

The Sacred Diary



WILLIAM GEARING

VITAL GODLINESS SERIES
Walking with God

THE SACRED DIARY

THE SACRED DIARY

OR

SELECT MEDITATIONS

FOR EVERY PART OF THE DAY, AND THE
EMPLOYMENTS THEREOF

by
William Gearing

NEW EDITION



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The Sacred Diary, or Select Meditations For Every Part of the Day, and the Employments Thereof

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TO THE READER

THE SCRIPTURES CALL upon us to redeem time. Now, to redeem time is, 1. To see that we cast none of it away in vain, but use every minute of it as a most precious thing, and spend it wholly in the way of duty. 2. That we be not only doing good, but doing the best good we are able. 3. That we do the best things in the best manner, and in the greatest measure, and do as much good as possibly we can. 4. That we watch for special opportunities. 5. That we presently take them when they occur and improve them when we take them. 6. That we part with all that is to be parted with to save our time. 7. That we forecast the preventing of impediments, the removal of our clogs, and the obtaining of all helps to expedition in duty. This is the true redemption of time, according to the judgment of a reverend divine.

And indeed, the consideration of the shortness of our time in this world should hasten us in the work and service of God. *“I must work the works of Him that sent me,”* saith our Saviour, *“whilst it is day; the night cometh when no man can work,”* (John 9:4). I have but a short day, the time of this life, to do the work which my Father hath sent me to finish here upon the earth; and now I must hasten it, for the time is at hand, I shall shortly be delivered into the hands of sinners to be crucified. When the master of the vineyard saw some standing idle at the eleventh hour, he checked them for it: *“Why stand ye here all the day idle?”* Do you not know that it is but one hour until night?

Eleven parts of your life are already gone, [and] there is but one of twelve remaining. Is it not a shame for you yet to be idle? How ought you now to hasten, when but the twelfth part of your short life yet remaineth!

A great part of this short life is taken up in such a manner that little of it is well spent. All the time of our life, till the time of our conversion, may be put aside as no time or life to us. And after our effectual calling, sleeping takes up a large part of our time, eating and drinking another part, and far more of it is spent in doing nothing or in doing that which is evil. Let a man be as frugal and as thrifty of his time as he can, yet much of his life will go this way. In our old age many weaknesses draw on, and when we would do good, we are disabled by age and sickness. We are long ere we begin to do the work of God, and are soon weary of well doing. Our glass is almost run, before we begin to live indeed, and at the entry of our spiritual life we begin to die by infirmity; so that by a just survey of our time, we shall easily find that God, who asks the tithe of our substance, scarcely gets the hundredth part of the time of those who know best how to spend it.

Consider the greatness of the work that every Christian has to do in this short time. How great a work is it to get a broken heart, our hearts being naturally hearts of stone! How great a task to get an established assurance of the love of God, we having such evil hearts of unbelief! How great a work to get forward, and grow in grace, our hearts being so full of corruption, eating out and wasting the strength of grace; so inclined to backsliding and declining, having so many things to press down, so many weights hanging on! How great a task to escape the corruption that is in the world, and to escape so many snares as are set in all places! How great a work to get a free and enlarged heart! How hard to walk constantly in the Spirit! How hard to do the work and perform the service of God in the power of the Spirit! How difficult to walk in a constant communion with the Lord! What

diligence then ought we to use in the service of God, being so much straitened with time, and having so much to do, and so great a task laid upon us!

Moreover, the shortness of life, compared with the greatness of the account that is to be given at the end of this life, should move us with great diligence to hasten in the work and service of God. A great account is to be given to God after a short life, and therefore great diligence must be used, that it may be an happy and joyful account, and that we may be sure to have all our sins blotted out of the account, and to have many works of obedience, many pleasing services acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, put into the reckoning. Every master calls his servants to account for what he puts into their hands, as to the improvement thereof. And God will call men to a reckoning for every talent, and inquire how they have improved them; what they have done for the glory of God, for the interest of Christ, and for the good of their own and others' souls. All our talents are written down; our using, our abusing them; our spending, our mispending them. All the times of God's patience, forbearance, and long-sufferance, are registered in God's account book. All the mercies and blessings we have received. All the ordinances of God, and means of grace we have enjoyed. All the powerful sermons we have heard – all are written down in the book of God's remembrance, and in the book of our consciences. We shall all be called to give an account (Matt. 25:15-19). Let us all mind the day of account and not put it far from us, in hope that our Master will defer his coming. But let every one labour so to do, as he desires to be found at his coming.

Furthermore, consider that everlasting state which follows upon so short a life, and which shall be according to this short life, and suitable unto it. Now, when everlasting life follows upon a short life, well spent to the glory of God, and everlasting woe and misery upon a life, spent according to the course of this world, by those that live in the flesh, oh what speed, industry,

and diligence should men use in improving their short lives in the service of God, that they may inherit everlasting life, and escape everlasting torment!

Finally, after this short life, we shall have no more such opportunities (as now) to glorify God here on earth. We shall hear no more sermons, enjoy no more Sabbaths, his Spirit shall strive with us no longer. *“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave where thou goest,”* (Eccl. 9:10). Death will take away those opportunities which the life of man affords. Therefore every man ought to put forth his might and best strength in improving his short life to the glory of God.

How may this reprove our prodigal and lavish mis-spending of our short lives! Men that have but a little store of such and such things are sparing and thrifty in dispensing and disposing them. Scarcity of any sort of provision induces men to be sparing of it. What is more scanty than time? What has a man less store of than of life? No man knows how little he has, and he that has most, has but little. Many reckon upon many years of life to come, who perhaps have not so many days, it may be not so many hours, as they reckon years. The truth is, no man is sure of any more than the present time of his life. All the time past which was ill-spent, is lost. And whether any be yet remaining to you is uncertain. And if any be, it is as likely to slide away from you without profit, as that which is past, if now you are lavish and careless in losing and casting away the present time. How easily may Satan lead you on step by step to hell, whilst you please yourself with thoughts afar off for heaven, with remote purposes for heaven and newness of life! Have you not passed over many weeks and days already, when you had a purpose to have turned unto the Lord, and to have broken off your sins by repentance? You have the same deceitful heart still, to flatter you with hopes and purposes of repentance for time to come. There is the same devil still to draw you on from day to day, from week

to week, to persuade you from time to time to take a longer day, until the days of your short life waste away, and you perish in your sin, and find no place for repentance.

Oh, how should this make men tremble! Your whole life is but as an hand-breadth, a short space of time! Oh then think how wretchedly lavish you have been already of this short, precious time! It may be you have not so many weeks behind, as you have lost years already; and all the days of your life, which you have spent in a state of impenitency and unregeneracy are lost, and you have no fruit of them in respect of salvation. The longer you have lived in the flesh, and have not been led by the Spirit, you are the nearer hell and condemnation. And all this while you have been *“heaping up wrath against the day of wrath.”* And is not this time woefully cast away? However you have thrived in the world, increased your outward estate, and gotten things about you, yet all your time is lost. And it were better for you never to have seen those days, if you have lived an impenitent and unregenerate life. Oh then waste no more of this precious time of this short life! There is so much of this precious oil spilt on the ground that there are but a few drops left to nourish the flame, and to keep light in the lamp. Take heed lest that also be spent and consumed, and your life go out like a candle with an unsavoury snuff, and end in perpetual shame and misery. If yet you are not turned unto the Lord by sound repentance, and have not yet begun to do the work of God, then now while it is called today, hearken to the voice of God, and speedily turn unto him. Defer not your setting about this work till tomorrow. Lose not so many precious hours about the world, spend not so many in carnal delights and vain pleasures, in idle talk, or in doing nothing; so many in eating, drinking, and sleeping more than your weakness requireth. Redeem time from all these, and the rather, because you know you have but a few steps to your grave. Whoever of us is appointed in the secret counsel of God to live longest here, yet the day is not long, the night of death is hastening upon

us. The longest summer's day is soon at an end, and the longest life upon earth passes away, as a tale that is told. Let us then endeavour so to spend this short life, that it may be lengthened out with everlasting life and blessedness. God hath given us time to make our peace with him, and if that be neglected, all is lost, and we are undone forever.

It is reported of Alexander the Great, that when he marched against any city, his manner was to set up a burning lamp, and make proclamation, that whoever came in, and submitted whilst this lamp was burning, should find favour, and have his life; but whoever staid till this lamp was out, he was but a dead man, and must expect no mercy. Know ye, O readers, that God hath set up a lamp, and our life is this lamp, and God proclaims, that whoever comes in, whilst this lamp is burning, shall find mercy. But if you stay till the lamp is out, till your life be consumed, there is nothing but eternal woe to be expected. Now, this lamp of your lives may not only go out on the consumption of the oil, but it may be put out by accidental means. And if this lamp be once out, and your work not done, you are lost and undone for ever (Eccl. 11:3). In the place where the tree falleth, there it lieth. Which way thou fallest when thou diest, that way you shall lie to eternity. If towards God, then God is thine forever. If toward sin, misery and destruction are thine forever. There can be no repenting nor believing after death. The soul and body being parted, the whole man is not capable of a work of God upon it.



SECTION I

The Introduction

IT IS GOOD for man to draw near to God, as the psalmist says concerning himself (Ps. 73:28), and this truth is plainly seen. For ever since the fall there is so much left in man, that he has an inclination to that which is good, but when he comes to particulars, then is the mistake. He seeks light in the way of darkness, and happiness in the way of misery, and life in the way of death, being hurried the contrary way by the violence of his impetuous lusts. But yet there is a natural tendency in all men to that which is good (as some of the heathen have observed), from the principles of nature, there remaining this general foundation of religion in all men. Good hath a magnetic force, and is of a drawing nature. And answerably to the discovery of good or evil in the understanding, there is an embracing or aversion in the will of man, which is that operation of the soul of man by which it cleaves unto good discovered. It is good to draw near to God, who is the chief Good. The goodness of a thing is the reason why we desire it.

It is the philosopher's definition of good, "That is good which all things desire." Now then, what is more desirable, is more excelling in goodness, and what is chiefly desirable, is the chiefest good. All creatures do naturally desire their chief good, their happiness, their perfection. And it is the happiness of man to draw near to God, his Creator.

The mind of a Christian may sometimes slip from God, and for a time be taken up with other things. But it cannot long be kept from him, because God is its centre, and it is as natural for a spiritual mind to move towards God, as for a needle, touched

with the lodestone, to point towards the North Pole. "*I have set the Lord always before me,*" says David (Ps. 16:8). Where God hath no place in our minds, we have no interest in him. A pious and devout man must be continually with God.

If the hungry man cannot forget to eat, nor the thirsty man to drink, then cannot a good man forget God. He who lives under a continual sense of the want of God, his soul is still breathing and panting after God. Love causeth an emission of the thoughts. It will not suffer him to dwell at home, but to be where it is best of all to be. There is a necessity that a man should mind what he most affecteth. And a man that loves God cannot live in a course of forgetfulness of God, either (as a pious man observes) want brings him, or love constrains him, or Christ draws him. And Christ will not be long from his people. If their hearts come not up to him, he will come into them, and if he be there, all is taken up with attending upon Him.



SECTION 2

A Soliloquy at Waking

HOW PRECIOUS ARE thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! When I awake, I am still with thee,” (Psa. 139:17-18). “O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me,” (Ps. 63:1-8). “O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early,” (Ps. 108:1-2); or, In the morning, I will be up first, and raise the morning out of its bed, that I may come to the celebration of thy praises. “My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning,” (Ps. 130:6); meaning, either, more than those who in the sanctuary of the Lord heedfully observed the morning watch, that they might offer the morning sacrifice in due season; or, more than those who are appointed to keep watch all night, wait and long for the morning.



SECTION 3

Directions How to Begin the Day

FIRSTLY, *give God your first waking thoughts*; suffer no worldly thought to enter, till God first come in. The first-fruits of the mouth and of the heart are to be offered unto God, says Ambrose. So evil and vain thoughts either will not dare to intrude, or shall more easily be kept out. The mind of man is never idle; it will be always active, either about God or the world, Christ or vanity, good or evil. It is always busied in thinking, devising, pondering, on something or other. Therefore it is necessary, that first of all in the morning we set our minds to the meditation of divine and heavenly objects. How will the devil busy himself in injecting multitudes of other thoughts into your minds, to divert your minds from the sweet meditation of God, if you give not God your waking thoughts! Multitudes of thoughts will run into your minds; but you must watch against them, and drive them away, as Abraham did the fowls from his sacrifice (Gen. 15:11).

2. *Lift up your hearts to God in a reverential manner, and give him thanks for the repose of the night*, and that his compassions have not failed you, but are renewed every morning; that even in the night you have received an apparent evidence of his love; and whereas for your sins committed the day before, God might even in the dead of sleep have taken your souls from you, and so have suddenly brought you to your account, bless him that it hath been his good pleasure yet to spare you.

3. *If God's glory be dear unto you, you will begin every day by offering to God's glory what you are about to do*, devoting the actions of the ensuing day in this or the like manner:

My God, whatever I shall this day speak or do, yea, whatever I shall think, I offer wholly to thee; these prayers, these meditations, these alms, these devotions, this fasting, these works, these businesses, these actions, these my affairs, I dedicate and consecrate unto thee, nor desire I anything else, than that what I shall perform this day may turn to thine honour.

How sweet is it in the beginning of the day, before a man takes any new matter in hand, to lift up his heart to God, and to say thus within himself:

Lord, I will undertake this action by thy help, and for thee this day; for thee will I labour; I will think this for thee; for thee now will I hold my peace, and now I will speak for thy honour and glory; I will cast myself on thee for the following day!

Use yourselves constantly to this course, that your consciences may check you when you neglect it. Such a constant course will keep off divers temptations that may otherwise surprise you, and engage your hearts to God for all the day.



SECTION 4

At the Dawning of the Day and Rising of the Day-Star

MEDITATE HOW THE gospel is as the day-star; and the work of the Spirit enlightening the mind is as the dawning of the day, or rising of the day-star in the heart of a Christian. So St. Peter commends those to whom he writes, for making use of the Old Testament, of the truth whereof they were assured (2 Pet. 1:19), until, by a further work of the Spirit of illumination, their hearts and minds were more effectually instructed, and more strongly assured of the truth of the gospel of Christ. The Old Testament is as torch-light in a dark room. The New Testament revealed by the Spirit is as the dawning of the day, or rising of the day-star, in comparison with that light which shall appear at Christ's second coming, which shall be as the bright rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

Consider, that as the dawning of the day is in respect of the night, such is the state of a soul enlightened with the saving knowledge of the gospel to one in his natural blindness. And,

First, if we compare such a soul to those poor creatures that want the outward means of knowledge, it is manifest that these have no light offered them, whereby they may come to know God in a saving way; therefore, in respect of this knowledge there is a mere night of ignorance among them. The condition of those that want the means of knowledge is plainly expressed by the apostle (Eph. 4:17-18), where he shows, that the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.

Where you may consider, that they are so far from having such knowledge as guides them unto life and salvation, that they are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them. It is said, that "*the world by wisdom knew not God,*" (1 Cor. 1:21). They had a kind of wisdom wherein many of them excelled, whereby they knew many secrets of nature, and many affairs of state and government. But all their wisdom, for want of the gospel, did not teach them the right knowledge of God in a saving way.

Consider also, that as the heathens that wanted the gospel, so the unregenerate that live under the ministry of the gospel, remain in darkness; the day doth not dawn unto them, nor doth the day-star arise in their hearts; or if the day dawn in their heads, it is dark night in their hearts. If they have some knowledge of the gospel and mysteries of salvation, yet this light doth not pierce so as to win them to the love of that truth and light which appears unto them, and to subject their hearts unto its power.

But in the regenerate, the gospel revealed to them by the Spirit is as the dawning of the day and the rising of the day-star in their hearts, in comparison with that night of blindness which was in themselves before regeneration, and is yet in others that are unregenerate. For first, the day dawns in their understandings, and then the day-star ariseth in their hearts; then the night begins to wear away, and the day breaks and dawns upon them; then they begin to see what they could not see before, and to see that far more clearly and effectually which they saw in some imperfect measure before. Now the Spirit, having caused the day to dawn in their understandings, proceeds also to enlighten the lower region, and to cause the day-star to arise in their hearts. In the night time, when the sun is on the other side of the earth, it shines brightly, and enlightens the stars, as we see, yet the body of the earth being between the sun and us, makes it dark here below. So when the Spirit enlightens the understanding of an unregenerate man with the knowledge of the gospel, even at the

same time there is a body of death in his heart, and a mass of sinful corruptions, which cast a shadow, and keeps the heart and affections in miserable darkness. Now, as every corruption is a degree of darkness, so every grace is a beam of heavenly light; for “*God is light*,” and every grace is a part of the image and likeness of God, and so is *lumen de lumine*, light issuing from the Fountain of light. Consider what St. Paul says to the believing Ephesians, “*Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord*,” (Eph. 5:8). Ye were darkness; dark all over, dark understandings, dark judgments, dark hearts and affections. They had a dark veil of natural blindness upon their judgments, a dark cloud of worldly and fleshly lusts and corruptions upon their hearts; but now they are light in the Lord, having lightsome understandings, and lightsome hearts and affections.



SECTION 5

At the Breaking Forth of the Light

ONSIDER WITH THYSELF that there is a fourfold light spoken of in Scripture, and that God is called, "*the Father of lights*," (James 1:17).

1. *There is material light*, which God created in the beginning, and of which he made the sun and moon to be as fountains and vessels, that with the beams proceeding from them the world might be illuminated. Consider how God was the Father of this; "*God said, Let there be light: and there was light*," (Gen. 1:3). He "*commanded light to shine out of darkness*," says the apostle (2 Cor. 4:6). And it is said that he set two lights in the firmament of heaven, "*the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night*," (Gen. 1:15).

2. *There is that which we commonly call the light of nature*; and it is the same knowledge and conscience which were at first planted in the mind of man, by which he was made able to distinguish between good and evil. Of this also God is the Father. It is he that hath created in us an understanding to discern, and conscience to bear witness of good and evil.

3. *There is what we commonly call the light of grace*; and from this there arise two beams:

a. That which shines into our hearts to dispel the darkness of sin in us; of which I have spoken before. It is in this sense that the children of God are called "*the children of light*," and the holy conversation that they lead is said to be "*walking in the light*." Now, of this also God is the Father. It is he who, by his Spirit, enlightens our hearts with grace, as I spake before.

b. There is a light that shines in our hearts to cheer us with

the assurance of God's love and favour: "*Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart,*" (Ps. 107:11). Light and joy are sown together in the same furrow. Of these also God is the Father. It is he only that can make us hear the voice of joy and gladness. So David prays, "*Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us,*" (Ps. 4:6). The light of his countenance is the light of his favour. Where the light of his favour shines, no clouds of affliction can darken our joy. It will make our hearts merrier than corn and wine.

4. *There is the light of glory.* It is that same light which God dwells in, the light inaccessible, the light that none can approach unto (1 Tim. 4:16), yet that light which God's children shall one day dwell in also. Light we may call it, for it is where darkness never made its pavilion; a light more glorious than the sun or moon; for it is where, though no sun shall be, yet where no night shall be. The glory of God lightens that place, and the Lamb is the light of it (Rev. 21:23). Now, of this light likewise God is the Father. He who inhabits it, created it. And he hath prepared it to be an habitation for his saints, that as many as shall be citizens of the new Jerusalem, may rest under the glory of it. "*The sun shall be no more thy light by day,*" says the prophet, "*neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory,*" (Isa. 9:19).

Meditate also of the correspondence between grace and light.

1. *The light flows and breaks out from the heavens.* So does grace. It is derived and sent down from heaven.

2. *Light dispels the darkness.* So does grace dispel the darkness of error and ignorance.

3. *Light purges the air from mists and dark fogs that choke it.* So does grace purify the heart with its beams from the corruption of sin with which it is choked and defiled (Acts 15:9).

4. *Light quickens the seeds that are sown in the earth,* making

them to spring and fructify. So does grace always quicken the seed of God's word when it is sown in our minds. If that be not there, it withers and dies, but grace makes it prolific and fruitful.

5. *Light pleaseth the eye-sight.* "*Light is sweet,*" says Solomon (Eccl. 11:7). So grace is pleasant to an eye that is spiritually enlightened. Even the eyes of God himself are delighted with such objects. For what are those beauties and ornaments of the spouse with which our Saviour Christ, in the Canticles, professes to be so much affected and ravished, but endowments of grace in which the spouse excelled? (Song 4).

6. *Light manifests things that are hid.* In the dark there is no judging of colours, but the light makes all things manifest. So does the light of grace, it manifests those things unto us which before were hidden from us, especially two sorts of things: God's mercies and our own wants. As for God's mercies, without the light of grace we cannot judge of them as we should do. Either we take no notice of them at all, or we ascribe them not to him from whom indeed we receive them. And as for our wants, the more our eyes are opened to see them, the more hath the light of grace shined into our hearts.

7. *Light begets heat.* So does grace in us likewise. It begets in us an heat of zeal and fervent charity. It not only enlightens us with knowledge, but warms us with zeal also, to make us contend for God's truth and for his glory.

The consideration thereof should teach us to love grace and to hate sin. We naturally hate darkness and love light. Darkness is a horrid and hateful thing to nature, but woeful is the condition of those that love "*darkness rather than light.*" It sheweth that their "*deeds are evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved,*" (John 3:19-20). Like owls and bats, they shun the light; for light is a discovering thing.



SECTION 6

At the Springing of the Day, or Rising of the Sun

HERE CONSIDER THAT Christ in his coming into the world was as the day-spring, the springing or rising of the sun from on high. Consider how his coming is most fitly compared to a day-spring (Luke 1:78), or to the rising of the sun, in divers respects.

1. *The sun, as it were, issues out of the night*, as it appears to our eyes. He seems to spring out of the bosom of darkness. The rising of the sun follows the darkness of the night. So our blessed Saviour, at his coming, appeared to spring out of darkness. He lay hid before under the veil. He was covered with shadows, types, ceremonies, mystical representations, and dark figures. Yea, the prophecies which bore witness of him had much darkness in them, though they were so clear that they showed the way to Christ unto all the faithful. Yet the light was but dim, in comparison with that which followed. And at that time especially there was much darkness overspreading the face of the church, even about the time of our Saviour's coming. Then was that true which was spoken, "*We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long,*" (Ps. 74:9). And besides the want of this light, there were special causes of darkness, namely, blind guides. For such our Saviour himself charged the Pharisees to be, who sat in Moses' chair; and, being blind and ignorant themselves, took upon them to lead the blind, and instruct the ignorant, and so no marvel that both stumbled in the dark, and fell into the ditch. Ignorance in these bred errors in the people, and caused an increase of darkness.

But now consider, that Christ was not sent for the salvation

of the Jews only, but of other nations also; and then reflect what darkness was on the world in general. The nations of the world were all regions of darkness and of the shadow of death. Even the learned Athenians worshipped God as a stranger, and their altar had this inscription, "*To the unknown God,*" (Acts 17:23). Now, out of this darkness, as it were, the Day-spring issued, Christ came and manifested himself to the world.

2. *The day-spring, or rising of the sun, removes the darkness.* So Christ manifested in the flesh did chase away that darkness which was upon the face of the world; and soon after Christ's coming there was such an alteration as if there had been a new world created, as it is expressed of the land of Naphtali and Zabulon, so the like change was effected in many parts of the world. "*The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephtholim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up,*" (Matt. 4:15-16). Thus it might be said of the world in general.

3. *The day-spring, or sun-rising, is beautiful and glorious.* David compares the sun at his rising to a bridegroom coming forth of his chamber with all his ornaments (Ps. 19:5). Christ's manifestation to the world was glorious, and full of heavenly beauty and majesty. Many glorious things appeared in him at his birth, and in his life many miracles, signs, and wonders. And among other things, the beauty of his perfect holiness and righteousness was such, that even the malicious eyes of his adversaries could see no spot or blemish in it. But especially in that more glorious manifestation at his resurrection and ascension, and sending down the Holy Ghost, by whom his apostles were led abroad to carry the light up and down in the world, did his beauty, excellency, and glory appear.

4. *The day-spring, or sun-rising, yieldeth special refreshment to the creatures,* as men, beasts, and birds. So the coming of Christ yielded special comfort and refreshment to the people of

God, yea, and to those who formerly were not the people of God (Hos. 1:10). Many poor Gentiles, after a tedious night of many hundred years of woeful darkness and blindness, were now most sweetly refreshed by the manifestation of Christ, as a glorious Day-spring, and a most blessed Sun of Righteousness arising with healing in his wings, whereby they saw the way of peace, and the means of reconciliation with God, and everlasting salvation by the remission of their sins in the blood of Christ.

5. *Consider that the day-spring, or sun-rising, is a cause of health.* The night is cold and moist, and for want of heat to purge the air, is the cause of many thick fogs and vapours. But the rising of the sun cleanses the air, and overcomes those foggy vapours. So consider what is said of Christ, that he, being the Sun of Righteousness, should arise with healing in his wings, dispelling those unwholesome vapours, which the devil, the prince of darkness, had raised to poison the souls of men. This Sun of Righteousness did, by the sovereign balm of his most precious blood, cure the wounds of guiltiness which were upon their consciences, and by the precious sun-beams of his Spirit did heal them of those corruptions and soul-sicknesses, giving them spiritual health, even the spirit of love and power, and of a sound mind.

6. *The day-spring, or sun-rising, calls men out of their beds, and rouses them from their sleep.* So Christ, by his manifestation unto the world, calls men from sleeping in sin, to awake unto repentance and righteousness. This St. Paul shows plainly: *“The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent,”* (Acts 17:30). That night-time, which was before the day-spring, and coming of Christ, God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. It was the time of sleep, and God suffered the world to lie sleeping in sin and wickedness. He winked at them and awoke them not. But now it is day and the night is past. He calls them to awake, that is, to repent. Yea, *“he commandeth all men every-*

where.” The Lord sent his messengers from nation to nation, from city to city, to awake the world at the day-spring, and at the rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

7. *The day-spring, or sun-rising, gives men light, and shows them both how to walk and work.* Christ is that Light which enlighteneth every one that cometh into the world (John 1:9). “*Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of the light,*” (John 12:35-36). Christ’s coming shows the way wherein we must go, if we would be saved. The world, for want of this light, lost the way to true happiness.

8. *The day-spring, or sun-rising, causes those things that are hurtful to hide themselves.* The wild ravenous beasts that prey upon others, get to their caves and coverts at the sun-rising, shunning the light. Thieves and murderers, who in the night break through and steal, hide themselves and refrain at the rising of the sun. So at the coming of Christ, Herod and his company were troubled and all Jerusalem with them. The scribes and Pharisees were troubled, and the devil himself, that prince of darkness, and great worker of the works of darkness, was troubled, and cried out, “*Art thou come to torment us before the time?*” (Matt. 8:29).

9. *The day-spring, or sun-rising, is welcome to those who are well busied, and diligently walk in an honest course of life.* So the coming of Christ, as the Day-spring, and Sun of Righteousness, was very welcome to those that walked uprightly before the Lord. It was the time which they had long looked for, more than those that watch for the morning. Therefore their eyes were upon this Day-spring. So Zacharias, Elizabeth, Joseph, Simeon, Anna, the godly shepherds, and the rest, flocked about our Saviour, like a company in the dark about a torch or candle. Yea, the wise men of the east, by the lesser light of a star, were con-

ducted to Christ, the great Light of the world. *"I am,"* saith he, *"the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life,"* (John 8:12).

Meditate how Christ's second and glorious coming shall be like the day-spring, or sun-rising.

1. *Meditate on the brightness and glory of that day which shall spring out of darkness.* What darkness possesses the world at this day, in comparison with the light of that great and glorious day! How great and gross is the ignorance of men in comparison with the knowledge which shall then be revealed! How many things now lie hidden, like things covered in darkness! How many things, concerning the mystery of Christ, are yet unknown, and many things imperfectly known! How many reasons of things that fall out in the world are now hidden from men! How many secrets are there in the ways of God's providence, and his dealings with the world, and with his church, which in this night-time of blindness and darkness we cannot see! Yea, how little do we see of the excellency of Christ, of the beauty of heavenly things, and of the glory of his kingdom! These are dark times, and little of these things is discovered. Yea, how little do men see into the vanity and vileness of earthly things! Who seeth the exceeding sinfulness and odiousness of sin? How many secret sins are now committed every hour, which are hid in darkness! These are times of darkness which now we live in, before the last coming of Christ.

2. *Consider, that Christ's last coming, like the day-spring, shall remove this darkness of the world,* and lay open things that were hidden, and dispel all the dark clouds that now hide the light from us. It shall remove the ignorance of heavenly things from the minds of men. Christ himself shall be the Light of that day. Then the things which are now imperfectly, shall then be perfectly, known. Then shall the saints put away childish things, imperfect beginning of heavenly knowledge, and shall have the

understandings of men, a perfection of light; not seeing through a glass darkly, but face to face. How clearly shall the light of that day show unto the saints the beauty and glory of Christ, and represent him to his church as the most glorious Bridegroom! Consider how that day shall declare the equity of all the Lord's proceedings in dealing with his creatures. How shall it cause all doubting and objections against it to vanish as a mist! How shall it lay open the folly and vanity of men, in cleaving to the things of this world, and in following their lusts! How evidently shall it make it appear, that the godly have chosen the better part; that those were truly wise that preferred the gospel of Christ, the glory of Christ, yea, the reproach of Christ, above the pleasures of sin, or the greatest things in the world! How shall this day set forth all secrets in the clear light! How shall the righteousness of the upright be then brought forth, after it hath been many years hidden by slanders and false accusations! How shall all their works of faith, all their labours of love, and all the fruits of the Spirit, be laid open and manifested! There are no false lights that can have any place at that day, to make bad wares seem good. Everything shall then appear as it is.

O my soul, how shouldst thou labour in thy most secret places, and in thy most secret thoughts, to bear in mind the light of that great day, when Christ shall appear as a day-spring unto the world! Will these thoughts which I cherish in my heart, these affections, these words, these deeds, be able to abide the great light of that day, when Christ shall come? Are they such as may be presented with boldness before the face of Christ, and offered to the view of the holiest angels and saints in heaven, and be brought to the open light, when the Sun of Righteousness shall shine in his strength?

3. *Consider that Christ's second coming shall be "in power and great glory,"* (Matt. 24:30). The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God (1 Thess. 4:16). He shall sit on the right

hand of power, and come in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:64). He “*shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels,*” (Matt. 16:27). The glory of the sun, moon, and stars, when they shine most gloriously, is nothing to this glory of Christ, which at that day he shall show forth to the world.

O my soul, labour now to behold, by faith, his beauty and glory in the Spirit; and by that glimpse raise thy thoughts to consider of that height and brightness of glory, wherein Christ shall show himself at that day; and how thine eye and thy soul shall be filled with a most sweet delight in his perfect beauty and glory. Could our hearts be thoroughly taken up with Christ’s glory at that great day, it would be a means to mortify our fond desires towards these things, wherewith our fleshly eyes or hearts are apt to be ensnared; and it would greatly support us under afflictions. What should not I suffer with patience, who look to see the beauty and glory of Christ at the last day? Yea, to see the glorious face of Christ turned to me in love, might I not pass through troubles, prisons, famine, nakedness, banishment, fire, sword, or, in short, anything, in hope to behold the beauty and glory of Christ, and to enjoy the light of his countenance forever, when he shall come as the Day-spring from on high?

4. *Consider how Christ, at his second coming, shall most sweetly refresh all those who throughout the world belong unto him.* He shall give them everlasting rest from all their labours which here they have undergone; everlasting peace from all cares and conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil; freedom from all troubles, and deliverance from all persecutions. When many millions of souls shall throng about him, and appear in his sight, being such as have believed in him, and cleaved to him in sincerity; some of them having been sawn asunder, some burnt to ashes, some slain with the sword, some kept in bonds and irons, some mocked, some scourged, some driven out of house and home, and spoiled of their goods, tossed to and fro, persecuted from city to city, some destitute, afflicted, tormented, for

his name's sake; then he shall sweetly ease and refresh them, as the day-spring, when they appear before him. And for those of his saints that have been burdened with much sickness, painful diseases, with poverty and outward wants, not having whereon to lay their heads, nor wherewith to fill their bellies, to them shall he give to drink of the full river of his pleasures. Yea, he himself shall be their refreshment, and they shall so fully enjoy him that they shall need nothing which may make them truly and perfectly happy.

5. *Consider that Christ, as the Day-spring, at his second coming, shall cure all the sicknesses both of the souls and bodies of his people.* A universal corruption and, as it were, contagion hath overspread and seized upon the whole body of nature, and all the limbs, the whole world, and all its parts, by reason of the sin of man. Now, Christ's coming shall refine all the creation, and shall set up "*new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,*" (2 Pet. 3:13). The beasts, birds, fishes, the corn, the fruit of the vine, etc., shall no longer be abused to gluttony, drunkenness, and epicurism, and to be as fuel to cherish the flame of unclean lusts. The wedge of gold or bag of silver, shall no longer be defiled, so as to be made an idol to the dishonour of its Maker, to carry away the heart from him. Other metals and minerals shall be no longer defiled so as to be turned into instruments of death and cruelty, and to be stained with innocent blood. Other creatures shall not be abused so as to set forth the pride of vain men and women. Christ shall heal the sickness and corruptions of the world, and free it from the bondage of corruption. His coming shall heal the world, much more shall it heal all the infirmities of his members. At the last day, the Lord at his coming will heal the sick and diseased, give sight to the blind, strength to the lame and weak, hearing to the deaf, beauty to the deformed. Yea, he shall cure them of death and mortality itself. Death shall no more hang about them, nor have to do with them. Much more shall his second coming bring perfect

and perpetual health to their souls. Sin shall then be fully cured, and the soul shall be made altogether sound. No sin shall pain the soul with the remembrance of it, nor afflict it with fear of punishment; and sense of guilt shall be taken away, as if man had continued as holy as the angels, and had always kept his first estate.

6. *Consider that this Day-spring, at his second coming, shall awaken all that sleep in the graves, and in the sea, and in all places whatever. All the dead, from Adam to the last human being, all that lie sleeping in their graves from one end of the world to the other, shall be awakened; all kings and princes, and other great men, who shall be found sleeping in their sumptuous tombs and monuments, and all that are buried anywhere. The trumpet shall sound, and the dead of all sorts, degrees, ages, nations, shall awake, live, arise, and come before the Son of God coming in his glory. Oh the wonderful change that shall be at that day-spring! when those eyes that have been shut up so many hundred years shall be opened, and these bodies that have been long buried in a silent grave, and covered with the darkness of death, shall be brought forth into the light of the great and glorious day.*

O my soul, awake thou beforehand, that then I may awake full of joy and comfort, and be satisfied with the image of my dearest Saviour, and lift up my head to behold my most glorious Redeemer, and the bright and blessed day of my full redemption. The archangel's trumpet shall then awaken the most secure conscience that ever composed itself to sleep in sin. Yea, then all their sins will awake with their awakened conscience, and rage fiercely against their souls. Awake then, O sinner, to repentance! Awake to holiness and righteousness, that thy conscience may be at peace with God, and thy sins may be absolved forever, that Christ may not find thee sleeping at his coming.

7. *As the sun at its rising causeth hurtful creatures to hide their heads, so this last coming of Christ is grievous to the wicked. It will make them call to the mountains to fall upon*

them, and upon the hills to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb, and from the presence of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Then they would be glad to hide their heads in the centre of the earth, when the light of this Day-spring shall appear. O my soul, do then now cast off the works of darkness, and then the light of that glorious day, which none of the children of darkness can behold without confusion of face, shall not be grievous unto thee.

8. *Consider how welcome the second coming of Christ will be to the godly.* The faithful are described by this property, that they “*love his appearing.*” It is said, that “every one is a friend to him that giveth gifts.” Oh! how welcome shall Christ be to all the faithful, when he comes with both his hands full of rich and precious gifts, such as surpass the thoughts and understanding of man! When Christ comes to bestow a crown of immortal glory, an everlasting kingdom, oh, what heir of the kingdom would not with a glad heart bid him welcome! But chiefly Christ shall be welcome to them in respect of himself, for then they shall see him as he is.

Consider what a blessed sight will this be, O my soul, to see thy dearest Saviour, who died for thee, loved thee, and washed thee with his own blood; to see him now so glorious; to see him on the throne, who was nailed to the cross; to see him reigning and judging, who was judged and condemned; to see him most blessed, who was made a curse; to see his righteousness shine forth to all the world, who was numbered among transgressors; to see him in such excellent majesty and fulness of glory, this will be most welcome. Oh, how blessed is the condition of him, who, being fitted for Christ, hath a longing desire of his coming, and can from his heart say, “*Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!*”

9. *As the day-spring shows man his work and his way, so the glorious coming of Christ shall show unto the world which way they have gone, and to what issue their way and works are come.* Many now imagine that they go the way of salvation, and the

way of life, and that they shall have peace, and will not be convinced otherwise by the Scripture. But this day shall declare it. It shall show, that many such have trodden the path of destruction, and have been going down to the chambers of death. Yea, now the end and issue of all will appear to be death and condemnation. On this day, the Lord will show who is righteous, and who is wicked. He will show, by the light of that day, who are wheat, and who are tares; who are for the fire, and who are for the garner; who are for the right hand, and who for the left.



SECTION 7

Whilst Thou are Yet Lying in Thy Bed

REMEMBER THAT Almighty God is about thy bed, and that he observes all the secret thoughts and workings of thy heart. Commune with thy heart upon thy bed (Psalm 4:4). It is good to remember God upon your bed, as was David's practice. The law of God was his meditation by night, as well as by day. When he meditated on God in the night-watches, he was as one satisfied with marrow and fatness (Ps. 63:5). Meditation and prayer may best be practised when we are freest from disturbance, in the night, or upon our beds after we awake. Nobody then is troublesome to us. Then we have a greater freedom and tranquillity of our thoughts, when we are not molested with business, when there is none that can hinder us from having access to God, when our mind, knitting itself together, is able diligently to make reference of all to the Physician of souls. At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God, being thrust into an inner prison, having their feet made fast in the stocks (Acts 16:24-25). Neither the rending of their clothes, nor their stripes and bonds, could hinder them from it. Nay, they did so much the more show their fervency toward the Lord. *"I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night,"* says David (Ps. 119:55). The night presents us with many opportunities of deeper meditation. Beware of plotting ill designs upon your beds. It is said of the wicked man, that *"he deviseth mischief upon his bed,"* (Ps. 36:4). He there employs his time of rest and freedom from business, to devise wicked acts to execute the next day.



SECTION 8

When Thou Risest Out of Thy Bed in the Morning

THINK HOW ALMIGHTY God can as easily raise thee out of the grave in the morning of the resurrection, from the sleep and bed of death, as he hath awakened thee in thy bed, and raised thee up in health and safety this morning. When the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, the sound of this trumpet shall be heard over all parts of the world, and with this trumpet shall he summon all nations to come to the general judgment. This is that fearful voice whereof Jerome speaks saying, "Whether I eat or drink, or whatsoever I do, I seem always to hear that voice sounding in my ears, Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment."

Oh, who shall appeal from this summons? Who shall be able to avoid this judgment? Whose heart shall not quake and tremble at the sound of this terrible voice? This voice shall take from death all her spoils, and cause her to restore again all that she hath taken from the world. The sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell deliver up the dead which are in them (Rev. 20:13).

Think with thyself, O Christian, when thou art rising out of thy bed, what a wonderful sight that shall be, to see the sea and the earth bring forth, in all parts, such variety of bodies, and to behold so many huge armies rising out of their beds of death and darkness, and so many diversities of nations and people gathered and assembled together; to see the most mighty princes, and most powerful potentates of the earth, raised out of their tombs,

and appearing with another manner of habit and behaviour, and with thoughts much differing from those they had in this life.

Think then with thyself, that all the children of Adam shall meet together, every one to give up an account of his own life, and to be judged according to his works. Yet shall there be a great difference between the just and the unjust at the day of resurrection. Some shall rise to everlasting life and glory, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2).

Consider what a joyful meeting there will be of the souls and bodies of the just at the general resurrection. With what joy shall the soul then embrace the body, and, as it were, say thus unto it: "O my body, and faithful companion, that hast helped me in obtaining this glorious crown, that has so often fasted, watched, and prayed, that hath suffered with me the necessities of poverty, the cross of afflictions, the reproaches and contradictions of reviling tongues. How often hast thou stripped thyself of thine own raiment to clothe the naked! How often hast thou denied thyself, renounced thine own right and title, being unwilling to be at variance with thy neighbour! Wherefore it is meet that thou shouldst now be partaker with me of this my glory, as thou hast been my companion in all my labours and sufferings."

Think also with thyself of the grievous and woeful meeting of the souls and bodies of the wicked, at the day of their resurrection. The soul of such an one shall then say to his vile body: "O cursed body, the cause of my woe and misery. Now I take thee no more for my companion, but mine enemy. Now art thou no more my helper, but my persecutor. O cursed taste, how dearly now do I pay for thy delights! O wretched flesh, how have I, by yielding to thy lusts and pleasures, plunged myself into these endless torments! Is this the body that scarcely would touch the ground, that would not endure the wind to blow upon it; that body which I spent so much time in dressing and adorning? Is this the flesh which I so often glutted and pampered? Were these the delights of this body, for which I cast away myself? Was it for

this mass of corruption that I have lost forever the kingdom of heaven? O ye infernal furies, rise up now against me, and tear me in pieces! Cursed be the day of my unfortunate birth, seeing for a few short pleasures I must suffer everlasting torments.”

These, and other more desperate words, thou mayst think, Christian reader, shall the miserable soul speak unto that body, which she loved so exceedingly in this transitory life. I will set down the words of a devout man, as follows:

Tell me, O miserable soul, why dost thou now so much abhor that thing which heretofore thou lovedst so well? Is not this flesh thy dearly beloved? Is not this thy belly which thou madest thy god? Is not this the face which thou didst keep so carefully from wind and sun? Is not this the visage which thou didst paint with so many artificial colours? Are not these the arms and finger which glittered with rings of gold, bracelets and diamonds? Is not this the body, for whose sake search was made both by sea and land to furnish a table for it, with all delicate and dainty dishes; to have a soft and stately bed; to procure curious and sumptuous garments? Who hath now so changed thine affections? Who hath now made thy body to appear so horrible and deformed, which before seemed so amiable and beautiful?

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power,” (Rev. 20:6).



SECTION 9

When Thou Art Sluggish and Loth to Rise Out of Thy Bed

THINK THEN WITH thyself, O Christian, that thou hearest the voice of St. Paul, saying to the Romans, "*It is high time to awake out of sleep,*" (Rom. 13:11). "*Awake to righteousness, and sin not,*" (1 Cor. 15:34). It is not enough that you affect righteousness, and have the heart bent toward it in some measure, but you must awake to it. As men's spirits are fresh and renewed, and made more quick and active, when they awake out of sleep, awaken and quicken your souls to righteousness and holiness, as if you were to begin the work again, that so your spirits may be fresh, and your hearts active and lively in the service of God.

See how David stirreth up himself, "*Awake, psaltery and harp; I myself will awake early,*" (Ps. 108:2). "*Awake, psaltery and harp.*" Does David speak to these dead instruments? Does he not rather speak to his own affections, that they might be awakened and quickened, to make melody to the Lord in his heart, whilst he played with his hand upon the psaltery and harp? He knew that the harp, though ever so well tuned and managed, would make but dull and flat music in the ears of the living God, if the heart were not tuned, and the affections stirred up and quickened. Raise up thy heart to God, and the love of the world will little prevail with it, and the more able shalt thou be to discern the excellency of heavenly things. This is a special help against temptation, and a means to prevent it; and hereby thou shalt be fitted for a more free communion with the Lord, and the more able shalt thou be to feel the power of God in his ordi-

nances, and shalt abound in every good work, and shalt find great delight in the service of God.



SECTION 10

When Thou Art Putting on Thy Clothes

FIRSTLY, CONSIDER that *our first parents, in innocency, had no garments.* A garment is both the cover and the witness of man's perfidiousness and treachery against God his Creator. The innocency of our first parents was then a garment to them. As they were without clothing, so they wanted no clothing. They were naked, and knew not that they were naked. But after they had sinned, their sin made them sensible of their nakedness, and they made them aprons of leaves, seeking to hide that from their eyes which did displease their souls; and not being able to shun themselves, they endeavoured to cover themselves. But God himself, who was indulgent to them, cut out their first suit, and clothed them with the skins of beasts. This is one use of apparel, namely, to cover our nakedness, and to hide our body, which began to be shameful when it ceased to be innocent.

Another use of apparel is to shelter us from the injury of the seasons, and to protect our bodies from the rigour of the elements. For man no sooner violated God's commandment, but all the creatures rebelled against him; and those four bodies, whereof all our bodies are composed, declared war one against another to afflict us; and breaking the bounds which had been prescribed them, intrenched one upon another, that their division might be our punishment. Now man was bound to make himself clothes. He hunted wild beasts, and clothed himself with their skins, and robbed his subjects that he might defend himself against his enemies, and learnt to his cost that no apparel is proof for all seasons but that of innocency. Here then let every

man see his own fault in his apparel, which is a sensible token of his disobedience; and would he govern himself by reason, he would, as it were, chastise his body as oft as he puts on his clothes. And yet many now seem to have a design to outbrave Divine justice, to glory in its punishments, to make that serve for their glory which ought to serve for their shame. Adam was never so ashamed as when he was forced to clothe himself. The skins he wore were the apparel of a penitent. He never clothed himself, but he bewailed his loss of innocency. And when cold weather made him put on more clothes, he considered how the irregularity of the seasons was the punishment of his sin. His wife knew not as yet the art of trimming and decking herself. All the eloquence of her degenerate daughters could not persuade her, that that which was a punishment of her disobedience could add unto her beauty. If thy clothes or ornaments are commendable, the praise is rather due to those that made them, than to those that wear them. Whoever prides himself in a suit of apparel, intrencheth upon his tailor's right; and who values himself the more for the stuff or silk that he wears, injures the worms that spun it, and the workmen that wrought it. "Our glory ought to be within us," said Seneca, "and we ought not to be proud of a thing which we forego as oft as we put off our clothes."

2. *When you are putting on your clothes upon your bodies, let this put you in mind of putting on Christ*, as St. Paul exhorts (Rom. 13:14). Put on Christ, by faith in his justifying righteousness, for he is "*made unto us of God, wisdom and righteousness*," (1 Cor. 1:30). As many as have been baptized into Christ, have (thus) "*put on Christ*," (Gal. 3:27). This is our best clothing, even our wedding garment. "*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels*," (Isa.

60:10). Happy are those who are thus clothed, for they shall never be found naked.

3. *When you are putting off your old clothes, see that ye put off the old, man with all his works* (Col. 3:9). “*That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,*” (Eph. 4:22, 24). As it is in apparel, we must first put off an old suit before we can draw on a new. So here, we must put off the old man, that is, the old quality of our whole nature.

Also meditate, that *you are covered with sin as with a garment*. As a garment covers us, so sin covers us. But it is not this or that garment; not like an hat that doth only cover the head, nor like a glove that doth cover the hand only, or like a boot that doth cover the leg only, but it is like a garment that covereth us all over. Now, seeing we are covered with sin as with a garment, as we would cast off a garment, so must we cast off sin. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of our righteousnesses, calls them “*filthy rags,*” (Isa. 64:6). How filthy then are our sins! We must strip ourselves of them, and instead of them seek to have fair robes put upon us; as Joshua, the high priest, came out first in filthy garments, but those being taken off, fair robes were put upon him (Zech. 3:3-4).

We must not lay our sins aside as we do our garments. We lay our garments off at night, and put them on usually in the morning. We have our Sabbath-day garments, and our working-day garments. Those we wear one day in the week, these all the week long. We must not do thus with our sins. And yet I would there were not those that did thus. They lay off their sins as they lay off their garments. Indeed, they go off at night; for so long as they are asleep they think not of them, but in the morning they put them on again, and walk familiarly in them; or they put them off upon the Sabbath-day perhaps. When their Sabbath-day clothes are on, then they go as if they were covered with zeal and devotion. But with their week-day suits they put on their

week-day sins, and then day after day they as commonly practise one as they wear the other. As we are exhorted to put on Christ, so having put him on, we must keep him on, and not put him off again when we like. We are not so to put off sin as when we like to put it on again; rather put on shame than put on sin. In a word, though you are to cast off sin like a garment, yet not like a wearing garment, for then you will one time or other get it about you again; but, like a leprous garment, like a diseased garment, like a prison garment, as Joseph left his prison garments when he was brought before Pharaoh; and when they were once put off he never put them on again (Gen. 41:14). So should we leave off our sins; not only lay them apart, but quite cast them away, never to resume them anymore.



SECTION 11

When You are Going to Dress Yourself

THINK WITH YOURSELVES, how pride and the vain fashions of the times do draw many into such a garb of attire, as makes them long in dressing themselves in the morning. Resolve against this, and do you wear such habits as may be soon put on. Our first parents were clad in beasts' skins, the prophets wore rough garments, and John Baptist was clothed in camels' hair; and many of the ancients say, that the blessed virgin had a mean habit, only to cover, not to adorn her body. The Lacedæmonians had a law, that none but harlots might wear rich apparel, [so] that honest women might be brought out of love with dress, and not spend much time in decking themselves. It is a piece of great folly to spend so much time in the morning in decking and adorning the body, that must ere long be the food of worms, whilst you pass away many days, weeks, months, and years, altogether neglecting the soul that must live forever. If St. Paul durst not glory but in the cross of Christ, how darest thou to pride thyself, and spend much time about these vanities!

Consider with thyself, what is the design of those who delight in sumptuous apparel, and spend so many hours in trimming themselves? Is it not to please those who look upon them, and to entangle souls in their nets? Indeed, some people do not care to dress themselves when they are alone. Solitariness is an enemy to pomp. As peacocks close up their plumes when nobody beholds them, so these neglect their dressing when nobody admires them. And when they have neither spectators to observe them, nor any to flatter them, self-love is not of force enough to make them long or curious in dressing themselves. It is better to go in

our dress as the wild Indians, than have those precious hours of the morning, especially on the Lord's days, to answer for, as too many have; yea, and those who wear dress above their degree.



SECTION 12

When You are Beholding Your Face in a Glass, and Dressing Yourselves By It

ONSIDER, THAT THE first use of glasses was, that thereby men and women might the better know themselves; that the most amiable persons might learn to shun all infamous things, and not defile the dignity of their persons with the deformity of their manners. But our glasses now have lost their primary institution, and make many persons to forget themselves, and like Narcissus, to dote upon their faces, thinking that every one that sees them should admire them.

Consider also, that there are divers glasses that we may look in, to observe and see what manner of persons we are, or ought to be: the glass of nature; the glass of example; the glass of conscience; the glass of God's word.

1. *The glass of nature.* That is a glass which the heavens, the earth, and every creature, hold up unto us. There is no creature that we can look upon, but we may behold in it either the face of God's glory, of his wisdom, of his eternal power and Godhead, or may see the image of that obedience and duty which we owe to God.

2. *There is the glass of example.* For what are the examples of those saints that we see before us in sacred Scripture, and in the acts and monuments of the church, but so many looking-glasses, by which we may learn to fashion and compose our lives according to the holy patterns which they give us? How many lively examples, and clouds of witnesses are set before us, in whom, as in so many glasses, we may behold the admirable graces and ready obedience of the saints, in those things whereat flesh and

nature stagger and draw back; yea, obedience in those things which might seem ridiculous unto men, and in such things as seemed contrary to natural affection, contrary to their profit, and in such things as made against their safety! The sight of those holy examples should make us cry out, O Lord our God, how wonderful are thy works which thou dost by the hands of thy servants! How wonderful are thy graces which thou causest to shine in their lives!

3. *There is the glass of conscience.* Though we wanted other directions, yet if we would but daily look into this glass, if we would but reflect upon ourselves, and turn our eyes inward to view our own consciences, then should we find a glass representing to us good and evil in their right forms and colours. If a man look frequently into this glass, he may cry out with the psalmist, "*Who can understand his errors?*" (Ps. 19:12). Who can count and number up the blemishes of his soul, and the errors of his life?

4. *There is the glass of the word of God.* That which of all others is the clearest and most perfect mirror, both to show us what indeed we are, and what we should be; to discover our spots and blemishes to us, that we may see them, and be directed how we may amend them.

The glass of nature has a power of conviction. Whoever looks not into it, and therein observes not God's power and wisdom, is an atheist. The glass of example has the power of direction. Whoso looks not into it, is negligent and perverse. The glass of conscience has the power of accusation. Whoso looks not into it, so as to discover and bewail his sins, is an hypocrite. The glass of God's word has the power of conversion. Whoso looks not into it, to learn the will of God, and to reform himself by it, is an infidel.

In a glass we behold the lineaments of our natural faces, and the outward form of our bodily structure. So in the glass of God's word we may behold the spiritual form of our hearts and

lives, and whatever inward corruption casts any stain upon us, we may thereby discern it and judge of it. *“By the law is the knowledge of sin,”* says the apostle (Rom. 3:20); namely, 1. Generally, because it makes us to know what sin is. 2. Particularly, because it makes us to know how far we are guilty of sin. But when the eye of our judgment, or the eye of our affection, is blinded or dimmed, though we stare at our spots and blemishes, yet we do not regard them. Therefore we must earnestly beg of God, that the veil that lies upon our minds may be taken away, that when we come to look into this glass, we may clearly see what it will show us, and represent unto us. Whoever looks into this glass, it will represent unto him his true image, and not delude his eye with any false shadow. We must not only labour to see our corruptions by the glass of the word, but when we see them, to reform them.

In Exodus 38:8, we read of a laver that Moses made of the looking-glasses that the Israelitish women brought unto him, to be set in the tabernacle. Devout and religious women were content to bestow those mirrors by which they were wont to dress their bodies, toward the making of an instrument whereby, through faith, they might sanctify their souls. This laver served the priests both to look in and to wash in. It was clear, that they might see themselves in it; and, if they had any impurity about them, they might also wash themselves with the water that ran out of it. Such a vessel is God’s word. It is a looking-glass, wherein we may see ourselves, and our own corruptions in it; but a laver too, to wash ourselves in it. *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?”* The answer is, *“By taking heed thereunto according to thy word,”* (Ps. 119:9).

If you are persons of quality, you may employ some one about you to read a chapter in the Bible whilst you are dressing; or the time may be employed by you in some profitable meditation, or godly conference with those about you, as far as your necessary occasions permit. And when you deck yourselves with

jewels and rich ornaments, take heed of being proud of them, or setting your hearts upon them. Beware of vain affectation in wearing them, and of wasting your estates upon them, for no persons are to bring poverty upon themselves and their children to make themselves fine. All your ornaments are but as marks of your sin and misery; and as a footman, who wears a gaudy livery, makes but his servitude more visible, so those that trim themselves finest, make but their shame more public.

Let men and women use what argument they can to excuse their vanity, they cannot deny but that their most gaudy apparel are the spoils of beasts, and that their ornaments are sought for in the bottom of the sea, or in the bowels of the earth. What is the matter whereof so many different silks are made, but the spinning of worms, and the sepulchre which those little animals make unto themselves before they die? What are pearls but the excrescence of certain shell-fish? What are diamonds and rubies but stones of a particular kind? And what is gold, which men disguise into so many shapes, which is sought for with so much labour, gotten many times so unjustly, and kept with so much care, but the refuse of the most barren soil, to which the fire gives lustre, and human error valuation? And what is the finest linen, wherewith multitudes of people are so much covered, and wherein the greatest part of their vanity consists, but a kind of herb and grass, which grows up and flourishes in the fields, withers and dies in a short time, which is turned with the spindle, stretched upon the loom, wrought with the shuttle, whitened in the dew, and at last cut into several shreds, wherewith the bodies of men and women are adorned? Must not those men or women have lost their judgment to be proud of such trifles? I deny not but it is lawful for some persons to wear ornaments, for we may not only wear that which serves for a covering to the body, but also that which may adorn it. But their adorning must not be so much that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, and of putting on of ap-

parel, as the hidden man of the heart (1 Pet. 3:3-4). Yet, in times of great calamity and afflictions, even the great must lay aside their ornaments, when the wrath and displeasure of God are broken out against a land or people. So the Lord said unto the people of Israel, *“Put off now your ornaments, that I may know what to do unto you,”* (Ex. 33:5). At such times we should rather appear in rags than in silks; with dust upon our heads, and sackcloth about our loins, than with ornaments upon our bodies, and chains of pearl about our necks.



SECTION 13

Of Our Dedicating the Morning to God

OD COMMANDED THE children of Israel, "*The first of the first-fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord,*" (Ex. 33:19). God would not only have the first-fruits, but the first of the first-fruits. If there were any ripe sooner than others, God called for them; which instructs us that we must not only give God the first-fruits of the day, but the earliest time in the morning, which is the first of the first-fruits of the day. This was the practice of holy Job in the behalf of his children: he "*sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all,*" (Job 1:5-6). As it is God's due, so it is our duty, to dedicate the morning, the first and best of every day, to God. David says unto God, "*My voice shalt thou hear in the morning: in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up,*" (Ps. 5:3). As the morning is a good friend to the muses, so it is a great friend to the graces. As the morning is the best studying time, so I judge the morning to be the best praying time. So Bildad speaks unto Job, "*If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes,*" (Job 8:5). In strictness of translation it may thus be rendered, "*If thou wouldest seek unto God in the morning;*" or, "*If thou wouldest morning God;*" be with him early in the morning, which is the first part or beginning of the day, then pour out thy heart unto God in prayer. It was the ancient custom to seek God early in the morning. And the very heathens, by the light of nature, took this course in their profane and superstitious worship. Herodotus relates, that the Persian magi addressed themselves early in the morning to pray. And the primitive Christians

were wondered at by the heathen for their early devotions. Pliny, in an epistle to the emperor Trajan, and Tertullian, in his apologetics for the Christians, speak of the assemblies of the Christians before day-break, to pray and call upon the name of God. And there has been, and still is, a superstitious abuse of this among the papists, who call their morning prayers their matins, because they begin early in the morning. “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God,*” says our Saviour (Matt. 6:33); first in time, not only principally, but in the first place. Seek it early in the morning; put it not behind to the latter end of the day, or in the latter end of your employments. It is best every day to begin with God. It is the advice of a reverend man,

If more necessary duties call you not away, let secret prayer by yourself alone, or with your chamber-fellow, or both, go before the common prayers of the family; and delay it not causelessly, but, if possible, let it be first before any other work of the day; yet be not formal and superstitious to your hours, as if God had absolutely tied you to such a time.

That hour is best for one, that may not be fit for another. Private prayer is most seasonable unto most, as soon as they are up and clothed. To others, some other hour may be freer and fitter. And those that have not more necessary duties, may do well to pray at all convenient opportunities.



SECTION 14

Of Retiring Ourselves in the Morning to Pray and to Give Thanks

IT IS GOOD TO retire ourselves into our closets every morning betimes, to pray and give thanks unto the Lord. Here you may give thanks unto God for all benefits received in general, and particularly for those you have received the night past, and at that instant, that you may season the action with some new relish. But more especially when the Lord has vouchsafed you any special, and, perhaps, unexpected favour, it does not beseem you, as vain worldlings, to scorn every one to whom the Lord has not opened the hand of his bounty so wide as to yourselves, but rather in an humble sense of your unworthiness, and admiration of God's goodness, to retire yourselves early, and pour out your hearts in prayer and thanksgiving before the Lord.

So when the Lord has given you special testimonies of his presence and favour, and revealed his love unto you more fully than ordinarily, it is a fit time for you to enter into your closets, there privately, and so the more freely, to open your hearts unto the Lord, and to confirm your acquaintance with your beloved, to endear yourself unto Jesus Christ, and to cast yourselves into his embracements. The Lord, by the prophet Ezekiel, speaking to the church of Israel, says, "*I passed by thee, and thy time was the time of love,*" (Ezek. 16:8). So a Christian should be watchful to observe the Lord passing by, and presenting himself, and take notice of the times of love, and then it will be his wisdom to spend some time in private prayer, meditation, and thanksgiving; and to that end I commend the morning as the fittest time for

this purpose. If we are frequent in this course, we shall grow more in favour with the Lord; whereas, when the Lord daily expresseth love and kindness to us, if we should show ourselves unkind and regardless of his love, this were the way to make him more strange unto us. And, indeed, the reason why we have no more communion with Christ, for the most part, is because we give him no better entertainment when he comes. A man of dignity, if he comes to visit a friend at his house, in the morning, and hears that he is yet in his bed, and will not rise to keep him company, or perceives that every small trifle keeps him out of sight, will not be an ordinary guest at that house. Now, God is said to visit us every morning; that is, as soon as the day breaks, or the sun is up, God is visiting. *“What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him, and visit him every morning,”* (Job 7:17-18). Our visits are usually in the afternoon. It is an extraordinary thing to visit one in the forenoon, especially very early in the morning. God’s visits are extraordinary. He visits in the morning, and visits every morning; as often as the morning returneth, so often does he come and visit us. God visits us, as one says, in a morning as a shepherd visits his flock, lest any should be hurt or strayed away. As sure as the sun rises, or the morning comes, so God visits us with mercies. Therefore his mercies are said to be renewed every morning (Lam. 3:23).



SECTION 15

Of Thanksgiving

THIS IS VERY necessary to be performed every morning, considering the benefits we receive continually from the hand of God. We should not be like the clouds, that obscure the sun that raised them, but let us rather imitate the looking-glass, which returns the image presented it.

In the time of the law, it was commanded that the fire on the altar should never go out, but be always kept burning. By that same fire, Philo says, thankfulness was signified. For as the fire still ascendeth upwards, so thankfulness lifteth up our hearts, and makes them ascend unto God. And it is fit that the Divine benefits should never be forgotten, as the fire of the altar was never to be extinguished. It well becometh the righteous to be thankful (Ps. 33:1). We are apt to like any habit, any dressing, any fashion or gesture, that makes us graceful and comely in the places where we are. Now, praise, says the psalmist, is a comely thing (Ps. 33:1). It renders us lovely and amiable, both in the eyes of God and man. Whereas unthankfulness, on the other side, like some sordid disguise, or like some ugly blemish upon the body, makes us monstrous and deformed in the eyes of the beholders. The creatures teach us the duty of thankfulness. The air draws us up vapours out of the earth, and when it hath turned the vapours into showers, it poureth them into the earth again, and moisteneth its dry ground. The earth has seed cast into her bosom. She keeps it not long, but she returns it back again with profit to the husbandmen; interest with the principal, thirty, sixty, and an hundred-fold. You know what Solomon says of the sea, *“All rivers run into the sea,”* (Eccl. 1:7), to note the

place whence they return, and to which they go. Bernard has a meditation upon it, that God is as the sea, and we should be as the rivers. All blessings come from God, as rivers from the sea; and as rivers to the sea, so we should return our praises to him. Indeed, that is as much as we can do, and so much we should do.

This act, as one observes, consists in these things. First, in the memory, which represents to the understanding the benefits received. Then the understanding considers the hand that gives them, and to whom, and how, and by what ways and means, and in what measure. Thereupon an affectionate acknowledgment is made in the will, which, not able to continue idle, spreads itself into outward acts, to testify the fervour of its affection. Now, to practise this will, it is requisite that we should make and keep a catalogue of all the benefits of God. Bless God especially for the benefits of creation, preservation, redemption, vocation, and for all other secret benefits particularly received.

1. *For the benefits of creation.* Consider what thou wast before thou wast created, even nothing, and that from the very beginning thou wast nothing, and that nothing could not make itself anything. Now, he that drew this great universe out of the chaos and darkness of nothing to the light of being and life, out of his mere grace, hath shown upon thee his almighty power, to bring thee to a being, and make thee something; and not a stone, not a bird, not a toad, not a serpent, but a man, one of the most noble creatures in the world. He made thee as a little miracle of nature, with the adornments of so many pieces well compacted together, to bear in thine aspect the beams of his own majesty. He framed this thy body, and beautified it in all parts, both with members and senses, and that with such curious art and wonderful providence, that every one of them, if they be well considered, is of itself a great wonder and a great benefit. This Job humbly and thankfully acknowledged: "*Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay. Hast thou not*

poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews,” (Job 10:8-11).

Our making and natural constitution are to be reckoned among the great benefits received from God. *“I will praise thee,”* says David, *“for I am fearfully and wonderfully made,”* (Ps. 139:14).

The greatest wonders of man’s creation are unseen. God hath placed many rarities, mysteries, and wonders, in man’s chest. All the vital instruments and wheels, whereby the watch of our life is in perpetual motion, from the first hour to the last, are locked up in a curious internal cabinet, where God himself prepared the pulleys, hung on the weights, and wound up the chime, by the hand of his infinite power, without opening of any part; as a learned anatomist of ours has elegantly instructed us in the preface to his sixth book.

Consider what usefulness and commodiousness, beauty and convenience, meet together in every part. What beauty is stamped on the face! What majesty in the eye! What strength is put into the arms and back! What activity into the hands! What music and melody are in the tongue! Nothing in this whole fabric could be well left out, or better placed, either for ornament or for use.

But the excellency of man consisteth in his soul; and as man was the principal part of the creation, so the soul is the principal part of man. God, by a Divine breathing, communicated this fountain of life, which heavenly principle, without noise or delay, diffused itself entire into the body, remaining nevertheless whole in every part. The frame of the body is an exquisite frame. But the frame of the soul, the faculties and powers, motions and operations, of the soul are far more exquisite. The inhabitant is more noble than the house, and the jewel than the cabinet; and so great is the capacity of the soul, that all the things of the world put together are not able to satisfy it. Besides, there is no ability,

no perfection, in any creature here below; but that a man hath the same in him in a higher and far greater perfection, and by the capacity of his soul he is able to attain unto it. Whereby it is manifest that God, by giving us this thing alone (namely, our soul), hath given us therewith at once all things together. This consideration should ever make thee thankful to thy most gracious and bountiful Lord, for this surpassing great benefit.

2. *Be thankful to him for thy preservation, and the benefits thereof.* Consider that God hath not only created thee in so great glory and dignity, but it is he also that preserveth thee, for thou art not able to live one moment, nor to move one step, without him. Consider also, how he hath created all things in the world for thy use and service. Yea, he hath appointed the very angels in heaven to be thy guard and defence. They are all officers in this great house and family of God, unto whom are committed the defence and safeguard of men. Here consider the particular favours received from God in your birth, nourishment, education, instruction; in gifts of soul and body; in means and conveniences; in health, strength, life, sustenance, and all other temporal helps and succours; in friends, allies, kindred; in thy calling, profession, and state of life; in a continued protection, in deliverance from so many dangers, and freedom from manifold miseries into which thou seest others to fall every day, and thou thyself mightest also have fallen into the same, had not Almighty God of his great mercy preserved thee; in guiding thee through the degrees of ages, wherein every one in his own particular may acknowledge infinite passages of the Divine providence. How should the consideration thereof, together with the circumstances of each benefit, make thee to cry out with the psalmist David, “*Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?*” (2 Sam. 7:18).

3. *Be exceeding thankful for thy redemption.* We are all by nature in miserable bondage to sin and Satan, and we have all sold ourselves for nought (Isa. 52:3); and by thus selling our-

selves to sin and Satan, we have put ourselves out of our own into their dominion, and during that state abide wholly to be disposed of at their pleasure. They are now become our lords, and no drudgery do we refuse, be it ever so irksome or burdensome, whereabout they may please to employ us. Now, how should all God's redeemed ones ascribe honour and glory to their God, acknowledging the infinite love and abundant grace of God, in procuring redemption for poor bond-slaves, captives, prisoners; that he hath appointed and anointed a Redeemer, to preach glad tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord; to proclaim a jubilee, a year of release to prisoners and bondmen! (Isa. 61:1-2). *"O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy,"* (Ps. 107:1-2). It was a custom among the Romans, when any of their commanders had gotten a great victory, and obtained the honour of a public triumph, if he had delivered any of his countrymen by this victory, who before were captives among the enemies, these redeemed ones used to attend the triumphant chariot of the conqueror, when he entered the city, thereby to do him homage, and to set forth the glory of his victory. In this case it becometh those whom the Lord hath redeemed from sin, from Satan, from the curse of the law, and from everlasting destruction, to wait upon their triumphant Redeemer, and do him all possible honour, and give him all praises and thankful acknowledgments for their redemption, procured by his victory over all those enemies and evils.

4. *Bless the Lord for thy vocation, that he hath called thee out of darkness into his marvellous light by his word and Spirit; that he hath taken thy soul to be his spouse, and decked it with the gifts and graces of his Spirit. What had become of thee if thou hadst been born among infidels, who are "without Christ, being*

aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world,” (Eph. 2:12); who wanting the knowledge of the true living God, worshipped stocks and stones for God; or among many that perish in ignorance and profaneness, that are under the sound of the word, to whom the gospel is hid, whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded, *“lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them,”* (2 Cor. 4:4). Bless the Lord that it pleased him that thou shouldst be born in the lap of truth, and be nourished there with the sincere milk of the word, and with the promises of Jesus Christ. Consider how long God waited for thy conversion, giving thee space to repent; and how he suffered thee so long to continue in that state of sin and wickedness, and did not cut down such an unfruitful and unprofitable tree that cumbered the earth, and received the influence of heaven so long in vain. Consider likewise, how many good inspirations and holy purposes he breathed into thy heart, even in the midst of thy very sins and wicked life, and that he persisted in calling thee so long a time; and, at length, to bring thy great stubbornness and obstinate resistance, so long continued, to an end. Consider how he called thee with such a mighty, loud, and effectual voice, that thereby thou mightest rise from death to life, and come forth, as it were another Lazarus, out of the dark and obscure grave of thy wicked and sinful life, and not with thine hands and feet bound, but loosed and set at liberty out of the prison and thralldom of the enemy of mankind. Praise the Lord for granting thee, not only pardon for thy sins past, but also grace from that time forward, not to return to thy former bondage; and likewise that he has given thee a sweet taste and savour of the things of his Spirit, which before seemed very unsavoury to thee, and withal a loathsomeness and mis-liking of the things of the flesh and of the world, which before were very delightful to thee. Then think with thyself unto how many God hath denied this benefit, which

he hath so freely granted unto thee; and whereas thou being as unworthy of this calling as they, yet it hath pleased God to suffer them to continue in their impenitency and obstinacy, and to call thee unto the state of grace and salvation. Oh what thanks and service dost thou owe unto him for this inestimable benefit!

5. *There are other benefits that are given to particular persons, which none other knoweth but he that has received them,* for which we are bound to give thanks unto the Lord, forasmuch as they are more certain tokens of the special and particular love and providence that the Lord bears towards us. Such benefits as these cannot be written in books, but every one is to write them in his heart, and so to join them with the other general benefits, and to give most humble thanks unto the Lord for them. There are also other benefits more secret, which are unknown, or scarcely observed by the party who receives them. These are certain snares and unseen dangers which the Lord often prevents and disappoints by his providence, knowing what great prejudice they might do unto us, did not he prevent them and disappoint them. Who is able to recount how many dangers he hath escaped, from how many temptations God hath preserved him, from how many occasions of sin he hath delivered him, how often he hath stopped the plans and taken out of the way the subtle and deceitful snares of the devil, our vigilant adversary, that we should not fall into them? Likewise, a man may have many secret sins, which the person that commits them knows not. Wherefore, as touching these secret sins, we ought daily to pray with the psalmist, "*Cleanse thou me from secret faults,*" (Ps. 19:12). Even so it is requisite to yield to him every day most hearty thanks for this kind of benefit.



SECTION 16

Of Preparation to Prayer

BEFORE WE ENTER upon prayer, or thanksgiving, it is very requisite that there be first a preparation of our hearts to this holy exercise; doing herein as musicians, who use to temper and tune their lute, viol, or other instrument, before they play upon it. The son of Sirach gives good advice: "Before thou prayest, prepare thyself, lest thou be as one that tempteth God." In our Saviour's platform of prayer, the petitions are not set down abruptly, but a solemn preface is prefixed, like a fair porch to a beautiful house, to teach us to set our affections in due order, before we draw nigh to speak unto the Lord. God hath also expressly commanded, "*Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God,*" (Eccl. 5:2). It is a dangerous thing to babble out unadvised and undigested words in his ears. Prayer, and other holy duties, call for holy preparation. "*I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord,*" was David's resolution (Ps. 26:6). Job sent and sanctified his children, that is, he sent solemnly to his children to prepare themselves, warning them not to come to the sacrifice except they were sanctified. So Samuel said to the elders of Bethlehem, "*Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice,*" (1 Sam. 16:5). This sanctifying was a preparing of themselves, was a fitting of themselves, that they might be ready for the sacrifice. The very heathen had this notion. They would not admit any to come to their religious services unless they were prepared, therefore they had one that cried out to the people, when they came to sacrifice, "All ye that are unclean and profane, go far away from these sacrifices." Prepare yourselves unto

prayer, by considering the greatness and majesty of that God to whom you go to speak in prayer; for this consideration will teach you with what great humility and reverence it behoves such miserable creatures to speak unto a Lord of so great majesty as Almighty God is, concerning a matter of so great importance as your own salvation. How close shut ought you to have the gates of your understanding and will at the time of prayer from the cares and thoughts of the world, and open unto God alone, that in case he come to enter therein he be not driven back again, finding the gates shut against him, or the lodging-chambers taken up and pestered with other guests!

And to this end you may pray to be prepared and enabled to pray in this or the like manner:

Almighty God, I beseech thee be pleased to prepare my heart, and quicken mine affections, in this holy service of calling upon thy name. Make me to consider that thou into whose presence I am come, and have to do, art a God clothed with glory and majesty, and that I am dust and ashes, and a most vile and unworthy sinner. I beseech thee possess me with an awful reverence of thy glorious majesty, that I may watch over my thoughts, and have regard to my good behaviour before thee, lest my presumption and want of due respect to thy majesty should turn my prayers into sin. Give me a lively sense of my own wants, and a clear apprehension of those blessings I have received from thee, and of those mercies which in thy word thou hast promised to bestow, that I may be furnished with matter both for request and thankfulness, and may be able to pour out my soul abundantly before thee. Let thy Spirit of supplication sanctify my thoughts, guide my tongue, and help mine infirmities. Give me faith in thy promises, that I may come boldly unto the throne of thy grace; and let me find it is good to draw near to thee, my God, in prayer. Let the end of my praying be thy glory, and make me as ready to give thanks for blessings obtained, as to be earnest for mercies I stand in need of.

With this preparation mayest thou draw near to God in the morning, imploring God for the assistance and succour of his grace, whereby thou mayest the better bestow the following day in his service; and be earnest with God in thy preparation, to instruct thee how to do thy duty therein, and to direct thee to speak unto him in prayer with such attention and devotion, with such recollection and closeness of mind, and with such awe and reverence, as is to be used before so great a Majesty; and withal entreat him that thou mayest so spend that portion of time in this exercise of prayer, that in the end thou mayest arise from the same with new force and strength to do all such things as appertain to his service.

And that thou mayest the better fit thyself for thy morning prayer, go to bed with the thoughts of it over night, like those that intend to bake unleavened bread the next day, lay the leaven over night. So may a Christian, over night, think of what he will recommend unto God the next morning; and as soon as he wakes busy his mind about it, before any other thing enters therein; that so, his heart having indited a good matter, his tongue may be as the pen of a ready writer.

And forasmuch as the prayers of the righteous are acceptable with God, you will do well to consider in your prayers, both morning and evening, what a number of God's faithful people, both men and women, in this world, are at this time at the throne of grace, humbly confessing their sins to the Lord, and craving pardon for them, and begging such graces and blessings as are needful; with which persons you ought to join yourselves, that the present sweet remembrance of them may be a spur to your devotion, causing you to persevere in this holy exercise of prayer. Moreover, whenever you find yourselves cold and remiss in this duty, you may be ashamed, and check yourselves by the example of so many pious and devout persons, who with so good carefulness and diligence have continued so long a time in this

exercise of prayer without ceasing, daily offering up their bodies and souls unto God in sacrifice.



SECTION 17

Of Reading the Holy Scriptures

AFTER PREPARATION followeth reading, which ought not to be done lightly, nor passed over in haste, but with great deliberation and attention, applying thereunto your understanding, to comprehend such things as you read; and chiefly your affections, to taste those things which you understand. Before you pray in the morning, first read a chapter, or some select portion out of the word of God, and when thou comest to any place that may excite thine affections, and raise thy devotion, thou wilt do well to stay and pause a little upon it, and to make there a stand in thinking upon that matter which thou hast read, and in making some short prayer upon it.

Here let me advise: Let not thy reading be very long, lest it take up too much time, which ought otherwise to be employed; for it is good both to read and pray, if we can do both the one and the other. After thou hast read a while, think with thyself how many choice things then canst pick out of it.

Consider, what holy counsels and exhortations to a godly life! What threatenings against such sins! What dreadful examples of God's judgments upon such and such sinners! What blessings and rewards God promises to such graces and virtues! What wonderful deliverances God has wrought for his church in times past, and what singular blessings he has bestowed upon his faithful servants! Bring home these things to thine heart, and do not read them as matters of historical discourse, but as so many epistles sent down to thee from God out of heaven; and read them with that reverence as if God himself stood by, and spake these words unto thee. It is written of a certain devout and godly

bishop, that he would always read the Holy Scriptures kneeling upon his knees. And whatever thou thus readest, let it be either to confirm thy faith or increase thy repentance.



SECTION 18

Of Meditation, and the Fittest Season For It

WHATEVER THE THING be that we are to meditate upon, whether of the life and passion of our Saviour Jesus Christ, or of any other thing that may be figured by imagination, as of death, the day of judgment, of heaven, or hell, we may then represent every one of these matters in our imagination in such manner as it passed, as if in the very same place where we are, all the same passed before us in our presence. This manner of meditating serves to this end, that by means of such a representation of these things, we may have the more lively consideration and feeling of them in us. Imaginary meditation is commonly a great help to oblige the mind to attend to her work, after the manner of bees, which work their honeycomb within their own hives.

Some commend the morning as the fittest time to busy our minds in holy meditation, for these reasons:

1. *Because they find it was the practice of David*, that man of meditation. He said unto God, “*When I awake, I am still with thee*,” (Ps. 139:18). That is, When I awake in the morning, I am taken up with meditations of God. Divine meditations were daily David’s waking and first thoughts.

2. *Because then the mind, a man’s intellectual and cogitative faculty, is fresh*, and more free from the hurrying businesses of the world, which fall out every day, and are apt to distract the mind in this holy duty.

3. *Because if the mind be first seasoned with holy meditation, it tends much to keep both mind and conversation in an holy frame all the day after*; for oftentimes what a man’s first thoughts

are, they become his frequent thoughts on that day. If a man begins the day with vain, worldly, or revengeful thoughts, they are apt to lodge in his heart all the day long. Such thoughts are intruding and abiding guests.

4. *Because God restores to us his mercies every morning.* New mercies do attend us every morning, and these renewed mercies should oblige us to renew our thoughts and meditations on God every morning.



SECTION 19

Of Petition

IT IS THE HONOUR of God, that all creatures sue unto him and depend upon him, that all need his help, and that so many petition him for it from day to day. He is the God who hears prayer, therefore unto him shall all flesh come (Ps. 65:2). The highest glory that God has on earth, is, that so many thousands come daily thronging to and knocking at the gate of heaven. A certain great emperor coming into Egypt, to show the zeal he had to the public good, said to the Egyptians, "Draw from me as from your river Nile." But what can be drawn from a man but hopes, which swell like bubbles of water till they burst? It is from God that we must draw, for he is a fountain which perpetually distils, who quenches the thirst of all the world.

Our Saviour, having taxed the abuses in prayer, sets down a perfect platform (Matt. 6:9-13), where we have, 1. A command; and, 2. A pattern. "*After this manner,*" or "*Thus pray ye,*" which may have reference as well to the matter as the manner, yea, to the order and method. But here we understand it not according to the method, as though we were bound to order our petitions always thus. We have some short prayers elsewhere specified in the New Testament, where we find not this order, and therefore that I think is arbitrary. Therefore, this may have reference, chiefly, to the matter of our prayers. Let this be the matter of your prayers, and to the affection, pray with such affections as are intimated in this prayer.

So that here are condemned all wicked and unlawful requests, as when men wish mischief unto others out of private

malice; when they wish the accomplishment of their unlawful desires; when they pray for those things that tend to the dishonour of God and the damage of his church; and, on the other hand, when they pray not with such affections as are insinuated in the prayer.

In the preface, which makes way to the prayer, you may see,

- I. Who must pray.
- II. For whom we must pray.
- III. To whom we must pray.
- IV. Through whom we must pray.
- V. How we must pray.

I. *Who must pray.* The question may have a double meaning.

1. *Who ought to pray?* To which I answer: All, because all owe unto God all service, honour, and worship, whereof prayer is a special part. In him all live, move, and have their being. Yea, nature teaches man to acknowledge and seek to Deity for the supply of its wants. All owe this debt, though all cannot pay it, and none so as is required.

2. *Who may and can pray in an acceptable manner unto God?* I answer: Only believers. They alone can truly call him, Father. They only have received him by faith (John 1:12). "*How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?*" (Rom. 10:14). This shows the misery of an unbeliever. He cannot come to God.

II. *For whom we must pray.* I answer: Not only for ourselves, but for all the household of faith especially; more largely for all that belong to God, whether called or uncalled; more generally for all men, as St. Paul says (1 Tim. 2:1); that is, all sorts and conditions of men, especially for the sovereign, and all that are in authority; our pastors, ministers, all that bear rule in the church or commonwealth, and for all the members of the catholic church; for our parents, masters, children, servants, and those

that be nearest unto us; and men that in special do want our prayers, in public and private calamities.

Object. But we must ask according to the will of God.

Ans. Yes, according to his revealed will. We must not, can not, look into his secret will, to see who are there excluded from his mercy. But those who are excluded in his revealed will we must not sue for, [such] as the devils, and those who have sinned against the Holy Ghost, if we knew them.

Object. But do we not worship God in vain, when we pray for whom the Lord will not hear us?

Ans. I answer: No. Our prayer shall return into our own bosoms, as it was with the psalmist, when he prayed for his enemies (Ps. 35:13).

III. *To whom must we pray?* I answer: Unto God, who is there called a Father – a word of nature, or person. In the former sense [it is] taken for the holy Trinity; in the latter for the first Person. Here you may understand it both ways, in a compound sense. First, that you are to direct your prayers to God, the whole Divine nature, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and then withal to the Father first in order, through the Son, by the Holy Ghost. All are here condemned who pray unto any other. No one is to be prayed unto but whom we may call our heavenly Father, which is not due to any creature.

IV. *Through whom must we pray?* I answer: Through Christ alone. For through him, and none other, does God become our Father. By him we have the privilege of adoption, and are made sons and daughters. “*We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins,*” (1 John 2:1-2). No one can be our mediator of intercession unto God but he that is the propitiation, appeasing him, and satisfying his wrath due unto our sins; and therefore no saint nor angel must be employed in this office. There is but one Mediator of redemption and intercession between God and man, even Christ Jesus, who is both God and man.

V. *How must we pray?* 1. As to a Father. 2. As to a Father which is in heaven. And therefore, [we pray] to one that is willing and ready to help, infinite in majesty and sovereignty, seeing and knowing all things, our hearts and wants. This should teach you to pray with boldness, confidence, reverence, understanding, and sincerity. Pray with boldness, as to a Father; with confidence and reverence, as to an heavenly Father; with sincerity and understanding, as to him that seeth your hearts.

The things that we are to pray for, every morning at least, may be reduced to these heads – namely, that you may not offend God this day; that you may not want grace, light, and strength, to resist those temptations which most assail you, and those sins to which you are most inclined; that you may practise those virtues which are most necessary for you; that you may be guided this day by God’s good providence, in all that concerns your soul, body, and estate; also, that you may obtain new favours and assistance for the necessities of your neighbours, which you may set before him.

This kind of supplication, among other benefits, hath this withal, that it daily reneweth in the soul some good purposes and desires of virtues, and moveth it to be the more earnest to do that thing, which it hath so frequently and so earnestly desired. Such as pray earnestly in very deed, will not suffer their hearts to commit any thing that is unseemly for such an exercise, but will ever have their eyes upon God, with whom a little before they talked and were conversant. And so by that cogitation they put away from them all the suggestions of the devil, when they consider what an heinous matter it would be that he that had a little before talked with Almighty God, and desired of him chastity and holiness, with all other virtues, should immediately run to his enemies’ side, and open the gates of his soul to receive filthy and dishonest delights, and suffer the devil to place himself in that heart, which a little before was the temple of the Holy Ghost.

A FORM OF PETITION, COMPOSED BY THOMAS AQUINAS

O God, give unto me, and unto all those whom I commend in my prayer, an understanding to know thee, an affectionate devotion to seek thee, a wisdom to find thee, a conversation to please thee, a perseverance boldly to wait on thee, a faith happily to embrace thee. My God, so order it that I may be wounded with thy sufferings into repentance, that in this life I may use thy blessings in grace, and enjoy in the other eternal joys in glory. Amen.



SECTION 20

Of Offering Ourselves to God

NE ACT OF TRUE devotion is, that a man should every morning offer up, and make a resignation of himself unto God, which is an absolute parting with himself, and a putting himself under the power, wisdom, and sovereignty of God, to be commanded, ordered, and disposed in all things by him according to his will. This work of resigning ourselves to God, must be always doing whilst we are in this world. When God has wrought upon the heart by effectual persuasions, and by his mighty power, the Lord saith to the soul, *"I am thy God,"* and the soul answers in truth, *"And I am thine;"* as David, *"O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant,"* (Ps. 116:16). Now is the resignation actually made. But though this be done, yet it is still always doing whilst we are here upon earth, nay, to eternity; for it is a thing that consists of an iteration of multiplied acts. As wedlock is not one single act of persons giving themselves each to the other, but, if they live as married persons ought, there is a daily giving of themselves each to the other; their hearts go out every day with complacency and delight, willingly renewing the bond, and making the contract yet firmer and firmer.

The end of this resignation of yourselves to God is, that in all things you may be commanded, ruled, and governed by him; to have the will of God to be your bounds, and to have it for your rule and pattern. To be bounded by God, is to do nothing but what God doth either command or warrant. All things are not commanded a Christian that he may do, but commands and warrants are the utmost latitude of that liberty which is left us.

We have no further to go, and we need not. There is scope enough to keep within these limits. David says, *"I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceedingly broad,"* (Ps. 119:96). It is as if he had said, "I have walked over the fair plains of every creature, I have viewed the extent of all excellence in them, and I could look beyond it; but when I look upon the commandment of God, as it is either mandatory or promissory, it is of so vast dimensions, so exceedingly great, that it exceeds all things in the world; there is room enough for the spirit of a man that is in true subjection unto God." Now, as we need not step beyond this bound, so if we do, it is dangerous. It is but as a man that steps out of a way, and falls into a pit; or one that steps from his house, and falls into a prison. For this very thing God threatens Israel, because they had withdrawn from him, that he would feed them as a lamb in a large place (Hos. 4:16); that is, like a lamb not kept within its fold and appointed pastures, under the care of a watchful shepherd, but left to ramble at its own will.

And as to have the will of God your rule, is to do nothing but what agreeth with his will, so it is to do all that he requireth. This is that which the Lord thy God requires of thee, to do all those things that he has commanded thee. When you give yourselves to God, to be commanded and governed by him, it is to a subjection that is absolute, and not conditional.

Moreover, to be under his command and government, is for you to make the will of God your rule and pattern; namely, not only to do the things that are commanded, but to do it in that manner as they are commanded.

You must also be willing to be disposed by him according to his will; to be contented in every condition wherein God sets you; and though your case seem hard, and there is much in it that is grievous to nature, yet to lie down quietly under the hand and will of God.

A second branch of being willing to be at God's disposing, is

an indifferency of mind in respect of any possible change, whereunto you are called according to the wisdom and will of God. As a holy man well notes, when Zadok was by the ark, king David said unto him, *“Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it, and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him,”* (2 Sam. 15:25-26).

Let this be thy language, O Christian. If thou ownest God as thy Sovereign, and daily resignest up thyself to be disposed by him in all things, consider, that thou art as a sheep before the shepherd, that must change thy pasture at the shepherd’s pleasure; and as a soldier that must march hither and thither at the command of thy captain or general; or as a vessel in the house, that stands to be filled or emptied at discretion; or as a servant, that must come and go as he is bidden, and not to go to, or stay in any place at his own will.

Let it be your care every morning to consecrate all your affections and actions unto God; to offer up all your faculties, senses, thoughts, words, and works, and all that you are, remembering that saying, “It is the most wicked avarice to defraud God of the oblation of ourselves.” You may offer yourselves to God in this, or the like manner:

THE MANNER OF OFFERING OURSELVES TO GOD

O Lord, I am not mine own, but thine. I have engaged myself unto thee. I have felt thy power conquering and subduing me, and I yield myself to be thine forever. I should account it high injustice in me to arrogate any liberty to myself, seeing I have so solemnly parted with it into thy hands. I think it best to resign up myself to thee, and esteem it a great mercy thou wilt enter into a new engagement with me. I recommend the small service which I shall do this day to thy merciful conduct and assistance. O blessed Saviour, let it be from henceforward before thine eyes, to direct, correct, and perfect it. I offer it, and all

that I am, to thee, with my whole affection, both for myself and all the faithful, in the union of that most perfect intention, which thou hadst when thou prayedst on earth to thy Father in heaven.



SECTION 21

Of Contrition

WHEN THOU COMEST into the presence of God in the morning, having considered the multitude of thy sins, and seen thyself overcharged with the burden of them, see that thou humble thyself, and let thy heart be pierced with godly sorrow, contrition, and compunction of spirit; for the furtherance whereof thou mayest help thyself with a very devout consideration of an ancient father, which I shall set down, with some little variation.

Behold I, a vile wretch, have greatly offended thy Divine Majesty; I am afraid to lift up mine eyes to heaven. I desire to strike myself, with that publican in the gospel, that God may be merciful to me a sinner. I desire to enforce myself, and to take arms against mine own wickedness, and to judge myself, that I may not be judged of the Lord. If my blessed Lord and Saviour has been so reproachfully handled for my sake, if he hath suffered such grievous pains and torments for the sins that I have committed, why should not I abuse and abhor myself, being the very person that hath sinned? I am he that has despised Almighty God. I am he that has endeavoured to crucify afresh the Son of God, and methinks that the whole frame of this world crieth out against me with open mouth, saying,

“This is he that has offended and despised our common Lord. This is that wicked wretch that has rather been moved with the guileful baits of the devil, than with the great benefits of Almighty God. This is he that could never be induced to virtue and goodness with the cords of love and sweet entertainments of Almighty God, nor even be affrighted with his terrible threatenings and dreadful judgments. This is he that, so much

as lieth in him, has defaced the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Lord, and cast contempt upon them. This is he that has been more afraid to offend a weak mortal man, than that God that can cast both soul and body into hell. This is he that has been more ashamed to commit a sinful act before a rude country peasant, than before the presence of the all-seeing God. This is he that has preferred the dross of the earth before heavenly treasures.”

Wherefore all creatures do cry out against me after this manner, and say,

“This is he that has wronged us all; for whereas he ought to have employed us in the service, and to the glory of our Creator, he has made us to serve his lusts, and the will and pleasure of the devil, perverting all such things to the injury and reproach of the Creator, which he had created for his service. His soul was adorned with the image of God, and he has disfigured this Divine image, and clothed it with our vile image and likeness. He has been more earthly than the earth itself, more unstable than the water, more mutable than the wind, more inflamed in his appetite than the fire, more hardened than the stone, more cruel to himself than the wild beasts, more spiteful and venomous against others than the cockatrice. He has neither feared God, nor regarded man. He has not been contented alone to be injurious to God, but would have many others to be partakers with him in sinful practices.

Now, what shall be said of his other abominable practices? Such has his pride been, that he refused to be in subjection unto God. He would not submit his neck under the sweet yoke of his obedience, but would rather live as he listed, and fulfil his own will in every point, rebelling against the Lord, and vexing his Holy Spirit. How exceedingly was he enraged, if God did not grant him all his desires, or if he sent any crosses, or troubles, for his trial and exercise! He loved to be applauded in all his doings whether good or bad.”

And now consider, O my soul, whether all creatures may not justly cry out against thee, and say, “Come, let us destroy this wicked wretch from off the face of the earth, that has done so

much wrong to our Creator." May not the earth say, "Why do I bear such a cumbersome wretch?" May not the water say, "Why do I not drown him?" May not the fire say, "Why do I not burn and consume him?" May not hell say, "Why do I not swallow him up, and torment him?"

Alas! miserable wretch that I am! What shall I do? Whither shall I go, seeing all creatures are in arms against me? Where shall I hide my head? Who will receive me who have offended all creatures? The great God I have despised, the angels I have grieved, the saints I have dishonoured, men I have offended and scandalized, and all creatures have I most wickedly abused. Whither then shall I flee for shelter, forasmuch as I have made all things to become mine enemies? I look round about me, and can see nothing that will take my part. Yes, even mine own conscience barks against me, and all my bowels accuse me, and rend me in pieces.

Wherefore, weep continually, O my soul. Lament thy wretchedness like a poor miserable creature, never cease weeping so long as thou livest in this vale of misery. Be still in expectation until thy merciful Saviour vouchsafes to turn the eyes of his compassion towards thee, and with all possible humility and shame, cast thyself down at his feet, and cry out,

"Oh where can I find punishment enough to be avenged on myself, and tears enough to wash away mine offences! O Lord, I am that great enemy of thine, who has committed most wicked and abominable offences before thy face. I acknowledge myself guilty before thee. I beseech thee, O Lord, to cast the mantle of thy mercy over me, thy poor, wretched, miserable creature, and let the greatness of thy goodness overcome and cover my wickedness. Let the most sweet and loving Father rejoice at the coming home again of his prodigal son. Let the Good Shepherd rejoice at the recovery of his lost sheep. Oh, how happy and joyful shall that day be, when thou shalt cast thine arms about my neck, and give me the sweet embraces and kisses of peace! I will now take arms against myself therefore, and be more cruel and rigorous against myself than any other. I will loathe and despise myself, and from henceforth the face of

sin shall be more hideous to me than hell, and I shall desire to be despised and punished of all creatures, forasmuch as I have despised the Creator of them all. I am contented that all dishonours, reproaches, and punishments, do run upon me on every side, so that by them I may be brought to my most sweet and merciful Lord. And as for all honour, pleasure, and worldly delights, they shall be quite banished away from me, insomuch as the very names of them shall be heard no more in my house; I will seek nothing else but the honour of my Lord God, and the contempt and confusion of myself.”

Hitherto, or almost to this effect, are the words of the devout and ancient father.



SECTION 22

Of Family Worship

HERE I SHALL commend unto you the advice of a reverend divine. Let family worship be performed constantly and seasonably, twice a day, at that hour which is most free from interruptions, not delaying it without just cause. Be sure it be reverently, seriously, and spiritually done. If greater duty hinder not, begin with a brief invocation of God's name, and craving of his help and blessing through Christ, and then read some part of the Holy Scripture in order; and either help the hearers to understand and apply it, or if you are unable for that, then read some profitable book to them for such ends, and earnestly pour out your souls in prayer. Pretend not necessity against this duty, for it is but unwillingness, or negligence, that makes men remiss in family worship. The lively and constant performance of family duties, is a principal means to keep up the power and interest of godliness in the world, all which decays when these grow dead, slight, and formal.

Those families wherein this service of God is performed, are, as it were, little churches, yea, even a kind of paradise upon earth. And for this purpose, St. Paul, writing to Philemon, greets the church that is in his house (Phm. 2). And in like manner he sent salutations to the church of Corinth, from Aquila to Priscilla, and the church that was in their house (1 Cor. 16:19). But where family worship is not used, but either for the most part, or altogether neglected, those families may be termed no better than companies of profane and graceless atheists, who as they deny God in their hearts, so they are described by this, that they do not call upon the name of the Lord (Ps. 14:4). And the prophet

prays thus unto God: *"Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name,"* (Jer. 10:25).

Many parents take care only to enrich their children, to make them great and honourable in the world, to leave them large portions and estates, to provide rich connections for them, but take no care to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Nay, many parents are afraid their children should prove religious. Some parents cannot abide their children, whom they see to look a little towards Zion. Such parents, as one says, are the devil's children. But every parent ought to say of his children according to nature, as St. John did of his spiritual children, *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth,"* (3 John 4).



SECTION 23

The Importance of a Calling and Business

IT BECOMES EVERYONE to be truly diligent, and well employed in some lawful calling. God himself, both Father and Son, are said to work (John 5:17), and will admit of no loiterers. He that will have his penny, must work in his vineyard (Matt. 20:9). *“And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal,”* (John 4:36). No man, therefore, must be idle, or ill employed. He must work the works of God, that is, such as God sets him about and approves, without picking and choosing his own work. He must work while it is day, before *“the night cometh, when no man can work,”* (John 9:4).

Let me advise thee, O Christian, to improve time and business, that even thine idleness (if I may so call thy vacant hours), that is, thy necessary rest and leisure, may not be without some diligence, because they tend to fit thee for business. When thou liest down to sleep, let it be to this end, that thou mayest rise, and go about thy work, not to pamper sloth. If thou eat, do it to the same end as Elijah did, to walk in the strength of thy food the way that God sends thee, and not to gratify thine appetite. And when God puts thee at any time upon doing his will, be thou never better pleased than when God gives thee thy hands full of work, nor more restless, than when God does not employ thee.

It is the diligent hand that maketh rich; and *“the soul of the diligent shall be made fat,”* (Prov. 10:4; 13:4). If thou walk in God’s way, thou art in God’s keeping. But if thou straggle from the way of duty, thou art like enough to meet with a lion, as the disobedient prophet (1 Kings 13:24); or with a storm, a wreck, a whale, as fugitive Jonah, to swallow, not to save (Jonah 1:17).

But if thou walk diligently in thy calling, thou art within the hedge and pale of Providence, and under the guard of the holy angels (Ps. 34:7). Idleness is the enemy of health, the consumption of thrift, the foil of virtue, the hindrance of wisdom, and the hatred of God.

No man ever had larger possessions than Adam, who was the only absolute monarch of the whole world; nor was any mere man more noble, for he is styled, "*the son of God*," (Luke 3:38). If any exceeded him herein, it was only Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, and "*Heir of all things*," (Heb. 1:2). Yet God would not that either Adam in paradise, in the state of innocence, or his own Son appearing in our flesh, should be without a calling, or idle in it.

How many are there of the gentry, that are possessed with this opinion, that they must live at the height of their estates, and spend all their time in pleasures and idleness, no way conducing to the common good, but much to the prejudice of it; as if God, like Augustus, had built an Apragopolis, a city void of business, and a nursery of idleness and profaneness.

Multitudes there are in the city, that like the Athenians, find little to do, but to busy themselves to hear and tell news. Others spend most of their time in plays, and in visits, in the study of the times, fashions, modes, and compliments, erecting, as it were, an academy of idleness, to busy all vain persons; like that office set up at Rome by Tiberius, styled, "*a voluptatibus*." But this will be the doom of all idle persons; "*Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; where shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth*," (Matt. 25:30). Everyone, though ever so great and honourable, stands in God's family as a servant; as David professes himself to be (Ps. 116:16). Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant (Heb. 3:5), and servants are not idle.

Everyone must serve in some particular calling, wherein he must abide with God, whether it be in the magistracy, ruling with God, that is, for God, and being "*faithful with the saints*,"

(Hos. 11:12); and so he must be a servant unto all. Thus, as David, he may serve his generation by the will of God (Acts 13:36). Or whether it be in the ministry, so he is to be a servant of Jesus Christ. Thus St. Paul, in the behalf of all faithful ministers, *“We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake,”* (2 Cor. 4:5). Yea, the master of the family must be a servant to the family, else the family will not abide in good state and order.

See that you do not only labour, but that the thing you are diligent in, be worth your labour. Join choice with diligence, and see that you guide all your affairs with discretion. Meddle with nothing, till you are able to answer yourselves this question, What is it good for? Is it my calling, or within it? or in the way to it? Does it prepare me for it, or quicken me in it? Does it make me work more cheerfully, or fruitfully?

See that ye do your own business, as St. Paul advises (1 Thess. 4:11). I do not mean that you should refuse to do business for others if they desire it, and that it may be for their good. But look, that what ye do for yourselves, or others, be confined within the limits of your duty, place, and calling. Meddle not with things beside your calling. God furnishes every man with abilities suitable to his calling, because therein he works for God; but not with sufficiencies for another calling, because therein he works for himself, or rather indeed against himself. As a reverend divine observes: For he that steps out of his calling, offends God, and so runs himself into danger. He is as a soldier, who having his station appointed him by his general, goes to another; or as a bird wandering from her nest where she is safe, becomes liable to be caught in nets, to be shot, or made a prey to other ravenous fowls. As Christians, you must seek the kingdom of God in the first place, and do God’s work before your own. But in business of your own particular calling, see that you not only abide with God, as not departing from him or it; but labour for God, that so you may please him that hath called you.

Among all businesses, set upon that which most concerns you to look after, having an eye to God's command, and the good of human society. And in the midst of outward employments, labour to have your conversation in heaven, and to do your earthly business with an heavenly frame of heart. Let not your hearts be taken up, nor taken away with, the things of the world, but set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth. And when you are most diligent in the works of your callings, aim at the gaining of time and liberty for holy duties. In your working days labour and prepare for the Sabbath's rest, and daily so endeavour, that you may gain time to solace yourselves with the Lord in reading, meditation, and prayer.

See that you manage all businesses without overmuch anxiety and vexation. Care and diligence may be accompanied with tranquillity of spirit, but not so with anxious vexation. I have read of a certain prince, of whom it is said, that he seemed always at leisure in his most serious employments. Be careful then in all affairs committed to thee by the Lord, but vex not thyself about them; for that will cloud thy reason, disturb thy judgment, and hinder thy doing of anything well. The wasps and drones make more noise than the bees, yet make no honey, but only wax. So those that perplex themselves too much about worldly business perform not anything well. And in all thy affairs rest thyself chiefly upon God, whence all our business should begin. Commit all thine affairs unto God. Trust in him, and have an eye still unto him, as those that sail at sea, who, that they may attain to the land they desire to come unto, look more up to heaven than down to the sea. Then God will go along with you, and bless and prosper you, that you shall not only get provision for your own families, but be able also to minister to those that are in need.



SECTION 24

Considerations for Those that Have the Pre- Eminence Above Others in the Body Politic

THAT MAN HAS no small business who has many under his charge. It is an high point of honour to be head and lord over others. It is also a high point of service. Here it may not be impertinent to set down the words of a grave divine and devout Spaniard, Avila, to his great lord, which are these:

Look upon the Lord of men and angels, whose person you represent. It is but reasonable that he that sits in the place of another should have the properties of him whose place he represents. A lord of vassals is a lieutenant of God. There is nothing to which great lords ought to attend so much as truly and cordially (and like men who live in the presence of God) to remain ever faithful and firm to him, without inclining either this way or that. And this will be easily performed by that great man who shall attentively consider that he is but the minister of God, as one who but merely executes, and must not exceed the commission which is given to him. God placeth not great lords in the world to the end that they may do and undo what they please, but to execute the laws of his holy will. And though they may account themselves lords, yet are they still under the universal Lord of all, in comparison with whom they are more truly vassals than their vassals are theirs; and their power is as truly limited as their vassals' power is, as far as regards the dispensing with what he ought to do.

Your lordship must consider, that as you are set as an eye in the body, so hath he placed you in the eyes of many, who take that to be a rule of their lives which they see you do. Make ac-

count that you are seated in an high place, and that your speech and fashions are seen by all, and followed by the most men. Take it for a point of greatness to obey the laws of Christ our Lord. Doubtless inferior men will hold it an honour to do that which they see practised by great persons. Let great men consider what they do, for that will be followed, either to their salvation, if they give good example, or for their condemnation, if it be evil.

I will add one thing more, namely, the speech of Sarpedon, to his brother Glaucus, which is worthy to be observed by all great men:

Come on, brother, we are lords over others, accounted gods upon earth. Let us show that we are so indeed, and not in name. Our work must evidence our worth. Those who are the highest lords, must, in point of good service to their country, be the lowest servants. Those that are above others in place, must shine before others in virtue. Those that eat of the fattest, and drink of the sweetest, and so have the best wages, must, by the rule of proportion, do the best work. And the rather, that our inferiors may have cause to say, these are honourable persons, and they walk honourably. They are prime and principal men among us, and they are (as their pre-eminence in place imports) the first and foremost in every good and honourable action.

So Sarpedon encouraged his brother, that, as two worthy persons, they might do worthily, which is worthy every man's knowledge that hath pre-eminence above others.



SECTION 25

Of the Government of a Family

THE MASTER OF the family is a person in whom rests the private and proper government of the whole household. And he comes not to it by election, as it falleth out in other conditions, but by the ordinance of God, settled in the order of nature. To the father and chief head of the family the true right and power over all domestic matters belong. If thou art in that place,

1. *See that thou set up and further the worship of God in thy family.* It was the resolution of Joshua, *“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,”* (Josh. 24:15). And to this end, do thou both pray for and with thy household, and also instruct them in the Holy Scriptures, and catechise them in the grounds of religion, that they may grow in knowledge, and may profit by the public ministry. Thus God commanded the children of Israel to walk in their families: *“Thou shalt teach these things diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them, when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up,”* (Deut. 6:7). And, v20-21, *“When thy son asketh thee, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt: and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.”* This testimony God gave of Abraham before the law was given: *“For I know Abraham, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord,”* (Gen. 18:19). To this purpose, Augustine says, that the master of the family does after a sort,

and in his measure, perform the office of a bishop within his own house.

2. *See that thou make provision for thy family, both food and raiment.* “If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel,” (1 Tim. 5:8). “The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. And thou shalt have goat’s milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens,” (Prov. 27:26-27).

3. *Look that you keep good order, and exercise good discipline in the family.* If children be stubborn, you are to correct them, and chastise them according to the nature of their offence, and the state and condition of the person, having first admonished them.

4. *See that you perform all duty about your servants conscientiously,* which consisteth in two things: In respect of your choosing them, and in respect of your conduct towards them.

a. *In the choice of servants, have regard to these things:*

(i.) As to the number of servants, see that it be proportionable to your estate, revenues, calling, and employments. It is great folly to make ostentation of many servants merely through vanity. A man is no way the happier by having many servants.

(ii.) As to the quality of servants, you must either take good servants, or labour to make them such. If one Achan troubleth a land, how may one irreligious servant trouble an house? God blessed Potiphar and Laban, for Joseph’s and Jacob’s sakes. You should beware of entertaining such servants who have neither conscience, nor the fear of God, and by whose wicked conversation your children may be soon corrupted.

(iii.) For capacity. It is necessary that in a servant there should be ability to discharge his office, for every one that is honest, hath not ability to undergo all kinds of business. Our abilities are limited as well as our minds, and every one hath his particular talent, which must be known by those that will make use of him.

To this end inquire where they have lived, get good testimony concerning them, and try before you trust.

(iv.) See that you take such servants as are faithful. Faithfulness is one of the qualities which the gospel gives of a good servant. You have reason to require it, and discreetly to make trial of it, not by suspicions and jealousies, which only serve to provoke such as have a disposition to do well. A man is oftentimes made faithful by being thought faithful, and many through continual fear of being deceived, have taught others to cheat and deceive, justifying their deceit by their own distrust. As the Roman philosopher says, "You must allow your officers what their several duties require, not quarrelling with them every minute for trifles." Notwithstanding you must carefully reserve the state of your affairs for your private knowledge, for it is an equal fault, indifferently to trust all, or to distrust all.

b. As to your conduct towards them. When you have made a good choice, the government of them is not hard; for Augustine says, "Nothing is so easy as to persuade those unto good, who have a great desire to put it in practice."

(i.) Banish all vice and scandal from your house. Let not wantonness and uncleanness come near it. Let not surfeiting, drunkenness, or excess know so much as the gate thereof. Suffer not proud persons, liars, slanderers, and workers of deceit to dwell with you, and cause froward and wicked persons to depart from you. This was David's practice (Ps. 101). For as Nebuchadnezzar made the pages that attended on him learn his language, so the devil teaches his dialect to those of his acquaintance.

(ii.) And having banished vice, accustom your family to devotion. Cause them diligently to hear the word on the Lord's day, and on other occasions offered. Bring them to the house of God, and see that they do there both religiously and reverently behave themselves, during the time of the public worship. And that being ended, and the congregation dismissed, examine them touching what thy have heard, that they may profit both in

knowledge and obedience. Assemble them in the evening, or some convenient time in the day, to some devout and pious exercise, and see how they are instructed in Divine truth.

(iii.) Behave yourselves wisely and sincerely before your children and servants, for your example will do more than all your words. The life and conversation of a good master and mistress, is a good monitor in a house. We live in an age wherein we have more need of patterns than precepts. Servants adhere to the pillars of an house, as ivy to great trees. It is good that ye be liberal according to your means. In ordering your family, be liberal in such expenses as are requisite both for necessity and decorum. For as nets are useful to take fishes, liberality is a golden hook to take men. Manage your dignity and place in such a way, as is neither harsh, imperious, nor arrogant, but let your conduct be mild, affable, and communicative. Show love and tenderness to your servants. A Christian servant must be in the place of a beloved brother or sister, and so is received (Phm. 16). Think, also, how you may do them good, as well as how to be benefited by their service. God required the Israelites, that they should not rule over their servants with rigour (Lev. 25:43). You must temper your power with mercy, laying aside threatening to your servants (Eph. 6:9); not menacing them for every trifle. For many severe masters and mistresses can scarcely speak to their servants, but they must abuse them. This kind of threatening the apostle forbids. But, on the other hand, take heed lest, through indiscretion, you run out of one extreme into another. For he that brings up a servant daintily, shall have enough of it (Prov. 29:21). Let me advise you also, to retain a decent and moderate gravity in your deportment, that the stamp which God sets on those he calls to offices and places of government, may not be defaced.

5. *Finally, in all your affairs, invoke God's assistance, and to give you wisdom to know what is pleasing to him, and that you may put it in execution. If your project or enterprise have good*

issue, give the praise unto God, and be an example of modesty unto your neighbour. But if business keep not time to your will, learn to keep time to the Divine Providence, which makes harmony in the world. Though you may have power over your designs, yet you have no power over events. But, above all, look into yourself, as the first piece of your government. Let your conscience be pure and peaceable. And herein do you exercise yourself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men, speaking and doing everything with much consideration, and never slighting or despising the counsel of those that are able to advise you. Keep the thoughts of God's presence always in your thoughts, and testify it by the desire you have to please him in all places, occasions, and actions. Dedicate all your works to him before you begin them, and having finished them, remember always to set upon them the seal of thanksgiving due to his Divine Majesty.



SECTION 26

Rules About Eating and Drinking

BEWARE OF EXCESS in eating and drinking, either in reference to the quality or quantity of meats and drinks.

1. *As to the quality or kinds of meats and drinks, be content with those that are necessary and useful, for the preservation of the health and strength of your bodies, and do not insatiably desire those meats which do not befit your calling. The children of Israel in the wilderness desired the flesh-pots, the leeks, the onions, and garlic of Egypt, saying, "Now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes,"* (Num. 11:4-6). See how contemptibly they speak of that manna, which God had, in a miraculous way, rained down from heaven among them, which is called the corn of heaven, and angel's food! (Ps. 78:24-25). But this was not good enough for their palates. They must have more rare and choice provision! The Lord satisfied their inordinate appetite, but it was with the execution of vengeance on them. For whilst the flesh was between their teeth, *"the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel,"* (Ps. 78:31). Seneca tells us that,

He is the wisest man, not who hath a faculty of making rooms to feast in with the greatest artifice, and is skilful in adorning them with the most luxuriant variety of dishes; but he who teaches himself and others, that men may have such provisions as are necessary for them, if they are content with the things which the earth, with an open and ready hand, affords unto them; such as required but little cost or toil to procure, or art to dress them. Which doctrine, if mankind would hearken

and give good credit unto, a cook would be as needless a thing in the world as a soldier, who certainly would be a very useless and superfluous creature, if the world were as wise, as good, and peaceable, as it should be.

Solomon advises us, not to be desirous of dainties, for they are a deceitful meat (Prov. 23:3). Pythagoras enjoined his followers to abstain from all sweet and costly meats. Epictetus would have men take so much care for the things of the body, meat, drink, and clothing, as is necessary to make it serviceable to the soul, and whatsoever serveth for ostentation only, or deliciousness, he would have men to abandon. Plutarch complained, that men kept such ado about seasoning the flesh of living creatures, which they killed for food, with oil, wine, and honey, with Syrian and Arabian sauces and spices, as if they meant to embalm them in order to an honourable burial in their own bodies. And Xenophon tells us, such fare is longed for only by wanton, diseased, effeminate persons, and that those who eat their meat most heartily, need no such adulterations.

To feed upon a variety of dishes is very prejudicial to our bodily health. There is not so much harm proceeding from the substance in itself of meat, and quality of it, in ill dressing and preparing, as there is from the quantity, disorder of time and place, unseasonable use of it, intemperance, and taking too much. That saying of Pliny is most true: "Simple diet is the best. Heaping up of several meats is pernicious, and sauces worse. Many dishes bring many diseases."

2. *As for the quantity of meats, we should be very sparing and moderate.* It was the complaint of Cardan in his time: "Man alone," says he,

eats and drinks without appetite, and uses all his pleasure without necessity; and thence come many inconveniences to him. For there is no meat whatever, though otherwise wholesome and good, but if unseasonably taken, or immoderately used,

more than the stomach will well bear, it will engender crudity, and do much hurt.

Temperance must continually be practised. No time, not a day in the year is allowed for intemperance, surfeiting, or drunkenness. It must not only be shunned when men are full of business, or the like, but at all times, even at feasts, at weddings, at the meeting of old friends and acquaintance, or at such times when many make account they may take liberty. Our Saviour alloweth thee not one hour in thy whole life for surfeiting or drunkenness, *“Take heed to yourselves,”* says he, *“lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness,”* (Luke 21:34). Now, this temperance in meats and drinks, is such a sober use of the creatures, as does not hinder, but further us in the service of God, and in the necessary duties of our calling; which agreeth with that general rule of St. Paul; *“Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,”* (1 Cor. 10:31). These things therefore must be so used, as that they may fit you to glorify God in your general and particular callings. God’s glory must be the end of all, and all must be referred to it. Now, if this rule were both rightly understood, and duly observed, how would it guide you in the use of the creatures, that you should not abuse them, nor defile yourselves in the use of them. How shamefully do men cast off all due consideration of this rule, when partly by stupifying their senses, and clouding their understandings, by letting loose their hearts to carnal contentments, they make themselves unfit both for the service of God, and for the business of their lawful callings! Such men aim not at the glory of God, but the pleasing of other men’s vain humours with whom they converse, the satisfying of their own carnal and sinful appetites, or the like, to the great dishonour of God, and taking his name in vain.

Labour, therefore, to shun and abhor intemperance and drunkenness, as that which will abase you below the beasts that

perish, and which will make a man contemptible, and despised of all wise and worthy men. Abridge yourselves, therefore, of some of your lawful delights. For suppose it be lawful to desire the most pleasant food, and to feed on a variety of dishes at your tables, yet you may do better to deny yourselves some lawful comforts, than always to go to the utmost bounds of your lawful liberty, or to do all that is not simply unlawful. You shall not readily fall into things unlawful, if you warily restrain yourselves sometimes in things lawful. If one be addicted to intemperance in eating, he shall with more facility overcome this vice, if he abstain from those meats that are most pleasing to his palate, even such as are lawful for him to feed upon; and if he abstain from them at such times as he may lawfully use them. This is one of the most forcible remedies to overcome this vice that any man can use.

Begin all your refreshments with prayer, and feed your minds with holy meditations whilst ye are eating and drinking; such as, of eating bread in the kingdom of heaven, of labouring for the meat that endureth to everlasting life, of feeding on God's promises by faith. Then does God prepare a table for you, when ye thus eat and drink to his glory. And as prayer began the banquet, so let it conclude it.



SECTION 27

Of Recreations, and How to Use Them

 CONCERNING RECREATIONS, it is the judgment of many grave and learned divines, that it is an unchristian and unwarrantable course, to spend a great part of a man's time in recreation, as if it were one half of a man's business, or perhaps more. Recreation is only so far allowable, as it has a respect to the glory of God; so far as it is serviceable to a man's calling, and maketh him the more fit to discharge the duties thereof to the glory of God. I confess, it is necessary sometimes to recreate both our bodies and spirits; and it is too rigorous a thing not to give ourselves any recreation, nor to suffer others that are under our charge to take any. To walk abroad to take the air, to entertain our companions with pleasant discourses, to play on some instrument, or the like, are recreations so good, that to use them well, needs nothing but discretion, that gives to everything its order, time, place, and measure.

But if we employ too much time therein, it is no more a recreation, but an occupation, that recreates neither the body nor the spirits, but rather dulls and distracts them. Take heed of placing your affections on any of them; for [though] the recreations in themselves be ever so good, it is a vice to set your affections on any of them. But you may take recreation in playing for the time you play, otherwise it would be no recreation; but you must not eagerly desire or long after them, nor yet study on them, nor vex yourself about them. And when your recreation withdraws your mind from walking in an honest calling, or eats up the time which might be far better spent, in doing those things which might tend to the good of yourself or others, either

in respect of this life, or the life to come, it is a manifest intemperancy and want of moderation. And if so strict an account must be given of idle words at the day of judgment, as our Saviour tells us, how strict a reckoning must be rendered of idle actions! And all actions of sport are idle when they are immoderate. All Christians are bound to redeem the time, and not thus idly and vainly to trifle and pass away the time. And heaven is appointed as a place for men to rest in from their labours, not for those to sit down in, who have here spent a great part of their days in sports and pleasures.

He that lawfully uses those things which God has given for our delight and refreshment, in a Christian, moderate way, takes them more sparingly; whereas others do even glut and cloy themselves with them. God's children take but a little of these, and but by the way, as they are running the race that is set before them in their flight towards heaven, their souls being then upon the wing and raised to heavenly-mindedness, when they taste of the sweetness of these things. And if they herein transgress, and sometimes glut themselves too much with these things, their failing doth more trouble them, than their pleasure doth refresh them. On the other hand, he that lives in pleasure, as the fish in the water, is then at rest when he is enjoying some sensual delights. He is then in his proper element, when his heart is even drenched and immersed in some such pleasure, as is adapted to his sensual affections. And when he is in the service and worship of God, he is like a fish on dry land, out of its place. He is in such a course as is not pleasing to him. His heart being not at all exercised in any heavenly employment, he is not in any way borne up with any lively and heavenly affections.



SECTION 28

Of the Conversation of Parents and Elders

EVERY ONE IN the family ought to serve God according to his abilities, as his place gives him occasion or advantage. Many a one, if he were head and master of a family (as he is but an inferior,) would do more good than there is done. Therefore they that have such advantage of place, should glorify God accordingly, and they should be like those wheels in the clock, which move first of all, and carry round all the rest with them. They should be leaders in praying, in reading, in meditation, in holy conference, in humility, in zeal, in sobriety, in admonition, and in a heavenly conversation.

Parents should pray earnestly to God to heal their children's souls. They should also be very careful to purge out the vanity of their hearts and conversations, that so they may take heed of increasing the sinfulness of their nature by an evil example. By a vain and evil conversation you do no less than confirm, and even water, those roots of sin which you have planted in them.

1. *Evil examples are most dangerous which are practised by men that have most authority.* The child, especially when he is in his childhood, when his disposition receives its first shape, looks upon his father as his prince, as it were. He fears and regards him more than any prince, and so the parent's look, his word, and especially his example, is a law unto him, and he looks for no better warrant. It has been said, "Much reverence is due to children." We say, and that truly, that children owe great reverence to their parents and elders. And it is as true, parents and elders should carry it reverently toward children, because their

example emboldens children to imitate them in a likeness of speech, or behaviour.

2. *That example is most dangerous, which is most commonly in sight.* Now, the child looks upon the father and mother almost every day. When they rise up, lie down, go forth, come in, talk, eat, or drink, he is still with them. Other men's courses he sees but now and then, but these always. Now, when unmortified, unrestrained vanity shall break out in every passage of their lives, and their children be witnesses of it, is it not likely that they will be followers of it also? The child, perhaps, hears a neighbour swear once in a week, or month, but when he hears his father every day dishonour God this way, it is very dangerous.

3. *Evil examples are most dangerous in those whom we specially love,* for love is a cover for many blemishes in persons and things that are beloved. Now, whom doth the child love so much as father and mother? Therefore their evil examples will soon influence them. That which is evil in parents, seems good to their children, because of their natural love toward them. Therefore, ye parents, how careful should ye be of your carriage in regard of your children. Ye would have your children love you, and so they ought. But take heed lest ye make their love to you an occasion of destruction to them. That were a most wicked, unnatural parent, who knowing his child would love something which should poison it, would purposely lay it in his child's way, that he might swallow it. So when a parent knows his children love and embrace him, and that which he does – his courses and actions – what a woeful thing is it, if he shall defile himself and his actions with sin and wickedness! He so occasions his children, by imitating him in love, to take into their hearts and affections his sin and wickedness also, whereby he and his actions are poisoned!

4. *The evil examples of those on whom we depend most, are most dangerous.* Now, upon whom on earth do children so much depend as on their parents? They look for meat, drink,

clothes, protection, portions, from them, therefore their examples are even a law unto them. Therefore, parents should walk unblameably before their children, that their sins may not be stumbling blocks, and occasions of falling to them.

5. *The evil examples of such persons as have a special nearness and likeness to us in natural dispositions, are most dangerous.* Now, whose natural tempers are commonly more like, than the child's to the father's and mother's? And when they, being of like temper to the children, shall walk before them in a vain conversation, this will be a dangerous means to draw them after them. Therefore, ye that are parents, take heed, let not your children learn of you to lie, swear, to be drunk, to cheat, to profane the Sabbath, to scoff at piety, to speak filthily, to be malicious, to be revengeful, to be greedy of the world, to be proud, to be wanton, to be obstinate, to be idle, to condemn the word of God, to neglect the worship of God, or to perform it carelessly. It is little considered what mischief fathers and mothers do to their children in this respect. When the poor child, not yet knowing the right hand from the left in matters of religion, nor what belongs to salvation and damnation, shall see the print of his father's foot in the way of sin and death, will he not be apt to make his father's footsteps his direction? Fathers, by giving evil examples to their children, give evil statutes to their children. The Lord saith, "*Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers.*" This he spake to the children. Their fathers gave them statutes, namely, they gave them their evil example as a law and rule unto them. The Lord charges them to walk in his laws, and keep his statutes, and not to make the evil ways and examples of their fathers a rule unto them (Ezek. 20:15-18).

Therefore, ye parents, be ye very careful of your conversation, even in regard of your children. For be you sure of this, that if you perish in your sins, and by your example bring your children to the same place of torment, every one of them shall add exceedingly to your woe and misery. On the other hand, in tender pity

towards them, and your own souls, labour all ye can, by exhortation, example, and by all good means, to set your children in the way of life, that they may be a crown unto you at the last day. Blessed are those parents which so walk before their children, and blessed are those children, which so follow such parents, as they follow Christ.



SECTION 29

Of the Carriage of Children, Servants and Inferiors

CHILDREN, SERVANTS, AND inferiors, must not slacken their pace. If they should perceive much backwardness to do that which is good in those that are above them, they must stir up the gift that is in them, and labour to go as far before others in the ways of God, as they are behind them in place and dignity. For, although their superiors should outrun them in zeal and holiness, yet they have no warrant to tarry for them, when they see them loiter. Ahab should have been more careful than his servant Obadiah, in saving those hundred prophets from Jezebel's rage, yet though Obadiah saw his master rather yield to his wife than fear the Lord, he did not allow his example to influence his conduct, but hid the prophets by fifty in a cave and fed them with bread and water. Nabal should have been more ready to relieve David's wants, and more provident in saving his family from danger than his wife, the weaker vessel. But when Abigail seeth him fail in both, she doth not sit still, and put all to the hazard, but supplieth that wherein her husband was defective. The zeal of an inferior person ought to be attended with humility, and comeliness of behaviour. Yet must he not, under colour of humility, modesty, or keeping distance, neglect his duty. Young Elihu, though his heart was so full that it was ready to break, would not speak before his elders had said what they could. Yet when he saw the ancients silent, he thought their unseasonable silence a warrant for his younger years to speak those things which they ought to have delivered (Job 32).



SECTION 30

How Every One is Every Day to Embrace All Opportunities of Doing Good

PPORTUNITY IS MANY times a special means which a man of gifts and place hath to do good above others, and above himself at other times. Sometimes things fall out so fitly to a man, that they even put him upon some service tending to the glory of God, whereas others have not the like. In such cases, the rule is: Do as thine hand shall find; do as occasion shall serve; do as opportunity shall invite thee. Many are called by the Lord's providence giving them opportunity, to do somewhat for his glory, whereunto others have not the like occasion. And when men fail herein, they show some neglect, or disobedience towards the Lord's calling. And therefore when God offers an opportunity, we must not stand questioning or muttering, "Why do not such or such, go before us? Why do not such do it rather?" as Moses in his weakness told the Lord. But every one should think thus with himself: "This is my work. The Lord puts it upon me, and I must do it." This falls out in many cases, for which there is not a full direction to be looked for.

Thus it may happen, that a man may sometimes, by opportunity, be put upon a work of mercy, to relieve one in want, when we meet him, through God's providence, and we have something at hand whereby to help him. This was the Samaritan's case, who found in his journey the poor helpless man, robbed and wounded, and so as occasion was given, he mercifully relieved him. Now, this opportunity both enabled him to relieve him, and was a calling to the work which others had not, that came not that way.

So again, when men's cases are more clearly made known to us than to others, by familiar converse with them, or by some other means, and thereupon special suit is made unto us. David's case was specially made known to Nabal, by the familiarity passing between him and Nabal's servants in the wilderness, and special suit was also made unto him by all the rich men thereabout. And therefore he had a special opportunity and calling to relieve David, and was more specially bound to it than some others.

Sometimes a man shall have a special opportunity given him, to admonish another of his sin. He may meet him alone. He may perhaps have some advantage of him, and may make him beholden to him some way or other, and so have occasion to deal the more boldly with him. As Moses, when Pharaoh stood in need of him and his prayer to remove the plagues which came so thick upon him, made use thereof, and admonished him of his unfaithful dealing and hardness of heart.

I have read, that when a great persecutor of the Protestants in France was smitten with a most grievous disease, and was forced to make use of a Protestant physician that feared God, the said physician took this as an opportunity to tell him closely of the great sin, in shedding the blood of the saints, and that this disease was God's revenging hand upon him. And when our Saviour had made the blind man especially beholden to him for the cure of his blindness, he took the opportunity to give him a seasonable admonition; "*Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee,*" (John 5:14).

Thus, when another has need of thine alms, thy counsel, or thy help in any way, and opportunity is given thee to deal plainly with him for any special sin that thou seest him lying in (and perhaps thou findest him in a better temper than usual), you may then think the Lord has fitted and made him ready to thy hand, and given thee an opportunity to work upon him; and you must think yourself bound to take it. There are many cases, and

a great variety of this kind, which a man shall ordinarily meet with, and which every one must watchfully observe, and take for the glory of God, and his own furtherance in the ways and work of God.

Finally, all Christians truly sanctified, are enabled with heavenly means and graces, far above those that are in their natural state. The wise man says, "*A living dog is better than a dead lion,*" (Eccl. 9:4). The meanest Christian, of the weakest capacity and ordinary natural parts, being raised to the new life of grace, is better able to do the service of God than he who is dead in sin, though enriched with higher natural endowments.

Ruffinus, in his Ecclesiastical History, tells us a memorable story, that when the emperor Constantine the Great, had caused the clergy to come together to dispute about the opinion of Arius, there came to the assembly divers philosophers and logicians that were exquisite in their faculty, and were highly conceited of themselves. Among the rest there was one that was very famous as a logician, and every day he disputed with the bishops, that were good logicians also. Many very learned men came to hear those conflicts, nor could the philosopher be put to silence. Nay, so cunning he was, that when he was thought most of all to be caught and taken, like a slippery eel he would slide away from them. But that God might show that his kingdom is not in word but in power, there was among the bishops one of the confessors standing by, a man knowing little save Jesus Christ and him crucified, who when he saw the philosopher exulting over the bishops and boasting himself upon the skill that he had in arguing and reasoning, desired of all that stood by to give him room, that he might talk with that philosopher. The bishops and their party, that knew the simplicity of the man and his unskilfulness in that kind, were afraid and blushed lest that holy simplicity of his should perhaps be exposed to the scorn of those crafty antagonists. But the old man persisted in his purpose, and thus began:

"O philosopher, in the name of Jesus Christ, hear thou those

things which are true. God that made the heavens and the earth, and gave man a spirit, whom he framed of the dust of the earth, is one. He hath by the virtue of his Word created all things both visible and invisible, and strengthened them by the sanctification of his Spirit. This Word and Wisdom, whom we call the Son, taking pity upon human errors, was born of a virgin, and by the passion of his death, hath delivered us from everlasting death, and by his resurrection hath given us everlasting life, whom we look for to be the Judge of all we do. O philosopher,” said he, “believest thou this?”

Whereupon the philosopher, as if he had never learned the art of contradiction, was so astonished at the words which were spoken, that being mute to all that was alleged, only this he was able to answer: “That what the old man had said seemed so to himself indeed, and that there was no other truth than that which was delivered by him.”

Whereupon the old man then replied, “Why then, if thou believest these things to be true, arise, and follow me to the church, and take thy baptism, the seal of this faith.”

Hereupon the philosopher turning to his disciples, or to those that were present, and came to hear, said, “O ye learned men, hearken unto me. Whilst this matter in hand was performed by words, I also opposed words unto words. And those things which were spoken, I was able to confute by the art of speaking. But now, that instead of words, power has proceeded from the mouth of him that speaketh, neither can words resist that power, neither can man withstand God. Therefore, if any of you here present, can believe those things that have been spoken, as I do believe them, let him believe in Christ, and follow this old man, in whom God hath thus spoken.”

And so, at length, the philosopher becoming a Christian, was glad that he was thus vanquished.

Now then, all ye who are made alive to God, consider ye what the Lord requires at your hands. Is it enough for you to keep pace

in the ways of God, with those who are asleep, yet dead in sin? [It is] as if a man should not arise from his bed, nor set upon his work, until he sees the dead corpses in the churchyard rise out of their graves, and walk abroad. It is you that have wherewithal to serve the Lord. It is you that have your eyes opened, to see the ways and works which he hath ordained, that ye should walk in them. It is you that have faith to rest upon him, whereby to receive an encouragement from him in his services, upon the apprehension of the crown of glory. It is you that have the spirit of prayer. It is you that have cast anchor within the veil. It is you that can see an open passage for your prayers and services to the throne of grace. It is you that have felt the fire of God to fall upon your hearts, whereby ye might offer up an acceptable sacrifice unto God, like Elijah, whilst carnal men, like the priests of Baal, may beat, cut, and force themselves, as divers of the papists do, beyond others in outward shows and needless superstitions, and yet have not one spark of fire from above, to set their offerings on fire. It is not a body of sin that will make a pleasing sacrifice unto God, but a body and soul washed by the blood of Christ.

Therefore, you to whom God hath thus given must offer up yourselves to him, as our Saviour saith to his disciples: *"To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given,"* (Matt. 13:11). So I say: To you it is given to pray. To you it is given to read the Scriptures, and to hear the word of God. To you it is given to meditate on the word. To you it is given to see and conceive aright of heavenly things. You have tasted of love and mercy, and therefore to you it is given to show love and mercy. Think of your talents and of your receipts, you to whom God has given much. Look what you have received, mind your account, [and] tender his glory, whose love in all eternity was so tender to your souls above many thousand others.



SECTION 31

Of the Improvement of All Inward and Outward Gifts, Means and Abilities, Bestowed on Us

LET EVERY ONE labour to improve all inward gifts, means, and abilities, bestowed upon them.

1. *Whoever has a larger understanding and a more searching head than others, God requires the more of such an one.* His brains should not be busied in hatching crafty and mischievous plots against God and his service, against the church of God, or against his neighbour. God did not allow that great politician, Ahithophel, to use that wit he had given him, to invent, nor his tongue which was as an oracle, to deliver a pestilent counsel against his anointed, a man after God's own heart, nor to teach the son how to kill his father. This is the height of Satan's wickedness, that whereas the Lord made him a glorious angel of light, and endued him with an admirable understanding and knowledge, he, on the other side, abuses it most wickedly to the dishonour of God his Maker, to oppose his glory, to ensnare his servants, and weaken his kingdom.

Some men have notable heads and great apprehensions, but they fill them merely with earth. The world possesses them altogether. They are wholly busied in laying plots for gain, or in compassing and grasping more of the world than they can well rule when they have it; as if God had given them more wit than others, that they may be greater drudges and slaves to mammon than others. Some again abuse their wits in frothy jesting and scoffing at others. It is a pity that men of excellent understandings, should be set to dig in the mines of base employments. They should use them in searching the Scriptures, and in gather-

ing knowledge out of the word of God, who does not require of the irrational creature that it should know his will in his word, but of man, to whom he hath given a more excellent spirit. But this is to be lamented, that men who naturally have notable understandings, quick wits, and solid judgments, are very blind and shallow in the knowledge of God's word. How will these stand before the Lord at the last day, when he shall say unto them: "I gave thee a great understanding, but thou knewest anything rather than me, whom thou shouldst have laboured to know above all things! How hast thou busied thy wits? Didst thou not think me worth thy knowledge and acquaintance? Thou knewest the way to thrive and get wealth, to please and get the good will of men, but didst not care to know the way to please me, to find out the way which I had ordained for thee to walk in. Thou knewest how to speak unto men, but didst not care how to call upon my name."

Then wilt thou cry out: "Oh that I had had a saving knowledge of God and his will, although all that had known me, had derided me for a fool, and contemned me for want of worldly wisdom! Oh that I had known Jesus Christ and him crucified, though I had known nothing else! Oh that I had thoroughly and spiritually known the Scriptures, which would have made me wise unto salvation, though I had not known my right hand from my left! Woe is me, that I busied my head about trifles, and cared not to know the way of life, and everlasting peace! Alas! All my wit, my craft, my policy, now fail me. They will not serve to help me with one excuse, whereby to shift off the wrath and justice of God. They do me no good now that I am to appear before my Judge."

Labour then for such knowledge as may tend, some way or other, to your furtherance in godliness, and use your understandings also, to bring things about as well as you can for the promoting of God's glory. For, as the Lord by his infinite wisdom defeats and brings to nought the crafty and malicious plots

of Satan, so also he would have his children (to whom he hath given better understandings, and more wisdom than to others) oppose their wits against the craft of wicked men, and use their best skill to uphold religion, and to overthrow the strongholds of Satan. Thus was Hushai among all David's followers, chosen out to match Ahithophel, and to be a means to defeat his crafty counsel, and turn it into foolishness.

And as for those that have not so good natural understandings as others, yet according to their measure they must use their talent, for which they are accountable to the Lord. Even weak natural parts may be excellently perfected and bettered by grace, and raised to a higher degree than could be expected. Therefore, none must give over exercising their gifts, although they cannot match some that are more excellent.

2. Again: *as to the memory, some men have a great gift this way.* They can remember things to the admiration of others, who cannot come near them in this respect. These must glorify God according to this ability. It is your duty, O Christians, to treasure up a store of heavenly things, which you may read and hear, and be helpful to others whose memories are not so firm and faithful. But do not condemn those to whom less is given in this kind. It is lamentable to consider how many notable gifts of this kind are abused or neglected. If a man could look into the memories of some that are naturally strong and firm, what should a man see there but ballads, play-books, romances, idle news and stories, old grudges, wrongs, and injuries of many years standing, or some things like to these? Yea, many a man makes his memory a mere counting-house. It is, as it were, a shop-book full of reckonings. But it is empty of heavenly things. It hath let slip the things which it hath heard in that kind.

O man, the Lord did not give thee thy memory for such ends, but that thou shouldst remember thy Creator, remember to keep holy the Sabbath-day, remember your latter end, and re-

member that for the actions which you do in this life, God will bring you to judgment.

If we come to some persons, and inquire of them concerning such points of faith and religion as they have heard many times, they remember nothing of them. The thing is gone from them, as Nebuchadnezzar spake of his dream. And their excuse is, "We are not book learned." But ask them about some worldly things, which they never heard nor saw more than once perhaps, and they will give you a ready answer. The reason is, these things suit with them. Their hearts are towards them. These take with them, but so do not the other. Therefore these stick and abide by them, when the things of God slide away out of their memories. Put clean water into a vessel which has but a little chink, and it will soon get out. Whereas that which is thick and muddy is not so apt to leak. The word of God (compared to living water in Scripture) is soon lost and forgotten, because it is pure and holy. Whereas those muddy things, of which we should rather cleanse our memories than keep them, are apt to abide in us.

But know ye, that the Lord who searches the heart, and every corner of it, will see what is in your memories and affections. "*God is not unjust to forget your labour of love,*" says the apostle (Heb. 6:10). So God is not unjust to forget your forgetfulness of him and his truth, when he has given you excellent memories, and such as might be of great use in his service. "*Lord, remember me,*" said the repenting thief unto our Saviour, "*when thou comest into thy kingdom,*" (Luke 23:42). As you desire that God should remember you for good at the last day, so do you remember him now and his word, otherwise it will be utterly in vain for you to call for mercy or remembrance at the last day. Many persons are now wilfully and affectedly forgetful, and it is just with God to punish in this life, with a final stupidity and sottishness, those who, to give satisfaction to their own vile lusts, cast his word behind their backs, and willingly let the devil steal it away from them. Look to it in time, and take heed that you do

not provoke God by a wilful carelessness, to bring upon you a fearful sottishness. Take heed of those sins that intoxicate the brain and the memory, as drunkenness, filthiness, and such like sins. How many able bodies, active minds, fruitful wits, flourishing memories, have these overthrown!

But for those who are forgetful by any accidental casualty or natural infirmity, I would rather say somewhat to comfort them than to reprove them. Doubtless many of God's dear children are subject to this defect, and daily complain of their forgetfulness, and how weak their memories are to retain any good thing that they hear. But grant it be so, yet perhaps you understand more than you are able to express. This is to be borne withal. Perhaps you remember the matter, though you cannot remember the words of a sermon. This makes some amends. Perhaps you remember it not to make repetition of it, yet you remember it to make practice of it. This is best of all.

Tully commends two ancient orators for their excellent memories, Lucullus and Hortensius. But he commends Lucullus most, because he remembered matter, the other but words. If you can remember the matter of a sermon though you cannot remember the words, or if you can remember to practise it though you cannot remember it to repeat it, you have the less cause to complain. But if your defect be as great as you complain it is, it may be some comfort to you that you have a heart to complain of it. How many thousands are in the world, whose sins lie heavy upon them, yet they are no matter of trouble to them! Ever remember, that it is a good sign to be sensible, either of the burden of sin or of the want of grace. There are four things about which your memories should be daily exercised: your sins, that you may daily confess and bewail them; death, that you may prepare for it; God's justice, that you may fear; and his mercy, that you may not despair.

3. *Another gift of the mind is courage, wherein some naturally go beyond others.* These men then are bound to make use

of this to the glory of God. If you have a resolute spirit, the Lord requires that you should show it on his side, and not in opposition of him and his ways. When a prince has a soldier or captain of tried and approved valour and courage, he relies more on him [and] looks for more notable performance from him, than from others who have not that spirit and courage which he hath. So when the Lord has given some men more courage and resolution than others, he requires they should be valiant for his truth and not hide their heads, and yield to his dishonour. It is strange to see how stout men are in their own quarrels, right or wrong, who are almost afraid of every bush when God's honour is concerned, and have no spirit to plead for God, or to appear for his gospel and glory.

Courage in a Christian takes its rise and wing from faith. Witness Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, Samuel and David, *"Who through faith subdued kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens,"* (Heb. 11:32-34). Much faith, then much courage; for men of little faith ever shake hands with the pusillanimous. Courage is a goodly grace, wherein God greatly delights, and whom can it so well become as a believer, who has more reason and better ground to be valiant than the greatest spirit in the world that wanteth faith. Those false-hearted spies and cowardly Israelites, at the sight or news of giants in Canaan (notwithstanding God's promise and presence), counted themselves but grasshoppers in comparison to the Anakims (Numb. 13:33). And all the congregation fainted, as if God and Moses had betrayed them, whereas Joshua and Caleb looked on the giants but as bread for the people of God (Numb. 14:9). So great are the odds between faith and infidelity, in cases of difficulty.

4. *Quickness, or liveliness, is another gift of the mind, wherein there is much difference between different men.* Some are naturally of lively, stirring dispositions, whereas others are

more slow by nature, more heavy, and not so ready for anything they go about. Now, if God hath given you quickness of spirit, you must use it to his glory. As John was more nimble than Peter, so he used this agility of body, and came sooner to our Saviour's sepulchre than Peter did. So if you have a more quick and active spirit, you must use it in out-running others in the ways of God's commandments. If a master have a servant whom he knows to be quick and can travel well, he expects that he should make more haste when he employs him in business, than one that is lame or sickly. So if thou art of a quick and lively disposition, the Lord requires thou shouldst every day show it in his service, and be more forward and affectionate than those who are of slower spirits.

But we see that many who boast of the quickness of their wits and spirits, and despise the dullness of others, are themselves dull, yea, altogether dead in the service of God. Many who go most nimbly about their profits and pleasures, who are full of mettle in other things, are exceedingly slow and dull in the service of God. They are as if they had no life in them. The services of God deaden their spirits. Natural quickness is of good use when it is seasoned by the quickening grace of the Holy Ghost. And the spirit of a man becomes fervent in serving God, when the heart is lively, and full of feeling in prayer, meditation, reading, and hearing. Otherwise it will be a means to increase such a man's condemnation, if being naturally quick and stirring, he remain spiritually dull and dead. But where activeness of spirit is put forth in God's service, such a man will not let the fire go out, but blows up the coals. It makes a man put on zeal as a cloak, and not only to wear the livery of Christ, and go on his errand, but to mend his pace and not only do his work, but do it with all his might.

Not only in regard of inward abilities, but also in respect of outward gifts of body or estate, men ought to serve the Lord.

1. *Health is a great blessing and a special means to enable you for the service of God*, and accordingly as the Lord hath given you health, so he requireth health to be given up to his service. Assure yourselves, [that] the more health you have, the more work you are to do for God; and God requires more of those who are healthy than of those who are sickly and diseased. When a master knows his servant to be in health, he suffers him not to lie long in bed in a morning, but calls him up to his business. Whereas he that is sick, sits or lies still without a check, though his master looks upon him.

You that are healthy, be wise and careful for the preservation of your health. Do not throw away your health upon your lusts. Do not expose yourselves to lasting pains and pining sicknesses for the satisfying [of] a wanton, sensual appetite. The health of the whole body is more worth than thousands of those vanishing delights. Yet how many are there that run themselves to the grave's mouth, and into the thickest throngs of destroying diseases, for such poor and perishing pleasures! To please their flesh for a few moments in surfeiting and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, they bring many days, yea, months and years of pain and torment upon their flesh, and shorten the number of their days by the course of nature.

There are many others who make their health even an excuse unto them to neglect the service of God, thinking the thorough performance of God's service never in season, till they are on their sick beds, and see death at hand. Such are all those, without exception, who put off their serious and sound repentance until the time of sickness. Health is one of the best outward abilities for the service of God. Now when this is bestowed on the service of sin, it is not without much robbery against God. To give to God only the services of our sick beds when he requires the best performances of our health, is as if Abraham should have offered the worst lamb in his fold when God called for his beloved son Isaac.

You have no assurance, if you neglect God in your health, that he will accept your sickly devotions. But, on the other side, if whilst you have health you dedicate that to God, then when sickness shall come, you may be assured that the Lord will accept your weak, [though] sincere endeavours. God will then say: "Such a man served me in his best health, when there were no apparent signs of death near him. He remembered me his Creator before the evil days came, therefore now I receive him as mine own, and I will make his bed in his sickness. I will support and strengthen him. I will cherish him now in his sickness, as well as I accepted him heretofore in his health."

Those also that are sick must think of the service of God when health is gone. The want of health and vigour of spirits must needs be a great disadvantage. Yet where grace is, and rules, the heart is lifted up to God, the soul breathes after him, and his bodily infirmities are a help to mortification, to patience, to the neglect of worldly things, and an incitement to long for his salvation, as old Jacob did upon his death bed. David attained to the best temper and measure of spiritual health, when he was most overlaid with bodily sickness.

2. *To health we may join bodily strength, which is a great help against spiritual assaults*, which work more upon weakness and age, than upon others. Young men have more strength than others overworn by age, and if they have the word of God abiding in them, they are strong indeed to overcome the evil one. Many men, out of their strength of body, might spare more time from their sleep to spend in religious duties, which others of weaker and feebler bodies cannot spare, who if they should miss of sufficient refreshment in this kind, would be unfit for any holy performance. Many occasions, also, may the strong take in journeying for the doing of many good services, which cannot be so well performed by the weaker sort. Yea, such men may wrestle the more earnestly with God in prayer, and in performing other

holy exercises may be the more vehement, which weak bodies are unable to perform.

But it is sad to see wicked men, notwithstanding their bodily weakness, to be never the weaker servants of sin. Some, in time of their weakness, grow more cross and froward to all about them, and being more impatient, murmur against God and are ready to curse and blaspheme because they have not health, limbs, or strength, as well as others. These are not unlike the vassals of antichrist, justly suffering extraordinary plagues for their voluntary slavery, that *“gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds,”* (Rev. 16:10-11).

But the weakest body must labour to be strong in spirit, that the power of God’s Spirit may be manifested in its weakness, whilst the inner man is renewed day by day, though the outward man decayeth.

3. *Youth, also, is an advantage in the service of God.* Young men have more abilities and helps than old persons, their wits being fresh [and] their affections lively. All the powers of nature are then in their prime, and God requires more of them in regard of outward performances. Let young men now remember their Creator in the days of their youth, and the prime of their days *“while the evil days come not.”* The days of old age are evil days, but thou must serve God in thy best days. Give him not the dregs of thy time, but let him have the principal and choicest of thine age. Think thy best days not good enough. The years will approach, wherein thou wilt say, *“I have no pleasure in them,”* (Eccl. 12:1). Dost thou think God will delight and take pleasure in that old age of thine, if thou then begin to serve him, when thou thyself canst find no pleasure in it? The Lord is to be served with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things. And wilt thou hope to serve him and be accepted of him, if thou begin not till then, when thou thyself shalt take contentment in nothing, when old age shall take away the joy of thine heart, and comfort of thy life?

Yet must the aged labour to excel in a settled constancy, in gravity, in holy examples, in ripeness of every grace and holy affection. But the younger sort must do more than the aged can do, in regard of the exercises of religion.

4. *So also in respect of outward estate, and in regard of wealth.* “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase,” (Prov. 3:9). St. Paul bids Timothy, “Charge them that be rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come,” (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Wherein you see the Lord requires an open hand and heart in those who are enriched with outward blessings. Every one is to lay by him, as the Lord hath enabled him. There are many things here required of the rich, which the poor cannot do, such as to maintain the preaching of the gospel, where means are wanting; to relieve the poor and needy; to strive against the danger and deceitfulness of riches; in the possessing and enjoying these outward things, to be as if you possessed them not; being as ready to leave all for Christ, as those that have least; and to be ready, according to your portion of wealth, to set forth the glory of Christ; to make riches the fuel of your graces, and the instruments of your duty towards God and man. To have the house full of riches, and the heart full of grace, this is a happy conjunction. It is an evidence of much grace, when a man is very holy in the midst of abundance of outward riches. Pineda says that the holiness of Job was enriched by his great riches. But usually riches impoverish the soul, and devour all care of heaven. They make men forget God, yea, spurn against him, as it is said of Jeshurun. They are often made the bellows of pride, the fuel of luxury and wantonness, the instrument of revenge, and cause their owners to contemn, despise, and oppress their poor brethren; and to make no other use of them but to satisfy their lusts and clog their souls, fastening them to the things below.

5. *To these we may add, respect and esteem from the world,* wherein some men have a greater part than others, and if they would rightly use it, a greater advantage to glorify God. And so accordingly the Lord requires more at their hands, than can well be performed by others.

First of all, some have favour with great men. So Nehemiah had with the Persian king, and he might be bold to speak for Jerusalem, the city of the Lord, when it lay desolate; and so he did. An ordinary Israelite had not the like opportunity. This shall be laid to the charge of many, who being in favour with great princes, and seeing many things amiss, will not make use of this their interest, nor glorify God according to those means, advantages, and opportunities which they have. Many such might be heard, if they would speak, and have many fit times to speak, which others have not. So many a man has some special relation to some inferior magistrate (suppose a justice of peace, or some other), and he might prevail with him for reformation of some abuse, for punishing of some scandalous sins, which are committed and continued in despite of the world, or he might speak successfully in some poor man's case. He might prevail in the behalf of some innocent and faithful person, that is likely to be trodden under foot by one mightier than he. Such advantages should be improved.

So even the favour of the multitude is many times a help to a man in some cases, for the furtherance of God's glory. A man, being gracious with them, may sometimes draw them from some sinful custom, overruling them in some sort and persuading them against some ungodly course. But commonly men who are thus in favour with the multitude, as they got their love by fawning upon them, humouring them and saying as they say, so they will seek to keep it by the same means and rather let God lose his honour, than they will adventure to lose the good will of the people by crossing them in any degree.

Yet those men who can do anything with the people, who

make use of them for their own ends, who can carry any business and it is their glory [to do so], [yet] when it cometh to a matter that concerns the glory of God [and] the reforming of some sinful abuses wherein God is dishonoured, [then] these great minions of the multitude stand still with their hands in their bosoms. Yea, it were the more tolerable if that were all, but themselves many times are the most dangerous engines of the mischiefs done by the multitude. They either set them to work, or else countenance them in their wickedness, and let them know so much of their mind, that they find them pleased with their doings.

That town clerk of Ephesus shall rise up in judgment against many such, who, though he were an idolater and subscribed to their cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians;" yet he used his best endeavours to stay their rage, and to still the uproar which they made against St. Paul and his companions. So Gamaliel, shall condemn many others, who though a chief Pharisee, yet wisely and peaceably prevented the danger of the apostles, being one that had great authority among the people. "*And to him,*" says the Scriptures, "*they hearkened,*" (Acts 5:40).



SECTION 32

Of Holy Watchfulness Against Temptations

MAN IS THE ONLY creature whom Satan hunts and pursues. It concerns us then every day to have an eye unto Satan, that although he pursue us, he do not make a prey of us. You will think it strange, perhaps, that seeing God would redeem his people from the hands of Satan, he would notwithstanding give so much liberty to Satan, in the pursuing and tempting of them. But let no Christian think it strange. God did not only permit it for the exercise of his children, but that with the more conflicts they might have the greater glory, and Satan the greater foil. Our condition in the world is much like the condition of the Israelites. When they came first into Canaan, it is said, that when God had brought them thither, he suffered divers of the Jebusites to remain still in the land, and would not drive them out all at once, because he would keep his people in exercise, and not have them live there slavishly and slothfully. And it is certain, that they were often prickles in their eyes, and thorns in their sides. God deals so by us. He hath redeemed his Israel out of Satan's hands, brought them out of a state of sin into a state of grace, as out of the land of Egypt into the land of Canaan. Yet still he suffers the Jebusite to dwell in our coasts. He suffers Satan, the enemy of our peace, by his assaults and temptations to vex and trouble us, because he would have us held in exercise, and be ever careful to do as they did, to keep our weapons by our sides, that when we are attacked, we may be prepared for resistance.

How much does it concern every Christian, with all the policy and prudence that he can, to avoid the temptations of

Satan and to take refuge from the danger of his assaults! He who is in a desperate state knows he has an enemy, yet is careless to prepare for him.

It concerns you then to be at no time secure, but to be very watchful over yourselves in all places, in all companies, at all times. You are in the midst of devils that watch all opportunities to draw you to sin, that endeavour your destruction. When Samson was lulled asleep in the lap of Delilah, then the Philistines came upon him. Whilst men slept, the envious man sowed tares. “*Watch and pray,*” saith our Saviour, “*that ye enter not into temptation,*” (Matt. 26:41). Whilst we are praying, we had need to be watching, for whilst we are praying we may be tempted. I may say too: Watch, and hear the word of God. Watch, and meditate. Watch in thy study and closet. Watch, and work in thy shop. Watch, and walk in the field. Keep a watch when thou art alone. Watch over thyself in all companies, times, places, duties. Expect temptations, and be watchful that you stumble not and fall.

The devil is watchful to tempt, diligent in tempting, [and] subtle in his temptations. Your corruptions are strong, your heart [is] prone to be ensnared with the charm of the charmer, and you do not know at what time he will come to tempt you. Be watchful over these four things:

1. *Over your thoughts.* In all keeping, keep thy heart (Prov. 4:23). Sin most of all begins with thoughts. Cleanse your heart from evil thoughts. Kill these conceptions before your thoughts bring delight, and then delight brings in desire to commit, and your desires will put you upon the practice of sin.

2. *Watch most where your greatest weakness is.* The greatest watch is kept where the enemy is most likely to make invasion. The strongest watch must be set at the weakest part of the walls of a besieged city. Be watchful over that sin to which you are prone – whether pride, passion, revenge, or any other sin. There set your watch there. Remember that Satan is most of all busy

with your beloved corruptions. He loves to cast his angle into such waters where the fish bite most.

3. *Be watchful over yourselves after the vanquishing of temptations, for then you are apt to grow secure.* Although by resisting you may put the devil to flight, yet he returns again, and will as violently assault you as before. The Lord will shortly bruise Satan under your feet, but he stands his ground for the present.

4. *Be watchful after your falls, lest a worse temptation than a former befall thee.* If Satan sees a man stumble and fall, he will keep him down if he can. When he had drawn David to commit adultery, he put him upon murder. When he had made Peter deny Christ once, he proceeded in his temptations.

Here let me propound divers preservatives against temptations, that you may not be overcome by them.

1. *Preserve in your heart settled thoughts of God's omnipresence.* Seneca, to keep men from looseness, would have them think upon grave Cato, that he was always beholding them. If the presence of a man, then [how] much more the presence of God will keep a man from sin. Wicked men take liberty to sin, because they say, "Tush, thou God seest us not." But God looks upon you, not only when you are fasting, but feasting; not only when you are praying, but playing; not only in the fields, but in the house; not only in the parlour, but in the bed chamber, yea, in the closet. Were this consideration still with you, "God sees us," what temptation could prevail against us? It is said of a holy and reverend man, that he had this written before his eyes in his study: "Sin not thou, though ever so secret. God sees thee, and the angels stand by thee. The devil is ready to accuse thee, thine own conscience to give evidence against thee, and hell fire to torment thee. Be thou in the fear of God all the day long," (Prov. 23:17)

2. *Maintain in your hearts thoughts of the strict account which you shall one day make of every sin.* Answer all tempta-

tions thus: "Oh, I cannot answer for the sins I have committed already! And shall I now make work for the great day? Is not my account great enough already! Oh, how can I answer God for one of a thousand sins that I have already committed?"

3. *Let the word of God dwell plenteously in your hearts.* To hide the word in your hearts, is the way to be kept from sin (Psa. 119:11). Christ vanquished the devil by Scripture; "*Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written,*" thou shalt not do thus or thus (Matt. 4:10). Impress the commands of God, the threatenings of God, the curse of the law, upon your soul, whenever thou art tempted to sin.

4. *Oppose eternity of torment to your sinful pleasures,* and say, "What advantage is it to win the whole world, and lose my soul forever? What! shall I venture to lie under the wrath of Almighty God forever for a few momentary pleasures?" Profits and pleasures are the gilded baits of all temptations.

5. *Lodge holy thoughts in your hearts and obey all motions of God's Spirit.* A mind fraught with holy thoughts, will not admit vain thoughts. When Satan finds the heart void and swept of good thoughts, then he enters with evil suggestions. So whilst thou art following the motions of God's Spirit, this will quench diabolical motions.

6. *Pray fervently, and frequently, that God will be thy guard.* Complain often to God that you are in the midst of enemies who are always vexing and enticing you. You can go nowhere, but the devil is at thy right hand. Beseech the Lord that he will rebuke Satan. If God be thy Shepherd, he will rescue thee out of the paw of the bear and out of the paw of the roaring lion.

7. *Finally, let me advise you to take heed of throwing yourselves into the lion's mouth,* and into the paws of the bear. It is a provoking and tempting of God to give us over. If children will be meddling with fire, it is wisdom in the parent to let them burn their fingers, to prevent greater mischief. No man hath need to tempt the devil to tempt him to sin; he is watchful enough to

devour. When a man rushes upon temptations, and will venture upon keeping company with the wicked, he tempts the devil to tempt him.



SECTION 33

Of Mortification, and the Daily Exercising Ourselves Therein

DAILY EXERCISE YOURSELVES in the work of mortification of sin. As the poets write of that many-headed monster Hydra with which Hercules encountered, that still the more heads he cut off, the more did spring up in their rooms, so we shall find it true of that uncouth monster of sin, which is bred in our natures. The more corruptions and temptations we vanquish and subdue, the more will multiply upon us still and reinforce their assaults. It will be every day's work, and all our lives work, to mortify all our sins. We must take all our spiritual enemies that we can light on, and give quarter to none that we take in battle, putting them all to the sword, as God commanded Saul to destroy all the Amalekites. And so careful ought every Christian to be to rid the field of all, that he must stand armed after he hath beaten and vanquished all that appeared, and prepare for such as are undiscovered. [Do] as David, who endeavoured not only to subdue all his known sins and to be kept from presumptuous sins, but prayed also to be cleansed from his secret sins – not from those which he cherished knowingly (for of this sort he had none,) but which he had not yet discovered in himself or not understood to be errors. Labour, by the power of grace, to charge through and through the whole body of sin, that you may cast down not only the actings, but the very imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought, to the obedience of Christ. Leave no member unmortified, no sin unsubdued, even when the relics and remains of sin are not wholly rooted up.

Let every Christian endeavour every day to mortify all his corruptions. By endeavouring to do it, you shall obtain thus much, that though corruption grows in your nature, yet it shall not overflow in your nature. The current of a quick springing well, which hath water continually bubbling and rising up in it, yet being continually laded out and emptied as fast as it fills, though it be not kept dry, yet it shall be kept shallow, and not suffered to swell above the banks. So it is with our nature. It is a well that hath a quick spring. There is filthy water that ever bubbles out of it. But let us ever be pumping it, and lading it out, that as fast as it fills, we may empty it. This will be a means to keep it shallow, and though we cannot keep it dry, it shall not swell above the banks. St. Paul's lesson is plain; "*Let not sin reign in your mortal body,*" (Rom. 6:12). Though sin remain there, yet let it not reign there; at least not reign like a king, though it reign like a tyrant, that we should be obedient to the lusts of it. There if it will be, let it be like a Gibeonite to an Israelite, a drudge, a slave; not a Sarah but an Hagar; a servant, not a mistress. Let not sin lose ground in one place and gain in another. Mortify your earthly members or affections (Col. 3:5). Draw mortifying virtue daily from the death of Christ, and that will have its influence upon the whole old man within you, although perhaps you employ it more especially against some particular members of the body of sin; as when Christ cursed the fig-tree, in more special reference to the branches that bear no fruit, the whole tree immediately withered. This mortifying virtue will not only tame and bring under all sin in you, that it shall not domineer and rage as formerly it did, but it will receive its mortal wound, languish and consume away more and more past all recovery, and hasten not only to a dissolution, but also, as it were, to a total annihilation.



SECTION 34

Of Growing in the Knowledge of Christ, and in Grace

LABOUR EVERY DAY to grow more and more in the knowledge of Christ. Now, there are two degrees of the knowledge of Christ. 1. Historical and doctrinal. 2. Experimental and effectual.

1. *As to the former, it is the knowledge of the person, natures, birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, kingdom, and the priestly, kingly, and prophetic offices of Christ, as these things are laid down in the history and doctrine of the gospel. And these contain abundance of glorious mysteries and wonderful revelations, which all the wisest men under heaven could never have found out, no nor the holy angels of heaven, if the Lord himself had not revealed them by his Spirit. Christians must grow in the knowledge of these. But an historical knowledge, or a bare understanding of these things, is not enough, though a man had all knowledge (1 Cor. 13:2); that is, of this degree or kind.*

2. *Labour for an inward, experimental knowledge of Christ, and to increase therein.* With St. Paul, count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:8). Labour daily to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and to be made conformable to his death. Our understandings are very weak, and it is but little that we can discern at one view. We have but weak and childish capacities in respect of heavenly things, therefore we must endeavour to grow more and more in the knowledge of Christ. Moreover, there is an admirable depth in the mystery of

Christ, and you can never come to the bottom of it, although you should be diving into it all your life long.

Look over all the objects of knowledge, and can you find a more pleasing, a more joyous, a more comfortable object to study than the knowledge of Christ, and his love toward sinners?

The more inwardly you grow acquainted with Christ, the more will you delight in him and admire him. The queen of Sheba knew Solomon by report and she admired him so far, that she took a long journey to visit him. But when she was an eye-witness and an ear-witness of his glory and wisdom, she admired him much more. So when a Christian has some acquaintance with Christ, he admires and loves him. But when he becomes more inwardly acquainted with him, he sees much more cause to admire and love him. Such is the inward excellency, sweetness, and perfection of Christ, that the nearer anyone approaches to him, the more admirable and lovely he appears. The more you grow in the knowledge of Christ, the more will your love of the world, of yourselves, of your sins, wear away, and die in you. If you find your souls increase in the knowledge of Christ, you will find them so far surpass all others, that you will grow more and more out of love with them. Labour daily more and more to partake of the comforts of his Spirit, for Christ will shine forth brightly in these to your souls. This comfort is called, "*the light of his countenance*," (Ps. 4:6); and therefore as the light of the sun shows the sun to us so that we see it by its own light, so the joys and comforts of Christ's Spirit, which are the light of his countenance, discover Christ in a clear and excellent manner to believers. These show Christ in his beauty and make the soul admire him, and cleave to him. The darkness of hell itself cannot hide Christ from you, when he thus discovers himself to you by his own immediate light.

Labour also daily to grow in grace. Crescens ("growing") is a fit name for a Christian, because he ever is, or ought to be, in a growing state; grace having the same efficacy upon the soul, as

the soul has upon the body. Whilst the body is in a growing condition, the soul enlarges the body in all the parts and dimensions, that the members may not only fill more clothes, but take in more nourishment, and so become stronger and more serviceable. In like manner labour that your inner man may truly grow up in Christ in all things, by the working of the Spirit of Christ, as the soul of that new life which is within you, that you may be meet instruments of righteousness, to bring forth fruit unto God. Be still advancing, still ascending, always going forward unto perfection, not only in knowledge, but growing in solid grace; not in external profession and formalities, but in all good works, which are more and better at the latter end than at the first. Endeavour to be still thriving, that you may bring forth more fruit in old age than at the beginning; that you wither not, nor decay, but still be fat and flourishing. And may this be your comfort, that although the outward man decay, yet your inner man is renewed day by day. And when you cannot perform so much outward service, as when younger and stronger in body, yet your thriving soul will glory more and more in your God, to see others stand up in your stead, whom by holy counsel and fervent prayers, you may further in the work of the Lord.

Labour every day to grow more spiritual. See that your knowledge becomes more judicious, your zeal more discreet, your love more active and substantial. Grow more to God, and less to yourselves and the world. Settle yourselves more and more in a good course, and although you seem not so fair outwardly, yet inwardly labour to be sound at heart.



SECTION 35

Of the Government of the Tongue

HE THAT OFFENDS not with his tongue, is a perfect man (James 3:2). He comes near to perfection indeed, who can subdue those corruptions, which not only profane men cannot subdue, but hardly those that are religious. It is one of our masterpieces in religion, to govern our tongues well. Three ways may men offend with their tongues:

1. *By much speaking*, for he that is a prodigal and lavish talker, bridled not his tongue. To bridle the tongue is a token of wisdom, but to be full of words is a note of folly. “*In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise,*” (Prov. 10:19). Sometimes the occasion may require that a man must speak much, and though it be much, it is no more than necessary. He that speaks but what is needful, let not him be taxed for speaking much. But sometimes though the matter he speak be good enough, yet he may be taxed for speaking too much – either because not needful, or not seasonable. The living creatures in Ezekiel’s vision are said to have wings, and eyes in their wings. You must not only have wings, but eyes too; eyes of discretion, as well as wings of zeal and devotion. I say, [we need] eyes of discretion, to accommodate circumstances of our speech, as times, places, persons, and occasions do require. Those that are affected with loquacity and much speaking, either speak things that are false, or superfluous, or both. However, it is an evidence of indiscretion and vainglory.

2. *Men offend by foolish and vain speaking, when their talk is idle, and to no purpose*; either such as edifies not, or such as concerns us not. St. Paul says, “*Let no corrupt communication*

proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers," (Eph. 4:29). If there be no edifying in it, it is better concealed than uttered. Our words should be "*seasoned with salt,*" (Col. 4:6). They should have salt in them, at least some seasoning and relish of wisdom and discretion.

Solomon's comparisons are excellent to this purpose. At one time he compares the tongue of a wise man to a tree of life (Prov. 15:4); at another, the words he speaks unto choice silver (Prov. 10:20). "*The tree of life;*" therein are grace and edification; "*choice silver,*" therein are wisdom and discretion. In foolish and vain talking there is neither of these, for that is both empty and useless. Not like a tree of life, but like a heap of chaff – it is empty. Not like choice silver, but like refuse dross – it is useless. With this also the apostle joins jesting. "*Foolish talking and jesting, let them not be once named among you,*" for they are things not convenient (Eph. 5:3-4). This is foolish talking, which profits not.

There is foolish talking which concerns us not, and that is curious meddling with other men's business. In 1 Tim. 5:13, St. Paul taxes certain widows of Ephesus, that among other ill qualities they had this for one: to go gadding from house to house, and to play the prattlers and busy bodies. Solomon says, "*It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling,*" (Prov. 20:3). To be meddling with other men's business which concerns us not, is the part of a fool.

3. *By wicked talking;* and this reaches either to God or man. You may find out the several branches of both, by the several branches of the moral law.

a. *Against God.* There is the tongue of the atheist, of whom David declares, that he saith in his heart, "*There is no God,*" (Prov. 14:1). Yea, perhaps he does not forbear to say so with his tongue; for tell them that God knows and sees what they do, they scoff at it: "What! Can God see us? Can he look through

the dark cloud?" Or tell them, he will one day come and punish them for what they do, they scoff at this also; as St. Peter saith, they ask with scorn, "*Where is the promise of his coming?*" (2 Pet. 3:4). Such promises and threatenings as these, they count but as fables. There is the tongue of the heretic, that spreads abroad false doctrine of God, that persuades the people to follow vanities, and go after lies. There is the tongue of the blasphemer and swearer, which speaks irreverently and profanely of God and his attributes, his word and his ordinances, and fearfully threatens Heaven with oaths and execrations. These are tongues that speak wickedly against God.

b. *There are tongues also which speak wickedly against men.* There is the *disloyal and disobedient* tongue, which mocketh the father, and despiseth the instruction of the mother. There is the *murderous* tongue, which speaks words of hatred and malice, which threatens, as Esau did, mischief and revenge against the life of others upon the undue apprehensions of suspected injuries. There is the *obscene* tongue, which pours out rotten and unsavoury communication, delighting to talk impurely and unchastely, which soliciteth to acts of lust and uncleanness. One of the philosophers hearing a beautiful young man speak some words of immodesty, asked him if he were not ashamed to draw a leaden sword out of an ivory scabbard? We may ask so of those whose profession is fair, and their communication filthy, whether they are not ashamed to draw such unseemly words from under so sacred a calling? There is the *deceitful* tongue, which coins many a false lie, which sweareth many a false oath, which venteth many a false protestation, to overreach others for gain to himself. But as Solomon says of false balances, we may say of false tongues, they are "*an abomination to the Lord.*" There is the *slandering and backbiting* tongue, which woundeth the reputation of those who are absent, of those who are dead, to make them odious. There is the *ensorious and scoffing* tongue,

which delights in talking of whatever is said or done, and then carping at whatever it pleases to dislike.

Let all, therefore, but especially those that profess to be religious, take special care every day to the well governing of their tongues, to bridle their tongues. A bridle has a rein belonging to it, and a bit; the rein to give liberty, the bit to check in. Thus learn to do by your tongues. You must learn when to give them the rein, [and] when the bit; when to let them loose, [and] when to restrain them. Solomon says, "*There is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence,*" (Eccl. 3:4). To this purpose there are divers circumstances, which are carefully to be observed by us, both in our keeping silence, and in our speaking. We must consider the following things:

1. *The persons to whom you speak are to be considered*, for you must not speak everything to everybody. To some it were a folly to do it; to some it were dangerous to do it. It were like Hezekiah's opening his treasures to his enemy, which was little better in effect than the betraying of his kingdom. Observe the condition and quality of the person, and accordingly learn to speak, or to be silent.

2. *Observe the matter that you speak of*, for according to that, you should speak more freely, or more sparingly. "*My heart is inditing a good matter,*" saith David, and "*my tongue is the pen of a ready writer,*" (Ps. 45:1). If it be a good matter that we are to speak of, we may let go the rein of the bridle, and give our tongues more scope and liberty. But take heed of those profane babblings that St. Paul speaks of, that increase to more ungodliness (2 Tim. 2:16). Augustine gives good advice to this purpose:

Thou wilt not give thy stomach bitter meat to feed on, and wilt thou give thy tongue wicked talk to feed on? As thou art choice of what thou eatest, so be choice of what thou talkest.

3. *Observe in what manner you speak*. St. Paul would that all

your words be seasoned with the salt of discretion (Col. 4:6). You must learn when to use an admonition, when a reproof, when a consolation. If you have to deal with a superior, use the more humility; if with your equal, you may use the more formality; if with your inferior, you may exercise your authority. Some natures must be handled with mildness, some with sternness. Some faults are to be privately reproved, others to be publicly rebuked. Some offenders must be saved with fear, others rescued with violence, and as it were with plucking out of the fire (Jude 23). According to the several occasions and dispositions that we meet with, so must our speech be tempered.

4. *Consider what end you have in speaking*, for though your mouth be as the oracle of God, speaking things heavenly and excellent; though your admonitions be ever so holy, your consolations ever so refreshing, your reproofs ever so zealous, yet perhaps your end may not be so sincere. Let your end therefore be always to aim at the glory of God, and at the good of your brethren. Piety teaches the one, charity the other.

5. *Consider the place where you speak*, for there is a difference to be put between private places and public. Some will never talk of religion, but when they are in a tavern, or upon an ale bench; fit chairs for such doctors. I do not mean that God may not anywhere be talked of. I mean only to condemn the indiscreet folly of those who choose unfit places or unfit meetings for their discourses. It is to do as the scribes and Pharisees did, to pray in the market-place, and to buy and sell in the temple.

6. *You must have respect to the time when you speak*. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver," (Prov. 25:11). The prophet notes it as a special part of wisdom in him who has the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in due season (Isa. 50:4). Thus Abigail dealt with Nabal. She would not tell him of his folly and danger in his drunken fit, but when the wine was out of his head.

Now, for the better learning of all this, I will recommend to you a few rules of direction:

1. *Be careful to keep a continual watch over your tongues, and to take diligent heed to the words that pass from you.* David says, “*I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue,*” (Ps. 39:1). It is with your talking, as with your walking. If you do not take heed to your feet when you walk, you may happen to stumble. So if you do not take heed to your tongues when you talk, they may happen to run wild.

2. *With watchfulness join prayer.* Pray heartily and frequently to God, that he would refrain your tongues from evil speaking, and open them in uttering the things that are good. Thus did Agur: “*Remove far from me vanity and lies,*” (Prov. 30:8). Thus did David: “*Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips,*” (Ps. 141:3). As you must beg pardon of God, when you have offended in the misgoverning your tongues, so for the guiding and well governing of them, you must be petitioners to him. Only he who hath given them to you, can teach you how to govern them.

3. *Learn humility in observing yourselves and sobriety in speaking of others,* for whence is our curiosity in observing, our censoriousness in condemning others, but merely from an opinionative self-love, and a proud conceit that men have of themselves. So long a man is ignorant in seeing his own faults, as he is curious to pry into the faults of others. To this purpose, Chrysostom gives good advice:

Enter into thine own heart, and let thine own conscience be thy judge. Bring thyself to a reckoning, and ponder in thyself the manifold sins that thou knowest thyself to have committed. Think of the punishments that are due unto thee for them, and ask thyself the question, ‘How thou darest do this, or that?’ If thy conscience then offer to fly back, and to baffle thee with other men’s faults, answer her, God hath not made thee a judge of others, thou hast enough of thine own to answer for.

4. *Learn ever to be more ready to hear than to speak.* So Elihu says, that he was careful to do. Thus he speaks to Job and his three friends; *“Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say,”* (Job 32:11). Indeed, the way to get wisdom is to hear much, and speak little. He that hears much, shall learn much. He that talks much, shall learn little. If you desire to speak much, Seneca says, *“Speak little to others, most to yourselves.”* It is the same the apostle teaches us. We should be *“swift to hear, slow to speak,”* (James 1:19). Yea, we should be twice as swift to hear as to speak, because nature hath given us but one organ to speak with and two to hear with.



SECTION 36

A Meditation on the Miseries of this Life

IT IS GOOD FOR a Christian every day, to meditate seriously on the miseries of this life. He should,
1. *Consider the shortness of it.* Job says, that man's days are determined, the number of his months are with God, and that he hath appointed his bounds that he cannot pass (Job 14:5). "*The days of our years are threescore years and ten: and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away,*" (Ps. 90:10). And hereof you cannot well reckon the time of your infancy for any part of your life, for in that age there is nothing either learned or done that may well beseeem the dignity of a man.

And as touching the time that is spent in sleep, I see not how that can well be called the time of life, seeing the principal part of our life, is to have the use of our senses and reason, which then are, as it were, suspended in us and dead. Therefore a philosopher said that in the half of man's life there is no difference between the happy man and unhappy, for as much as during the time of sleep all men are equal.

Multitudes of people sleep the third part of the day and night, which is eight whole hours (and some more) whence it follows, that a third part of our lives is consumed in sleep, and so consequently that during that time we do not live.

But compare this small remnant of life we live here with the life to come, and how little will it appear! What is this momentary life, compared with life everlasting, but as it were a drop of water compared with the whole ocean? If a thousand years in the sight of God be no more but as it were yesterday, which is

now past and gone, what shall the life of seventy or eighty years seem to be, but only a very nothing, compared to eternity?

Christian reader, think then with yourself every day: What greater folly and madness can be imagined, than that men and women, for the enjoying of this short dream of such vain delights and pleasures, should plunge themselves into everlasting torments! And what sottishness has possessed men, that they should take so much labour and pains to provide so many things for so short a life, and not to make any provision at all for their souls, which shall live forever!

2. *Meditate also of the uncertainty of your life.* As our life is very short, so it is also uncertain. "*Man knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them,*" (Eccl. 9:12). How often are men surprised with sudden changes, as birds in a snare, and fishes in a net.

"*Watch ye therefore,*" and be always in readiness, because "*ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh,*" (Matt. 25:13). Because you know not the year, be therefore always in readiness every year. And because you know not the month, watch every month. And because you know not the hour, watch every hour. I will give you a comparison brought to my hand by a devout man. Suppose there were set thee upon a table, thirty or forty several dishes of meat, and thou wert told by a special friend that there was poison in one of them. Thou wouldst scarcely adventure to eat of any one of them, although thou wert very hungry, for fear lest thou shouldst light upon the dish that was poisoned. Now, perhaps, thou thinkest, that thou shalt live thirty or forty years. Well then, if it be certain that in one of these years thou shalt die, and thou knowest not in which of them, why art thou not then afraid in every one of them, and dost not every year, yea, every day, make preparation for death?

Why do soldiers keep a continual watch in the castle that

stands in the frontiers, upon an enemy's country? Is it for any other cause, but only for that they know not when the enemy will come to assault it? Surely for no other. O then, seeing you know not at what hour death will assault you, you had always need to be watchful. Thy soul is of greater value than all the castles and kingdoms of the world, and thou hast greater enemies that endeavour day and night continually to assault it, and thou art altogether ignorant of the day and hour of thine assault. And the whole matter of the salvation or condemnation of thy soul consists in this point, whether thou be taken provided or unprovided in that dreadful hour.

3. *Consider the frailty and brittleness of man's life.* No glass is so subject to breaking as the life of man. Some lose their life by the vehement heat of the sun. Some die by drinking a draught of cold drink, or by surfeiting at a supper. Some die of excessive pleasure or of grief. Some seem to go well to bed, and there are found dead in the morning. We may not wonder how soon men end their lives, as how they endure so long, the workmanship of their bodies being so tender, and the matter and stuff whereof they are compounded, so frail and weak. God bids the prophet cry, "*All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth,*" (Isa. 40:6-7). What is the grass, but the earth's summer garment, which is put off before winter cometh!

Today you may see a young gallant in the flower of his age, strong and lively, parading up and down in rich attire, and with a lofty countenance. And tomorrow, a violent disease surprising, may strangely disfigure and alter him. Some are sore broken with adversities. Others are pinched with penury and poverty. Some are distempered with delicate meats and sweet wines. Others are debilitated with age. Some mar their complexions with artificial painting, or riotous behaviour, so that their flesh withereth like grass, and the flower thereof fadeth away.

May you not today see some, descended of noble parentage,

of a very ancient house and family, well befriended, and keeping a great house, attended with a great train of tenants and servants, and commanding the whole country where they live; and within a short time after you may see the same men forsaken of all their friends, despised by their equals, and little regarded of all the world; utterly disgraced, and thrust into that prison, where perhaps they not long before had imprisoned others, and there end their wretched and miserable life? O sinful man! thou that drinkest down iniquity like water, that wallowest daily in sinful delights and pleasures, dost thou not plainly see, that whenever the thread of this frail and short life of thine breaketh in sunder, that if thou continuest still in this thy wicked course, thou shalt fall into the bottomless pit of destruction? How then canst thou sing, laugh, play, sleep, or take any rest! How is it that thou art so senseless of thy peril and danger, who art ready every moment to drop into the pit of hell!

4. *Meditate on the variableness of this life.* Who is able to reckon up the alterations that are in man? Now he smiles, anon he frowns. Now he is pleased, but shortly he is displeased. Now he is merry, anon he is sad and pensive. Now he is well, then he is sick; sometimes contented, sometimes discontented; sometimes full of hope, sometimes in despair; sometimes pleased, sometimes angry. That which is past is irksome to him, that which is present is troublesome, and that which is to come disquiets him. He is careful in getting goods, fearful of losing, and sorrowful in parting with them. And how man's life continually moves and wastes away! Every minute he is going a step further towards his death.

Job says, that his days were swifter than a post (Job 9:25). He that rides post, though his message require ever so much haste, yet sometimes necessity causes him to stay. But our life never stays one moment.

5. *Meditate on the treacherousness of this life.* It is full of deceit and guile. O man, dost thou perceive when thou wast

made an infant? Canst thou tell when thou wast made a strippling? Or when thou camest to man's estate? Or when thou didst begin to be old? We die every day. We are in deaths often, and yet vain man would persuade himself he shall live forever.

Wherefore do men labour so much in gathering riches, and in purchasing lands, and make so little preparation for death? Is it not because they persuade themselves that their lives shall be long? This false conceit makes them believe, that they shall have time for their pleasures, lusts, vanities, and worldly businesses; and that they shall have time enough also before they die, to make their account ready and to make their peace with God. This vain persuasion is not grounded upon any reason, or true foundation, but only upon self-love, which as it naturally hates the thoughts of death, so it will not believe that it will come as soon to his house as to another man's. Most men are loth to believe that which may be an occasion of so great pain and grief to them as this would be.

6. *Meditate on the manifold miseries of this life.* So many are the calamities and miseries of man's body and mind, that it deserves rather the name of death than life. Were your eyes opened to see your own case, you would always lament and bewail your state, as men condemned by God Almighty to endure such miseries. Consider first the external miseries of the body. Who is able to count them? What pains and toils do men take to get food, whereby to sustain their lives, either by the sweat of their brows or of their brains! The beasts of the earth and birds of the air are fed without any labour or pain. But man is constrained to labour day and night, and to turmoil by sea and land, to get his living. And as the spider labours day and night in spinning her web, wasting even her own bowels, and consuming herself to bring it to an end, which serves only for a net to catch flies in, even so all man's travail serves to no other end, but only to catch flies, to procure trifles, and things of little value.

Who is able to reckon up the infinite diversities of diseases, to

which the body of man is subject? Physicians in their books write of abundance of diseases, and remedies for the same. And yet their science is enlarged continually by the addition of new and strange diseases, of which the physicians of old were altogether ignorant.

And even those persons that have been free from these miseries, yet have not been exempt from other calamities and mischances. How many thousand men has the sea swallowed up! How many has the sword devoured! How many has the fire consumed! How many have been killed by the falling down of houses, walls, and towers! How many with the strokes and stings of venomous beasts! How many women die in travail of their children, and dearly purchase their children's lives with their own painful death! The very brute beasts that were made to serve us, rebel against us; and among all other creatures, man is most cruelly bent against man.

What abundance of engines, artillery, weapons, and ammunition have men devised for their own defence and to destroy others! Insomuch that when they are not molested with the air and the elements, men become wolves and devils to one another. But if I should run through all the miseries and calamities that are incident to all the ages and conditions of this life, men might yet find themselves in a far worse case. And here we should never make an end, if we should set forth the little satisfaction that is to be found in each of these, and that eager desire that every one has to change his condition with the state of others.

7. Meditate on death itself, which succeeds after other miseries. Who is able to declare the manifold miseries included in this misery alone? At present consider what a holy father saith, by way of exclamation against death:

O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee! How suddenly dost thou steal upon us! How secret are thy paths and ways! How doubtful is thy hour! How universal is thy domin-

ion! The mighty cannot escape thy hands. The wise cannot hide themselves from thee, and in thy presence the strong lose their strength. Thou accountest no man rich, for no man can ransom his life of thee for money. Thou goest everywhere, thou searchest everywhere, there is no place where thou art not. Thou witherest the herbs, thou drinkest up the winds, thou corruptest the air, thou changest the ages, thou alterest the world, thou refrainest not to sup up the sea. All things do increase and diminish, but thou continuest always at one stay. Thou art the hammer that always striketh. Thou art the sword that never blunteth. Thou art the snare whereinto every one falleth. Thou art the prison whereinto every one entereth. Thou art the sea wherein all do perish. Thou art the pain that every one suffereth, and the tribute that every one payeth.

O cruel death, why hast thou no pity on us, but stealest suddenly upon us, to snatch us away in our best times, and interrupt us in our best affairs? Thou robbest as much from us in one hour, as we have gained in many years. Thou cuttest off the succession of kindreds and families. Thou leavest princes and kingdoms without any heirs. Thou fillest the world with widows and orphans. Thou breakest off the studies of great clerks. Thou overthrowest good wits in their ripest age. Thou joinest the end with the beginning, without giving place to the middle. If devotion hath made us wings, why are we slothful? Let us soar aloft, and take that flight which our Lord tracked out to us in the day of his ascension. Remember that the quintessence of all wisdom is the meditation of death. It is a business we should learn all our life-time, to exercise it once. The faults therein committed are irreparable, and the loss without recovery.



SECTION 37

Of Returning to Family Worship in the Evening

LET EVERY CHRISTIAN return to the worshipping of God in the family, and in secret, in the evening as in the morning. Under the law a lamb was offered up morning and evening, day by day continually (Exod. 29:38). Of this the Hebrew doctors say, that the continual sacrifice of the morning made atonement for the iniquities that were done in the night. And the evening sacrifice made atonement for the iniquities that were done in the day.

This should teach us daily to renew the application of the sacrifice of Christ, typified by the Lamb, once offered to the Father for us. Receive him, feed upon him, and make daily application to him. Every morning and evening make a humble confession of your sins, with much holy contrition and godly sorrow, and then present Christ and all his merits unto God, and sprinkle thy conscience afresh with his blood. Renew your hold of him, and embrace him more strongly. Let your faith be daily exercised upon Christ.

The Lord met with the people, and spoke with them in the place where the lamb was offered continually (Exod. 29:42). So if we daily, morning and evening, by a true and lively faith, renew the application of Christ's sacrifice to our souls, we may be sure that Christ will meet with us there, and speak with us there. Oh, how we wrong ourselves when we withdraw, and do not give Christ a meeting, when we absent ourselves morning or evening, and neglect those holy duties wherein we should meet Jesus Christ, and hear him speaking to us peace and pardon, reconciliation and salvation! What sweet comfort is to be found in all

states, when thus we draw near to the Lord in these holy duties! When we meet him, and hear his sweet expressions of love by his Spirit to our souls, it should make us loth to depart, even hard to be pulled away from the door of the tabernacle, unwilling to end these exercises, or turn our thoughts another way, were it not that other things must be done. Therefore, sanctify yourselves every one, and come to this daily burnt offering morning and evening continually, that you may meet the Lord, and hear him talk with you words of peace and love. Many complain that Christ is strange unto them, they cannot see him, nor hear any word of comfort from him. But the fault is in themselves. They fail to give him a meeting, or to come in that holy manner as they ought.

Moreover, it is said in Exodus 29:43, that hereupon the tabernacle should be sanctified by the glory of the Lord, when they should come before him daily with this continual burnt offering, and he should meet them and speak with them. In like manner, a family, a Christian, is sanctified by the glory of the Lord through this daily intercourse with him. If you daily meet the Lord in humiliation, in renewing the application of Christ to your souls, in calling upon him for the accomplishment of his promises, and he, on the other side meets with you and speaks to you, then shall you be sanctified by the glory of the Lord. You shall see the light of his loving countenance graciously and gloriously shining upon your souls. This has a sanctifying virtue and power in it. As the sun shining brightly and gloriously from time to time on trees and fruits gives growing sweetness and ripeness to these fruits, so Christ, by meeting us and shining on our souls with the light of his countenance, when we present ourselves before him aright in the due and daily performance of his service, and offering of this sacrifice, sanctifies us by his glory. He alters the temper of our souls. He changes and fashions us unto his likeness, in righteousness and true holiness, from glory to glory, by his Spirit.



SECTION 38

Of a Man's Taking Review in the Evening of the Actions and Mercies of the Past Day

IT IS GOOD before you lie down to sleep, to take a review of all the actions and mercies of the past day. If you would know the sins you have committed the past day, or the past week, or your whole past life, you may briefly run over all the Ten Commandments, and you may easily see what commandments you have transgressed, and so may be humbled for your sins, and renew your repentance and resolutions for better obedience. Look diligently into the whole state of your life, consider what progress you have made in godliness, or how you have declined – what words you have spoken, what works you have done, and to what end, and in what manner, they were performed.

Consider your apparel, your service, your attendance, your table, your conversation, your entertainment, and all your dealings and demeanour, whether they have not savoured of pride and vanity, and let this be matter of humiliation.

Take a strict examination of thy conscience every evening. For if conscience condemn, God doth much more condemn. And if conscience acquit and justify, by the evidence of the word and Spirit, God doth acquit and justify, and we shall have confidence toward God. What can more nearly concern us, than daily to make a thorough and careful search of our own consciences! Shall men be so careful to examine the evidences by which they hold lands and annuities, the leases whereby they hold farms, and shall we be so careless as to let our hearts and consciences lie unexamined and unsearched?

I have read of an English king, who after a long time of desolating wars, which caused a great confusion in men's outward estates, in a public assembly, called upon his subjects to show their evidences by which they held their lands. Whereupon a noble, being loth to have his writings examined, drew his sword, and said that by this he held his lands. So there are many that cannot endure to search their hearts and consciences, because they have no sound hope to find their evidence good and clear to the kingdom of heaven.

Unless you are justified by faith in Christ, your consciences, when they are indeed awakened and enlightened, will condemn you as guilty in the sight of God, and will condemn the best of your actions as not wrought in God, nor done in the name of Christ, as not proceeding from the love of God, nor intended for his glory. Now, before you can find yourselves justified by faith in Christ through the gospel, you must find your consciences condemning you for sin, and therefore daily yield them to be searched and convinced by the word of God.

Take a review every evening, likewise, of all the gifts, graces, blessings, and benefits, God has bestowed upon you, and consider after what sort you have employed them the day past. And examine whether all these things, wherewith thou shouldst have done the more service unto Him who gave them, thou hast not made weapons and instruments wherewith to offend him the more. Examine how you have used your strength, your health, your riches, your substance, your life, your understanding, your memory, your will, your affections, your sight, your tongue, your ears, your hands, and all the rest of your members and faculties. And then let the consideration of God's benefits cause you to acknowledge him, and his goodness to love him. Though we are not to slight common mercies, yet extraordinary mercies must be more specially and particularly observed by us.



SECTION 39

Of Providing in the Evening for the Day to Come

IT IS GOOD advice that one gives, that a Christian should begin from the evening the purpose of good works which he is to perform the next day – what points he ought to meditate upon, what vice he should resist, what virtue he should exercise, what affairs he is to take in hand – to make all appear in its proper time with a well-matured providence. We should guide our actions in the great labyrinth of time, otherwise all runs to confusion.

Some commend the evening as a fit time for meditation, namely, from the sun setting to the twilight. It is said of Isaac, that he went forth into the field in the evening, to meditate and to pray (Gen. 24:63). The original word signifies both duties. It is thought by some interpreters, that David penned the eighth Psalm in the night, occasioned by his meditation on the works of God.

In the evening, consider that every morning has its evening, and the longest day has its night. So every man's day of life, will have its night of death. The longest day of life will have its night of death. Think upon that saying of our Saviour, "*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work,*" (John 9:4). There is no working out your salvation, when the night of death is come.

If thou, O man, hast spent the day in vain delights and pleasures, ask thyself in the evening, what satisfaction thou hast found in those vanities which thou hast so eagerly pursued all the day before, and what comfort they now afford unto thee. Ah! they are now gone and passed, and they have left but a sad

relish behind. But if yet thou resolvest to tread the same paths of sin and destruction again, be thou well assured, that a night will come which shall never have a morning; when being covered with the shadow of death, thou shalt lie down in everlasting sorrow. Then wilt thou cry out in the anguish of thy soul: "Oh, what an unfortunate wretch am I, that had time and opportunity to gain that blessed state which angels and saints enjoy in the kingdom of heaven, and would not use the benefit thereof! Oh, how idly and wickedly has the time of my life passed away, which shall never return again! And now for a few momentary pleasures on earth, I must suffer intolerable and everlasting torments in hell. Oh unhappy pleasures! Oh cursed change! Oh, unfortunate hour and moment wherein I thus blinded myself! What a miserable wretch am I! A thousand, yea, ten thousand times unhappy, that have so fondly deceived myself! Oh, it had been well if I had never been born!"



SECTION 40

A Meditation on Putting Off Our Clothes to Go to Bed

ONSIDER THAT CLOTHES do not make nor mar a man. The body ceases not to be a body when the clothes are put off, that the body may take its rest in a warm bed. So it is not the body that makes a man. It is the mind or soul of man that is the man. When the body is laid aside in the grave, a man doth not then cease to be, but his soul is then taking its rest in heaven, or tormented in hell. Death is not an annihilation of a man, but only a dissolution.

Again consider, that as a man unclothes himself before he goes to take his rest in his bed, so death to a godly man is but an unclothing of him for sleep and rest. And here meditate on the resemblances between death and the unclothing of ourselves for sleep and rest.

1. *Before a man lays off his clothes, he loosens his garments, that he may put them off.* Thus ordinarily before the soul is unclothed of the body, God sends sickness, one disease or other, to ungird and let loose the body, so nearly united to the soul of man. Therefore St. Paul calls it a dissolution. I desire, says he, to be dissolved (Php. 1:23). If he had not thought his soul bound and girt to his body, he would not have desired to be dissolved. Every ache, pain, and sickness that God lays upon the body is, and ought to be, a forewarning to you, that it is almost bed-time. It is death's harbinger, and God's servant, sent it may be to fetch and carry you to your bed, to your place of rest.

2. *A man cannot take such sweet rest in his clothes, as when he is unclothed.* So a godly man can never rest from his labours

whilst he is in the body, but he will be always burdened, wearied, and groaning in this earthly tabernacle. He is *“born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.”* There is no hope of resting from sin, from temptation, from trouble, from labours without, and from fears within, till a Christian lays aside his body, the garment of the soul. Death makes him to rest from all his labours. While the soul is in the body, it is absent from the Lord – the proper rest of the soul, the saint’s everlasting habitation. But death carried Lazarus into Abraham’s bosom.

3. *When a man puts off all his clothes to go to his bed, he takes a covering upon him.* Thus when the soul leaves the body, it lays aside the clothes, yet lies not without a covering. Man’s bed is his grave, and the earth is his covering. A pious man may think upon his burial in a grave, as a chest or coffer, wherein his body (the apparel of his soul) is laid up till the morning of the resurrection. But a wicked man may think on it as a dark prison, reserving his body (as his soul is reserved in hell in chains of darkness) until the judgment of the great day.

4. *When a man puts off his clothes, he lays aside all his rich ornaments with them.* Thus when the soul lays aside the body, it also lays aside all a man’s honours, preferments, riches, pleasures, and whatever the vain heart of man takes a pride in. We came forth naked into the world, and naked we shall return out of the world. We came forth naked, which shows men were not born to great matters; and naked we shall return, to show the vanity of men in looking after great matters. For when the rich and the honourable men die, they shall carry nothing away with them, and their glory shall not descend after them (Ps. 49:17). O consider, what a lamentable thing it is for men to lay aside these things at death, and to have no ornament but the ugliness of sin in which to appear before God!

5. *Men put off their clothes in hope, after they have refreshed themselves with sleep, to put them on again.* So when the soul lays aside the body, it is in hope of rising again, of a reunion of

the soul with the same body which had been laid aside; so to put off the body, as one that shall put it on again in a more glorious manner, and never more lay it aside.



SECTION 41

When You Lie Down in Your Beds at Night

HAVING RECOUNTED the mercies of the day, think on the dangers of the night. It is said of thieves and robbers that in the dark they dig through houses, which they have marked for themselves in the daytime (Job 24:16). The word in the original signifies to mark with a seal, as if they put their seal upon other men's houses for their own use. Thieves set their mark upon such houses in the day-time, which they intend to rob at night. Or, as some explain it, they observe the strength of the house, the ways to it, what company is in the house, and where they may with most facility and advantage break into it. Houses are marked out in the day, and broken open in the night. Many houses also are fired in the night, and how helpless is man amidst these casualties and dangers! If he be asleep, the thief finds him bound to his hand, and if fire takes his chamber, how likely is the fire to consume him in his bed! At midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Pharaoh, to the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle (Exod. 12:29). It was in the night that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians, a hundred fourscore and five thousand (2 Kings 19:35). Ish-bosheth was slain at noon upon his bed, and the night has been fatal to many.

Acknowledge it a mercy that God affords you rest after labour. Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour until the evening (Ps. 104:23), for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Life and strength would fail as much for want of rest, as for want of food. A good Christian may go to bed without fear. You shall

find many promises in Scripture about this blessing. “*When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid, yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet,*” (Prov. 3:24). “*Thou shalt take thy rest in safety, thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid,*” (Job 11:18). David says, “*I laid me down, and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me,*” (Ps. 3:5). “*I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep, for thou, Lord, makest me dwell in safety,*” (Ps. 4:8).

Every member of Jesus Christ is secure through faith in him. The shepherd wakes when others are asleep, to keep his sheep from the wolf. God is the Keeper of his flock. He is always vigilant to defend them. “*Behold, he that is the Keeper of Israel, shall never slumber nor sleep: the Lord is thy Keeper,*” (Ps. 121:4-5). Peter feared not to sleep in prison (Acts 12:6). When the Lord undertakes our protection, we may sleep, as our Saviour did, in the midst of a storm and tempest. As a good night’s rest is the gift of God, so it deserves daily acknowledgments by us.



SECTION 42

When You Compose Yourself to Sleep

HAVING PRAYED IMMEDIATELY before you go to rest, offer your rest itself to God, in this or the like manner: “My God, I desire as often as I shall draw breath this night, that all my respirations may praise thee.”

It is good to empty yourselves, before you sleep, of all that troubles you. Pythagoras gave this rule to his scholars, “Betake not thyself to sleep, till thou hast in thy mind gone thrice over the works of the day.” The sleep of a godly man is sweet, but the sleep of many wicked men is very troublesome.

But good men sometimes, through grief and pain, find little ease, or refreshment from their beds. Thus Job amplifies his sorrows, instancing in those ordinary ways which give sick and distempered bodies some abatement or intermission of their pain, lying down upon their bed, or couch. “*When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions,*” (Job 7:13-14). As if he had said, “Whilst I was all day conflicting with my sorrows, I yet had some hope to find comfort at night, that I should find rest on my bed. Or whilst in the day my spirit is overwhelmed within me, I think sometimes to deceive my pains a little by sleeping on my couch.” Consider here, that the most probable and proper means are unable of themselves to minister any ease or comfort to us. A man may go to his bed, and lie down upon his couch in vain. Unless God command a bed to comfort us, it shall yield us no comfort. And unless he say to a couch, “Ease such a man’s complaint,” it shall not do it. But if God say to an hard stone, “Give such a man rest,” he shall rest

and sleep sweetly upon it, as Jacob did when he journeyed from Beersheba towards Haran, making stones his pillow in the place where he lay down to sleep, there dreaming of a ladder set upon the earth, the top whereof reached to heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending on it, and the Lord standing above it, promising to give the land whereon he lay to him and his seed, and to multiply his seed exceedingly, and that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed (Gen. 28:11-14).

How often does God scare some men with dreams, and terrify them with visions, as Job speaks concerning himself. Some conceive, that the dream of Pilate's wife was from the devil, because Satan would thereby have hindered the work of man's redemption. She comes to Pilate, and desires him to have nothing to do with that just man, "*For,*" saith she, "*I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him,*" (Matt. 27:19). As our waking times are in God's hand, so are our sleeping times. Sometimes God makes sleep an affliction to us. Job's dreams were terrifying and scaring to him. Some dreams are for warning and admonition. The Lord warned Joseph in a dream. The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream whilst he thought on those things, and gave him counsel what to do (Matt. 1:20). Holy meditations, even upon our beds, do many times meet with the Lord's messages. The angels are at God's service to assist his saints, as in the case of Joseph. The angel helps him out of his perplexing thoughts. He was contriving how to please God in that important business, and God sends an angel to assist him. No time is unseasonable for God to help his children. No time but he watcheth over them. When they are sleeping, when they think neither harm nor good, then the Lord watches over them for good. God can give us better direction sleeping, than we can find out waking. Many a one has tasted more of heaven in a night-dream, than in many days' attendance on holy ordinances. Yet this is no pillow for laziness. If we do our best while we are waking, God will relieve us sleeping. Let us go to God,

and not distract ourselves, nor be careless. Joseph thought what to do, yet his thoughts were not so distracting as to break his sleep. God helps him sleeping. God will have us be doing, and yet it may be, he will do his own work without us.

Let every Christian labour to be well employed in the day-time, for it is possible that our fancy in the night may hold some conformity with the day's employment. For if our mind in the day-time be intent upon good employment, and well fixed thereon, our sleep may relish of the same employment also, and our fancy may make return of something whereof we so fastened on in the day, as well as it will do in other vanities. The wise man saith, that in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities, "*but fear thou God,*" (Eccl. 5:7). If thou fearest God, thou needest not fear thy fancy, nor thy dreams. I shall conclude with the advice of Chrysostom: "Close thine eyes with the thoughts of God and his goodness, and thou shalt have sweet dreams. Thy fancy shall not be troubled."



AN APPENDIX

Meditations and Directions for the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath

THE VERY SIGHT OF the Lord's house and place of his worship was a recreation to holy David. *"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!"* They are lovely and beautiful. *"My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."* And, *"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they shall be still praising thee. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the ways of them,"* (Ps. 84:1-2, 4-5). Oh, it is a joyful and a blessed thing to be near the Lord, to be conversant in his service! And, *"I was glad,"* says David, *"when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord,"* (Ps. 122:1). David needed no sport to make him merry upon the Sabbath day. The very invitation made to him of going to the house of the Lord, and the very naming of the house of the Lord, were enough to make him a happy man. And mark how his heart leaps for joy within him. *"Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together,"* (Ps. 122:2-3). He was so pleased with the house of God there, that the city itself seemed the more beautiful to him for it. *"Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel,"* (Ps. 122:4). He goes on in such lively expressions of a glad and joyful spirit, that we may, as it were, feel his pulse beating, and his spirits exulting and triumphing in these passages. Thus was he delighted in the Lord, and in the presence, house, and worship of the Lord, who would not have thought a vain sport worth a cast of his eye to behold it.

And if yet you would more particularly understand what was holy David's recreation on the Sabbath day, mark what is said in Psalm 92, which is entitled, "*A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath Day.*" "*It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High: to show forth thy loving kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night, upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.*" Here was his recreation in the morning and evening, to praise and bless the Lord.

But this seems a tedious and melancholy work to a carnal heart. Mark then what he says in vv4-5: "*For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work; I will triumph in the works of thy hands O Lord, how great are thy works! And thy thoughts are very deep.*" The Lord had made him full of joy in pardoning his sins, and also in protecting his church, and in avenging the cause of his church upon its enemies. But see what follows: "*A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this,*" (v6). An earthly minded man finds no matter of rejoicing in the Lord, or in his works or worship, and therefore a brutish man must have brutish delights, sensual pleasures, or else his heart is lumpish and leaden. I am persuaded, that there is no man of David's spirit, no man after God's own heart, that needs any of those ordinary sports and pleasures to cheer him on the Lord's day. Hear what David says; "*The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart,*" and, "*sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb,*" (Ps. 19:8, 10). A sanctified heart never finds less need of ordinary recreations than on the Lord's day, when the word of God is plentifully communicated.

Now, when are the Lord's statutes more freely published and unfolded to us than on the Lord's day? And can he want recreation, who finds these to be the rejoicing of his heart, and sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb? The Lord's day is a joyful day with him.

I will a little examine the supposed necessity of these recreations, which some so much desire.

There are some recreations that are indeed simply necessary, as meat, drink, rest, sleep. And what servant has not those? If they are needful for any, it is chiefly for such as are kept in the house or shop, who have some sedentary trade, not occasioning them to stir much. And for these, they are not so absolutely necessary, that for them they should rob God of his day in any part.

But some will say perhaps, that they had rather be without their meat and drink than these. But doth this prove them necessary? So had many an one rather lose his life than his beloved lust. Does that prove it necessary? No, that vain desire of yours must be mortified, and you must deny yourself if you would be Christ's disciple. I believe, that the Israelites had as strong an appetite for quails, as ever they had for manna. Does that prove that quails were necessary for them when they had manna? Certainly not! Manna was for their hunger, but quails they desired for their lust. So those that have not sport on other days, and therefore would have it on the Lord's day, in any part of it, as necessary, it is their lust, and not any true need, which makes it seem so necessary unto them. And yet I would have masters prevent this excuse in servants, allowing them some time for convenient refreshment this way, lest by their greediness they thrust them upon temptations, and become guilty of their sins. Give them therefore some other time, and let them give up this time to the Lord.

But some will say, that it will keep them from worse exercises. I answer, that such means to prevent sin are to be used as God has sanctified for that purpose. The word of God has been to some a savour of death unto death, but shall it therefore be taken away? That is it which many wish. But it were better they were taken out of the world. Christ himself was "*a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence*" unto many. What wonder then, if that which is good, he made an occasion of evil, through man's

corruption and Satan's malice! Does not the apostle show, that the law is an occasion that concupiscence rages and stirs the more? (Rom. 7:8). Yet must the law be preached and pressed.

In a word, what child of God that knows how hard a thing it is to work the word of God into his heart, can find spare time upon this day for sports and vain delights? Are not the most serious thoughts and exercises fittest to give impression to the word in the heart? Away then with all light, vain sports and exercises, unless we would make a jest and a trifle of religion and salvation. All the business of our calling is but a trifle in comparison with the work of this day. Therefore such light exercises are most unfit for this day, of all days of the week.

Therefore, "*remember the Sabbath day,*" the whole day, "*to keep it holy,*" not to spend it, or any part of it, in vain sports and pleasures. For it is a day which the Lord requires, and we must not be sharing nor quartering out the day with him. When you have offered up a morning and evening sacrifice in public, do not think that now you have discharged yourself, but hold out in a holy performance of such duties as are answerable to the public. If ever you are serious, let it be now. You never have such important business in hand as upon this day. Therefore close it up with a serious performance of such duties as best become the duties of the public worship. These things concern your everlasting state.

To these things let me add some cautions, very needful to direct us in the observance of this day.

1. *Let us take heed chiefly to the manner of performance of the duties of the day, that we do them in spirit and truth, with life, and affection, and power of the Spirit.* Let us take heed that we do not by any means content ourselves with abstaining from worldly discourses, worldly businesses, or recreations. Neither let us think we have done well, when we have spent the day in the outward worship of God, and in private duties. All this we may

do, and yet all this while not rightly perform any obedience at all to the fourth commandment. Let the love of God rule in your hearts, that you may in love and delight give up the Lord's day unto him, that you may with free, cheerful, fervent spirits – yea, with glad hearts and willing minds – do his holy work upon his holy day of rest. To this end watch over your hearts, and observe when your affections begin to hang the wing, and labour by all means to revive and re-enforce them. Look up to heaven, and draw in strength from Christ. Yea, in such cases it would be fit to break off for a little space such exercises which require a continual speaking, or attending to that which is spoken, and step aside to refresh your mind with some sweet heart-raising meditation of the gospel, or solace it with a psalm or heavenly song, and then return again with a fresh spirit to this service.

2. *Take heed of a deceitful heart herein, lest you should so please yourself in some degree of strictness about the observance of the Sabbath, as that you should let loose the reins all the week after to worldliness, vanity, and sin.* And consider, that the Lord has given this day for this end, that now you should get light to guide you, and heat to quicken you, and strength to enable you to walk in the way of the Lord all the week after, so much the more holily and spiritually. Consider especially what you have heard on the Lord's day, and be often thinking of it in the week following, knowing it was the special portion of the week, all offered thee of the Lord. And if, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit in the use of the ordinances, public and private, you find your heart raised to a higher pitch of heavenly-mindedness, be sure to keep your station, take heed of sinking lower, labour to be more and more established and confirmed in spirit, and endeavour to keep your heart, that so you may be more raised and quickened.

3. *Finally, when you have done all, be humbled, confess your own wants, weaknesses, and neglects, judge yourself, and beg of God to pardon the iniquities of your most holy things.* Always

think that your best sacrifice has its blemishes, your best offering its uncleanness, and dip it in the blood of Christ, that thy service may be accepted, and the impurity of it done away, and pardoned.



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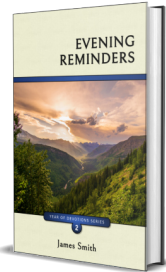
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