apprehended him. He was very diligent" to improve the divine image in his heart and life.

From hence we may discover the vanity of their hopes, that are of lukewarm affections in religion, (the abhorred character of Laodicea) who esteem it a prudent principle, as convenient for their carnal ease and interest, not to be "earnest in following holiness." Vices in

mediocrity are tolerable with them, only the excess is condemned. They content themselves with a mediocrity in religion, and are presumptuous and secure, as the church that said, "I am rich, and have need of nothing." They boast as if they had found but the temperate region between the burning line and the frozen pole. They account all that is above their degrees in religion, to be furious or indiscreet zeal, and all below to be dead, cold profaneness. They censure those for hypocrisy or unnecessary strictness, who are visibly better, and stand upon proud comparisons with those who are visibly worse: and thus set off themselves by taxing others. But how easily do men deceive and damn themselves? Can we have too much of heaven upon the earth? Can we become too like God, when a perfect conformity to him is our duty and felicity? Indeed moral virtue consists in a mediocrity, not of the habitual quality, but of the affections and actions between the vicious extremities. Fortitude consists in the mean between cowardice, and rash boldness; but how much the more confirmed the courageous habit is, so much the more a man excels in that virtue. Liberality consists between an indiscreet profuseness, and sordid avarice; patience between a soft delicacy, and stupid insensibility. Thus philosophic virtue glories in its beauty as pure and entire, between two vicious deformities. And the religion of many is paganism dressed up in a christian fashion. But this mediocrity only belongs to inferior virtues, that respect things of created limited goodness, and is determined according to the worth of their nature. But divine graces respect an object supremely good, and their perfection consists in their most excellent degrees, and the most intense affections and operations that are leading to it. Faith in its obedience, hope in its assurance, love in its ardour can never exceed. When the object is infinite, a mediocrity is vicious. Humility can never descend too low, nor love ascend too high: for reflecting upon our natural and moral imperfections, that we are raised from nothing, that we are defiled and debased with sin, we cannot have too low thoughts of ourselves. And since God the sovereign being, infinite in perfections, and infinitely amiable, is the object, no bounds or measure must be set to our affections, but with all our united powers, "all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the

mind, and with all the strength," we must love him, and please him, and endeavour to be beloved of him.

There are others will acknowledge their defects, and tell you they do not pretend to eminent sanctity, to the graces of the apostles and martyrs, nor aspire to their degrees in glory; they are content with a lower place in heaven, and less strict religion is sufficient for their purpose. This deceit is strengthened by popery, that enervates and dissolves many of our Saviour's precepts, by teaching they are not laws obliging all christians to obedience, that will attain to eternal life, but counsels of perfection: if they are not done, it is no sin; and the performance of them meritoriously entitles to a richer crown. And though men by impure indulgences please their sensual affections, yet by tasting purgatory in the way, they may come to heaven on easier terms, than a universal respect to God's commands, and an equal care to observe them. But death will confute all these feeble wretched pretences: for though the saints above shine with an unequal brightness, as the stars differ in glory; yet none are there but saints. And those who do not mourn under their imperfections, and unfeignedly desire and endeavour to be better, were never really good. The slothful servant that did not waste but neglect to improve his talent, was cast into "outer darkness." There are different degrees of punishments in hell, but the least miserable there are miserable for ever. In short, it is a perfect contradiction, a prodigy, for any man to think he is sincere in his choice, and prepared in his affections for the pure glorious felicity in heaven, that does not labour to "cleanse himself from all pollutions of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God."

Chapter X: The Choice of Heaven Must Be in the Prime of our Days

The choice of heaven must be early, in the prime of our days. The choice must be constant. Saving perseverance includes the permanent residence of grace in the soul, and the exercise of it, and progress towards perfection. Perseverance is required, notwithstanding all temptations that may allure or terrify us from our duty. Saving perseverance excludes not all sins, but total apostacy and final impenitency. The sincerity of obedience is discovered by its constancy. A corrupt confidence, or a vicious dejection of spirit, the trusting in ourselves, and distrusting God, are equally pernicious to the stability of a christian.

2dly. THE choice of eternal felicity must be early, in the prime of our days. The rule of our duty, and reason binds us "to remember our Creator in our youth," to pay to him the first fruits of our time and strength. When we are surrounded with enticing objects, and the senses are entire and most capable to enjoy them, when the electing powers are in their vigour, then it is just we should live to God, obey him as our Lawgiver, and prefer the fruition of him in heaven, the reward of obedience, before all the pleasures of vanity. It is very honourable and pleasing to God to give the heart to him, when the flesh and the world strongly solicit to withdraw it. It is a high endearment of the soul to him, when his excellencies are prevalent in the esteem and affections above all the charms of the creatures. And it is an unspeakable satisfaction to the spirit of a man, to declare the truth and strength of his love to God, by despising temptations when they are most inviting, and the appetite is eager for the enjoyment of them. But alas! how many neglect their duty, and defer their happiness? They think it too soon to live for heaven "before the evil days come, wherein they shall have no pleasure;" when they cannot sin, and vainly presume they can repent. The danger of this I have considered in the Discourse on Death, and shall therefore proceed to the next head.

3dly. Our choice of heaven must be constant and lasting.

The two principal rules of the spiritual life are to begin and end well: to fix and establish the main design for everlasting happiness, and from a determinate resolution and ratified purpose of heart, to pursue it with firmness and constancy: to live for heaven, and with readiness and courage to die for it, if the glory of God so require. Perseverance is indispensably necessary in all that will obtain the eternal reward. For the clearing this most important point, I will, First, Represent from scripture the idea of perseverance, that is attended with salvation. Secondly, Consider why it is so strictly required.

1. Saving perseverance includes the permanent residence of grace in the soul: it is composed of the whole chain of graces, the union of holy habits that are at first infused into a christian by the sanctifying Spirit. When eternal life is promised to faith, or love, or hope, it is upon supposal that those graces being planted in the heart, shall finally prosper. "He that is faithful to the death, shall inherit the crown of life." Rev. 2. "It is love that never fails," 1 Cor. 13. that shall enter into heaven. "It is hope firm unto the end," that shall be accomplished in a glorious fruition. If grace be diseased by a usurping lust, apostacy will follow, and the forfeiture of our right in the kingdom of heaven.

2. Grace must be continually drawn forth into exercise according to our several states and duties, and the various occasions that happen in our course through the world. Those "who are light in the Lord, are commanded to walk as children of the light;" to signify the excellency and purity of the christian life. "Those who live in the Spirit, must walk in the Spirit;" that is, by a conspicuous course of holiness declare the vigour and efficacy of the divine principle that is communicated to them. *Paulum sepultæ distat inertie celata virtus*: virtue that breaks not forth into visible actions, is not worthy of the name. The mere abstaining from evil is not sufficient, but all the positive acts of the holy life are to be constantly done. In discharging both these parts of our duty, complete religion is expressed, and the power of grace consists.

3. Perseverance includes not only continuance in well-doing, but fervour and progress towards perfection. There are two fixed states, the one in heaven, the other in hell. The blessed spirits above are arrived to the height of holiness. The devil and damned spirits are sunk to the lowest extremity of sin. But in the middle state here, grace in the saints is a rising growing light; and sin in the wicked improves every day, like poison in a serpent, that becomes more deadly by his age. We are enjoined not to remain in our first imperfections, but to "follow holiness" to the utmost issue of our lives, to its entire consummation. For this end all the dispensations of providence must be improved, whether prosperous or afflicting. And the ordinances of the gospel were appointed, that in the use of them we may be "changed into the divine image from glory to glory."

4. Perseverance is required notwithstanding all temptations that may allure or terrify us from our duties; whatever affects us one way or other, while we are clothed with frail flesh. It is the fundamental principle of christianity declared by our Saviour, "If any man will come after me," that is, be my disciple and servant, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me;" even to be crucified with him, rather than wilfully forfeit his integrity and loyalty to Christ. He must by a* sacred fixed resolution divest himself of all things, even the most valued and desirable in the present world, and actually forsake them, nay entertain what is most distasteful, "and resist unto blood," rather than desert his duty.

(1.) He must with unfainting patience continue in doing his duty, notwithstanding all miseries and calamities, losses, disgraces, torments, or death itself, which wicked men, and greater enemies, the powers of darkness, can inflict upon him. "To them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour and immortality, eternal life is promised." Rom. 2. "He that endures to the end" (notwithstanding the most terrible sufferings to which he is exposed for Christ's) sake "shall be saved." Matt. 10:22. In this a christian must be the express image of his Saviour; "who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and

is set down at the right hand of God." Disgrace and pain are evils that human nature has a most tender sense of; yet the Son of God, with a divine generosity and constancy, endured them in the highest degrees. He was scorned as a feigned king, and a false prophet. He suffered a bloody death, and by the cross ascended to glory. And we must follow him, if we desire to be where he is.

(2.) But this is not the only trial of a christian. Prosperity is a more dangerous enemy to the soul, though adversity be more rigorous.

Scævior armis

Incumbit luxuria. JUVEN.

For the spirit is excited by perils and difficulties to seek to God for strength, and with vigilant resolute thoughts unites all its powers to oppose them; but it is made weak and careless by what is grateful to the sensual inclinations. It keeps close the spiritual armour in the open encounter of dangers that threaten its ruin, but is enticed to put it off by the caresses and blandishments of the world. It does not see its enemies under the disguise of a pleasant temptation. Thus sin insinuates itself, and by stealing steps gets into the throne without observation. A man is wounded with a pleasant temptation, as with the plague that flies in the dark, and grace is insensibly weakened. From hence it is, that adversity often reforms the vicious, and prosperity corrupts the virtuous. Now perseverance must be of proof against fire and water, against whatever may terrify or allure us from our duty.

5. Saving perseverance excludes not all sins, but total apostacy, and final impenitency, which are fatal and deadly under the new covenant. "If the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, he shall die." Ezek.

18:24. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," saith the Lord, Heb. 10:38. These threatenings imply, there is a possibility of the saints falling away considered in themselves; but not that they are ever totally deserted by the Holy Spirit, and left under the reigning power of sin. The threatenings are intended to awaken their care, and are preservatives of them from ruin, and have a singular influence on their perseverance. A vigilant and cautious fear establishes the certainty of their hope. Indeed from the relics of weakness and corruption in the saints, they sometimes actually fall into presumptuous sins, and by rebellious relapses wound conscience, and let out much of the vital spirits, their graces and comforts. But though the divine nature in them is miserably wasted by such sins, yet it is not abolished. As after the creation of light, there was never pure and total darkness in the world. Grace does not consist in a point, but is capable of degrees. The new creature may decline in beauty and strength, yet life remain. Between a lively and a dead faith, there may be a fainting faith; as in St. Peter, for certainly our Saviour was heard in his prayer for him, that his "faith should not fail" in his dreadful temptation. The saints do not by a particular fall extinguish the first living principles of obedience, faith and love; nor change their last end by an entire turning from God to the world. In short, a single act of wickedness does not reduce them into a state of unregeneracy: for it is not the matter of the sin singly considered, but the disposition of the sinner that denominates him. If grace in the saints should utterly perish, as some boldly assert, their recovery would be impossible: for the apostle tells us, that "if those who were enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift," that had been under some common workings and lower operations of the Spirit, if such "fall away universally," and live in a course of sin opposite to their former illuminations and resolutions, it is impossible to renew them by repentance; how much more then if those who were truly sanctified by the Holy Spirit, should entirely lose all those gracious habits planted in them in their regeneration? But David, though guilty of adultery and murder, sins of so foul a nature as would dishonour paganism itself, and "made the enemies of God to blaspheme," was restored by repentance. The gospel propounds a

remedy, not only for sins committed before conversion, but after it. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." God does not revoke the adoption, nor reverse the justification of a believer, but upon scandalous disorders, the effects of justification are suspended with respect to the new contracted guilt, till there be sincere and actual repentance. He is not disinherited, but his right to the kingdom of heaven is eclipsed as to the comfortable sense of it, nay suspended, till by renovation he is qualified and made fit for the enjoyment of that pure inheritance. For those sins which are a just cause of excommunicating an offender from the church on earth, would exclude him from the kingdom of heaven without repentance. Our Saviour tells us, "what is bound on earth, is ratified in heaven." And the apostle expressly declares of those kinds of sin for which professors must be removed from the communion of saints here, that they are an exclusive bar from the kingdom of heaven. "But I have written to you, not to keep company, if any that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no not to eat." 1 Cor. 5:11. "And know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. 6:9, 10. If one that is truly a child of God fall into any of these sins, till by an extraordinary repentance he is prepared for pardon, he cannot obtain it, nor have a comfortable hope of entering into heaven. For only those "who are justified, are glorified." Indeed it is not imaginable where "the seed of God remains," the vital principle of grace, as it does in "all that are born of God," but that notorious sins that cannot be concealed from the view of conscience, will cause stings and sorrows proportionable to their malignity, and consequently a hatred and forsaking of them. Now perseverance principally respects the end of our course: there may be interruptions in the way for a time; but if with renewed zeal and diligence we prosecute our blessed end, we shall not fall short of it.

Secondly. I come now to consider the second thing propounded, the reason why perseverance is requisite in all that will obtain eternal life; and it is this, that their sincerity may be discovered by constancy in obedience under all trials, "Blessed is the man that endures temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." The law required unsinning obedience as the condition of life, the gospel accepts of sincerity; but if that be wanting, there is no promise that gives right to the reward. Now sincerity implies such an entire love of God, as makes a person submit to all duties commanded in his law, and all trials appointed by his providence. A high example we have of this in Abraham, when he was commanded to offer up his only son Isaac, and by his own hands, for a burnt-offering. This was to kill a double sacrifice at one blow; for the life of Abraham was bound up in Isaac: he lived in him more dearly than in himself; all his joy, all his posterity by Sarah had died in Isaac. What resentments, what resistance of nature did he suffer? yet presently he addressed himself to perform his duty. Whoever saw a more glorious victory over all the tender and powerful passions of human nature? O unexampled obedience! being an original without any precedent to imitate, and without a copy to succeed it. After this clear infallible testimony of his sincerity, the angel declared from heaven, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." And it is said concerning the followers of the Lamb, that "they loved not their lives unto the death." The love of Christ that animated them in all their sufferings, was sweeter than life, and stronger than death.

Indeed there was a wonderful difference in the behaviour of the martyrs under sufferings, but in all the same persevering grace was evident, though working variously. Some in the most beautiful flower of their age encountered fire and sword, tormentors and torments, with that sensible joy, with those songs of praise to Christ, as if they saw the heavens open with St. Stephen, and their Saviour ready to receive and crown them. But many others, as Chrysostom testifies,* went to the tribunals, to the theatres, to death, with many

appearances of fear. Upon hearing the wild beasts roar, they were struck with horror; at the sight of the executioners and the instruments of torment, they were pale and trembling. The flesh seemed to cry out, "O let this cup pass from me;" yet weak and faint, it followed the spirit, that corrected the natural desire, with "not my will, but thine be done." As the moon in eclipse, though obscure, yet goes on in a regular course, as when it is full of light by the reflection of the sun: so those desolate martyrs, though as it were forsaken, and deprived of the bright beams of comfort, yet persevered in their profession of the truth. When one word to renounce christianity would have saved them, no torments could force it from them, but they patiently endured all. Now in these the combat of nature was visible, and the admirable power of grace. They first overcame their own fears, the reluctancy of the carnal part, their affection to whatever is desirable in the world, which is the noblest victory, and then the cruelty of their persecutors. In them was verified the testimony of the Spirit, "here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the command of God and the faith of Jesus."

But how many appear faithful while their faith is not to be showed by difficult works, and proved by sufferings? The seed that fell on the stony ground, sprang up as hopeful as the seed in the good ground at first; but when tribulation came, it withered away, wanting the root of sincerity. And that which was sown among thorns, was choaked by the cares and pleasures of the world. Some lust in the heart interweaves with the affections, and causes apostacy. How many from glorious beginnings have made a lamentable end? not only mercenaries in religion, whose zeal is a foreign complexion, not springing from an inward principle of life and health, relinquish even the profession of godliness, when their gain ceases; but some who have thought themselves sincere, yet in times of danger their resolutions, like the morning dew, have suddenly vanished. As the foolish builder that computed not the charges of his designed work, began to raise a magnificent structure, but unable to finish it, laid the foundation in his own shame. They repented their choice of heaven

when they saw what it must cost them, and would save the world with the loss of their souls.

Others that began in the spirit, and with raised affections set out in the ways of godliness, yet by the allurements of sensual lusts and temptations, (and therefore with greater* guilt) leave their first love, and end in the flesh. They fall from high professions, but, deceived by soft pleasure, feel not the fall. These were never sincere, and never had a right to heaven. They took up sudden resolutions, not grounded in serious and deep thoughts, and for a flash were hot and active, but with great levity return to their former lusts. The apostle tells us of such, "it had been better for them they had not known the way of righteousness, than to turn back and voluntarily to forsake it." It is observed that boiling water taken off from the fire, congeals more strongly than that which was never heated: because the subtile parts being evaporated by the fire, the more terrestrial parts remaining are more capable of cold. So those who have felt the power of the word in their affections, and afterwards lose that holy heat, become more hardened in their sins. God justly withdraws his grace, and the evil spirit that was expelled for a time, returns with seven worse, and aggravates his tyranny.

To conclude; since the certainty of salvation is conditional, if we persevere in a holy state, let us beware of a corrupt confidence, and a vicious dejection of spirit, the trusting in ourselves, or distrusting God. To prevent the trusting in ourselves, consider,

1. The most excellent creatures are by the instability of nature liable to defection; subject to a corruptive change. Of this the fallen angels are a dreadful example, who of their own motion, untempted, sinned in heaven.

2. The danger is greater of falling away, when they are urged and solicited by a violent or grateful temptation. Thus our first parents fell, and lost more grace in an hour, than can be recovered by their posterity in all ages to the end of the world.

3. When there is a supervenient corruption in the creature, that inclines them with earnest propensity to forbidden things; and takes flame from every spark, the danger is extreme. Like a besieged city that is in great hazard of taking, by assaults from, without, and conspiracies from within. Let us therefore be very watchful over our hearts and senses, and keep as much as is possible at a safe distance from temptations; and be very diligent in the use of all holy means to confirm and fortify our resolutions for heaven. God promised to Hezekiah fifteen years, but not to preserve his life by miracle; he was obliged to repair the wastings of nature by daily food, and to abstain from what was noxious and destructive to his body. The apostle excites christians to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that works in them to will and to do of his good pleasure. Let him that stands take heed lest he fall." None are a more easy conquest to the tempter than those who presume upon their own strength. We should be always jealous of ourselves, from the sad examples of apostacy in every age.* St. Ambrose testifies from his own knowledge, that many after the courageous enduring of cruel torments for religion, the tearing open their sides that their bowels appeared, and the burning of some parts of their bodies; yet when led forth to finish the "victory of faith," to be a triumphant "spectacle to angels and men," when the blessed Rewarder was ready to put the martyrs' crown on their heads, at the sight of their mourning wives and children in the way, were overcome by pity, the weakest affection, and failed in the last act of christian fortitude. "We must pray to be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." For some may vigorously resist one sort of temptation, and render themselves to others. And if finally vanquished by one of those enemies, we lose our victory and crown.

And as presumption betrays the soul into the devil's snares, so a vicious dejection of spirit from a distrust of relief from God in our difficulties, and his assistance with our unfeigned endeavours for salvation is very pernicious. For this damps industry, and causes either a total neglect, or uncomfortable use of means for that end.

Many christians considering their graces are weak, their nature fickle and apt to revolt, are ready (as David said, "one day I shall perish by the hand of Saul) to conclude sadly of the issue of their condition. To encourage such, let them consider, that perseverance is not only a condition, but a privilege of the covenant of grace; for that assures us of supply of spiritual strength to the sincere believer for performing the condition it requires. Indeed if grace were the mere product of freewill, the most fervent resolutions would vanish into a lie, upon the assault of an overpowering temptation. As Hezekiah acknowledged, that the Assyrian kings had "destroyed the gods of the nations that were no gods, but idols, the work of mens' hands." But sanctifying grace is the effect of the Holy Spirit; and he that "begins that good work in the saints, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." He that inclined them joyfully to choose the spiritual eternal good, will bind their inconstant hearts, that by a faithful adherence they shall cleave to their duty and felicity. God hath most graciously declared, "I will put my spirit into their hearts, that they shall never depart from me." The promise is founded in the unchangeable love of God to his people. Were God, as man, subject to variation, there might be jealousies in believers, lest they should lose his good will: as those who depend on princes, are suspicious lest from the natural inconstancy of the human will, a new favorite should supplant them. "But whom God loves, he loves to the end." The apostle prays for the Thessalonians, "that God would preserve them blameless until the coming of Christ; by this consideration, "faithful is he that calleth you, he will do it." He speaks of the internal call, that opens the heart, and overpowers all resistance. As when the angel came with a light shining in the prison to St. Peter, and struck him on the side, bid him arise quickly, loosed his chains, and led him through the guards, opened the doors, and restored him to liberty. The effectual calling of a sinner is the visible and infallible effect of electing mercy; and God is unchangeable in his own purpose, and faithful to his promises of bringing all such by sanctification to glory. The same apostle tells the saints at Corinth, that the Redeemer would confirm them to the end: "God is faithful, by whom ye are called." Grace that was at first inspired, is continually actuated by the spirit, who is

"styled the earnest of the saints' inheritance." So that whereas the angels that excelled in strength, kept not their first state of purity and glory, but are sunk into corruption and misery; yet true humble believers, though weak, and encompassed with many difficulties, shall be preserved from destructive evil, and raised to an unchangeable estate of perfection. This is as truly admirable, as if the stars should fall from heaven, and clods of earth ascend and shine in the firmament. The apostle, who acknowledged "his insufficiency of himself to think a good thought;" yet triumphantly declares, "I can do all things" (within the compass of his duty) "through Christ that strengthens me." The love, fidelity, and power of God, are a sure fountain of assistance to every christian, that sincerely resolves and endeavours to prosecute his last and blessed end.

Chapter XI: Directions to Fix the Choice Aright.

The danger from the senses and the fancy, of perverting our choice. The power of fancy considered. The carnal affections are the worst counsellors. The senses and carnal affections are incapable of apprehending spiritual things; they are deceitful and very numerous and clamorous. The general example of men is corruptive of our judgments about worldly things. It is foolish to be directed by the multitude in an affair of eternal moment. The universal judgment of worldly men in their last serious hours, is considerate, and to be believed.

ii. I SHALL now come to the directions how to fix our choice aright.

This is a matter of everlasting consequence; it therefore becomes us with the most intense application of mind to consider it, and according to the advice of wisdom, "to keep the heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Indeed the choice were not difficult between lying vanities and substantial blessedness, if uncorrupted reason had the superior sway: but in this lapsed state of nature, the understanding and will are so depraved, that present things pleasing to sense, ravish the heart into a compliance. Men are deceived, not compelled into ruin: the subtile seducer prevails by fair temptations. This will be evident by reflecting upon the frame and composition of man, as he consists of spirit, soul and body, and the manner of his acting. The spirit is the intellective discerning faculty, the seat of reason, capable to compare and judge of the qualities of things, and foresee their issues. The body includes the lower faculties, the senses, fancy and passions, that are conversant about present things. The soul is the will, the principle of election, in the midst of the other, as the centre to which all their addresses flow. Now upon the proposal of the spiritual and carnal good in order to choice, the will is to be directed by the mind, and by its own authority to rule the lower passions. But alas! the mind has lost its primitive light and purity, vigilance and integrity, neglects its duty, and from ignorance, error and carnal prejudices often pleads for the flesh: and the will, the rational appetite, is voluntarily subordinate, and enslaved by the sensitive. From hence it is, that in the competition, heaven with all its glory is despised, and the present world embraced. To open this more particularly, consider:

1. The senses can only taste and enjoy grosser dreggy pleasures.
2. The fancy that depends upon them in its operations, and is guided by their report, conceives of felicity only under the notion of sensitive pleasure. We may illustrate this by the practice of* Aretius a painter, recorded with infamy, who being often employed to paint the goddesses, to be set in the pagan temples, always drew their pictures by the faces and complexions of his harlots, that the objects of his impure love might have veneration, and a divinity, attributed to them, under the titles, and pretence of Minerva, Juno, Diana, and the other goddesses adored by the heathens. This impiety in an idolater, is resembled by men who fancy happiness (that is a spiritual divine

perfection enjoyed in the glorious vision of God) to be a carnal fruition, and having with sensible colours and lineaments represented it agreeable to their brutish faculties, place it in their hearts, and sacrifice all their thoughts, affections, and service to it.

The fancy is very powerful in men upon a double account.

(1.) The understanding naturally receives the notions of things by phantasms that are still mixing in its contemplations. While the soul is confined to a tabernacle of flesh, it apprehends no object without the precedent excitation of the senses. From whence it is impossible, that a person absolutely deprived of sight from his birth, should have an idea of light, or colours; or that is born deaf, should conceive what sound is; the sense never having imparted an account of it to them. And the image of the object is not immediately transmitted from the sense to the mind, but first to the imagination, that prepares it for its view. And from hence the sensual fancy is so predominant in swaying the judgment, and inclining the will. As those counsellors of state that have the ear of the prince, and are continually with him, by specious informations, and disguising truth, influence him to approve or reject persons and things according to the various aspects given by them. The same object propounded in a dark confused manner, weakly moves us; but varnished and beautified with lively and pleasant colours by the imagination, is armed with such power that ravishes the esteem of the mind, and consent of the will. Now celestial happiness being purely spiritual, "such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man to conceive," though some discoveries be made of it by revelation, yet the imagination makes such an obscure detracting idea of it, that it affects no more, than a dead shadow drawn in some imperfect lines of an exquisite beauty. But when the fancy is warmed and enlivened by the presence of sensible objects, it makes a vigorous impression of them upon the mind, and that represents the pictures of pleasure as very lovely and delightful to the will, which presently embraces them.

(2.) The fancy has a marvellous force upon the sensitive appetite, that eagerly desires what is represented as pleasant, though the enlightened mind sees through the temptation, and knows it is a mere dream, that brings neither solid nor durable joy. One in a fever is pleased by imagining fountains and streams, though he knows that imaginary waters cannot quench his thirst, nor afford the least real refreshment. Now the sensitive appetite being inflamed by the fancy, imparts a contagious fire to the will, and that induces the mind, either to concur with it, and palliate the deceit, and to judge favourably according to its inclinations, or makes it slack or remiss in its office, diverting the thoughts from what might control the appetite; or if the understanding still contradicts, yet it is in so cold and speculative a manner, "that the law of the members" rebels against the superior light, and is too strong "far the law of the mind," and that saying is verified,

Video meliora probóq;

Deteriora sequor.

I see what is worthy to be chosen, but pursue what is to be abhorred. Thus miserably weak are the rational guiding powers in man since his fall, thus imperious and violent the brutish faculties. In short, illusion and concupiscence are the principal causes why the most noble and divine good is undervalued and rejected in comparison of inferior transitory vanities. O the cheap damnation of beguiled souls! A mess of pottage was more valuable to Esau, than the birthright that had annexed to it the regal and priestly dignity. Unwise and unhappy wretches! "that follow lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies."

Thus I have briefly set down the process of men's foolish choice in this degenerate state. Now that we may with a free uncorrupted judgment compare things in order to a wise choice of true felicity, it follows from what has been said, that as the apostle in obeying his heavenly commission, "conferred not with flesh and blood; we must not in this matter of infinite importance, attend,

1st. To the suggestions and desires of the senses and carnal appetites, which are the worst counsellors, as being incapable of judging what is our proper happiness, deceitful and importunate.

(1.) They are incapable of apprehending spiritual eternal things, which alone bring true and complete satisfaction to the soul, and cannot look forward to the end of sinful pleasures, and balance the terrible evils they leave at parting, with the slight vanishing content that springs from their presence. Therefore as blind persons lay hold on things they feel, so the sensitive faculties, that are blind and brutish, adhere to gross present enjoyments, not understanding the pure spotless felicity that is to come, and despising what they do not understand. Now who would in an affair upon which his all depends, advise with children and fools, whose judgment of things is without counsel, their counsel without discourse, their discourse without reason? There is nothing more contrary to the order of nature, than for men that should affect with judgment, to judge by their affections.

(2.) The carnal appetite with its lusts are very deceitful, a party within holding correspondence, with our spiritual enemies, the armies of evil angels, so active and assiduous in conspiring and accomplishing the damnation of men. The devil in scripture is called the tempter by way of eminence, who manages and improves all temptations; and his pernicious design is by the objects of sense, ordered and made more alluring and killing by his various arts, to engage the affections into a compliance, and so to gain the will. Now our great danger is not so much from satan the enemy without, as from the carnal appetite, the traitor within, that gives him the first and easy entrance into the soul. He can only entice by representing what is amiable to sense, but the corrupt appetite inclines to the closing with it. He tempted Jesus Christ, but was repelled with shame, "having found nothing within him to work upon." The perfect regularity, of faculties in our blessed Saviour was not in the least disordered, neither by his fairest insinuations, or most furious assaults. And we might preserve our innocence inviolable, not

withstanding all his attempts, did not some corrupt affection, cherished in our bosoms, lay us naked and open to his poisoned darts. The apostle Peter, who had a spiritual eye, and discerned wherein the strength of our great enemy lies, admonishes christians, "dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, that war against the soul." And we are told by him, that "the corruption that is in the world, is through lust." The outward objects are useful and beneficial in their kind, the abuse of them is from lust. The poison is not in the flower, but in the spider. It is therefore infinitely dangerous to consult, or trust our carnal faculties in this matter, for they are bribed and corrupted, and will comment temporal things to our choice.

(3.) The sensual affections are so numerous and clamorous, so vehement and hasty, that if they are admitted to counsel, and give the decisive vote, the voice of conscience will not be heard or regarded. In concernments of a lower nature, it is constantly seen, that nothing more disturbs reason, and makes men improvident and precipitant in their determinations, than a disordered passion. From hence, it is a prudent rule, that as it is not fit to eat in the height of a fever, because the meat feeds the disease, by increasing the feverish, not the vital heat: so it is not good to deliberate in the heat of any affection. For then the thoughts strongly blow up the passion, and smother, reason, and the mind is rather a party than a judge: but after the declination of that fever in the soul, in a quiet interval, it is seasonable to consider. Now if any simple passion when moved, transports and confounds the mind, and makes it incapable of judging aright, much more the love of the world, a universal passion that reigns in men, and has so many swarming desires answerable to the variety of sensible things, and therefore is more unruly, lasting and dangerous than any particular passion. In short, sensual affections captivate the mind, and hinder its due considering the folly and obliquity of the carnal choice, and when incensed (as distracted persons whose strength grows with their fury) violently break all the restraints the understanding can apply from reason and revelation.

2dly. In order to make a right choice, we must be very watchful lest the general example of men taint our reason, and cause an immoderate esteem of temporal things. "The whole world lies in wickedness," in a sensual sty, without conscience of its misery, or care of regaining its happiness, deceived and pleased with shows of felicity. The way to hell is broad, as the inclinations of the licentious appetite; pleasant, as the delights of sense; so plain and easy, that men go to it* blindfold; and so frequented, that it would force tears from any considering person, to see men so hasty to meet with damnation. When Calisto the harlot reproached Socrates that there were more followers of her beauty than his wisdom; the† philosopher replied, that was not strange, because it was much easier to draw them in the way of pleasure, that is steep and slippery, than to constrain them to ascend to virtue, seated on a hill, where the ascent is slow, and with toil and difficulty. Now there is nothing more contagious than example. We blindly consent with the multitude, and are possessed with foolish wonder, and carnal admiring of worldly greatness, treasures and delights, neglecting to make a due estimation of things. It is the ordinary artifice of the devil to render temporal things more valuable and attractive to particular persons, from the common practice, of men who greedily pursue them at their happiness. As some crafty merchants, by false reports raise the exchange, to advance the price of their own wares. The men of the world are under the direction of sense, and think than only to be wise and happy that shine in pomp, abound in riches, and overflow in pleasures. The psalmist tells us of the prosperous worldling, "that while he lives, he blesses his soul; and men will praise thee when thou dost well to thyself." By vicious imitation our judgments are more corrupted, and our passions raised to higher degrees for painted vanities. The affections in the pursuit of earthly things are inflamed by the contention of others. And when holy desires and resolutions spring up in men, yet so powerful is the custom of the world, that they often become ineffectual. As a ship whose sails are filled with a fair wind, but makes no way, stopped by the force of the current. Now to fortify us against the pernicious influence of example, consider,

(1.) It is most unreasonable in this affair of so vast moment to be under the direction of the multitude. For the most are sottish and sensual, governed by the uncertain motions of a giddy voluble fancy, and roving impetuous passion; so that to be led by their example, and disregard the solid immortal rules of heavenly wisdom, is as perfect madness, as for one to follow a herd of swine through the mire, and leave a clean path that lies before him. If there were but few in an age or country that were deluded with false appearances, it would be a disgrace to imitate the practice of the foolish: and shall the great numbers of the earthly-minded give reputation and credit to their error? He were a strange fool indeed, that should refuse a single piece of counterfeit money, and receive a great heap in payment: as if the number added a real value to them. It is therefore a necessary point of wisdom to divest all* vulgar prejudices, to separate ourselves from the multitude, that we may see the vanity of things, that dazzle inferior minds.

(2.) Consider the universal judgment even of worldly men in their last and serious hours, when the prospect of eternal things is open before them. How vastly different are their apprehensions of temporal things in the review, from what they were in their vicious desires? How often do they break forth in the sorrowful words of the apostle, "We have been toiling all night, and caught nothing?" When there are but a few remaining sands in the glass of time, and death shakes the glass before them, how powerfully do they preach of the emptiness and uncertainty of things below, and sigh out in Solomon's phrase, "All is vanity?" And this is more singularly observable in those who have had the fullest enjoyment of earthly things. How do they complain of the vain world, and their vainer hearts, when experience has convinced them of their woful folly? Solomon who was among other princes, as the sun in the midst of the planets, that obscures them by his illustrious brightness; he that had surveyed this continent of vanity, to make an experiment whether any satisfaction could be found in it, at last sadly declares, that all things here below are but several kinds and ranks of vanities, as ineffectual to make men happy, as counterfeit jewels of several

colours are to enrich the possessor. Nay they are not only vanity, but vexation, an empty show that has nothing real but the vexation of disappointment. And shall we not value the judgment of men when they are best instructed, and give credit to their testimony when they are sincere? Certainly in their approaches to the divine judgment they are most considerate and serious, they have the truest and justest thoughts of things, and most freely declare them. O the astonishing folly of men! they will not be convinced of the error of their ways, till they come to the end of them, and the sun is set, and no time remains for their returning into the way of life.

Chapter XII: A Steadfast Belief in Unseen Eternal Things

A steadfast belief of unseen eternal things is necessary to direct our choice. Faith realizes things future, and controls the efficacy of present temptations. The neglect of the great salvation proceeds from infidelity. The most that are believers in title, are infidels in their hearts. Consideration is necessary in order to a wise choice. It must be serious and deliberate; frequent, and with application to the soul. Motives to consideration. It is the noblest exercise of the mind, and most profitable.

iii. I Shall proceed to show further what is necessary to direct us in our choice, that we may not fall into the double misery, of being deceived with a false happiness, for a little time, and deprived of true happiness for ever.

First, A sound and steadfast belief of unseen eternal things.

Secondly, Serious consideration of the vast difference between things that are the objects of sight, and that are the objects of faith.

First. The sound and steadfast belief of eternal things is requisite to direct our choice aright. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heb. 11:1. It assures us of their reality and worth, as if they were before our eyes, and in our actual possession. This divine light governs and conducts the will to choose wisely, and excites all the practicable powers for the preventing the greatest evils, and the obtaining perfect felicity. When the devil, the deadly flatterer, by inviting representations of the world, entices the heart, the serious belief of the future reward so glorious and eternal, disgraces the most splendid temptations, and makes them ineffectual. "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." If tempted to lasciviousness by the allurements of an earthly beauty, faith represents the angelical lustre of the saints, when they shall come with the unspotted Lamb in his glorious appearance; and this unbinds the charm, and makes the tempting person an object not of desire, but aversion. If tempted with honour to a sinful compliance, faith represents so convincingly the glory which all those who preserve their conscience and integrity inviolable, shall receive at the universal judgment, in the presence of God, and the holy angels, (as our Saviour hath promised, "He that serves me, him will my Father honour") and the confusion wherein the most honourable sinners shall then be covered, that with a generous disdain all secular honours will be despised. And it is as powerful to enervate the temptation of temporal profit. We read of Moses, "that by faith, when he was come to years," (and therefore more capable to understand and enjoy what felicity the brightest honours and greatest riches could afford) "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect to the recompense of reward." And all the evils which a wicked world, inspired with rage from Satan, can threaten to fright us from our duty, poverty, disgrace, banishment, nay torments and death, those terrible visumata, so heightened by the carnal fancy, are easily overcome by a sincere and strong believer. Thus some who were urged by such motives to renounce their religion,* told the

persecutors, that life was not sweet to them if they might not live christians, nor death bitter, if they must die for Christ. A lively firm persuasion of the excellence and eternity of the reward, what miraculous effects would it produce? Nothing would be impossible within the compass of our duty, either to do or suffer in order to a glorious immortality. Faith has a celestial power, a magnetic virtue to draw up the heart from the earth, and fastens it to things above. It is not imaginable that a clear-sighted soul, that sees a good infinitely great, should reject it for mean things to please the lower desires. We may as probably imagine, that a skilful jeweller would part with the richest oriental pearls, for cherry stones to play with children.

From hence we may discover the true cause of the neglect of the great salvation offered in the gospel; "the word preached does not profit, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it." It is astonishing to consider that earth should contend with heaven for our affections, and prevail against it; that vanity should turn the scale against the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" that men should pursue fleeting shadows, and neglect the most excellent realities, as if they could be happy here, and continue here for ever, and hereafter there were neither happiness nor eternity. But this releases the wonder, that "all men have not faith." Eternal things are not of conspicuous moment in the carnal balance. Some are infidels in profession, openly declaring themselves to be without religion, without God, and have the same credit of the heaven and hell discovered in the gospel, as of the Elisian fields, and Stygian lake, the fables of the poets. These live as if they should never die, and die as if they should never live in the other world; as if death caused so deep a sleep, that the voice of the Son of God could not awaken them at the last day. Their unbelief is not from reason, but vicious opposite affections; for the truth of the eternal state as so clearly revealed, and strongly established in the gospel, that the sincere mind must readily assent to it. But the wicked cannot delight in the discovery of that for which they are unprepared, and therefore try all ways to elude the force of the most satisfying arguments. Their infidelity is obstinate and incurable. An instance whereof we have in the pharisees, who

rejected our Saviour. Though all the characters of the Messiah were conspicuous in his person, though his doctrines were confirmed by miracles, yet they would not yield up themselves to that omnipotent conviction; so strong were their carnal prejudices against his humble state, and holy doctrines. That reproach is more justly due to infidels under the gospel, than to Israel in the prophet: "Who is blind as my servant?" The heathens who are blind from their birth, and have only some glimmering apprehension that eternity succeeds time, are less culpable than those who have infinitely more reason to believe it, and yet believe it less. The plea for them will be a terrible accusation against such unbelievers. If a blind person falls, it moves compassion; but if one voluntarily shuts his eyes against the sun, and refuses the direction of the light, and falls from a precipice, his ruin is the just consequence of his folly. Simple ignorance excuses as to the degrees of the fault, but affected wilful ignorance, now reason and revelation with united beams give so clear a prospect into the eternal world, aggravates the guilt and sentence of such unbelievers.

Besides, the most who are believers in title, are infidels in heart. Our Saviour tells the Jews, who pretended the highest veneration of the writings of Moses, "That if they had believed Moses, they would have believed him, for Moses wrote of him." If men did seriously believe such an excellent reward as the gospel propounds, would it be a cold unpersuasive motive to them? The depravation of the will argues a correspondent defect in the mind; though not absolute total infidelity, yet such a weakness and wavering in the assent, that when temptations are present and urgent, and it comes to actual choice, sense prevails over faith. This will be clear by universal experience in temporal things. The probable hope of gain will make those who are greedy of gold, prodigal of their lives, and venture through tempestuous seas to accomplish their desires. And if the belief were equal, would not men do or suffer as much for obtaining what is infinitely more valuable? A firm assent would produce adherence, and faith in the promises, fidelity in obeying the commands of Christ. Tertullian propounds it as a powerful incentive to the martyrs, *Quis ergo non libentissime tantum pro vero habeat erogare, quantum alii*

pro falso? Who would not joyfully, sacrifice life and all its endearments, to obtain true blessedness, which others do for the vain appearance of it? Men may be as truly subjects without subjection, as believers without a heavenly conversation, which is inseparable from the reality of faith. Many in the bosom of the church are as truly, though not so notoriously, infidels, as Turks and heathens. Indeed even in true believers, the apprehension of eternal things has such great allays, that temporal things are overvalued and over-feared. A strong faith in the truth and power of God, would make the glorious world so sure and near in our thoughts, that with indifferent affections we should, receive good or evil things here; "Rejoice as if we rejoiced not, and mourn as if we mourned not." Our lives would be so regular and pure, as if the Judge were to come the next hour, as if the sun did now begin to be darkened, and the trumpet of the archangel were sounding, and the noise of the dissolving world were universally heard. Infidelity deadens the impression, and suppresses the reigning power of eternal things in our hearts. In short men are heavenly or earthly in their choice and conversation, as they are directed by the sincere light of faith, or misled by the false beams of sense.

Secondly. The second thing requisite in order to a wise choice, is consideration. For as by faith the virtue of the reward is diffused through all the faculties, and the powers of the world to come are felt in the soul; so by consideration faith is exercised, and becomes effectual. This unites and reinforces the beams of eternal truth, and inflames the affections. As the psalmist expresses himself, "My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned," Heaven is a felicity so glorious and attractive, that if duly considered, no man can possibly refuse it: and hell is a misery so extreme and fearful, that if seriously laid to heart, none can possibly choose it. The last end is to be conceived under the notion of an infinite good, without the least mixture of evil, to which the human will swayed by the invincible impression of nature has a tendency. The liberty of indifference is with respect to some particular good things, which may be variously represented, so as to cause inclination or aversion. That men who

believe eternal life is the reward of holiness, yet with a careless inadvertency neglect their duty; and that eternal death is the wages of sin, yet securely continue in it, is more wonderful than to see martyrs sing in the flames; and the great cause of it is the neglect of consideration. This is assigned to be the cause of that unnatural and astonishing rebellion of Israel against God their Father and sovereign: "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. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Isa. 1:2, 3.

This duty, as it is of admirable advantage, so it is universally necessary; for all are equally concerned, and it is within the power of all to perform. Though men cannot convert themselves, yet they may consider what is preparatory to conversion. For the will may turn the thoughts of the mind to any sort of objects.

I will briefly show the nature of this duty, and how to manage it for spiritual profit, and those objects from whence our thoughts derive vigour for the swaying of the will, and the conduct of the life.

1. The nature of consideration is discovered by its end, which is this; that the mind being satisfied in the just reasons upon which the choice of heaven is to be made, the will and affections may be engaged in an earnest, joyful and constant pursuit of it. And in this respect it differs from simple knowledge, and naked speculation, that informs the mind, without influence and efficacy upon the heart: like a garland of flowers that adorns the head, without any benefit and refreshing to him that wears it. And practical meditation differs from the study of divine things in order to the instructing of others. That is like a merchant's buying of wine for sale, this like providing it for our own use.

2. That the consideration of eternal things may be effectual, it must be,

(1.) Serious and deliberate. For the affair is great in reality above all possible conception or comparison. All other things, how considerable soever in themselves, yet respectively and in parallel with this, are of no account. Our Saviour told Martha, "One thing is necessary: Mary hath chosen the better part, that shall not be taken from her." What instance can be of equal moment with that of entertaining the Son of God? Yet a serious attention to the words of eternal life dropping from his lips, was more necessary than making provision for him. The greatest and most weighty affairs in the world are but a vain employment, but irregularity and impertinence; in compare with eternal salvation. And the greatest solemnity of thoughts is requisite to undeceive the mind, and engage the will for heaven. It is very observable that errors in judgment and choice spring from the same causes, the not sincere and due weighing of things. In the decisions of questions, truth is discovered by comparing, with an equal staid attention, the reasons of the one and the other part. But when some vicious affection contradicts the truth, it fills the mind with prejudices, that it cannot impartially search into things, and is deceived with specious fallacies, with the image of truth. For according to the present application of the mind it is determined, and passion strongly applies it to consider that which is for the carnal interest, and consequently inclination, not reason, is the principle of the persuasion. And this is more evident in men's foolish choice: as the eye cannot see but what is visible, nor the understanding conceive what is not intelligible, the will cannot love and choose what is not amiable, at least in show. If the devil did appear without a disguise, he would have no power to persuade, but in all his temptations there is the mixture of a lie to make it pleasant. He presents a false perspective, to make what is but superficial, appear solid and substantial. And the carnal heart turns the thoughts to what is grateful, without seriously considering what is infinitely better, and accordingly chooses by the eye of sense, the happiness of this world. Therefore till eternal things are opened in the view of conscience, and the mind calmly considers by the light of faith their reality and greatness, no right valuation, nor wise choice can be made.

Besides, the most clear and rational enforcements by the actings of the thoughts, are necessary to make a strong impression on the affections, and rescue them from the captivity of the flesh. In other things as soon as the mind is enlightened, the will resolves, and the inferior faculties obey; but such is the resistance of the carnal heart, that although it is evident from infallible principles there is an everlasting glory, infinitely to be preferred above the little appearances of beauty and pleasure here, yet the most piercing reasons enter heavily without earnest inculcation. Slight or sudden thoughts may produce vanishing affections of complacency, or distaste, and fickle resolutions, that like sick feathers drop away, and leave the soul naked to the next temptation; but solemn and fixed thoughts are powerful on the heart, in making a thorough and lasting change. When the clouds dissolve in a gentle shower, the earth drinks in all, and is made fruitful; but a few sprinkling drops, or a short storm of rain, that wets only the surface, without sinking to the root, is little beneficial. In short, there may be some excitations to good, and retractions from evil; some imperfect faint essays toward heaven, from an impulse on the mind: but solid conversion is produced by deliberate discourse, by the due consideration and estimation of things, it is rational and perpetual.

(2.) Consideration must be frequent, to keep eternal objects present, and powerful upon us. Such are the natural levity and inconstancy, sloth and carnality of the mind, that the notions of heavenly things quickly pass through, but of earthly abide there. If a stone be thrown upwards, it remains no longer in the air, than the impression of the force by which it was thrown continues; but if it falls on the earth, it rests there by nature. When the soul is raised in contemplation to heaven, how apt is it to fall from that height, and lose the esteem, the lively remembrance and affections of eternal things? But when the thoughts are excited by the presence of what is pleasing to sense, the withdrawing the object does not deface the idea of it in the memory, nor lessen the conceit, nor cool the desires of it, because the heart is naturally inclined to it. Therefore it is necessary every day to refresh and renew the conceptions of eternal things, that although they are

not always in act, yet the efficacy may be always felt in the heart and life. The soul habituated to such thoughts will not easily yield to temptations, that surprise and overcome others that are strangers in their minds to the other world: nay the presence of temptations, as by antiperistasis, will reinforce the resolutions for heaven; like the pouring water upon lime, that revives a hidden fire in it, which seems a natural miracle. It is therefore of great advantage frequently to sequester ourselves from the world, to redeem time from secular affairs, for the recollecting of our thoughts, and their solemn exercise upon the eternal world. Sense, that reveals natural things, darkens spiritual. How can the thoughts be fixed on invisible things so distant from sense, if always conversant with secular objects that draw them down? In the silence of the night a small voice is more distinctly heard, and a little distant light more clearly seen: so when the soul is withdrawn from the noisy throng of the world, and outward things are darkened, the voice of conscience is better heard, and the light of heaven more perfectly received.

(3.) Consideration of eternal things must be with present application to the soul. It is not the mere conviction of the mind, but the decree of the will that turns men from sin to holiness, from the creatures to God. The heart is very deceitful, and by variety of shifts and palliations is disposed to irresolutions and delays in spiritual concernments. How often does the miserable sinner contend with himself, and while conscience urges him to seek the kingdom of heaven, and the affections draw down to the earth, the carnal part prevailing over the rational, he overcomes, and is overcome; he is convinced and condemned by his own mind. Till consideration issues in this, that with settled judgment and affections the soul determines for God and heaven, it is without profit. Therefore in the managing this duty, it is our wisdom not to be curious and inquisitive after subtile conceptions, and exalted notions of the future state, that little confer to the making the heart better; but to think seriously on what is plain and evident, and most useful to produce a present lasting change. It were egregious folly in a man, that for the use of his garden, should with great labour fetch water from distant fountains,

and neglect that which springs up in his own ground. That meditation is profitable which produces not new thoughts, but holy and firm resolutions of obeying God in order to the full enjoying of him for ever.

To persuade us to the serious practice of this duty, there are many enforcements.

Is any man so foolish, so regardless of his convenience, to purchase a house wherein he must live all his days, and will not first see whether it will be convenient, and secure for his habitation? Shall we not then consider heaven the mansion of blessedness, and hell the seat of misery and horror? for according as we choose here, we shall be in the one or other place for ever. I shall in the fourth part of this treatise, endeavour to represent something of the inexpressible misery of the wicked hereafter, and show how congruous and powerful the thoughts of it are to restrain men from sin; but at present shall briefly excite to the meditation of the heavenly glory, as the most noble, delightful and fruitful work of the soul, whilst confined to the body of flesh. It is the most exalted exercise of the mind, the purest converse with God, the flower of consecrated reason. It is most like the life of glorified spirits above, who are in continual contemplation of the divine excellencies; and it is most raised above the life of carnal men, that are sunk into sensuality and brutishness. It is the most joyful life, in that it sheds abroad in the soul delights that neither satiate, nor corrupt, nor weaken the faculties, as the delights of sense do, but afford perfection as well as pleasure. It is the most profitable life. As in those parts of the earth where the beams of the sun are strongly reflected, precious metals and jewels are produced wherein the refulgent resemblance of that bright planet appears: so the lively and vigorous exercise of the thoughts upon the heavenly glory, will produce heavenly affections, heavenly discourses, and a heavenly shining conversation. This will make us live like the blessed society above, imitating their innocence and purity, their joyful, entire and constant obedience to God. This confirms the holy soul in its choice, with an invincible efficacy

against the temptations and lusts of the world. The serious considering believer is filled with ravishing wonder of the glory that shall be revealed, and looks down with contempt upon the earth, and all that has the name of felicity here. All the invitations, nay terrors of the world, are as unable to check his pursuit of his blessed end, as the breath of an infant to stop the high flight of an eagle.

But how rare and disused a duty is this? How hardly are men induced to set about it? Business and pleasures are powerful diversions. Some pretend business as a just cause, but in vain; "for the one thing necessary" challenges our principal thoughts and care. Besides, there are intervals of leisure, and the thoughts are always streaming, and often run waste, which directed aright, would be very fruitful to the soul. The true cause of this neglect is from the inward temper of men. Carnal pleasures alienate the mind, and make it unfit for the deep serious actings of the thoughts upon eternal things. "I have said of laughter, thou art mad." It wakes the mind light, and vain, and desultory. As a distracted person by every motion of fancy flies from one thing to another without coherence. The heart filled with cloudy and smoky fires, with thoughts and desires about worldly things, is unprepared for such a clear, calm, and sedate work. A carnal person can taste no sweetness, feel no relish in the meditation of heaven, nor any spiritual duty. It is as if one should take some delicious fruit into his mouth, a peach, or the like, without breaking the skin; it would be rather a trouble, than pleasant. Nay, the gospel expressly declaring, "that without holiness no man shall see God:" those who by vicious affections are engaged in any sinful way, being conscious of their guilt and unpreparedness, add that while such, they are under a peremptory exclusion from celestial glory, cannot endure the thoughts of heaven. The divine presence is their torment, and the serious consideration of it is to bring them before God's holy and just tribunal, to accuse and condemn them.

Chapter XIII: The End for Which Man was Designed in His Creation.

The objects from whence consideration derives its power to direct our choice. The end for which man was designed in his creation. We must make a judicious comparison between the objects that stand in competition for our choice, the present world, and heaven. The vast difference between them in their quality and duration.

I Shall now take a particular view of those objects, from whence consideration derives vigour, for the inclining of the will to a right choice, and for regulating the life.

1. Consider the end for which man was designed in his creation, why endued with rational and noble powers of soul, and placed by the Sovereign Maker in the highest rank of so numerous and various natures that fill the universe. Is it to raise an estate, to shine in pomp, to enjoy sensual pleasures for a little while, and after the fatal term to be no more for ever? Was he sent into the world upon as mean a business as that of the foolish emperor, who employed an army, furnished with all military preparations, to gather shells upon the sea shore? This were, according to the passionate expostulation of the psalmist, to charge God "that he had made all men in vain." Reason and scripture tell us the end of man is to glorify and enjoy God, the obtaining whereof makes him perfectly happy, and the missing of it perfectly miserable. This is a fundamental truth upon which the whole fabric of man's duty and felicity is built. Without this foundation, our faith presently sinks. If the clearness of this principle be obscured, we shall wander from the way of eternal life, and not only lose the way, but the remembrance and desire of it. Thinking is the property of the reasonable soul, and the just order of consideration is, that the mind primarily regards the supreme directive truth that is to govern all our actions. It was prudent counsel that* one of the ancients gave for composing a book, that the author frequently reflect upon the title, that it may correspond in all

the parts with his original design. Thus it becomes a man often to consider the end of his being, that the course of his life may have a direct tendency to it; and the more excellent our end is, the more constraining is the necessity to prosecute it. It is of great efficacy to reflect upon ourselves, whither do my thoughts and desires tend? For what do I spend my strength, and consume my days? Will it be my last account, how much by my prudence and diligence I have exceeded others in temporal acquisitions? If a general were at play while the armies are engaging, would it be a noble exploit for him to win the game, whilst his army for want of conduct loses the victory? Will it be profitable for a man to gain the world, and lose his soul? Let conscience answer in truth.

It is observable what is reported of a* noble foreigner, that on his birth-day reflecting upon the age of his life, he was surprised with grief, and struck with astonishment, that without a due sense of the proper business and end of life, he was arrived to that age, when our days begin to decline. In an instant all things seemed to change appearance in his view. Then first (says he) I perceived I was a man, for before I had not resolved for what I should employ my life. The issue was, his serious resolution unfeignedly to honour God, sincerely to confess Christ, to place his felicity in holiness of life, and most zealously to follow it. Let any one that is not of a reprobate mind, and an incorrigibly depraved heart, duly consider the sublime and supernatural end of man. O what a marvellous change will it make in him, of carnal into spiritual? Nay, it would be a kind of miracle if he continued in his sinful state. How will it transform him into another man, with new valuations, new affections and resolutions, as if he were "born again" with a new soul? How will it amaze him that his whole course has been a contradiction to the wise and gracious design of God, that all his industry has been a race out of the way, a perpetual diversion from his main business, that his life has been fruitless and dead to the true end of it? How will he be confounded at his former folly? Then alone we act with understanding, when moved by our blessed end, and our actions by a strict tendency without variation issue into it.

2. Consider attentively the objects that stand in competition for our choice, the present world and heaven, to make a judicious comparison between them in their quality and duration.

(1.) In their quality. The things of the world, according to the judgment of God himself, who is only wise and good, and has the highest authority to decide in the case, are but fallacious appearances of happiness, mere vanity. And certainly the Creator knows the true worth of all things, and would not disparage his own works, but would undeceive men that are apt to judge and choose by the eye of sense. The apostle tells us, "that an idol is nothing in the world:" although the matter of it may be of gold, or marble, or wood, yet it has no divine perfection, which the idolater attributes to it. So all worldly things, in which men place their chief care, and confidence, and joy, though they have some degrees of goodness, and are a transient relief to us in our passage to eternity, yet they are nothing as to perfect felicity. It is merely opinion and conceit that makes them so valued and pleasing, like a rich dye to a slight stuff from whence its price arises. Reason is either obscured, or not obeyed when the world is the object of our choice. Now what are these appearances of beauty and pleasure, compared with a blessedness that is truly infinite? Carnal joy smiles in the countenance, flatters the fancy, touches the sense, but cannot fill the heart; but the favour of God satisfies the soul. "Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than when their corn and wine increased." Carnal joy in its highest elevation, in the time of the harvest and vintage, is incomparably less than spiritual joy that springs from the light of God's countenance. The world cannot fill the narrow capacity of our senses, but divine joys exceed our most enlarged comprehensive faculties. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing; but the peace of God passes all understanding." The things of the world are of a limited goodness: wisdom is not strength, nor learning riches, nor beauty fruitfulness: but God is a "universal good," in whom are all attractives to raise and satisfy our desires. If men did consider, they would distinguish and despise in comparison all that is named felicity here, with the favour of God. To seek for

satisfaction in the creature and forsake him, is as it one desirous to see the light should withdraw from the presence of the sun, to borrow it from a weak ray reflected by some obscure matter. Now if there be so vast a difference in their nature, as between a painted vapour, and the solid glorious good, between finite and infinite, why is there not a difference accordingly in our esteem, affections and respects to them? How unreasonable is it that a soul capable of God, should cleave to the dust? It would be most egregious folly to hang a weight, that is able to turn a great engine, upon a small clock: it is incomparably more foolish, when the love of happiness, the weight of human nature, which applied aright, will turn our desires to heaven, is only used to give vigorous motion to our endeavours about earthly things.

(2.) Consider their duration. The apostle tells us, that the main "scope of his actions was things invisible;" and gives the reason of it, "for the things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen are eternal." 2 Cor. 4:18. To insist upon the vast difference between temporal and eternal, may seem needless: for the first notions of things are of such uncontrollable clearness, that an attempt to prove them, is to light a candle to discover the sun. Yet this principle drawing after it such powerful consequences for the government of our hearts and lives, and conscience being so remiss, and the sensual affections so rebellious, it is needful to consider this seriously, that what is really assented to in speculation, may not be contradicted in practice. Now who can unfold the infinite volume of ages in eternity? The understanding of an angel can no more comprehend what is incomprehensible, than the mind of a man. A snail will pass over an immense space as soon as an eagle: for though one dispatches more way than the other, yet both are equally distant from arriving to the end of what is endless. But that the conception of eternity may be more distinct, and affecting, it is useful to represent it under some temporal resemblances, that sensibly, though not fully, express it. Suppose that the vast ocean were distilled drop by drop, but so slowly, that a thousand years should pass between every drop; how many millions of years were required to empty it? Suppose this

great world in its full compass, from one pole to another, and from the top of the firmament to the bottom, were to be filled with the smallest sand, but so slowly, that every thousand years only a single grain should be added; how many millions would pass away before it were filled? If the immense superficies of the heavens, wherein are innumerable stars, the least of which equals the magnitude of the earth, were filled with figures of numbers without the least vacant space, and every figure signified a million, what created mind could tell their number, much less their value? Having these thoughts, I reply; the sea will be emptied drop by drop, the universe filled grain by grain, the numbers written in the heavens will come to an end; and how much of eternity is then spent? Nothing; for still infinitely more remains. In short, whatever is temporal, extends the continuance of it to the utmost possibility of conception, is infinitely short of eternity. A day, a hour, a minute, has some proportion with a thousand years; for that duration is determined by a certain number of days, and hours, and minutes: but millions of ages have no proportion to eternity, because it is an indeterminable duration. The mind is soon tired and lost in searching after numbers to represent it: it is confounded and struck with amazing horror, and can only direct the eye upward or downward to the two habitations of eternity, the glorious and the miserable, heaven and hell. Now let us compare the things of the present world with those of the future state. The first are measured by flying time, the other remain in an unmoveable eternity. The comforts that spring from the earth, suddenly wither and fall to it: the tree of life flourishes only above. Frequent changes from prosperity to adversity, are the properties of this mortal state. As those who are in voyages at sea, sometimes are in a calm, and presently suffer a storm, and are forced to alter their course by the changing of the winds; so it is with us in our passage here. But upon the first entrance into another world, all the variations of this are at an end. "Verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity. Surely every man walks in a vain show, surely they are disquieted in vain." The visible felicity of man is of no continuance. We may frequently observe in the evening, a cloud by the reflection of the sun invested with so bright a lustre, and adorned

with such a pleasant variety of colours, that in the judgment of our eyes, if an angel were to assume a body correspondent to his glory, it were a fit matter for it. But in walking a few steps, the sun is descended beneath the horizon, and the light withdrawn, and of all that splendid flaming appearance, nothing remains but a dark vapour, that falls down in a shower. Thus vanishing is the show of felicity here. In this, sense assists faith; for the experience of every day verifies what the scripture declares, "that the fashion of this world passes away." And therefore the guilty folly of men is aggravated, "to set their eyes and hearts upon that which is not." To see one passionately doat on a face ruined and deformed with age, to be enchanted without a charm, raises wonder, and exposes to contempt. Yet such is the stupidity of men to embrace with their most entire affections the withered vanities of the world, that are hastening to their period. It was a stinging reproach to idolaters from God, "None considers in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding," to say, "I have burnt part of it in the fire; yea, I have also baked bread upon the coals thereof: I have roasted flesh and eaten it; and shall I make the residue an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?" And are not sensual men equally guilty of such monstrous folly? for though universal experience convinces them, that all things under the sun are fading, and that many times their dearest comforts are snatched away from their embraces; yet who does advisedly consider, and say to himself, shall I give my heart to transient shadows? Shall I cherish vain hopes, vain aims and desires of obtaining happiness in a perishing world? Although the worshipping a stock be idolatry of grosser infamy, yet it is as foolish and as destructive to set our chief love and joy, that is only due to God, upon the creature. And what follows in the prophet, is justly applicable to such persons; "he feedeth on ashes," (that not only afford no nourishment, but are very hurtful to the body) "a deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand?" Thus carnal men are so blinded with their affections to these short-lived pleasures, that they cannot take the true liberty of judging and reflecting that they are deceived and delighted with empty shadows that will suddenly end in

disappointment and sorrow? Briefly, these glittering fictions and false joys cannot please without an error in the mind, that shall last but a little while. And if you saw a distracted person sing and dance, with a conceit that he is a prince, would you be willing to lose sober reason for his phantastic pleasure, especially if you knew that his cheerful fit should suddenly change into a mournful or raging madness for ever? But the blessedness above is unchangeable as God the author and object of it, eternal as the soul that enjoys it. And shall the "world that passes away with the lusts thereof, turn our affections from the undefiled immortal inheritance?" Shall the vanishing appearance, the fleeting figure of happiness, be preferred before what is substantial and durable? If a spark of true reason, of sincere love to our souls be left, "we shall count all things but dross and dung, that we may gain the kingdom of glory," Thus eternity enlightens, thus it counsels us.

Chapter XIV: Other Motives to Seek the Kingdom of Heaven

. God is very willing men should partake of his glory. All who unfeignedly and earnestly seek, shall obtain it. Heaven is promised upon gracious terms. An answer to the carnal allegation, that we are commanded to pluck out the right eye, and eat off the right hand, and to submit to the sharpest sufferings. Fervent and constant prayer for divine grace, that we may fix our aims upon eternal happiness, and be diligent in the use of the means to obtain it. The grace of the Spirit requisite to convince the mind thoroughly of the reality and greatness of an invisible and future happiness. It is requisite to purify the will and affections, that with full consent the soul may desire and prosecute its blessed end.

TO encourage us to seek the kingdom of heaven, I shall propound other motives to consideration.

1. God is very willing that men should be saved and partake of his glory. For this end, "he has brought life and immortality to light in the gospel." The Lord Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, has dispelled the darkness of the Gentiles, and the shadows of the Jews, and rendered the blessed and eternal state so clear and so visible, that every eye may see it. Our assurance of it is upon infallible principles. And though the excellent glory of it is inexpressible, yet it is represented under variety of fair and lovely types to invite our affections. Besides, God makes an earnest offer of life to us in his word; he commands, counsels, excites, urges, nay entreats and beseeches with infinite tenderness, that men will accept of it. Thus the apostle declares, "now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be reconciled to God." Is it not evident then beyond the most jealous suspicion, God is desirous of our happiness? Can we imagine any design, any insincerity in his words? Why should heaven court a worm? It is his love to souls that expresses itself in that condescending compassionate manner, to melt and overcome the perverse and hardened in sin.

And as his words, so his works are a convincing argument of his will: his most gracious sustaining and supporting of sinful men, his innumerable benefits conferred upon them, in the provision of good, and preservation from evil, are for this end, that by the conduct of his merciful providence they may be led to repentance, and received into his favour. And the temporal judgments inflicted on sinners, are medicinal in their nature, and in his design to bring them to a sight and abhorrence of sin, to prevent their final ruin: if they prove mortal to any, it is from their obstinate corruption. The time allowed to those who are obnoxious to his justice every hour, is not a mere reprieve from torment, but a space of repentance to sue out a pardon: they are spared in order to salvation. "The Lord is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3:9.

But, above all his other works, the giving of his Son to be a sacrifice for sin, is an incomparable demonstration how much he delights in the salvation of men. Since God has been at such cost to put them into a capacity of obtaining the kingdom of unchangeable glory, far transcending the earthly paradise that was forfeited by sin, we have the strongest assurance that he desires their felicity. And how guilty and miserable will those sinners be, that when Christ has opened heaven to us by his blood, refuse to enter into it? When Brutus, the most noble Roman, propounded to a philosopher his design to restore Rome to liberty, he replied, that the action would be glorious indeed, but that so many servile spirits that tamely stooped under tyranny, were not worthy that a man of virtue and courage should hazard himself so recover that for them, which they did so lightly esteem. The redemption of mankind is without controversy the master-piece of God's works, wherein his principal attributes appear in their excellent glory. But how astonishing is the unworthiness of men, who wretchedly neglect salvation, which the Son of God purchased by a life full of sorrows, and a death of infinite sufferings? Blessed Redeemer! May it be spoken with the humble, affectionate, and thankful sense of thy dying love, why didst thou give thyself a ransom for those who are charmed with their misery, and with the most foul ingratitude disvalue so precious a redemption? How justly shall they be for ever deprived of it? "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish."

2. Consider, this glorious blessedness shall be the portion of all that unfeignedly choose it, and earnestly seek it. This motive was inclosed in the first, but deserves a separate consideration. And of this we have infallible assurance from the word of God, "who cannot lie. Godliness has the promise of the life to come. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation." The hope of a christian is so certain, that it is compared to "an anchor fastened in heaven." And besides the fidelity of his word, God has given us security of the reward, the life of his Son. This methinks should turn the current of our desires and endeavours to heaven. For notwithstanding all our toil and sweat, the labour of the day and the watchings of the night

for the obtaining earthly things, yet we many times fall short of our aims and hopes. It was the observation of the wisest man, "I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to all." Indeed such is the order of divine providence in the world, there must be different conditions of men here: some rich, others poor; some noble, others mean; some in command, others in subjection. And from hence it is also evident, that neither dignity, nor riches, nor pleasures are the happiness of man. For it is not becoming the wisdom and goodness of God to make that the last end of the reasonable creature, which though sought with sincerity and diligence, may not be obtained, or of which without his own consent he may be deprived. But civil distinctions and qualities are of no value and consideration with respect to the obtaining or excluding from heaven. The rich and honourable that are in an exalted state, have not a more easy ascent and entrance into the kingdom of God than those who are in the lowest degree. The stars appear with the same bigness to him that stands in the deepest valley as on the highest hill. Is there any difference between the souls of the rich and great in the world, and the souls of the poor and despised? Are they not equally the offspring of God, and equally ransomed by the most precious blood of his Son? Are they not equally capable of eternal rewards? Are not the promises of the heavenly kingdom, equally addressed to every one that has an immortal soul, that is faithful to his duty and covenant with God? This should inspire all with flaming desires, and draw forth their utmost industry, "and make them steadfast and unmoveable, always to abound in the work of the Lord, knowing our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

I knew the carnal will is impetuous and impatient of delay; and earnest for what is present, with the neglect of the future glory. But the unreasonableness of this is evident to all: for it is not a new and strange thing to sow in hopes of reaping a harvest, for men to be industrious and active on land and sea for future advantage. Nay, it is the constant practice of the world: the merchant, the husbandman,

the student, the soldier, and every man in the circle of his calling are visible instances of this; and though many times the most flourishing hopes are blasted, they are not discouraged. And is it not a sight full of wonder, to observe men cheerful in labours and hardships in the service of the world, to carry it so lightly as if they had wings, and all for a poor and uncertain recompence, and to be slow and languid in their endeavours for a reward as great and as sure as God is glorious and true? How many ambitiously strive to please a prince, and wait long in his service, who is but a man, and therefore variable in his temper and state, sometimes is not willing to do what he can, and sometimes cannot do what he would to reward his servants? And is there not infinitely more reason we should labour to please God, who is the most liberal, and rich, and "certain rewarder of all that seek him?"

3. Consider how gracious the terms are upon which heaven is promised in the gospel. Our Saviour's laws are so holy, just, and in their own nature so good to men, even in their present performance, that their own excellence, and equity, and sweetness, is sufficient to recommend them without a respect to the glorious reward of obedience. For what can be more desirable than conformity to the nature of the blessed God? What pleasure is comparable to that which springs from a pure conscience, from a godly, righteous and sober conversation? How joyful is the performance of that service which more immediately is directed to the honour of the divine majesty? In prayer, and other sacred actions, we draw near to the fountain of felicity, and receive from his fulness. In the affectionate praises of God, we are companions of the angels. And are not integrity and honesty in our dealings with men more easy and comfortable than fraud and oppression? Is it not troublesome to be always under a mask, to use arts and disguises to avoid the reproach and revenge that attend unjust actions when discovered? Are temperance and chastity as hurtful to the body, as luxury and lasciviousness, the essential parts of carnal felicity? How miserable is man when the heart is rent with numberless vanities, the affections distracted between various objects! How quiet and composed, when

the heart is united to God as the supreme good, and the affections joyfully conspire in his service! Can it then be pretended that the yoke of Christ is heavy, and his law hard? Or are his promises uncertain, and his reward small? No, "his commands are not grievous; in the keeping them there is a great reward," a present paradise. Religion will make us happy hereafter in the enjoyment of God, and happy here in obedience to his holy will. Such is his goodness, that our duty and happiness are the same.

But it will be said, that the gospel requires "us to pluck out the right eye, and to cut off the right hand, and to take up the cross of Christ; that is, to mortify the dearest lusts, and to submit to the sharpest sufferings for his honour, that we may be eternally happy.

To this I answer:

It is true, the human nature in this depraved state, only relishes such objects as pleasantly insinuate with the carnal senses, and it is bitter as death to bind up the affections from them. But grace gives a "new divine nature to the soul," and makes it easy to abstain from fleshly lusts. To make this more clear by a sensible instance: suppose a diseased person, whose stomach is oppressed with corrupt humours, and his throat and month so heated with choler and continual thirst, that he thinks it impossible, though for his life, to abstain from immoderate drinking. If a physician by some powerful medicine cleanses the stomach, and tempers the internal heat, he then can easily restrain himself from excess. Thus a carnal man that is full of false estimations, and irregular desires, while there are pleasures without, and passions unsubdued within, though his salvation depends on it, thinks it impossible to restrain the exorbitant appetites of flesh and blood. The "Gentiles thought it strange, christians did not run with them to the same excess of riot." But divine grace so clarifies and enlightens the mind, so purifies and elevates the affections, that it is not only possible, but easy to abstain from unlawful pleasures. St. Austin before his conversion was astonished, that many in the vigour of youth, and in a fair world lived

chastely; and reflecting upon himself, was encouraged by this thought, that which such and such observe, why shall it be impossible to me to observe? and upon serious trial, by the prosperous influence of heaven, was a conqueror over all carnal temptations,* Nay after his holy change, the withholding his heart from vicious delights, was inexpressibly more sweet than his former enjoying of them. And are there not many visible examples of holy heavenly christians, to whom grosser sensual pleasures are unsavory and contemptible? You may as well tell the number of the stars, as of those who have practised religion in its strictness and purity, and by their enlightened conversations directed us in the way to heaven. And are their bodies taken from the vein of a rock, and not composed of flesh and blood as well as others? Are their passions, like Solomon's brazen sea, unmoveable by any winds of temptations? Are they entirely exempted from the impression of objects, and the lower affections? No, they are alive, and sensible of those things that ravish the affections of carnal men, but by the power of grace despise and overcome them. And this grace is offered in the gospel to all that sincerely desire it, so that it is a vain wretched pretence that religion binds to hard service.

To the other part of the objection, that sometimes religion exposes the professors of it to heavy sufferings, I answer; indeed the gospel is plain and peremptory in this, if we will "reign with Christ, we must suffer with him," when we are called forth to give a noble testimony to his truth. It is no extraordinary elevation, no point of perfection, but the duty of every christian to be always ready in the disposition and resolution of his mind, to sacrifice his life when the honour of Christ requires it. But it is no hard condition to suffer transient afflictions for the obtaining a happy immortality, to be conformable to the image of our suffering Redeemer, that we may be crowned with his glory. How many christians esteemed themselves honoured in the disgrace, and blessed in the injuries they suffered for Christ, and with an invincible patience, and astonishing joy, endured the most cruel persecutions, though yet the human nature in them was as tender, and sensible of pains as in others? But the natural aversion

and repugnance to suffering was overruled by the determination of the rational will, upon the account of their duty, and the reward attending it. They gave a most convincing sensible testimony how much more valuable heaven is, than this present world, willingly exposing themselves to all evil here, "and rejoicing in hope" of a glorious issue.

In short; the reward of obedience is a triumphal crown; and where there is no victory, there can be no triumph; and where no combat, no victory; and where no enemy, no combat. Therefore we are commanded to fight against our internal enemies, our corrupt affections, to kill the lusts of the flesh, and to encounter and overcome, by humility and meek submission, the cruelty of malicious enemies without us, in order to obtain the crown of life. And a believer that has heaven in taste and expectation, will easily renounce the most pleasant, and willingly endure the sharpest temptations, for the blessed reward of his obedience.

Lastly, Fervent and constant prayer is requisite for the grace of God, that we may fix our aims aright upon eternal happiness, and use those sure means that with divine advantage are proposed in the scriptures, that can make us wise to salvation. Such is the depravation of man since his fall, the mind is diverted by vain thoughts, and the heart prepossessed with sensual desires, that till "the spirit of his mind be renewed," and his original affections to the supreme good be revived and restored by divine grace, he is regardless of it, and only applies himself to what is pleasing to sense. There may be some transient glances, and volatile wishes of heaven in carnal men, but they are miserably weak, and ineffectual. Therefore a most necessary duty incumbent upon us, is by humble and fervent prayer to address ourselves to God for his spirit, to enlighten our minds, that we may believe the reality and greatness of the eternal reward; and to reform our wills, that we may feel its attractive force. Both these acts of the Spirit are requisite, that the love of God, as our chief felicity, may be the regent principle of our hearts and lives.

1. For this end the Holy Spirit convinces men thoroughly of the reality and greatness of an invisible and future happiness. In the light of the gospel, how many of eminent intellectual faculties are stupid as to their great interest, and spend themselves about trifles, and are equally tractable to eternal ruin, as the ox to the slaughter? He that is destitute of the illuminating grace of the Spirit, "is blind, and cannot see afar off." Now by the analogy between the corporeal and intellectual faculties, we may understand in some measure how the mind is illuminated by the Spirit of God. For as to the act of seeing, two things are requisite; 1. External light in the air, without which the colours, figures and beauties of objects are not visible to the sharpest eye, but lie obscured under impenetrable darkness. 2. Internal light in the eye, in which the visive power consists: if this be extinguished, the clearest light of heaven is of no use for the discovery of things. Thus the understanding is enabled to see spiritual things. 1. By the revelation of the object: in this respect "life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." Till that bright discovery was made of eternal blessedness, it was above the desires and hopes of sinful man. *Cœlum, homo nec optare poterat ex ignorantia, nec sperare ex propriæ miserïe conscientia.* 2. By the inward enlightening "from the Spirit of wisdom," that removes the ignorance, prejudice, and inadvertency of the mind, which as scales darkened its sight, and disposes it to perceive the verity and excellency of spiritual and future things, though not with comprehensive evidence, yet with that assurance, that no doubtfulness or suspence remains concerning them. It is observable that faith is expressed in scripture, by "prudence, wisdom, and knowledge," whereby a man knows the grounds and motives of his judgment and actions. And sin is called folly. For as when the understanding faculty, either from the indisposedness of the organs, as in idiots, or from the disorder of fancy, by inflammation of the humours, as in distracted persons, cannot weigh and compare, and therefore makes a perverse judgment of things; so the carnal mind, by not due measuring and pondering, judges falsely of spiritual things. If something no bigger than the hand were put before the eye, it would intercept the sight of the heavens; and he that not

considering the properties of things near and distant, should conclude that piece to be bigger than the heavens, were justly reputed a fool. And the folly of carnal men is more gross, who prefer things present to sense, before what is future and of everlasting consequence to the soul. But there are some actions, which if done by a natural, would be counted folly; yet being done by those who in the reputation of the world are wise, are esteemed prudent, but they are the most deplorable folly. Now as the restoring the Lœsum principium, the broken mind to its sound state, whereby it is able to consider, discern and conclude of things according to their nature, such is the action of God's Spirit upon the corrupt mind, clarifying and enlightening it, so that it receives full conviction by the clearest marks of divine authority shining in the gospel, of the truth of all the great and precious promises therein contained, and causing it, by a steady application of the thoughts, to see the vast difference between what is temporal, and eternal; how despicably light all the vanities of this world are found, when put in the balance against the infinite inestimable happiness of the next. In short, the renewed mind knows spiritual things according to their nature and qualities, believes, esteems, and determines that they are of eternal moment, and absolutely necessary for the happiness of man. And as when the natural faculty of seeing is perished, it is irreparable by human skill, and without a miracle can never be restored; so the intellectual faculty, when darkened by sinful lusts, without the renewing power of the Spirit, "can never know spiritual things as they ought to be known." Therefore as the blind men in the gospel, who despaired of help from the physicians, hearing of the miraculous power of Christ, importunately begged his healing mercy; so let us pray to the Light and Saviour of the world, but in a more noble and higher sense, "Lord, that we may receive our sight." Let us with the most zealous affections call upon "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that he would give unto us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

(2.) The efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit is requisite to change the will, that with a free and full consent it may desire and prosecute the spiritual eternal good. Without this, the conviction of the mind is not powerful enough to convert the soul from the love of the world, to choose heaven. There may be an enlightened conscience without a renewed heart. Though the judgment assents that God is the supreme good, "yet till the heart be circumcised," the sensuality of the affections taken away, divine love that directs the life to God as our blessed end, can never possess it. Suppose that men had a sensible and strong assurance of the eternal state hereafter, if all those who lived godly in a visible manner ascended with Elias to heaven, and if all who continued in their sins visibly descended into hell, as Corah and his company were swallowed up alive by the earth before the Israelites; if men could hear the joyful exultations of the saints above, their high praises of God, and hear the desperate cries and deep complaints of the damned: if one according to the desire of the rich man, were sent from hell, and with his fiery tongue relate what he had seen and suffered, and exhibit a sensible demonstration in himself of those torments, yet this alone were not sufficient to draw off their hearts from the deceitful happiness of this world, and fasten them on the perfect and eternal happiness in the text. Indeed they could not then indulge their lusts so securely, but they "would be strangers to the life of God," such an inveterate alienation of heart is in men from real holiness. Till the sanctifying Spirit by a directive persuasive light, that represents the truth and goodness of spiritual things, transforms the soul, and makes it spiritual in its valuations and affections, it is inwardly averse from grace and glory. "The Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

ON HELL

Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.
MARK 9:48

Chapter I: The Opening of the Text.

The punishment of unreformed sinners shall be extreme and eternal. The torments in hell exceed the heaviest judgments inflicted here. They are represented in scripture, so as to instruct and terrify sinners. The soul shall be the chief mourner in hell. The apprehension shall be enlarged to all afflicting objects. The thoughts shall be fixed upon what is tormenting. All the tormenting passions will be let loose upon the guilty soul. Shame, sorrow, rage, despair, at once seize on the damned

THE words are the repetition of a powerful motive, by our blessed Saviour, to deter men from indulging temptations to sin, how grateful or useful soever to them: "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; if thy eye offend thee, pluck it out." All the occasions whereby sin insinuates itself, and inflames our inclinations, whether it bribes us with profit, or allures by pleasure, must be immediately cut off, and for ever separated from us. This counsel seems very severe to the natural man, who freely converses with temptations: to do violence to himself, and tear his beloved lusts from his bosom, the carnal nature will not content to. Our Saviour therefore urges such arguments as may move the understanding and affections, may strike sense and conscience: "For it is better to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, where the fire never shall be quenched." Hope and fear are the most active passions: the hope of heaven is motive enough to induce a true believer to despise and reject all the advantages and pleasures of sin that are but for a season: and the fear of an everlasting hell, is strong enough to control the vicious appetites.* Reason determines, that

when a gangrene that is deadly and spreading, has seized upon a member, presently to cut off an affected arm or leg, to save the rest: how much more reasonable and necessary is it to part with the most charming and favourite sin, to preserve the soul from eternal death? It is observable, our Saviour inculcates three times, that men may take notice of it with terror, "Where the worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched:" a worm gnawing upon the bowels, that are of the most tender and quick sense, fire that causes the most vehement pain, are fearful representations to typify the torments of the damned: and that the worm is undying, and the fire unquenchable, infinitely aggravates their punishment.

The proposition is this: that the punishment of those who will retain their pleasant or profitable sins, shall be extreme and eternal. In the handling of this point, I will discourse of the extremity of the punishment;—And the eternity of it.

I. The extremity of the punishment.

Before the particular description of the pains of the damned, I shall observe in general, that the full representation of hell is beyond all human expression; nay our most fearful thoughts cannot equal the horror of it. "Who knows the power of thine anger?" Psal. 90:11. What are the prepared plagues, by infinite justice and Almighty wrath, for obstinate sinners? It is impossible for the most guilty and trembling conscience to enlarge its sad apprehensions according to the degrees of that misery. "The Lord will show forth his wrath, and make his power known in the vessels fitted for destruction." None can tell what God can do, and what man can suffer, when made capable to endure such torments for ever, as now would presently consume him. As the glory of heaven cannot be fully understood till enjoyed, so the torments of hell cannot be comprehended till felt. But we may have some discovery of those unknown terrors, by the following considerations.

The most heavy judgments of God upon sinners here, are light and tolerable in comparison of the punishment of sinners in the next state. For,

1. Temporal evils of all kinds and degrees, as pestilence, famine, war, are designed for the bringing of men to a sight and sense of their sins, and are common to good and bad here. And if his anger be so terrible when he chastises as a compassionate father, what is his fury when he punishes as a severe judge? If the correcting remedies ordered by his wisdom and love for the conversion of sinners be so sharp, what is the deadly revenge of his irreconcilable hatred?

2. The miseries of the present state are allayed with some enjoyments. None are so universally afflicted, so desolate, but something remains to sweeten the sense of their sufferings. Judgments are tempered with mercies. No man is tortured with all diseases, nor forsaken of all friends, nor utterly without comfort. And when the affliction is irremediable, yet if our grief produces sympathy in others, it is some ease to the troubled mind, and by that assistance the burden is made lighter. But in hell, the damned are surrounded with terrors, encompassed with flames, without any thing to refresh their sorrows, not a drop of water to lake of fire. All that was esteemed felicity here, is totally withdrawn. Death puts a period to their lives and pleasures of sin for ever. For it is most just, that those objects which were abused by their lusts, and alienated their hearts from their duty and felicity, should be taken away. And which is extreme misery, in their most pitiful state, that they are absolutely unpitied. Pity is the cheap and universal lenitive, not denied to the most guilty in their sufferings here: for the law of nature instructs us to pity the man, when the malefactor suffers. But even this is not afforded to the damned. All their agonies and cries cannot incline the compassion of God, and the blessed spirits in heaven towards them: for they are not compassionable objects, their misery being the just effect of their perverse obstinate choice. And in hell all human tender affections are extinguished for ever. Now it is the perfection of misery, the excess of desolation, to be deprived of

all good things pleasing to our desires, and to suffer all evils from which we have the deepest aversion and abhorrence. As in heaven all good is eminently comprised, and nothing but good; so in hell all evil is in excessive degrees, and nothing but evil.

Temporal evils are inflicted by the meditation of second causes that are of a limited power to hurt: but in the next world he more immediately torments the damned by his absolute power. The apostle tells us, that the wicked "are punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." What is the lashing with a few rushes, to a blow given by the hand of a giant that strikes dead at once? This comparison is below the truth.

More particularly the state of misery is set forth in scripture by such representations as may powerfully instruct and terrify even the most carnal men.* Nothing is more intolerably painful, than suffering the violence of fire enraged with brimstone: and hell is described by a lake of fire and brimstone, wherein the wicked are tormented. Whether the fire be material or metaphorical, the reality and intensesness of the torments is signified by it. But the ordinary fire, though mingled with the most torturing ingredients, is not an adequate representation of it. For that is prepared by men, but the fire of hell is prepared by the wrath of God for the devil and his angels. The divine power is illustriously manifested in that terrible preparation: so that, as some of the fathers express it, if one of the damned might pass from those flames into the fiercest fires here, it were to exchange a torment for a refreshment. The scripture speaks of the vehement heat and fiery thirst, and outer darkness in which the damned suffer, to satisfy the rights of justice in the torments of those senses, for the pleasures of which men wilfully broke the laws of God.

But the soul being the chief sinner, shall be the chief mourner in those regions of sorrow. An image of this we have in the agonies of spirit, which sometimes the saints themselves are in here, and which

the most stubborn sinners can neither resist nor endure. Job was afflicted in that manner that he complains, "The arrows of the Almighty are with me, the poison whereof drinks up my spirit, the terrors of God set themselves in array against me." If a spark of his displeasure falls on the guilty conscience, it tears and blows up all, as a fire-ball cast into a magazine. Solomon, who understood the frame of human nature, tells us, "The spirit of a man can bear his infirmity;" that is, the mind fortified by principles of moral counsel and constancy, can endure the assault of external evils: but "a wounded spirit who can bear?" This is most insupportable when the sting and remorse of the mind is from the sense of guilt: for then God appears an enemy, righteous and severe; and who can encounter with offended Omnipotence? Such is the sharpness of his sword, and the weight of his hand, that every stroke is deadly inward. Satan, the cruel enemy of souls, exasperates the wounds. He discovers and charges sin upon the conscience with all its killing aggravations, and conceals the divine mercy, the only lenitive and balm to the wounded spirit. What visions of horror, what spectacles of fear, what scenes of sorrow are presented to the distracted mind by the prince of darkness? And, which heightens the misery, man is a worse enemy to himself than satan: he falls upon his own sword, and destroys himself. The guilty conscience turns "the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood:" the precious promises of the gospel, that assure favour and pardon to returning and relenting sinners, are turned into arguments of despair, by reflecting upon the abuse and provocation of mercy, that the advocate in God's bosom, is become the accuser. Whatever the soul wounded sinner sees or hears, afflicts him; whatever he thinks, torments him. All the diversions in the world, business, pleasures, merry conversation, comedies, are as ineffectual to give freedom from those stings and furies in the breast, as the sprinkling of holy water is to expel a raging devil from a possessed person. Those who in their pride and jollity, have despised serious religion, either as a fond transport and ecstasy towards God, or a dull melancholy and dejection about the soul, or an idle scrupulosity about indifferent things, yet when God has set their sins with all their killing circumstances in order before their eyes, how changed, how

confounded are they at that apparition? How restless, with the dreadful expectation of the doom that attends them! Belshazzar in the midst of his cups, and herd of concubines, by a few words written on the wall, containing his process and judgment, was so terrified by his guilty jealous conscience, that his joints were loosed, nature sunk under the apprehension. Now all these troubles of mind are but the beginnings of sorrows, but the smoke of the infernal furnace, but earnest of that terrible sum which divine justice will severely exact of the wicked in hell.

Indeed these examples are rare, and not regarded by the most, and by some looked on as the effects of distraction: but to convince the bold and careless sinners, who never felt the stings of an awakened conscience, what extreme terrors seize upon the wicked in the other world, consider,

(1.) The apprehension shall be more clear and enlarged than in the present state. Now the soul is oppressed with a weight of clay, and in drowsiness and obscurity. The great things of eternity are of little force to convince the conscience, or persuade the affections. But then the soul shall work with the quickest activity. The mind shall by an irresistible light take a full view of all afflicting objects. The most stupid and unconcerned sinners shall then see and feel their ruined state, what a glorious felicity they have lost, what a misery they are plunged into, without any possibility of lessening it by false conceits, and receiving any relief by the error of imagination.

(2.) The mournful thoughts shall be always fixed upon what is tormenting. The soul in conjunction with the body, cannot always apply itself to one sort of objects. For the ministry of the sensible faculties is requisite to its operations. And the body must be supported by eating and drinking and rest, which interrupts troublesome thoughts. Besides, the variety of objects and accidents here avert the mind sometimes from what is afflicting. But the separate soul is in no dependance on the body, and after their reunion, there shall be no necessity of food or sleep, or any other

animal actions to support it, but it shall be restored to a new capacity for new torments, and preserved in that miserable state by the power of God. There will be nothing then to divert the lost soul from sad reflections upon its misery. There are no lucid intervals in hell.

(3.) All the tormenting passions will then be let loose at once upon the guilty creature. And if there be no single passion so weak, but heightened, will break the spirit, and render life so miserable, that a man will take sanctuary in the grave to escape; how miserable is the condition, when the most fierce and united passions war against the soul? This is signified by the "never-dying worm" that gnaws on the tenderest parts, and of quickest sense. Shame, sorrow, despair, fury, hatred and revenge, are some of that brood of vipers that torment the damned.

Shame is a passion of which human nature is very sensible, and this in the highest degree of confusion shall seize on the wicked. Dan. 12:2. For all the just causes of shame shall then meet. The inward source of it is the consciousness of guilt, of turpitude and folly in the actions; and all these are the inseparable adjuncts of sin.* The guilty soul by a piercing reflection upon its crimes, has a secret shame of its degeneracy and unworthiness. The passion is increased, when a discovery is made of vile practices that defile and debase a man, expose to contempt and infamy, before persons of high quality and eminent virtue, whom we admire and reverence, and whose esteem we value. To be surprised in an unworthy action by such a person, disorders the blood, and transfuses a colour into the face, to cover it with a veil of blushing. And the more numerous the spectators are, the more the disgrace is aggravated. And if derision be joined with the ignominy, it causes extreme displeasure. O the universal confusion, the overpowering amazement that will seize on sinners in the great day of discovery, when all the works of darkness, all their base sensualities shall be revealed before God, angels and saints! When all the covers of shame shall be taken off, the excuses and denials, to extenuate or conceal their sins, shall vanish, and their breasts be transparent to the eyes of all! How will they be ashamed of

their foul and permanent deformity in the light of that glorious presence? How will they be astonished to appear in ail their pollutions before that bright and immense theatre? How will they be confounded to stand in all their guilt before that sublime and severe tribunal? How will they endure the upbraidings for all the sins which they have so wickedly committed, and the derision for the punishment they so deservedly suffer? The holy Judge will "laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear comes. The righteous also shall see, and shall laugh at them;" lo these are the men that made not God their portion, but perishing vanities, that preferred sweet folly before severe wisdom. The devils will reproach them for that scornful advantage they had over them, that as children are seduced for things of lustre to part with real treasures, so they were easily persuaded for the trifles of time to exchange eternal happiness. "Whither will they cause their shame to go?" Jer. 14:12. Those black sinners that here never change colour for their filthiness, that hardened by custom in sin, are impenetrable to shame, as the brute beasts that are absolutely destitute of reason; nay, that have not only overcome all tenderness, but "glory in their shame," shall glow at the manifestation of their sordid lusts, their vile servilities, and be covered with confusion, and the sense of it shall be revived in their minds for ever.

To open shame is joined the greatest inward sorrow. This passion, when violent, penetrates the soul in all its faculties, and fastens it to the afflicting object. When it dwells in the bosom, it gives an easy entrance to whatever cherishes and increases it, and rejects what might assuage and lessen the sense of the evil. The most pleasant things do not excite desire or joy, but exasperate grief. Like those animals that convert the best nourishment into their own poison; so deep sorrow receives mournful impressions from all things, and turns the sweetest comforts of life into wormwood and gall. The causes of sorrow are either the loss of some valued good, or the sense of some present evil. And the sorrow is more violent, as the cause is great in itself, and in the apprehension and tenderness of the sufferers. Now both these causes, with all the heavy circumstances

that can multiply and aggravate sorrow, meet in hell the centre of misery.

The loss is inconceivably great. If Cain, when banished from the society of the saints, where God was publicly worshipped, and by spiritual revelations and visible apparitions, graciously made himself known, cried out in anguish of soul, "my punishment is greater than I can bear; from thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive upon the earth:" how intolerable will the final separation from his glorious and joyful presence be? In the clear and transforming vision of his glory, and the intimate and indissoluble union with him by love, consist the perfection and satisfaction of the immortal soul. The felicity resulting from it, is as entire and eternal, as God is great and true, who has so often promised it in scripture. Now the damned are for ever excluded from the reviving presence of God. It is often seen how tenderly and impatiently the human spirit resents the loss of a dear relation. Jacob for the supposed death of Joseph, was so overcome with grief, that when all his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him, he refused to be comforted, and said, "I will go down mourning to the grave." Indeed this overwhelming sorrow is both a sin and a punishment.* It is ordained by the righteous and unchangeable decree of God, that every inordinate affection in man should be his own tormentor. But if the loss of a poor frail creature for a short time be so afflicting, how insupportable will the sorrow be for the loss of the blessed God for ever? Who can fully conceive the extent and degrees of that evil? For an evil rises in proportion to the good of which it deprives us: it must therefore follow, that celestial blessedness being an infinite eternal good, the exclusion from it is proportionably evil. And as the felicity of the saints results from the fruition of God in heaven, and from comparison with the contrary state: so the misery of the damned arises both from the thoughts of lost happiness, and from the lasting pain that torments them.

It may be replied, if this be the utmost evil that is consequent to sin, the threatening of it is likely to deter but few from the pleasing their corrupt appetites: for carnal men have such gross and vitiated

affections that are careless of spiritual happiness. "They cannot taste and see how good the Lord is."

To this a clear answer may be given: in the next state, where the wicked shall be for ever without those carnal objects that here deceive and delight them, when deprived of all things that please their voluptuous senses, their apprehensions will be changed; they shall understand what a happiness it is to enjoy God, and what a misery to be expelled from the celestial paradise. Our Saviour tells the Jews, "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." Luke 15:28. How will they pine with envy at the sight of that triumphant felicity, of which they shall never be partakers? To see that blessed company entering into the sacred mansions of light, will make the loss of heaven infinitely more discernible and terrible to the wicked, who shall be cast into "outer darkness," and for ever be deprived of communion with God and his saints. "Depart from me," will be as dreadful a part of the judgment, as "eternal fire."

With the loss of the most excellent good, the suffering of the most afflicting painful evil is joined. The sentence is, "depart ye cursed into everlasting fire." And if an imaginary sorrow conceived in the mind without a real external cause, as in melancholy persons, when gross vapours darken and corrupt the brightness and purity of the spirits that are requisite for its cheerful operations, is often so oppressing, that nature sinks under it; how insupportable will the sorrow of condemned sinners be, under the impression and sense of God's almighty and avenging hand, when it shall fully appear how pure and holy he is in his anger for sin, how just and dreadful in punishing sinners? It may be, the indulgent sinner may lessen his fear of hell, by fancying the number of sufferers will assuage the sense of their misery. But this is a foolish mistake; for the number of sufferers shall be so far from affording any relief, that the misery is aggravated by the company and communication of the miserable. Every one is surrounded with sorrows, and by the sights of woe about

him, feels the universal grief. The weeping and wailing, the cries and dolorous expressions of all the damned, increase the torment and vexation of every one. As when the wind conspires with the flame, it is more fierce and spreading.

The concomitant of sorrow will be fury and rage against themselves, as the true causes of their misery. For God will make such a discovery of his righteous judgment, that not only the saints shall glorify his justice in the condemnation of the wicked, but they shall be so convinced of it, as not to be able to charge their Judge with any defect of mercy, or excess of rigour in his proceedings against them. As the man in the parable of the marriage feast, when taxed for his presumptuous intrusion without a wedding-garment, "How camest thou in hither?" was speechless: so they will find no plea for their justification and defence, but must receive the eternal doom with silence and confusion. Then conscience shall revive the bitter remembrance of all the methods of divine mercy for their salvation, that were ineffectual by their contempt and obstinacy. All the compassionate calls by his word, with the holy motions of the Spirit, were like the sowing of seed in the stony ground, that took no root, and never came to perfection. All his terrible threatenings were but as thunder to the deaf, or lightning to the blind, that little affects them: the bounty of his providence designed "to lead them to repentance," had the same effect as the showers of heaven upon briars and thorns, that make them grow the faster. And that a mercy so ready to pardon, did not produce in them a correspondent affection of grateful obedient love; but by the most unworthy provocations they plucked down the vengeance due to obstinate rebels, will so enrage the damned against themselves, that they will be less miserable by the misery they suffer, than by the conviction of their torn minds, that they were the sole causes of it. "What repentings will be kindled within them," for the stupid neglect of "the great salvation" so dearly purchased, and earnestly offered to them. What a fiery addition to their torment, that when God was so willing to save them, they were so wilful to be damned? They will never forgive themselves, that for the short and mean pleasures of sense,

which if enjoyed a thousand years, cannot recompense the loss of heaven, nor requite the pains of hell for an hour, they must be deprived of the one, and suffer the other for ever.

The sorrow and rage will be increased by despair: for when the wretched sinner sees the evil is peremptory, and no outlet of hope, he abandons himself to the violence of sorrow, and by cruel thoughts wounds the heart more, than the fiercest furies in hell can. This misery that flows from despair, shall be more fully opened under the distinct consideration of the eternity of hell. Briefly, as the blessed are in heaven, and heaven is in them, by those holy and joyful affections that are always exercised in the divine presence; so the damned are in hell, and hell is in them by those fierce and miserable passions that continually prey upon them.

Chapter II: The Eternity of Misery Makes it Most Intolerable.

The justice of God cleared in the eternal punishment of sinners for temporary sins. The wisdom of God requires that the punishment threatened should be powerful to preserve the commands of the law inviolable. There is an inseparable connexion between the choice and actions of man here, and their condition for ever. The damned are unqualified for any favour. The immense guilt of sin requires a proportion in the punishment.

II. THE eternity of the punishment.

The eternity of their misery makes it above all other considerations intolerable. Our Saviour repeats it thrice in the space of a few verses, to terrify those who spare some favourite corruption. "that in hell their worm dies not, and the fire is never quenched." God will never reverse his sentence, and they shall never change their state. How

willingly would carnal men rase the word eternal out of the scriptures; but to their grief they find it joined with the felicity of heaven, and the torments of hell. The second death has all the terrible qualities of the first, but not the ease and end it brings to misery. All the tears of those forlorn wretches shall never quench one spark of the fire. Where are the delicious fare, the music, the purple, and all the carnal delights of the rich man? they are all changed into a contrary state of misery; and that state is fixed for ever. From his vanishing paradise he descended into an everlasting hell. In this the vengeance of God is infinitely more heavy than the most terrible execution from men. Human justice and power can inflict but one death (that will be soon dispatched) upon a malefactor worthy to suffer a hundred deaths; if he be condemned to the fire, they cannot make him live and die together, to burn and not be consumed. But God will so far support the damned in their torments, that they shall always have strength to feel, though no strength patiently to endure them. Those extreme torments which would extinguish the present life in a moment, shall be suffered for ever. This consideration infinitely aggravates the misery: for the lost soul, racked with the fearful contemplation of what it must suffer for ever, feels, as it were at once, all the evils that shall torment it in its whole duration. The perpetuity of the misery is always felt by prevision. This is as the cruel breaking of the bones upon the wheel, when the soul is tormented by the foresight of misery, that without allays shall continue in the circulation of eternal ages. To make this more sensible, let us consider, that pain makes the mind observant of the passing of the hours. In pleasures, time with a quick and silent motion, insensibly slides away; but in troubles the hours are tedious; in violent pains we reckon the minutes as long. It is observable, how passionately the afflicted psalmist complains, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? Will he be favourable no more? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Psal. 77:7. In what various pathetic forms does he express the same affection? Though he had assurance that the gracious God would not be always severe, yet his anguish forced from him complaints, as if the moment of his trouble were an

eternity. But what strains of sorrow are among the damned, who besides the present sense of their misery, have always in their thoughts the vast eternity wherein they must suffer it?

When three terrible evils were propounded to David's choice, pining famine for three years, or bloody war for three months, or devouring pestilence for three days; he chose the shortest, though in itself the heaviest evil.

Many sad days must pass under the other judgments, where death by anticipation in such variety of shapes would be presented to the mind, that the lingering expectation of it would afflict more than the sudden stroke; whereas the fury of the pestilence would be soon over. But the damned have not this relief, "but shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." How earnestly "do they seek for death," but cannot find it? What a favour would they esteem it to be annihilated? For certainly, if when the evils in the present state are so multiplied, that no comfort is left, or so violent that the afflicted person cannot enjoy them, and refresh his sorrowful spirit, death is chosen rather than life; it cannot be imagined that in the future state, where the misery is extreme, and nothing remains to allay it, that the damned should be in love with the unhappy good of simple being, and not choose an absolute extinction if it might be.

If any one should be so foolish to think that custom will render that state more tolerable, he will find a terrible confutation of his vain fancy. Indeed, continuance under light evils may arm the mind with patience to bear them; but in great extremities it makes the evil more ponderous and intolerable. He that is tortured with the stone, or on the rack, the longer the torture continues, the less able he is to sustain it. In short, as the joy of heaven is infinitely more ravishing, that the blessed are without fear of losing it; so the misery of hell is proportionably tormenting, that the damned are absolutely destitute of hopes of release. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," who lives for ever, and will punish for ever incorrigible sinners?

There are some who strongly fancy, it is not consistent with divine justice to inflict an eternal punishment for temporary sins. Therefore they soften the sentence, by interpreting the words of Christ, "these shall go into everlasting punishment," of the Inn annihilation of impenitent sinners; that is, they shall be for ever deprived of heaven, but not suffer torments for ever.

To this there is a clear answer: 1. The direct "opposition between everlasting punishment, and everlasting life, in the words of Christ, is a convincing argument they are to be understood in the same extent for an absolute eternity. And the words in the revelation are so express, that they admit no mollifying interpretation, "they are tormented day and night, for ever and ever:" which necessarily infer, the tormented have life and sense for ever. Now that in scripture it is evident, that God hath decreed and denounced eternal punishment to obstinate sinners, is sufficient to satisfy all inquiries about the justice of it: for divine justice is the correspondence of God's will and actions with the perfections of his holy nature. From hence we may infer with invincible evidence, that whatever he pronounces in judgment, and consequently inflicts, is most righteous. The truth is, we may as easily conceive there is no God, as that God is unjust; because absolute rectitude is an inseparable perfection of his nature. Thus the apostle with abhorrence rejects the question, "is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" Rom. 3:5, 6. That were to deny him to be God, who is the Creator, and King, and Judge of the world, It is a full reply to all die pitiful shifts that are made use of to elude the plain meaning of the eternal judgment that will pass upon the wicked: "shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker?" Job 4:17. The reprobates have now some bold advocates, that plead those things for favour to them, which they will not dare to plead for themselves at the last day. The holy judge will then cut off all their excuses, and reduce them to a defenceless silence, before he cuts them off. "God will be justified in his sentence, and overcome when he judgeth."

The righteousness of the proceedings at the last day, in determining the wicked to a state of everlasting torments, has been considered in the Discourse on Judgment, and will farther appear by the following considerations.

1. The wisdom of God requires, that the punishment threatened in his law, as it must be so firmly decreed, that all obstinate rebels shall of necessity undergo it, so it must incomparably exceed all temporal evils, to which men may be exposed for their obedience to the divine commands, otherwise the threatening would not be an effectual restraint from sin: for the propinquity of an evil makes a strong impression on the mind, and a present fear makes a person solicitous to avoid the incursion of what is ready to seize on him, without forecasting to prevent an evil looked on at a distance. Therefore that the sanction of the divine law may preserve the precepts inviolable, that there may be a continual reverence of it, and a fixed resolution in the heart not to transgress, the penalty threatened must be in its own nature so terrible, that the fear of it may conquer the apprehension of all present evils that can be inflicted to constrain us to sin. Therefore our Saviour warns his disciples, "fear not them that can kill the body" (make that part die that is mortal) "but fear him that after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." Now if the threatening of an everlasting hell, through infidelity and inconsideration, be not effectual in the minds of men to restrain them from sin; if temporary torments in the next state were only threatened, which are infinitely more easy and tolerable, carnal sinners would follow the swinge of their corrupt appetites, and commit iniquity with greediness: this would seem to reflect upon the wisdom of the lawgiver, as if he were defective in not binding his subjects firmly to their duty, and the ends of government would not be obtained.

2. God, as the sovereign ruler of the world, has established an inseparable connexion between the choice and actions of men here, and their future condition for ever. The promised reward of obedience is so excellent and eternal, that all the allurements of the

world vanish in comparison with it: and there is such an infallible assurance of this reward in the word of God, that all, and only those who sincerely obey his commands, shall enjoy it in the future state; that a serious believer who ponders things, cannot be diverted from his duty by present temptations. Besides, by a chain of consequences sinful pleasures are linked with eternal punishment threatened in the divine law; and he that will enjoy forbidden pleasures, binds himself to suffer all the pains annexed to them. Now when God has, from his excellent goodness and undeserved mercy, assured men of the glory and joys of heaven that are unspeakable and eternal, upon the gracious terms of the gospel; and, upon their despising it, threatened eternal misery, if men obstinately neglect so great salvation; how reasonable is it they should inherit their own choice? Those who do not seek the kingdom of heaven, cannot escape hell, but by eternal consequence it will be their portion. There is no middle state in the next world, no tolerable mediocrity, but two contrary states; yet alike in this, that the happiness and misery are equally eternal: and it is just, that all who neglect eternal life, should suffer eternal death; far it is the natural and necessary consequence of their option: therefore sinners are charged with extreme madness, "to wrong their own souls, and to love death." Prov. 8:26.

3. It will appear how unqualified the damned are for the least favour, if we consider their continual hatred and blasphemies of God. The seeds of this are in wicked obstinate sinners here, who are styled "haters of God;" but in the damned this enmity is direct and explicit, the fever is heightened into a frenzy, the blessed God is the object of their curses and eternal aversation. Our Saviour tells us, that in hell there "is weeping and gnashing of teeth;" extreme sorrow, and extreme fury. Despair and rage are the proper passions of lost souls. For when the guilty sufferers are so weak, that they cannot by patience endure their torments, nor by strength resist the power that inflicts them, and are wicked and stubborn, they are irritated by their misery, and foam out blasphemies against the righteous judge. If their rage could extend to him, and their power were equal to their desires, they would dethrone the Most High. Hatred takes pleasure

in revenge, either real or imaginary: and although God is infinitely above the transports of their fury, and all their rancorous imprecations are reflexively pernicious to themselves, like arrows shot against the sun, that fell down upon their heads that shot them; yet they are always venting their malice against the just power that torments them. It is said of the worshippers of the beast, "that they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains." Rev. 16:10, 11. The torment and blasphemies of those impenitent idolaters, are a true representation of the state of the damned. From hence it appears they are the proper objects of revenging justice. How can we reasonably conceive, that God, in favour to the reprobates, should cross the established order of creation? For two ranks of beings were made, the material, of perishing principles, the spiritual, of an immortal duration: and will God withdraw his conservative power of the guilty soul in its immortality, and to put an end to its deserved misery, and self-tormenting reflections, annihilate it? If a criminal were justly condemned to a severe punishment, and should contumeliously and fiercely reproach the prince, by whose authority he was condemned, could it be expected there should be a mitigation of the sentence? And is it a thought consistent with the reasonable mind, that the righteous judge of the world will reverse or mitigate the sentence against the damned, who blaspheme his majesty and justice? And if they were as omnipotent to effect, as they are malicious to desire, would destroy his being. It is true, the divine threatening does not bind God to a rigorous execution of it upon sinners: he has declared, if "sinners will turn from their evil ways, he will repent of the evil he purposed to do unto them." Jer. 26:3. But when threatenings are part of the laws whereby men are governed, it is congruous to the wisdom and justice of the lawgiver to execute them in their full force upon the obstinate offenders; withal considering the inflicting of them is so far from working any ingenuous change in those rebels, that thereby they become more fierce and obdurate.

Lastly, The immense guilt that adheres to sin, requires a proportion in the punishment. It is a rule in all courts of judicature, that the

degrees of an offence arise according to the degrees of dignity of the person offended. Now the majesty of God is truly infinite, against whom sin is committed; and consequently the guilt of sin exceeds our boundless thoughts. This is the reason of the sentence, "curse is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." The curse threatened, includes the first and the second death. What a dishonour is it to the "God of glory," that proud dust should fly in his face, and control his authority? What a provocation, that the reasonable creature, that is naturally and necessarily a subject, should despise the divine law and lawgiver? Though carnal minds alleviate the guilt of sin, yet weighed "in the scales of the sanctuary," it is found so heavy, that no punishment inflicted on sinners exceeds, either in the degrees or duration, the desert of sin.

God's justice is not satisfied in depriving them of heaven, but inflicts the most heavy punishment upon sense and conscience in the damned: for as the soul and body in their state of union in this life were both guilty, the one as the guide, the other as the instrument of sin; so it is equal, when reunited, they should feel the penal effects of it. Sinners shall then be tormented wherein they were most delighted; they shall be invested with those objects that will cause the most dolorous perceptions in their sensitive faculties. The "lake of fire and brimstone, the blackness of darkness for ever," are words of a terrible signification. But no words can fully express the terrible ingredients of their misery: the punishment will be in proportion to the glory of God's majesty that is provoked, and the extent of his power. And as the soul was the principal, and the body but an accessory in the works of sin; so its capacious faculties shall be far more tormented than the limited faculties of the outward senses. The fiery attributes of God shall be transmitted through the glass of conscience, and centred upon damned spirits: the fire without is not so tormenting as the fire within them. How will the tormenting passions be inflamed? What rancour, reluctance, and rage against the just power that sentenced them to hell? What impatience and indignation against themselves for their wilful sins, the just cause of

it? How will they curse their creation, and wish their utter extinction, as the final remedy of their misery? But all their ardent wishes are in vain; for the guilt of sin will never be expiated, nor God so far reconciled as to annihilate them. As long as there is justice in heaven, or fire in hell; as long as God and eternity shall continue, they must suffer those torments, which the strength and patience of an angel cannot bear one hour.

Chapter III: Practical Inferences.

The tender mercies of God to men, in revealing the prepared plagues for sinners, to prevent their misery. Carnal men are more capable of conceiving the torments of hell, than the joys of heaven. They are more apt to be moved by them. The desperate folly of sinners, to choose the pleasures of sin, notwithstanding the dreadful and everlasting torments that follow sin. The steadfast belief and serious consideration of eternal death, the wages of sin, is a prevailing motive to abhor and forsake it. Our dear obligations to our Saviour, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

I SHALL now draw some practical inferences, and conclude this subject.

1. From the revelation in scripture of the dreadful punishment prepared for unreformed sinners in the next state, we may understand the tender mercies of God to men; how willing he is they should be saved, who are so wilful to be damned. Hell is represented to them by the most violent figures, to terrify their imaginations, and strongly affect their minds, that "they may flee from the wrath to come." God counsels, commands, entreats, urges sinners to be wise, to foresee and prevent the evil that every hour is approaching to them; and with compassion and indignation laments their misery, and reproaches their folly in bringing it upon themselves. The divine

mercy is as eminently and apparently declared to men in the present corrupt state, in threatening hell to excite their fear, as in promising heaven to allure their hopes. For if carnal indulgent sinners are not roused by a quick apprehension of hell, they will securely enjoy their pernicious pleasures, and despise the blessed reward, and heaven would be "as empty of human souls as it is full of glory."

(1.) Because they are more capable to conceive of the torments of hell, than the joys of heaven. Storms and darkness are more easily drawn by a pencil, than a clear calm day. Fire mixed with brimstone, is very painful to sense; and the fancy strongly represents its vehemence in tormenting the body: and what misery the incessant remorse of the guilty conscience will cause in the damned hereafter, is in part understood by the secret accusations and twinges of conscience in self-condemning sinners here. But they are absolutely strangers to the joys of the Holy Ghost, to the delights of the soul in communion with God, and to peace of conscience in his favour. They cannot without experience, "know how good the Lord is," no more than see a taste. To discourse to them of spiritual pleasures that flow from the divine presence, of the happiness of the saints "that are before the throne of God, and serve him in his temple," is to speak with the tongue of an angel* unintelligible things. Their minds and language are confined to sensible things. The "natural man receives not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." There may be in the carnal mind a conception of heaven, as a sanctuary where in they may be secured from the wrath of God, and some smothering confused thoughts of its felicity, as the idea of light and colours in one blind from his birth; but only "the pure in heart can see God," as in the perfect vision of glory hereafter, so in the imperfect reflection of it here.

(2.) Carnal men are more disposed to be wrought upon, by representing the torments of hell, than the joys of heaven. For we cannot love but what is known, nor enjoy but what is loved. And as the purification of the heart from vicious affections, is an excellent

means to clear the mind; so the illustration of the mind is very influential to warm the heart. The true conception of heaven in its amiable excellencies, would powerfully and sweetly ravish the affections; and of this, prepared souls are only capable. But those who are sensual, are without relish of spiritual happiness, and are allured or terrified only with what is pleasant or painful to flesh.

It is recorded as the unparalleled folly of Nero, † that when he was ready to cut his own throat, to avoid the fury of the multitude, he broke forth into great expressions of sorrow, what an excellent artist he died! It was not the loss of the Roman empire that so much troubled him, as that so much skill in music died with him. He valued himself more as a fidler, than an emperor. Thus carnal men with a folly infinitely more prodigious, when death is near, are not so much affected with the loss of the crown of glory, and the kingdom of heaven, as with their present leaving this world and its vanities. This makes death intolerably bitter. Till the love of God purifies the heart, the fruition of his presence is not esteemed nor desired. A seraphim sent from the presence of God with a flaming coal from the altar, touched the lips of the holy prophet, and his heart was presently melted into a compliance with the divine will. But if a rebel angel, that burns with another fire than of divine love, were dispatched from hell with a coal from that altar, where so many victims are offered to divine justice as there are damned soul, and touched obdurate sinners, that they might have a lively sense what it is to burn for ever, it were the most congruous and effectual means to reclaim them: like stubborn metals, they are only made pliant by the fire. From what has been said, we may observe the heavenly harmony between mercy and justice in God; he is the Father of mercy, it is his natural offspring, his primary inclination to the creature; and the threatening of vengeance against sinners, is a gracious design to constrain than with humility and repenting affections to seek his favour. Briefly, his severity and flaming displeasure never destroys sinners, but to revenge the abuse of his neglected benignity and clemency.

2. This shows the woful depravation of the minds and wills of men, that choose sin, when thinly painted over with pleasure, notwithstanding the most dreadful and durable, torments, the certain consequences of it. Desperate folly! either they believe, or do not, the eternal torment of hell. If they do not, how prodigious is their impiety? If they do, it is more prodigious they dare indulge their vicious affections. A wicked believer is more monstrous and guilty than a wicked infidel.

In some there is atheism full of folly, or folly full of atheism, that they will not believe the prepared plagues for the wicked in the next state, because they have no sensible proof of them. Reason, assisted by divine revelation, affords so clear an evidence of the future state, and the rewards and punishments in it, that if any sincerely apply themselves to consider things, he will receive the most affective conviction of them. It is true, there is not sensible evidence; for God will try our faith before he satisfies our sight: partly, that we may honour his veracity, by yielding a firm assent to his word, before the actual accomplishment of what is promised or threatened; and partly, that our obedience may be voluntary and unconstrained, that his goodness may take its rise to reward us. But these presumptuous infidels live as if they had no spirit, nothing of understanding in them: they are wholly under the dominion of sense, as if they were free and lawless, independent and unaccountable; as if the most high Governor of the world were an inferior being, without power and justice to vindicate the honour of his despised Deity. They do not fear hell, but are afraid they should be fearful of it. This is such a piece of folly (but infinitely more woful) as that of the West-Indians, who at their first invasion by the Spaniards, were so terrified by their glittering swords, that they presently fled, and very considerably resolved to hide themselves in the day, and assault their enemies in the night. They were fearful to see their danger, and rash to encounter it, and fighting in the dark were killed in the dark, The threatenings of eternal death are the brandishing "of God's glittering sword" before he strikes; and sensual infidels are afraid lest the belief of those terrible truths should pierce into their breasts; therefore are

utterly averse from due considering their danger, and will not foresee what they shall certainly suffer. It is in vain to offer arguments to convince them; for they are as deaf as adders to the wisest instructions, till sense extort an acknowledgment from them. They have hardened their hearts and faces against all reproofs, and by an open contempt of scripture-threatenings, are past reclaiming. They are now fearless of that judgment, the thoughts whereof make the devils tremble: but the time will shortly come, when the word of the righteous God, which now they despise, shall irresistibly and immediately, like lightning shot from heaven, destroy them. There are many degrees of sin, many steps in the descent to hell; but the lowest and nearest the gate of that infernal prison, is the scornful derision of God's dreadful preparations for the wicked.

Others in the christian church who profess and presume they are true believers, yet by living indulgently in their pleasant or profitable sins, discover their faith is counterfeit, or such a superficial assent to the truth of God's word that is without efficacy, and will not avail them at the last. Unfeigned faith of the divine threatenings, produces such a fear as would make men circumspect over their hearts and ways. The fear of a present destructive evil controls the most eager appetites. It is recorded, that when the army of Israel was in pursuit of the Philistines, Saul, to complete his victory, forbid, upon pain of death, that any should taste food till the sun was down. In the chase of their enemies they pass through a wood dropping with honey; yet notwithstanding their hunger and faintness, and the easy provisions before them, no man so much as tasted it: "for the people feared the king's oath." And did men truly believe and fear the law of God, threatening hell for sin, would they dare to commit it, though invited by the pleasant temptations? Nay, not only a strong fear, but the mere suspicion of great danger, will restrain the most vehement desires of nature. What person, though inflamed with thirst, would drink a glass of cool liquor, if he suspected that deadly poison were mixed with it? And if men were persuaded that sin is attended with eternal death, would "they drink in iniquity like water?" The devils themselves are not able to conquer the fear of judgment to come,

they believe and tremble: therefore when it is not active upon the conscience, it is either because men do not believe it, or they fancy that retaining their beloved lusts, they may obtain an easy absolution, and escape the damnation of hell, which the eternal Judge has declared shall be the punishment of all that will not cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye, separate their dearest corruptions from them. Astonishing perverseness! How many will not discern nor censure that folly in themselves, which they will condemn in others for extreme madness? If one riotously lavishes away his estate, and for the short pleasure of a few years, be reduced with the prodigal to extreme poverty, and to loathsome imprisonment all his life after, would he not be esteemed to have been besides himself? Yet this is a very tolerable case, in comparison of exposing the soul to eternal vengeance, for the pleasures of sin that are but for a season.

3. Let us steadfastly believe, and frequently consider, that "Eternal death is the wages of sin," that we may renounce it with the deepest abhorrence, and forsake it for ever. We are assured, from the wisdom and compassion of our Saviour, that it is a powerful means to mortify the inclination to sin, and to induce us to prevent and resist all temptations. The subtle tempter cannot present any motives, that to a rectified mind will make sin eligible. Let the scales be even, and put into one all the delights of the senses, all the pleasures and honours of the world, that are the elements of carnal felicity, how light are they against the heavenly glory? Will the gain of the world compensate the loss of the soul and salvation for ever? If there were any possible comparison between deluding transient vanities, and the happiness that is substantial and satisfying for ever, the choice would be more difficult, and the mistake less culpable; but they vanish into nothing in the comparison. According to the judgment of sense, would any one choose the enjoyment of the most exquisite pleasures for a year, and afterwards be content to burn in a furnace for a day; much less to enjoy them for a day, and to burn for a year? What stupid brutes are they, who for momentary delights incur the fiery indignation of God for ever? Try but the finger with the flames

of a candle, you will soon discover your weakness. Will the remembrance of sensual delights allay the torments of the damned? When carnal lusts are most inflamed, and objects are present, pain will extinguish all the pleasures of the senses: and if actual enjoyment cannot afford delight when the body is under a disease, will the reflections upon past pleasures in the fancy and memory refresh the damned in their extreme torments? No, the remembrance will infinitely increase their anguish, that for such, seeming and short pleasures, they brought upon themselves misery intolerable, without ease or end. O that men would strip sin of its disguises, and wash off its flattering colours, and look into its odious nature, and to the consequential evils of it in the next world! O that they would consider they hang by slender strings (a little breath that expires every minute) over the bottomless pit, and that within a little while nothing will remain of the pleasures of sin, but the undying worm, and the ever-living flames! This would be a means to raise and preserve in them an invincible resolution and reluctancy against all temptations to sin and provoke God. But how hardly are men induced to exercise their minds on this terrible object! They think least of hell, who have most reason to consider it.

To this I must add, that the mere fear of hell, and the judicial impression upon conscience from it, is not sufficient to convert men to God. For that servile affection, though it may stop a temptation, and hinder the eruption of a lust into the gross act, yet does not renew the nature, and make men holy and heavenly. There may be a respective dislike of sin, with a direct affection to it. Besides, that religion that is the mere effect of fear, will be, according to the nature of its principle, with resistance and trouble, wavering and inconstant: for tormenting fear is repugnant to the human nature, and will be expelled if possible. In short, the fear of hell may be only a natural affection, that recoils from what is painful to sense.* Therefore it is the great design of the gospel, by the fear of hell, as a powerful preparative, to make way for the love of God, who offers pardon and indemnity to all returning sinners, and for the hope of heaven, the blessed reward promised to them. No offers of mercy will

prevail to make sinners to yield themselves, till they are stormed by the terrors of the Lord. But when the fear of hell has made a breach, divine grace enters and takes possession. As the virtue of the loadstone, when encompassed and armed with iron, is increased, and draws a far greater weight than when it is naked and single; thus the attractives of heaven are more powerful to move the hearts of men, when enforced from the terrors of hell. Now the love of God, and the hope of heaven, are spiritual affections; and the obedience that flows from them is voluntary from the entire consent of the soul, and persevering.

Lastly, From the consideration of the punishment determined for sin, we may understand how dear our engagements are to the Lord Jesus Christ: The Rector and Judge of the world would not release the guilty without a ransom, nor the surety without satisfaction; and the Son of God most willingly and compassionately gave his precious blood the price of our redemption. He obtained the Spirit of holiness, to illuminate our minds, to incline our wills, to sanctify our affections, without whose omnipotent grace, neither the hopes nor fears of things spiritual and future, would ever have cleansed and changed our hearts and lives. We are naturally as senseless as the dead, as to what concerns our everlasting peace, blind and brutish, and without fear should plunge ourselves into destruction, if the Spirit of power, and of a sound mind, did not quicken and direct us in the way to everlasting life. O that we might feel our dear obligations to him who has "delivered us from the wrath to come," and purchased for us a felicity perfect, and without end! I would not lessen and disparage one divine work, to advance and extol another; but it is a truth that shines with its own light, and is declared by our Saviour, that our redemption from hell to heaven, is a more excellent benefit than our creation; in as much as our well-being is better than our being, and eternal misery is infinitely worse than mere not being. Our Saviour speaks of Judas, "It had been better for him if he had never been born." How engaging is the love of Christ, who raised us from the bottom of hell to the bosom of God, the seat of happiness! If his perfections were not most amiable and attractive, yet that he died

for us, should make him the object of our most ardent affections. "To those who believe, he is precious;" to those who have felt their undone condition, and that by his merits and mediation are restored to the favour of God, that are freed from tormenting fears, and revived with the sweetest hopes, he is and will be eminently and eternally precious. "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."

MONERGISM BOOKS

The Four Last Things by William Bates, Copyright © 2020

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions September 2020. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, Oregon, 97068