

Monergism

THE GRACE AND DUTY OF BEING  
**SPIRITUALLY MINDED**

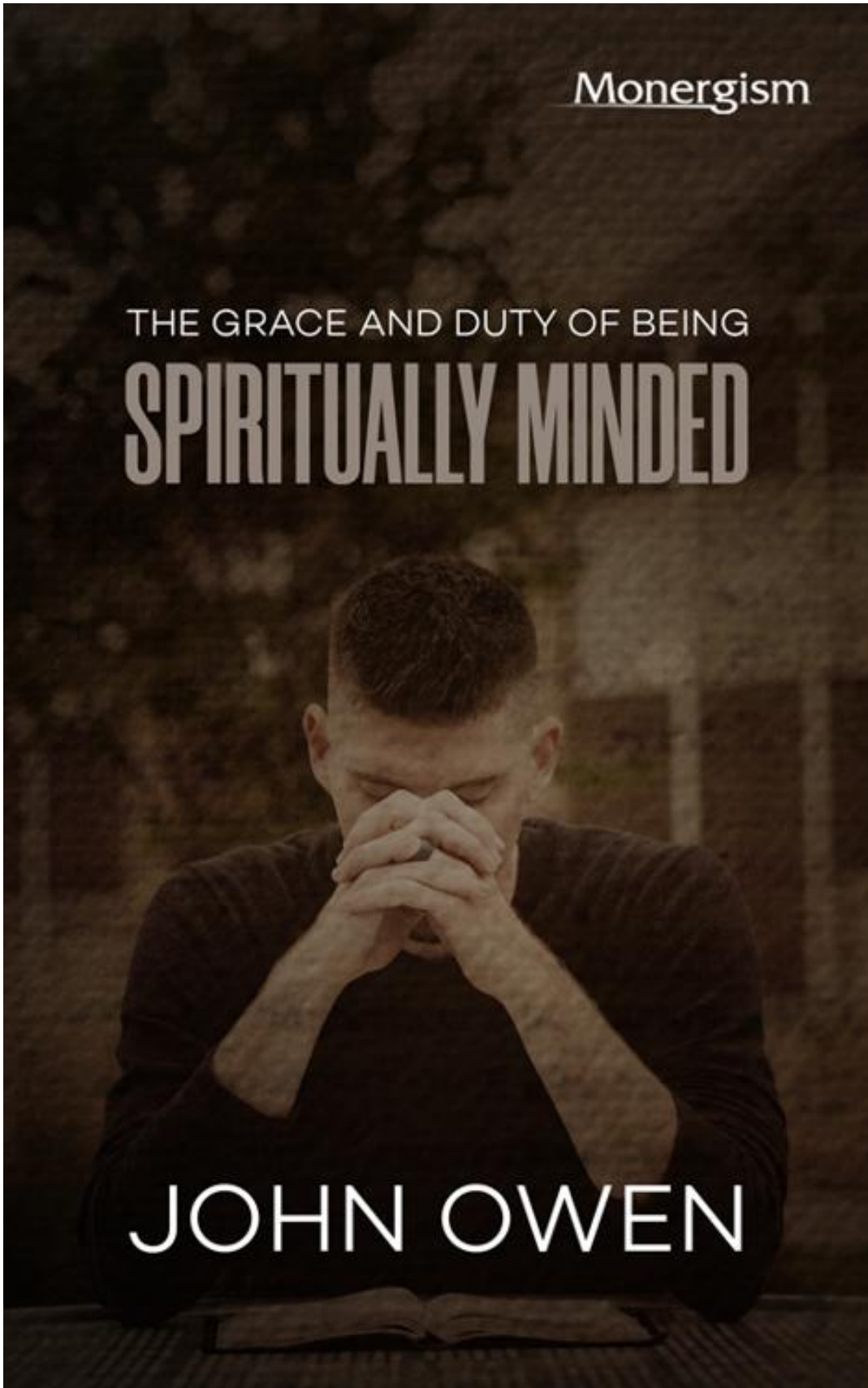
A man with short dark hair, wearing a dark sweater, is shown from the chest up, sitting and praying. His hands are clasped together in front of his face, and his eyes are closed. He is positioned over an open book that lies flat on a surface in front of him. The background is a textured, light-colored wall. The overall lighting is soft and focused on the man.

JOHN OWEN

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# THE GRACE AND DUTY OF BEING SPIRITUALLY MINDED

## DECLARED AND PRACTICALLY IMPROVED.

To be spiritually minded is life and peace. — Romans 8:6

Set your affection on things above. — Colossians 3:2.

LONDON: 1681

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## **PREFATORY NOTE.**

OWEN is an instance that attention to the outward order of the sanctuary, and zeal for the general rights of those who worship in it, are not incompatible with the cultivation of personal holiness and spirituality. In the year 1681, when he had published a tract in

defense of the Nonconformists, and his laborious "Inquiry into Evangelical Churches," the following treatise, so rich in the spiritual experience of a renewed heart, was given to the world. During a season of indisposition so great that he had been led to anticipate the close of his earthly labors, he had composed some meditations for his own use; on his recovery he preached the substance of them to his congregation; and they were afterwards published in the shape of this treatise. There is scarcely one of the more important works of Owen, but some authority might be quoted as signifying a preference for it as the best of his productions; this treatise, however, would perhaps command the greatest number of suffrages in its favor. It evinces the same sharp discrimination of human motives and character, but to elevate believers above earthly objects and console them amid present trials seem to be its prevailing design; and it contains some passages which, in solemn tenderness and beauty, are not surpassed in all the writings of our author, who is here not so much a Boanerges set for the defense of the gospel, as a Barnabas intent on the consolation of the saints.

"The following treatise of Dr Owen," says Dr Chalmers, "holds a distinguished rank among the voluminous writings of this celebrated author; and it is characterized by a forcible application of truth to the conscience, by a depth of experimental feeling, an accuracy of spiritual discernment into the intricacies and operations of the human mind, and a skill in exploring the secrecies of the heart, and the varieties of affection, and the ever-shifting phases of character, which render this admirable treatise not less a test than a valuable guide to the honest inquirer, in his scrutiny into the real state of his heart and affections."

#### ANALYSIS.

After an explanation of Romans 8:6, the duty of being spiritually minded is described as including —

1. The exercise of the mind in its thoughts concerning iritual things;
2. The inclination of the mind in its affections towards them; and,
3. The complacency of the mind in them, chap. I.

The treatise is divided into two parts: —

- I. The former relating to the first of these heads, — the nature of spiritual thoughts;
- II. The latter to the two other heads, — the exercise of spiritual affections.

PART I. As to the character of those thoughts which are the evidence of spiritual mindedness, —

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  - (1.) impressions constraining it to acts opposed to its habitual procedure, and
  - (2.) outward occasions; such as
    - [1.] the preaching of the Word,
    - [2.] prayer, and
    - [3.] the discourses and remarks of other men
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An inquiry follows into the objects of spiritual thoughts; which are, —

1. The dispensations of Providence;
2. Special trials and temptations; and
3. Heavenly and eternal realities. In regard to the latter, —

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(2.) Directions for this spiritual exercise are supplied; — the mind must be occupied with right notions of these objects, directed to them with intensity, and led to compare the blessedness of an interest in them with the opposite state of eternal death and misery, V.,VI. The especial objects of ritual contemplation are, —

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## **PREFACE.**

I THINK it necessary to give the reader a brief account of the nature and design of the ensuing plain discourse, which may both direct him in the reading and be some kind of apology for myself in the publishing of it. He may know, therefore, that the thoughts here communicated were originally private meditations for my own use, in a season wherein I was every way unable to do any thing for the edification of others, and far from expectation that ever I should be so able any more in this world. Receiving, as I thought, some benefit and satisfaction in the exercise of my own meditations therein, when God was graciously pleased to restore a little strength unto me, I insisted on the same subject in the instruction of a private congregation. And this I did, partly out of a sense of the advantage I had received myself by being conversant in them, and partly from an

apprehension that the duties directed and pressed unto in the whole discourse were seasonable, from all sorts of present circumstances, to be declared and urged on the minds and consciences of professors: for, leaving others unto the choice of their own methods and designs, I acknowledge that these are the two things whereby I regulate my work in the whole course of my ministry. To impart those truths of whose power I hope I have had in some measure a real experience, and to press those duties which present occasions, temptations, and other circumstances, do render necessary to be attended unto in a peculiar manner, are the things which I would principally apply myself unto in the work of teaching others; for as in the work of the ministry in general, the whole counsel of God concerning the salvation of the church by Jesus Christ is to be declared, so in particular we are not to fight uncertainly, as men beating the air, nor shoot our arrows at random, without a certain scope and design.

Knowledge of the flock whereof we are overseers, with a due consideration of their wants, their graces, their temptations, their light, their strength and weakness, are required herein. And when, in pursuance of that design, the preparation of the word to be dispensed proceeds from zeal for the glory of God and compassion unto the souls of men, when it is delivered with the demonstration of a due reverence unto God whose word it is, and of authority towards them unto whom it is dispensed, with a deep sense of that great account which both they that preach and they that hear the word preached must shortly give before the judgment-seat of Christ, there may be a comfortable expectation of a blessed issue of the whole work. But my present design is only to declare in particular the reasons why I judged the preaching and publishing of this small and plain discourse, concerning "the Grace and Duty of being Spiritually Minded," not to be altogether unseasonable at this time in the present circumstances of most Christians. And the first thing which I would observe unto this end is, the present importunity of the world to impose itself on the minds of men, and the various ways of insinuation whereby it possesseth and filleth them. If it attain hereunto, — if it can fill the minds, the thoughts, and affections of

men, with itself, — it will in some fortify the soul against faith and obedience, and in others weaken all grace, and endanger eternal ruin. For "if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us;" and when the world fills our thoughts, it will entangle our affections. And, first, the present state of all public affairs in it, with an apprehended concernment of private persons therein, continually exerciseth the thoughts of many, and is almost the only subject of their mutual converse; for the world is at present in a mighty hurry, and being in many places cast off from all foundations of steadfastness, it makes the minds of men giddy with its revolutions, or disorderly in the expectations of them.

Thoughts about these things are both allowable and unavoidable, if they take not the mind out of its own power by their multiplicity, vehemency, and urgency, until it be unframed as unto spiritual things, retaining neither room nor time for their entertainment.

Hence men walk and talk as if the world were all, when comparatively it is nothing.

And when men come with their warmed affections, reeking with thoughts of these things, unto the performance of or attendance unto any spiritual duty, it is very difficult for them, if not impossible, to stir up any grace unto a due and vigorous exercise. Unless this plausible advantage which the world hath obtained of insinuating itself and its occasions into the minds of men, so as to fill them and possess them, be watched against and obviated, so far, at least, as that it may not transform the mind into its own image and likeness, this grace of being spiritually minded, which is life and peace, cannot be attained nor kept unto its due exercise.

Nor can we be any of us delivered from this snare, at this season, without a watchful endeavor to keep and preserve our minds in the constant contemplation of things spiritual and heavenly, proceeding from the prevalent adherence of our affections unto them, as will appear in the ensuing discourse.

Again; there are so great and pregnant evidences of the prevalency of an earthly, worldly frame of spirit in many who make profession of religion, that it is high time they were called unto a due consideration how unanswerable they are therein unto the power and spirituality of that religion which they do profess. There is no way whereby such a frame may be evinced to prevail in many, yea, in the generality of such professors, that is not manifest unto all. In their habits, attires, and vestments, in their usual converse and misspense of time, in their over-liberal entertainment of themselves and others, unto the borders of excess, and sundry other things of a like nature, there is in many such a conformity unto the world (a thing severely forbidden) that it is hard to make a distinction between them. And these things do manifest such a predominancy of carnal affections in the minds of men as, whatever may be pretended unto the contrary, is inconsistent with spiritual peace. To call men off from this evil frame of heart and mind, to discover the sin and danger of it, to direct them unto the ways and means whereby it may be affected, to supply their thoughts and affections with better objects, to discover and press that exercise of them which is indispensably required of all believers if they design life and peace, is some part of the work of the ensuing discourse. It may be it will be judged but a weak attempt as unto the attaining of that end; but it cannot be denied to have these two advantages, — first, that it is seasonable, and, secondly, that it is sincerely intended. And if it have this only success, that it may occasion others who have more ability and opportunity than I have to bring in their assistance for an opposition unto the vehement and importunate insinuations of the world in these things to have an entertainment in the minds of professors, this labor will not be lost. But things are come to that pass amongst us that unless a more than ordinary vigorous exercise of the ministry of the word, with other means appointed unto the same end, be engaged in to recall professors unto that strict mortification, that sincerity of conversation, that separation from the ways of the world, that heavenly mindedness, that delight in the contemplation of spiritual things, which the gospel and the whole nature of Christian religion

do require, we shall lose the glory of our profession, and leave it very uncertain what will be our eternal condition.

The same may be spoken concerning love of the world, as unto the advantages and emoluments which men trust to attain unto themselves thereby. This is that which renders men earthly minded, and most remote from having their conversation above. In the pursuit of this corrupt affection do many professors of religion grow withering, useless, sapless, giving no evidence that the love of God abideth in them. On these and many other accounts do many Christians evidence themselves to be strangers from spiritual mindedness, from a life of meditation and holy contemplation on things above; yet unless we are found in these things in some good measure, no grace will thrive or flourish in us, no duty will be rightly performed by us, no condition sanctified or improved, nor are we prepared in a due manner, or "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Wherefore, as was said, to direct and provoke men unto that which is the only remedy of all these evils, which alone is the means of giving them a view into and a foretaste of eternal glory, especially unto such who are in my own condition, — namely, in a very near approach unto a departure out of this world, — is the design and scope of the ensuing discourse, which is recommended unto the grace of God for the benefit of the reader.

## **PART I.**

### **CHAPTER 1.**

#### **THE WORDS OF THE TEXT EXPLAINED:**

"To be spiritually minded is life and peace." Romans 8:6.

THE expression in our translation sounds differently from that in the original. "To be spiritually minded," say we. In the original it is \_\_\_\_\_, as that in the former part of the verse is \_\_\_\_\_, which we render "to be carnally minded." In the margin we read, "the minding of the flesh" and "the minding of the Spirit;" and there is great variety in the rendering of the words in all translations, both ancient and modern. "Prudentia, sapientia, intelligentia, mens, cogitatio, discretio, id quod Spiritus sapit," — "The wisdom, the understanding, the mind, the thought or contrivance, the discretion of the Spirit, that which the Spirit savoureth," are used to express it. All our English translations, from Tindal's, the first of them, have constantly used, "To be spiritually minded;" neither do I know any words whereby the emphasis of the original, considering the design of the apostle in the place, can be better expressed. But the meaning of the Holy Ghost in them must be farther inquired into.

In the whole verse there are two entire propositions, containing a double antithesis, the one in their subjects, the other in their predicates; and this opposition is the highest and greatest that is beneath eternal blessedness and eternal ruin.

The opposite subjects are, the "minding of the flesh" and the "minding of the Spirit," or the being "carnally minded" and "spiritually minded." And these two do constitute two states of mankind, unto the one of which every individual person in the world doth belong; and it is of the highest concernment unto the souls of men to know whether of them they appertain unto. As unto the qualities expressed by "the flesh" and "the Spirit," there may be a mixture of them in the same persons at the same time, — there is so in all that are regenerate; for in them "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary," Galatians 5:17. Thus different, contrary actings in the same subject constitute not distinct states; but where either of them is predominant or hath a prevalent rule in the soul, there it makes a different state. This distinction of states the apostle expresseth, Romans 8:9, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." Some are

"in the flesh, and cannot please God," verse 8; they are "after the flesh," verse 5; they "walk after the flesh," verse 1; they "live after the flesh," verse 13. This is one state. Others are "in the Spirit," verse 9; "after the Spirit," verse 5; "walk after the Spirit," verse 1. This is the other state. The first sort are "carnally minded," the other are "spiritually minded." Unto one of these doth every living man belong; he is under the ruling conduct of the flesh or of the Spirit; there is no middle state, though there are different degrees in each of these as to good and evil.

The difference between these two states is great, and the distance in a manner infinite, because an eternity in blessedness or misery doth depend upon it; and this at present is evidenced by the different fruits and effects of the principles and their operations which constitute these different states, which is expressed in the opposition that is between the predicates of the propositions: for the minding of the flesh is "death," but the minding of the Spirit is "life and peace."

"To be carnally minded is death." Death, as it is absolutely penal, is either spiritual or eternal. The first of these it is formally, the other meritoriously. It is formally death spiritual: for they that are carnally minded are "dead in trespasses and sins," Ephesians 2:1; for those who "fulfill the desires of the flesh and of the mind are by nature children of wrath," verse 3, — are penally under the power of spiritual death. They are "dead in sins and the uncircumcision of the flesh," Colossians 2:13. And it is death eternal meritoriously: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," Romans 8:13; as "the wages of sin is death," chapter 6:23.

The reason why the apostle denounces so woeful a doom, so dreadful a sentence, on the carnal mind, he declares in the two next verses: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." If it be thus with the carnal mind, it is no wonder that "to be carnally minded is death;" it is not meet it should

be any thing else. That which is enmity against God is under the curse of God.

In opposition hereunto it is affirmed that "to be spiritually minded," or the minding of the Spirit, "is life and peace." And these are the things which we are particularly to inquire into, — namely, What is this "minding of the Spirit;" and then, How it is "life and peace."

1. The " Spirit " in this context is evidently used in a double sense, as is usual where both the Holy Spirit himself and his work on the souls of men are related unto.

(1.) The person of the Spirit of God himself, or the Holy Ghost, is intended by it: Romans 8:9, "If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." And so also verse 11, "The Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead." He is spoken of as the principal efficient cause of all the spiritual mercies and benefits here and afterward insisted on.

(2.) It is used for the principle of spiritual life wrought in all that are regenerate by the Holy Ghost; for "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," John 3:6.

It is most probable that the name "Spirit" is here used in the latter sense, — not for the Spirit himself, but for "that which is born of the Spirit," the principle of spiritual life in them that are born of God; for it is, in its nature, actings, inclinations, and operations, opposed unto "the flesh," Romans 8:1, 4, 5. But "the flesh" here intended is that inherent corrupt principle of depraved nature whence all evil actions do proceed, and wherewith the actions of all evil men are vitiated. The opposition between them is the same with that mentioned and declared by the apostle, Galatians 5:17, etc. Wherefore "the Spirit" in this place is the holy, vital principle of new obedience, wrought in the souls of believers by the Holy Ghost, enabling them to live unto God.

2. Unto this Spirit there is \_\_\_\_\_ ascribed, which, as we have intimated, is translated with great variety. \_\_\_\_\_ is the principal power and act of the mind. It is its light, wisdom, prudence,



knowledge, understanding, and discretion. It is not so with respect unto speculation or ratiocination merely, which is \_\_\_\_\_ but this \_\_\_\_\_ is its power as it is practical, including the habitual frame and inclination of the affections also. It is its faculty to conceive of things with a delight in them and adherence unto them, from that suitableness which it finds in them unto all its affections. Hence we translate \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes to "think," — that is, to conceive and judge, Romans 12:3; sometimes to "set the affection," Colossians 3:2, — to have such an apprehension of things as to cleave unto them with our affections; sometimes to "mind," to "mind earthly things," Philippians 3:19, which includeth that relish and savor which the mind finds in the things it is fixed on. Nowhere doth it design a notional conception of things only, but principally the engagement of the affections unto the things which the mind apprehends.

\_\_\_\_\_, the word here used, expresseth the actual exercise, \_\_\_\_\_, of the power of the mind before described. Wherefore, the "minding of the Spirit" is the actual exercise of the mind as renewed by the Holy Ghost, as furnished with a principle of spiritual life and light, in its conception of spiritual things and the setting of its affections on them, as finding that relish and savor in them wherewith it is pleased and satisfied.

And something we must yet farther observe, to give light unto this description of the "minding of the Spirit," as it is here spoken of: —

1. It is not spoken of absolutely as unto what it is in itself, but with respect unto its power and prevalency in us, significantly rendered, "To be spiritually minded;" that is, to have the mind changed and renewed by a principle of spiritual life and light, so as to be continually acted and influenced thereby unto thoughts and meditations of spiritual things, from the affections cleaving unto them with delight and satisfaction. So, on the contrary, it is when men "mind earthly things." From a principle of love unto them, arising from their suitableness unto their corrupt affections, their

thoughts, meditations, and desires are continually engaged about them. Wherefore, —

2. Three things may be distinguished in the great duty of being spiritually minded, under which notion it is here recommended unto us: —

(1.) The actual exercise of the mind, in its thoughts, meditations, and desires, about things spiritual and heavenly. So is it expressed in the verse foregoing: "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh," — they think on them, their contrivances are about them, and their desires after them; "but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." They mind them by fixing their thoughts and meditations upon them.

(2.) The inclination, disposition, and frame of the mind, in all its affections, whereby it adheres and cleaves unto spiritual things. This "minding of the Spirit" resides habitually in the affections. Wherefore, the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Spirit, or the mind as renewed and acted by a spiritual principle of light and life, is the exercise of its thoughts, meditations, and desires, on spiritual things, proceeding from the love and delight of its affections in them and engagement unto them.

(3.) A complacency of mind, from that gust, relish, and savor, which it finds in spiritual things, from their suitableness unto its constitution, inclinations, and desires. There is a salt in spiritual things, whereby they are condited and made savory unto a renewed mind; though to others they are as the white of an egg, that hath no taste or savor in it. In this gust and relish lies the sweetness and satisfaction of spiritual life. Speculative notions about spiritual things, when they are alone, are dry, sapless, and barren. In this gust we taste by experience that God is gracious, and that the love of Christ is better than wine, or whatever else hath the most grateful relish unto a sensual appetite. This is the proper foundation of that "joy which is unspeakable and full of glory."

All these things do concur in the minding of the Spirit, or to constitute any person spiritually minded. And although the foundation of the whole duty included in it lies in the affections, and their immediate adherence unto spiritual things, whence the thoughts and meditations of the mind about them do proceed, yet I shall treat of the distinct parts of this duty in the order laid down, beginning with the exercise of our thoughts and meditations about them; for they being the first genuine actings of the mind, according unto the prevalency of affections in it, they will make the best and most evident discovery of what nature the spring is from whence they do arise. And I shall not need to speak distinctly unto what is mentioned in the third place, concerning the complacency of the mind in what its affections are fixed on, for it will fall in with sundry other things that are to be spoken unto.

But before we do proceed, it is not amiss, as I suppose, to put a remark upon those important truths which are directly contained in the words proposed as the foundation of the present discourse; as, —

1. To be spiritually minded is the great distinguishing character of true believers from all unregenerate persons. As such is it here asserted by the apostle. All those who are "carnally minded," who are "in the flesh," they are unregenerate, they are not born of God, they please him not, nor can do so, but must perish forever. But those who are "spiritually minded" are born of God, do live unto him, and shall come to the enjoyment of him. Hereon depend the trial and determination of what state we do belong unto.

2. Where any are spiritually minded, there, and there alone, is life and peace. What these are, wherein they do consist, what is their excellency and pre-eminence above all things in this world, how they are the effects and consequents of our being spiritually minded, shall be afterwards declared.

There is neither of these considerations but is sufficient to demonstrate of how great concernment unto us it is to be spiritually

minded, and diligently to inquire whether we are so or no.

It will therefore be no small advantage unto us to have our souls and consciences always affected with and in due subjection unto the power of this truth, — namely, that "to be spiritually minded is life and peace;" whence it will follow, that whatever we may think otherwise, if we are not so, we have neither of them, neither life nor peace. It will, I say, be of use unto us if we are affected with the power of it; for many greatly deceive themselves in hearing the word. They admit of sacred truths in their understanding, and assent unto them, but take not in the power of them on their consciences, nor strictly judge of their state and condition by them, which proves their ruin; for hereby they seem to themselves to believe that whereof in truth they believe not one syllable as they ought. They hear it, they understand it in the notion of it, they assent unto it, at least they do not contradict it, yea, they commend it oftentimes and approve of it, but yet they believe it not; for if they did, they would judge themselves by it, and reckon on it that it will be with them at the last day according as things are determined therein.

Or such persons are, as the apostle James declares, "like a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was," chapter 1:23,24. There is a representation made of them, their state and condition, unto them in the word; they behold it, and conclude that it is even so with them as the word doth declare; but immediately their minds are filled with other thoughts, acted by other affections, taken up with other occasions, and they forget in a moment the representation made of themselves and their condition. Wherefore all that I have to offer on this subject will be utterly lost, unless a firm persuasion hereof be fixed on our minds, unless we are under the power of it, that "to be spiritually minded is life and peace;" so that whatever our light and profession be, our knowledge or our duty, without this we have indeed no real interest in life and peace.

These things being premised, I shall more practically open the nature of this duty, and what is required unto this frame of spirit. To be "spiritually minded" may be considered either as unto the nature and essence of it, or as unto its degrees; for one may be so more than another, or the same person may be more so at one time than another. In the first way it is opposed unto being "carnally minded;" in the other unto being "earthly minded."

"To be carnally minded is," as the apostle speaks, "death;" it is so every way; and they who are so are dead in trespasses and sins. This is opposed unto being "spiritually minded," as unto its nature or essence. When a man, as unto the substance and being of the grace and duty intended, is not spiritually minded, he is carnally minded, — that is, under the power of death spiritual, and obnoxious unto death eternal. This is the principal foundation we proceed upon, whence we demonstrate the indispensable necessity of the frame of mind inquired after.

There are two ways wherein men are earthly minded. The one is absolute, when the love of earthly things is wholly predominant in the mind. This is not formally and properly to be carnally minded, which is of a larger extent. The one denomination is from the root and principle, namely, the flesh; the other from the object, or the things of the earth. The latter is a branch from the former, as its root. To be earthly minded is an operation and effect of the carnal mind in one especial way and instance; and it is as exclusive of life and salvation as the carnal mind itself, Philippians 3:19; 1 John 2:15,16. This, therefore, is opposed unto the being of spiritual mindedness no less than to be carnally minded is. When there is in any a love of earthly things that is predominant, whence a person may be rightly denominated to be earthly minded, he is not, nor can be, spiritually minded at all; he hath no interest in the frame of heart and spirit intended thereby. And thus it is evidently with the greatest part of them who are called Christians in the world, let them pretend what they will to the contrary.

Again; there is a being earthly minded which consists in an inordinate affection unto the things of this world. It is that which is sinful, which ought to be mortified; yet it is not absolutely inconsistent with the substance and being of the grace inquired after. Some who are really and truly spiritually minded, yet may, for a time at least, be under such an inordinate affection unto and care about earthly things, that if not absolutely, yet comparatively, as unto what they ought to be and might be, they may be justly said to be earthly minded. They are so in respect of those degrees in being spiritually minded which they ought to aim at and may attain unto. And where it is thus, this grace can never thrive or flourish, it can never advance unto any eminent degree.

This is the Zoar of many professors, — that "little one" wherein they would be spared. Such an earthly mindedness as is wholly inconsistent with being spiritually minded, as unto the state and condition which depends thereon, they would avoid; for this they know would be absolutely exclusive of life and peace. They cannot but know that such a frame is as inconsistent with salvation as living in the vilest sin that any man can contract the guilt of. There are more ways of spiritual and eternal death than one, as well as of natural. All that die have not the plague, and all that perish eternally are not guilty of the same profligate sins. The covetous are excluded from the kingdom of God no less severely than fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, and thieves, 1 Corinthians 6:9,10. But there is a degree in being earthly minded which they suppose their interest, advantages, relations, and occasions of life do call for, which they would be a little indulged in; they may abide in such a frame without a disparagement of their profession. And the truth is, they have too many companions to fear an especial reflection on themselves. The multitude of the guilty take away the sense and shame of the guilt. But, besides, they hope well that it is not inconsistent absolutely with being spiritually minded; only they cannot well deny but that it is contrary unto such degrees in that grace, such thriving in that duty, as is recommended unto them. They think well of others who are spiritually minded in an eminent degree, at least they do so as unto the thing itself in

general; for when they come unto particular instances of this or that man, for the most part they esteem what is beyond their own measure to be little better than pretense. But, in general, to be spiritually minded in an eminent degree, they cannot but esteem it a thing excellent and desirable; — but it is for them who are more at leisure than they are; their circumstances and occasions require them to satisfy themselves with an inferior measure.

To obviate such pretenses, I shall insist on nothing, in the declaration of this duty and the necessity of it, but what is incumbent on all that believe, and without which they have no grounds to assure their conscience before God. And at present in general I shall say, Whoever he be who doth not sincerely aim at the highest degree of being spiritually minded which the means he enjoyeth would lead him unto, and which the light he hath received doth call for, — whoever judgeth it necessary unto his present advantages, occasions, and circumstances, to rest in such measures or degrees of it as he cannot but know come short of what he ought to aim at, and so doth not endeavor after completeness in the will of God herein, — can have no satisfaction in his own mind, hath no unfailing grounds whereon to believe that he hath any thing at all of the reality of this grace in him. Such a person possibly may have life, which accompanies the essence of this grace, but he cannot have peace, which follows on its degree in a due improvement. And it is to be feared that far the greatest number of them who satisfy themselves in this apprehension, willingly neglecting an endeavor after the farther degrees of this grace and growth in this duty, which their light or convictions, and the means they enjoy, do suggest unto them, are indeed carnally minded and every way obnoxious unto death.

## CHAPTER II.

### A PARTICULAR ACCOUNT OF THE NATURE OF THIS GRACE AND DUTY OF BEING SPIRITUALLY MINDED — HOW IT IS STATED IN AND EVIDENCED BY OUR THOUGHTS.

HAVING stated the general concernments of that frame of mind which is here recommended unto us, we may proceed to inquire more particularly into the nature of it, according unto the description before given in distinct propositions, And we shall carry on both these intentions together, — first, to show what it is, and wherein it doth consist; and then, how it doth evidence itself, so as that we may frame a right judgment whether it be in us or no. And we shall have no regard unto them who either neglect or despise these things on any pretense whatever; for this is the word according unto which we shall all shortly be judged, "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Thoughts and meditations as proceeding from spiritual affections are the first things wherein this spiritual mindedness doth consist, and whereby it doth evidence itself. Our thoughts are like the blossoms on a tree in the spring. You may see a tree in the spring all covered with blossoms, so that nothing else of it appears. Multitudes of them fall off and come to nothing. Ofttimes where there are most blossoms there is least fruit. But yet there is no fruit, be it of what sort it will, good or bad, but it comes in and from some of those blossoms. The mind of man is covered with thoughts, as a tree with blossoms. Most of them fall off, vanish, and come to nothing, end in vanity; and sometimes where the mind doth most abound with them there is the least fruit; the sap of the mind is wasted and consumed in them. Howbeit there is no fruit which actually we bring forth, be it good or bad, but it proceeds from some of these thoughts. Wherefore, ordinarily, these give the best and surest measure of the frame of



men's minds. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," Proverbs 23:7. In case of strong and violent temptations, the real frame of a man's heart is not to be judged by the multiplicity of thoughts about any object, for whether they are from Satan's suggestions, or from inward darkness, trouble, and horror, they will impose such a continual sense of themselves on the mind as shall engage all its thoughts about them; as when a man is in a storm at sea, the current of his thoughts run quite another way than when he is in safety about his occasions. But ordinarily voluntary thoughts are the best measure and indication of the frame of our minds. As the nature of the soil is judged by the grass which it brings forth, so may the disposition of the heart by the predominancy of voluntary thoughts; they are the original actings of the soul, the way whereby the heart puts forth and empties the treasure that is in it, the waters that first rise and flow from that fountain. Every man's heart is his treasury, and the treasure that is in it is either good or evil, as our Savior tells us. There is a good and bad treasure of the heart; but whatever a man hath, be it good or evil, there it is. This treasure is opening, emptying, and spending itself continually, though it can never be exhausted; for it hath a fountain, in nature or grace, which no expense can diminish, yea, it increaseth and getteth strength by it. The more you spend of the treasure of your heart in any kind, the more will you abound in treasure of the same kind. Whether it be good or evil, it grows by expense and exercise; and the principal way whereby it puts forth itself is by the thoughts of the mind. If the heart be evil, they are for the most part vain, filthy, corrupt, wicked, foolish; if it be under the power of a principle of grace, and so have a good treasure in it, it puts forth itself by thoughts suitable unto its nature and compliant with its inclinations.

Wherefore, these thoughts give the best measure of the frame of our minds and hearts, I mean such as are voluntary, such as the mind of its own accord is apt for, inclines and ordinarily betakes itself unto. Men may have a multitude of thoughts about the affairs of their callings and the occasions of life, which yet may give no due measure of the inward frame of their hearts. So men whose calling and work it

is to study the Scripture, or the things revealed therein, and to preach them unto others, cannot but have many thoughts about spiritual things, and yet may be, and oftentimes are, most remote from being spiritually minded. They may be forced by their work and calling to think of them early and late, evening and morning, and yet their minds be no way rendered or proved spiritual thereby. It were well if all of us who are preachers would diligently examine ourselves herein. So is it with them who oblige themselves to read the Scriptures, it may be so many chapters every day. Notwithstanding the diligent performance of their task, they may be most remote from being spiritually minded. See Ezekiel 33:31. But there is a certain track and course of thoughts that men ordinarily betake themselves unto when not affected with present occasions. If these be vain, foolish, proud, ambitious, sensual, or filthy, such is the mind and its frame; if they be holy, spiritual, and heavenly, such may the frame of the mind be judged to be. But these things must be more fully explained.

It is the great character and description of the frame of men's minds in an unregenerate condition, or before the renovation of their natures, that "every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually," Genesis 6:5. They are continually coining figments and imaginations in their hearts, stamping them into thoughts that are vain, foolish, and wicked. All other thoughts in them are occasional; these are the natural, genuine product of their hearts. Hence the dearest, and sometimes first, discovery of the bottomless evil treasure of filth, folly, and wickedness, that is in the heart of man by nature, is from the innumerable multitude of evil imaginations which are there coined and thrust forth every day. So the wicked are said to be

"like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast .up mire and dirt," Isaiah 57:20.

There is a fullness of evil in their hearts, like that of water in the sea; this fullness is troubled or put into continual motion by their lusts

and impetuous desires; hence the mire and dirt of evil thoughts are continually cast up in them.

It is therefore evident that the predominancy of voluntary thoughts is the best and most sure indication of the inward frame and state of the mind; for if it be so on the one side as unto the carnal mind, it is so on the other as unto the spiritual. Wherefore, to be spiritually minded, in the first place, is to have the course and stream of those thoughts which we ordinarily retreat unto, which we approve of as suited unto our affections, to be about spiritual things. Therein consists the minding of the Spirit.

But because all men, unless horribly profligate, have thoughts about spiritual things, yet we know that all men are not spiritually minded, we must consider what is required unto such thoughts to render them a certain indication of the state of our minds. And there are these three things required hereunto: —

FIRST, That they be natural, arising from ourselves, and not from outward occasions. The psalmist mentions the "inward thought" of men, Psalm 49:11, 64:6; but whereas all thoughts are the inward acts of the mind, it should seem that this expression makes no distinction of the especial kind of thoughts intended from those of another sort. But the difference is not in the formal nature of them, but in the causes, springs, and occasions. Inward thoughts are such as arise merely and solely from men's inward principles, dispositions, and inclinations, that are not suggested or excited by any outward objects. Such in wicked men are those actings of their lusts whereby they entice and seduce themselves, James 1:14. Their lusts stir up thoughts leading and encouraging them to make provision for the flesh. These are their "inward thoughts." Of the same nature are those thoughts which are the "minding of the Spirit." They are the first natural egress and genuine acting of the habitual disposition of the mind and soul.

Thus in covetous men there are two sorts of thoughts whereby their covetousness acts itself: — First, such as are occasioned by outward objects and opportunities. So it was with Achan, Joshua 7:21. "When," saith he, "I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, then I coveted them." His sight of them, with an opportunity of possessing himself of them, excited covetous thoughts and desires in him. So is it with others every day, whose occasions call them to converse with the objects of their lusts. And some by such objects may be surprised into thoughts that their minds are not habitually inclined unto; and therefore when they are known, it is our duty to avoid them. But the same sort of persons have thoughts of this nature arising from themselves only, their own dispositions and inclinations, without any outward provocations.

"The vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity," Isaiah 32:6;

and this he doth as the "liberal deviseth liberal things," verse 8. From his own disposition and inclination, he is contriving in his thoughts how to act according to them. So the unclean person hath two sorts of thoughts with respect unto the satisfaction of his lust: — First, such as are occasioned in his mind by the external objects of it. Hereunto stage plays, revelings, dancings, with the society of bold persons, persons of corrupt communication, do contribute their wicked service. For the avoidance of this snare, Job "made a covenant with his eyes," chap. 31:1; and our Savior gives that holy declaration of the evil of it, Matthew 5:28. But he hath an habitual spring of these thoughts in himself, constantly inclining and disposing him thereunto. Hence the apostle Peter tells us that such persons

"have eyes full of an adulteress, that cannot cease from sin," 2 Peter 2:14.

Their own affections make them restless in their thoughts and contrivances about sin. So is it with them who are given to excess in wine or strong drink. They have pleasing thoughts raised in them from the object of their lust represented unto them. Hence Solomon gives that advice against the occasion of them, Proverbs 23:31. But it is their own habitual disposition which carries them unto pleasing thoughts of the satisfaction of their lust; which he describes, Proverbs 23:33-35. So is it in other cases. The thoughts of this latter sort are men's inward thoughts; and such must these be of spiritual things, whence we may be esteemed spiritually minded.

Psalm 45:1, saith the psalmist,

"My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King."

He was meditating on spiritual things, on the things of the person and kingdom of Christ. Hence his heart "bubbled up" (as it is in the original) "a good matter." It is an allusion taken from a quick spring of living waters: from its own life and fullness it bubbles up the water that runs and flows from it. So is it with these thoughts in them that are spiritually minded. There is a living fullness of spiritual things in their minds and affections that springeth up into holy thoughts about them.

From hence doth our Savior give us the great description of spiritual life. It is "a well of living water springing up into everlasting life," John 4:10,12. The Spirit, with his graces residing in the heart of a believer, is a well of living water. Nor is it such a well as, content with its own fullness, doth not of its own accord, without any instrument or pains in drawing, send out its refreshing waters, as it is with most wells, though of living water; for this is spoken by our Savior in answer and opposition unto that objection of the woman, upon his mention of giving living water, verse 10: "Sir," saith she, "thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; whence wilt thou have this water?" verse 11. "True," saith he, "such is the nature of this well

and water, dead, earthly things, — they are of no use, unless we have instruments, lines and buckets, to draw withal. But the living water which I shall give is of another nature. It is not water to be kept in a pit or cistern without us, whence it must be drawn; but it is within us, and that not dead and useless, but continually springing up unto the use and refreshment of them that have it." For so is it with the principle of the new creature, of the new nature, the Spirit and his graces, in the hearts of them that do believe, — it doth of itself and from itself, without any external influence on it, incline and dispose the whole soul unto spiritual act-ings that tend unto eternal life. Such are the thoughts of them that are spiritually minded. They arise from the inward principle, inclination, and disposition of the soul, — are the bubblings of this well of living water; they are the mindings of the Spirit.

So our Savior describes them, Matthew 12:35,

"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things."

First, the man is good; as he said before, "Make the tree good, or the fruit cannot be good," verse 33. He is made so by grace, in the change and renovation of his nature; for in ourselves we are every way evil. This good man hath a treasure in his heart. So all men have; as the next words are, "The evil man out of the evil treasure of the heart." And this is the great difference that is between men in this world. Every man hath a treasure in his heart; that is, a prevailing, inexhaustible principle of all his actings and operations. But in some this treasure is good, in others it is evil; that is, the prevailing principle in the heart, which carries along with it its dispositions and inclinations, is in some good and gracious, in others it is evil. Out of his good treasure a good man bringeth forth good things. The first opening of it, the first bringing of it forth, is by these thoughts. The thoughts that arise out of the heart are of the same nature with the treasure that is in it. If the thoughts that naturally arise and spring up in us are for the most part vain, foolish, sensual, earthly, selfish,

such is the treasure that is in our hearts, and such are we; but where the thoughts that thus naturally proceed from the treasure that is in the heart are spiritual and holy, it is an argument that we are spiritually minded.

Where it is not thus with our thoughts, they give no such evidence as that inquired after. Men may have thoughts of spiritual things, and that many of them, and that frequently, which do not arise from this principle, but may be resolved into two other causes; —

1. Inward force;

2. Outward occasions.

1. Inward force, as it may be called. This is by convictions. Convictions put a kind of a force upon the mind, or an impression that causeth it to act contrary unto its own habitual disposition and inclination. It is in the nature of water to descend; but apply an instrument unto it that shall make a compression of it and force it unto a vent, it will fly upwards vehemently, as if that were its natural motion. But so soon as the force of the impression ceaseth, it returns immediately unto its own proper tendency, descending towards its center. So is it with men's thoughts oftentimes. They are earthly, — their natural course and motion is downwards unto the earth and the things thereof; but when any efficacious conviction presseth on the mind, it forceth the egress of its thoughts upwards towards heavenly things. It will think much and frequently of them, as if that were their proper motion and course; but so soon as the power of conviction decays or wears off, that the mind is no more sensible of its force and impression, the thoughts of it return again unto their old course and track, as the water tends downwards.

This state and frame is graphically described, Psalm 128:34-37,

"When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless

they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant."

Men in troubles, dangers, sickness, fears of death, or under effectual conviction of sin from the preaching of the word, will endeavor to think and meditate on spiritual things; yea, they will be greatly troubled that they cannot think of them more than they do, and esteem it their folly that they think of any thing else: but as freedom and deliverance do approach, so these thoughts decay and disappear; the mind will not be compelled to give place unto them any more. The prophet gives the reason of it, Jeremiah 13:23,

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

They have had another haunt, been taught another course, the habit and inclination of the mind lies another way, and they will no longer tend towards spiritual things than an impression is on them from their convictions.

And it is an argument of very mean attainments, of a low and weak degree in this frame of heart, or in our being spiritually minded, when our thoughts of spiritual things do rise or fall according unto renewed occasional convictions. If when we are under rebukes from God in our persons or relations, in fears of death and the like, and withal have some renewed convictions of sin in commission, for omission of duties, and thereon do endeavor to be more spiritually minded in the constant exercise of our thoughts on spiritual things, which we fail in, and these thoughts decay as our convictions in the causes of them do wear off or are removed, we have attained a very low degree in this grace, if we have any interest in it at all.

Water that riseth and floweth from a living spring runneth equally and constantly, unless it be obstructed or diverted by some violent opposition; but that which is from thunder-showers runs furiously



for a season, but is quickly dried up. So are those spiritual thoughts which arise from a prevalent internal principle of grace in the heart; they are even and constant, unless an interruption be put upon them for a season by temptations. But those which are excited by the thunder of convictions, however their streams may be filled for a season, they quickly dry up and utterly decay.

2. Such thoughts may arise in the minds of men not spiritually minded, from outward means and occasions. Such I intend as are indeed useful, yea, appointed of God for this end among others, that they may ingenerate and stir up holy thoughts and affections in us. But there is a difference in their use and operation. In some they excite the inward principle of the mind to act in holy thoughts, according unto its own sanctified disposition and prevalent affections. This is their proper end and use. In others they occasionally suggest such thoughts unto the minds of men, which spring only from the notions of the things proposed unto them. With respect unto this end also they are of singular use unto the souls of men. Howbeit such thoughts do not prove men to be spiritually minded. When you till and manure your land, if it brings forth plentiful crops of corn, it is an evidence that the soil itself is good and fertile; the dressing of it only gives occasion and advantage to put forth its own fruit-bearing virtue. But if in the tilling of land, you lay much dung upon it, and it brings forth here and there a handful where the dung lay, you will say, "The soil is barren; it brings forth nothing of itself." These means that we shall treat of are as the tilling of a fruitful soil, which helps it in bringing forth its fruit, by exciting its own virtue and power; — they stir up holy affections unto holy thoughts and desires. But in others, whose hearts are barren, they only serve, as it were, some of them here and there, to stir up spiritual thoughts, which gives no evidence of a gracious heart or spirit. But because this is a matter of great importance, it shall be handled distinctly by itself.

## CHAPTER III.

**Outward means and occasions of such thoughts of spiritual things as do not prove men to be spiritually minded — Preaching of the word — Exercise of gifts — Prayer — How we may know whether our thoughts of spiritual things in prayer are truly spiritual thoughts, proving us to be spiritually minded.**

1. SUCH a means is the preaching of the word itself. It is observed concerning many in the gospel, that they heard it willingly, received it with joy, and did many things gladly, upon the preaching of it; and we see the same thing exemplified in multitudes every day. But none of these things can be without many thoughts in the minds of such persons about the spiritual things of the word; for they are the effects of such thoughts, and, being wrought in the minds of men, will produce more of the same nature: yet were they all hypocrites concerning whom these things are spoken, and were never spiritually minded.

The cause of this miscarriage is given us by our Savior, Matthew 13:20, 21,

"He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while."

The good thoughts they have proceed not from any principle in themselves. Neither their affections nor their thoughts of these things have any internal root whereon they should grow. So is it with many who live under the present dispensation of the gospel. They have thoughts of spiritual things continually suggested unto them, and they do abide with them more or less, according as they are

affected: for I speak not of them who are either despisers of what they hear, or wayside hearers, who understand nothing of what they hear, and immediately lose all sense of it, all thoughts about it; but I speak of them who attend with some diligence, and receive the word with some joy. These insensibly grow in knowledge and understanding, and therefore cannot be without some thoughts of spiritual things. Howbeit for the most part they are, as was said, but like unto waters that run after a shower of rain. They pour out themselves, as if they proceeded from some strong, living spring, whereas indeed they have none at all. When once the waters of the shower are spent, their channel is dry, there is nothing in it but stones and dirt. When the doctrine of the word falls on such persons as showers of rain, it gives a course, sometimes greater, sometimes less, unto their thoughts towards spiritual things; but they have not a well of water in them springing up into everlasting life. Wherefore, after a while their minds are dried up from such thoughts; nothing remains in them but earth, and that perhaps foul and dirty.

It must be observed, that the best of men, the most holy and spiritually minded, may have, nay, ought to have, their thoughts of spiritual things excited, multiplied, and confirmed, by the preaching of the word. It is one end of its dispensation, one principal use of it in them by whom it is received. And it hath this effect two ways: —

(1.) As it is the spiritual food of the soul, whereby its principle of life and grace is maintained and strengthened. The more this is done, the more shall we thrive in being spiritually minded.

(2.) As it adminstereth occasion unto the exercise of grace; for, proposing the proper object of faith, love, fear, trust, reverence, unto the soul, it draws forth all those graces into exercise. Wherefore, although the vigorous actings of spiritual thoughts be occasional from the word, be more under and after the preaching of it than at other times, it is no more but what ariseth from the nature and use of the ordinance by God's own appointment, nor is it any evidence that those with whom it is so are not spiritually minded, but, on the

contrary, that they are. Yet where men have no other thoughts of this matter but what are occasioned by the outward dispensation of the word, such thoughts do not prove them to be spiritually minded. Their endeavors in them are like those of men in a dream. Under some oppression of their spirits, their imagination fixeth on some thing or other that is most earnestly to be desired or avoided. Herein they seem to themselves to strive with all their might, to endeavor to go, run, or contend; but all in vain, — every thing fails them, and they are not relieved until they are awaked. So, such persons, in impressions they receive from the word, seem to strive and contend in their thoughts and resolutions to comply with what is proposed unto them; but their strength fails, they find no success for want of a principle of spiritual life, and after a time give over their endeavors until they are occasionally renewed again. Now, the thoughts which, in the dispensation of the word, do proceed from an inward principle of grace, excited unto its due exercise, are distinguishable from them which are only occasionally suggested unto the mind by the word outwardly preached; for, —

(1.) They are especial actings of faith and love towards the things themselves that are preached. They belong unto our receiving the truth in the love thereof; and love respects the goodness of the things themselves, and not merely the truth of the propositions wherein they are expressed. The other thoughts are only the sense of the mind as affected with light and truth, without any cordial love unto the things themselves.

(2.) They are accompanied with complacency of soul, arising from love, and experience, more or less, of the power of them, and their suitability unto the new nature or principle of grace in them; for when our minds find that so indeed it is in us as it is in the word, that this is that which we would be more conformable unto, it gives a secret complacency, with satisfaction, unto the soul. The other thoughts, which are only occasional, have none of these concomitants or effects, but are dry and barren, unless it be in a few words or transient discourse.

(3.) The former are means of spiritual growth. So some say the natural growth of vegetables is not by insensible motion, but by gusts and sensible eruptions of increase. These are both in spiritual growth, and the latter consists much in those thoughts which the principle of the new nature is excited unto by the word in the latter.

2. The duty of prayer is another means of the like nature. One principal end of it is to excite, stir up, and draw forth, the principle of grace, of faith and love in the heart, unto a due exercise in holy thoughts of God and spiritual things, with affections suitable unto them. Those who design not this end in prayer know not at all what it is to pray. Now, all sorts of persons have frequent occasion to join with others in prayer, and many are under the conviction that it is their own duty to pray every day, it may be, in their families and otherwise. And it is hard to conceive how men can constantly join with others in prayer, much more how they can pray themselves, but that they must have thoughts of spiritual things every day; howbeit, it is possible that they may have no root or living spring of them in themselves, but they are only occasional impressions on their minds from the outward performance of the duty. I shall give some instances of the grounds hereof, which, on many reasons, require our diligent consideration: —

(1.) Spiritual thoughts may be raised in a person in his own duty, by the exercise of his gifts, when there is no acting of grace in them at all; for they lead and guide the mind unto such thing as are the matter of prayer, — that is, spiritual things. Gifts are nothing but a spiritual improvement of our natural faculties or abilities; and a man cannot speak or utter any thing but what proceeds from his rational faculties, by invention or memory, or both, managed in and by his thoughts, unless he speak by rote and that which is not rational. What, therefore, proceeds from a man's rational faculty in and by the exercise of his gifts, that his thoughts must be exercised about.

A man may read a long prayer that expresseth spiritual things, and yet never have one spiritual thought arise in his mind about them;

for there is no exercise of any faculty of his mind required unto such reading, but only to attend unto the words that are to be read. This I say may be so; I do not say that it is always so, or that it must be so. But, as was said, in the exercise of gifts, it is impossible but there must be an exercise of reason, by invention, judgment, and memory, and consequently thoughts of spiritual things; yet may they all be merely occasional, from the present external performance of the duty, without any living spring or exercise of grace. In such a course may men of tolerable gifts continue all their days, unto the satisfaction of themselves and others, deceiving both them and their own souls.

This being evident from the Scripture and experience, an inquiry may be made thereon as unto our own concernment in these things, especially of those who have received spiritual gifts of their own, and of them also in some degree who usually enjoy the gifts of others in this duty; for it may be asked how we shall know whether the thoughts which we have of spiritual things in and upon prayer do arise from gifts only, those of our own or other men's, giving occasion unto them, or are influenced from a living principle and spring of grace in our hearts. A case this is (however by some it may be apprehended) of great importance, and which would require much time fully to resolve; for there is nothing whereby the refined sort of hypocrites do more deceive themselves and others, nothing whereby some men do give themselves more countenance in aft indulgence unto their lusts, than by this part of the form of godliness, when they deny the power thereof. And, besides, it is that wherein the best of believers ought to keep a diligent watch over themselves in every particular instance of the performance of this duty. With respect hereunto, in an especial manner, are they to watch unto prayer. If they are at any time negligent herein, they may rest in a bare exercise of gifts, when, on a due examination and trial, they have no evidence of the acting of grace in what they have done. I shall, therefore, with what brevity I can, give a resolution unto this inquiry; and to this end observe, —

It is an ancient complaint, that spiritual things are filled with great obscurity and difficulty; and it is true. Not that there is any such thing in themselves, for they all come forth from the Father of lights, and are full of light, order, beauty, and wisdom; and light and order are the only means whereby any thing makes a discovery of itself. But the ground of all darkness and difficulty in these things lies in ourselves. We can more clearly and steadily see and behold the moon and the stars than we can the sun when it shines in its greatest luster. It is not because there is more light in the moon and stars than in the sun, but because the light of the sun is greater than our visive faculty can directly bear and behold. So we can more clearly discover the truth and distinct nature of things moral and natural, than we can of things that are heavenly and spiritual. See John 3:12. Not that there is more substance or reality in them, but because the ability of our understanding is more suited unto the comprehension of them; the others are above us. We know but in part, and our minds are liable to be hindered and disordered in their apprehension of things heavenly and spiritual by ignorance, temptations, and prejudices of all sorts. In nothing are men more subject unto mistakes than in the application of things unto themselves, and a judgment of their interest in them. Fear, self-love, with the prevalency of temptations and corruptions, do all engage their powers to darken the light of the mind and to pervert its judgment. In no case doth the deceitfulness of the heart, or of sin (which is all one), more act itself. Hence multitudes say "Peace" to themselves to whom God doth not speak peace; and some who are children of light do yet walk in darkness. Hence is that fervent prayer of the apostle for help in this case, Ephesians 1:15-19. There is also a great similitude between temporary faith and that which is saving and durable, and between gifts and graces in their operations; which is that that is under present consideration. It is acknowledged, therefore, that without the especial light and conduct of the Spirit of God, no man can make such a judgment of his state and his actions as shall be a stable foundation of giving glory to God and of obtaining peace unto his own soul; and therefore the greatest part of mankind do constantly deceive themselves in these things.

But, ordinarily, under this blessed conduct in the search of ourselves and the concernments of our duty, we may come unto a satisfaction whether they axe influenced by faith and have grace exercised in them, especially this duty of prayer, or whether it derive from the power of our natural faculties, raised by light and spiritual gifts only; and so whether our spiritual thoughts therein do spring from a vital principle of grace, or whether they come from occasional impressions on the mind by the performance of the duty itself.

If men are willing to deceive themselves, or to hide themselves from themselves, to walk with God at all peradventures, to leave all things at hazard, to put off all trials unto that at the last day, and so never call themselves unto an account as unto the nature of their duties in any particular instance, it is no wonder if they neither do nor can make any distinction in this matter as unto the true nature of their thoughts in spiritual duties. Two things are required hereunto: —

[1.] That we impartially and severely examine and try the frames and actings of our minds in holy duties by the word of truth, and thereon be not afraid to speak that plainly unto our souls which the word speaks unto us. This diligent search ought to respect our principles, aims, ends, actings, with the whole deportment of our souls in every duty. See 2 Corinthians 13:5. If a man receive much money, and look only on the outward form and superscription, when he supposeth that he hath great store of current coin in gold and silver, he may have only heaps of lead or copper by him; but he that trades in it as the comfort and support of his natural life and condition, he will try what he receives both by the balance and the touchstone, as the occasion requires, especially if it be in a time when much adulterated coin is passant in the world. And if a man reckon on his duties by tale and number, he may be utterly deceived, and be spiritually poor and a bankrupt, when he esteems himself rich, increased in goods, and wanting nothing. Some duties may appearingly hold in the balance as to weight, which will not hold it at the touchstone as to worth. Both means are to be used, if we would not be mistaken in our accounts. Thus God himself, in the midst of a multitude of duties,



calls the people to try and examine themselves whether or no they are such as have faith and grace in them, and so like to have acceptance with him, Isaiah 58:2-7.

[2.] Add we must unto our own diligent inquiry fervent prayers unto God that he would search and try us as unto our sincerity, and discover unto us the true frame of our hearts. Hereof we have an express example, Psalm 139:23,24,

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

This is the only way whereby we may have the Spirit of God witnessing unto our sincerity with our own spirits. There is need of calling in divine assistance in this matter, both from the importance of it and from its difficulty, God alone knowing fully and perfectly what is in the hearts of men.

I no way doubt but that, in the impartial use of these means, a man may come to assured satisfaction in his own mind, such as wherein he shall not be deceived, whether he doth animate and quicken his thoughts of spiritual things in duties with inward vital grace, or whether they are impressions on his mind by the occasion of the duty.

A duty this is of great importance and necessity, now hypocrisy hath made so great an inroad on profession, and gifts have deflowered grace in its principal operations. No persons are in greater danger of walking at hazard with God than those who live in the exercise of spiritual gifts in duties unto their own satisfaction and [that of] others; for they may countenance themselves with an appearance of every thing that should be in them in reality and power, when there is nothing of it in them. And so it hath fallen out. We have seen many earnest in the exercise of this gift who have turned vile and debauched apostates. Some have been known to live in sin and in

indulgence of their lusts, and yet to abide constant in their duties, Isaiah 1:10-15. And we may hear prayers sometimes that openly discover themselves unto spiritual sense to be the labor of the brain, by the help of gifts in memory and invention, without an evidence of any mixture of humility, reverence, or godly fear, without any acting of faith and love. They flow as wine, yet smell and taste of the unsavory cask from whence they proceed. It is necessary, therefore, that we should put ourselves on the severest trial, lest we should be found not to be spiritually minded in spiritual duties.

Gifts are gracious vouchsafements of Christ to make grace useful unto ourselves and others; yea, they may make them useful unto the grace of others who have no grace in themselves. But as unto our own souls, they are of no other advantage or benefit but to stir up grace unto its proper exercise, and to be a vehicle to carry it on in its proper use. If we do not always regard this in their exercise, we had better be without them. If instead hereof they once begin to impose themselves practically upon us, so as that we rest in spiritual light acting our inventions, memories, and judgments, with a ready utterance, or such as it is, there is no form of prayer can be more prejudicial unto our souls. As wine, if taken moderately and seasonably, helps the stomach in digestion, and quickens the natural spirits, enabling the powers of nature unto their duty, [and] is useful and helpful unto it; but if it be taken in excess it doth not help nature, but oppress it, and takes on itself to do what nature should be assisted unto, it fills men's carcasses with diseases as well as their souls with sin: so whilst spiritual gifts are used and employed only to excite, aid, and assist grace in its operations, they are unutterably useful; but if they put themselves in the room thereof, to do all that grace should do, they are hurtful and pernicious. We have need, therefore, to be very diligent in this inquiry whether our spiritual thoughts, even in our prayers, be not rather occasioned from the duty than spring from a gracious principle in our hearts, or are the actings of real saving grace.

(2.) Where thoughts of spiritual things in prayer are occasional only, in the way before described, such prayers will not be a means of spiritual growth unto the soul. They will not make the soul humble, holy, watchful, and diligent in universal obedience. Grace will not thrive under the greatest constancy in such duties. It is an astonishing thing to see how, under frequency of prayer and a seeming fervency therein, many of us are at a stand as to visible thriving in the fruits of grace, and it is to be feared without any increase of strength in the root of it. "The LORD's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear." He is the same as in the days of old, when our fathers cried unto him and were delivered, when they trusted in him and were not confounded.

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Prayer is the same that it was, and shall lose nothing of its prevalency whilst this world endureth. Whence is it, then, that there is so much prayer amongst us, and so little success? I speak not with respect unto the outward dispensations of divine providence, in afflictions or persecutions, wherein God always acts in a way of sovereignty, and oftentimes gives the most useful answer unto our prayers by denying our requests; I intend that only whereof the psalmist giveth us his experience, Psalm 138:3,

"In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."

Where prayers are effectual, they will bring in spiritual strength. But the prayers of many seem to be very spiritual, and to express all conceivable supplies of grace, and they are persisted in with constancy, — and God forbid we should judge them to be hypocritical and wholly insincere, — yet there is a defect somewhere, which should be inquired after, for they are not so answered as that they who pray them are strengthened with strength in their souls. There is not that spiritual thriving, that growth in grace, which might be expected to accompany such supplications.

I know that a man may pray often, pray sincerely and frequently, for an especial mercy, grace, or deliverance from a particular temptation, and yet no spiritual supply of strength unto his own experience come in thereby. So Paul prayed thrice for the removal of his temptation, and yet had the exercise of it continued. In such a case there may be no defect in prayer, and yet the grace in particular aimed at may not be attained; for God hath other holy ends to accomplish hereby on the soul. But how persons should continue in prayer in general according to the mind of God, so far as can be outwardly discovered, and yet thrive not at all as unto spiritual strength in their souls, is hard to be understood.

And, which is yet more astonishing, men abide in the duty of prayer, and that with constancy, in their families and otherwise, and yet live in known sins. Whatever spiritual thoughts such men have in and by their prayers, they are not spiritually minded. Shall we now say that all such persons are gross hypocrites, such as know they do but mock God and man, — know that they have not desires nor aims after the things which they mention in their own prayers, but do these things either for some corrupt end or at best to satisfy their convictions? Could we thus resolve, the whole difficulty of the case were taken off; for such "double-minded men" have no reason to "think that they shall receive any thing of the Lord," as James speaks, chapter 1:7. Indeed they do not; — they never act faith with reference unto their own prayers. But it is not so with all of this sort. Some judge themselves sincere and in good earnest in their prayers, — not without some hopes and expectations of success. I will not say of all such persons that they are among the number of them concerning whom the Wisdom of God says,

"Because I called, and they refused; they shall call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me," Proverbs 1:24,28.

And although we may say unto such a person in general, "Either leave your sinning or leave your praying," from Psalm 1:16,17, and

that with respect unto present scandal and certain miscarriage in the end if both be continued in, yet in particular I would not advise any such person to leave off his praying until he had left his sin. This were to advise a sick man to use no remedies until he were well cured. Who knows but that the Holy Spirit, who works when and how he pleaseth, may take a time to animate these lifeless prayers, and make them a means of deliverance from the power of this sin? In the meantime, the fault and guilt is wholly their own, who have effected a consistency between a way in sinning and a course in praying; and it ariseth from hence, that they have never labored to fill up their requests with grace. What there hath been of earnestness or diligence in them hath been from a force put upon them by their convictions and fears; for no man was ever absolutely prevailed on by sin who prayed for deliverance according to the mind of God. Every praying man that perisheth was a hypocrite. The faithfulness of God in his promises will not allow us to judge otherwise. Wherefore, the thoughts that such persons 357 have of spiritual things, even in their duties, do not arise from within nor are a natural emanation of the frames of their hearts and affections.

(3.) Earnestness and appearing fervency in prayer, as unto the outward delivery of the words of it, yea, though the mind be so affected as to contribute much thereunto, will not of themselves prove that the thoughts of men therein do arise from an internal spring of grace. There is a fervency of spirit in prayer that is one of the best properties of it, being an earnest acting of love, faith, and desire; but there is a fervency wherewith the mind itself may be affected that may arise from other causes: —

[1.] It may do so from the engagement of natural affections unto the objects of their prayer, or the things prayed for. Men may be mighty earnest and intent in their minds in praying for a dear relation or for deliverance from eminent troubles or imminent dangers, and yet all this fervor may arise from the vehement actings of natural affections about the things prayed for, excited in an especial manner by the present duty. Hence God calls the earnest cries of some for temporal

things, not a "crying unto him," but a "howling," Hosea 7:14; that is, the cry of hungry, ravenous beasts, that would be satisfied.

[2.] Sometimes it ariseth from the sharpness of convictions, which will make men even roar in their prayers for disquietment of heart. And this may be where there is no true grace as yet received, nor, it may be, ever will be so; for the perplexing work of conviction goes before real conversion. And as it produceth many other effects and changes in the mind, so it may do this of great fervency in vocal prayers, especially if it be accompanied with outward afflictions, pains, or troubles, Psalm 128:34,35.

[3.] Ofttimes the mind and affections are very little concerned in that fervor and earnestness which appear in the outward performance of the duty; but in the exercise of gifts, and through their own utterance, men put their natural affections into such an agitation as shall carry them out into a great vehemency in their expressions. It hath been so with sundry persons, who have been discovered to be rotten hypocrites, and have afterward turned cursed apostates. Wherefore, all these things may be where there is no gracious spring or vital principle acting itself from within in spiritual thoughts. Some, it may be, will design an advantage by these conceptions, unto the interest of profaneness and scoffing; for if there may be these evils under the exercise of the gift of prayer, both in constancy and with fervency, — if there may be a total want of the exercise of all true grace with it and under it, — then, it may be, all that is pretended of this gift and its use is but hypocrisy and talk. But I say,  
—

(1.) It may be as well pretended that because the sun shining on a dunghill doth occasion offensive and noisome steams, therefore all that is said of its influence on spices and flowers, causing them to give out their fragrancy, is utterly false. No man ever thought that spiritual gifts did change or renew the minds and natures of men; where they are alone, they only help and assist unto the useful exercise of natural faculties and powers. And therefore, where the

heart is not savingly renewed, no gifts can stir up a saving exercise of faith; but where it is so, they are a means to cause the savor of it to flow forth.

(2.) Be it so that there may be some evils found under the exercise of the gift of prayer, what remedy for them may be proposed? Is it that men should renounce their use of it, and betake themselves unto the reading of prayers only?

[1.] The same may be said of all spiritual gifts whatever, for they are all of them liable unto abuse. And shall we reject all the powers of the world to come, the whole complex of gospel gifts, for the communication whereof the Lord Christ hath promised to continue his Spirit with his church unto the end of the world, because by some they are abused?

[2.] Not only the same, but far greater evils, may be found in and under the reading of prayers; which needs no farther demonstration than what it gives of itself every day.

[3.] It is hard to understand how any benefit at all can accrue unto any by this relief, when the advantages of the other way are evident.

Wherefore the inquiry remains, How we may know unto our own satisfaction that the thoughts we have of spiritual things in the duty of prayer are from an internal fountain of grace, and so are an evidence that we are spiritually minded, whereunto all these things do tend. Some few things I shall offer towards satisfaction herein: —

(1.) I take it for granted, on the evidence before given, that persons who have any spiritual light, and will diligently examine and try their own hearts, will be able to discern what real actings of faith, of love, and delight in God, there are in their duties, and, consequently, what is the spring of their spiritual thoughts. In general we are assured that "he that believeth hath the witness in himself," 1 John 5:10. Sincere faith will be its own evidence; and where there are sincere actings of faith, they will evidence themselves, if we try all things

impartially by the word. But if men do, as for the most part they do, content themselves with the performance of any duty, without an examination of their principles, frames, and actings of grace in it, it is no wonder if they walk in all uncertainty.

(2.) When the soul finds a sweet spiritual complacency in and after its duties, it is an evidence that grace hath been acted in its spiritual thoughts and desires. Jeremiah 31, the prophet receiveth a long gracious message from God, filled up with excellent promises and pathological exhortations unto the church. The whole is, as it were, summed up in the close of it: Verse 25,

"For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul."

Whereon the prophet adds, "Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me." God's gracious message had so composed his spirit and freed his mind from trouble as that he was at quiet repose in himself, like a man asleep. But after the end of it, he stirs up himself unto a review and consideration of what had been spoken unto him: "I awaked, and beheld," or, "I stirred up myself, and considered what had been delivered unto me;" "and," saith he, "my sleep was sweet unto me," — "I found a gracious complacency in and refreshment unto my soul from what I had heard and received." So is it oftentimes with a soul that hath had real communion with God in the duty of prayer. It finds itself, both in it and afterward when it is awakened unto the consideration of it, spiritually refreshed; it is sweet unto him.

This holy complacency, this rest and sweet repose of mind, is the foundation of the delight of believers in this duty. They do not pray only because it is their duty so to do, nor yet because they stand in need of it, so as that they cannot live without it, but they have delight in it; and to keep them from it is all one as to keep them from their daily food and refreshment. Now, we can have no delight in any thing but what we have found some sweetness, rest, and complacency in.



Without any such experience we may do or use any thing, but cannot do it with delight. And it ariseth, —

[1.] From the approach that is made unto God therein. It is in its own nature an access unto God on a throne of grace, Ephesians 2:18, Hebrews 10:19,20; and when this access is animated by the actings of grace, the soul hath a spiritual experience of a nearness in that approach. Now, God is the fountain and center of all spiritual refreshment, rest, and complacency; and in such an access unto him there is a refreshing taste of them communicated unto the soul: Psalm 36:7-9,

"How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light."

God is proposed in the excellency of his loving-kindness, which is comprehensive of his goodness, grace, and mercy; and so he is also as the spring of life and light, all spiritual powers and joys. Those that believe are described by putting their "trust under the shadow of his wings." In his worship, the "fatness of his house," they make their approaches unto him. And the fruit hereof is, that he makes them to "drink of the river of his pleasures," the satisfying, refreshing streams of his grace and goodness. They approach unto him as unto the "fountain of life," so as to drink of that fountain in renewed communications of life and grace, and in the "light of God," the light of his countenance, to "see light" in satisfying joy. In these things doth consist, and from them doth arise, that spiritual complacency which the souls of believers do find in their duties

[2.] From the due exercise of faith, love, and delight, the graces wherein the life of the new creature doth principally consist. There is a suitableness unto our natural constitution, and a secret complacency of our natures, in the proper actings of life natural for

its own preservation and increase. There is so in our spiritual constitution, in the proper actings of the powers of our spiritual life unto its preservation and increase. These graces, in their due exercise, do compose and refresh the mind, as those which are perfective of its state, and which quell and cast out whatever troubles it. Thence a blessed satisfaction and complacency befall the soul. Herein "he that believeth hath the witness in himself." Besides, faith and love are never really acted on Christ, but they prepare and make meet the soul to receive communications of love and grace from him; which it never faileth of, although it be not always sensible thereof.

[3.] From the testimony of conscience, bearing witness unto our sincerity, both in aims, ends, and performances of the duty. Hence a gracious repose of mind and great satisfactoriness do ensue.

If we have no experience of these things, it is evident that we walk at random in the best of our duties; for they are among the principal things that we do or ought to pray for. And if we have not experience of the effects of our prayers in our hearts, we neither have advantage by them nor give glory unto God in them.

But yet here, as in most other spiritual things, one of the worst of vices is ready to impose itself in the room and place of the best of our graces; and this is self-pleasing in the performance of the duty. This, instead of a grace steeped in humility, as all true grace is, is a vile effect of spiritual pride, or the offering of a sacrifice unto our own net and drag. It is a glorying in the flesh; for whatever of self any doth glory in, it is but flesh. When men have had enlargements in their expressions, and especially when they apprehend that others are satisfied or affected therewith, they are apt to have a secret self-pleasing in what they have done; which, before they are aware, turns into pride and a noxious elation of mind. The same may befall men in their most secret duties, performed outwardly by the aid of spiritual gifts. But this is most remote from and contrary unto that spiritual complacency in duty which we speak of, which yet it will pretend unto until it be diligently examined. The language of

spiritual complacency is, "I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of thy righteousness, of thine only," Psalm 121:16; — that of spiritual pride is, "God, I thank thee that I have done thus and thus;" as it was expressed by the Pharisee. That is in God alone; this is in self. That draws forth the savor of all graces; this immediately covereth and buries them all, if there be any in the soul. That fills the soul eminently with humility and self-abasement; this with a lifting up of the mind and proud self-conceit. That casts out all remembrance of what we have done ourselves, retaining only a sense of what we have received from God, of the impressions of his love and grace; this blots out all remembrance of what we have freely received from God, and retains only what we have done ourselves. Wherever it is, there is no due sense either of the greatness or goodness of God.

Some, it may be, will say that if it be so, they for their parts are cut off. They have no experience of any such spiritual rest and complacency in God in or after their prayers. At the best, they begin them with tears and end them with sorrow; and sometimes they know not what is become of them, but fear that God is not glorified by them nor their own souls bettered.

I answer, —

[1.] There is great spiritual refreshment in that godly sorrow which is at work in our prayers. Where the Holy Ghost is a Spirit of grace and supplication, he causeth mourning, and in that mourning there is joy.

[2.] The secret encouragement which we receive, by praying, to adhere unto God constantly in prayer ariseth from some experience of this holy complacency, though we have not a sensible evidence of it.

[3.] Perhaps some of them who make this complaint, if they would awaken and consider, will find that their souls, at least sometimes,

have been thus refreshed and brought unto a holy rest in God.

[4.] Then shall ye know the Lord, if ye follow on to know him. Abide in seeking after this complacency and satisfaction in God, and ye shall attain it.

(3.) It is a sure evidence that our thoughts of spiritual things in our supplications are from an internal spring of grace, and are not merely occasioned by the duty itself, when we find the daily fruit and advantage of them, especially in the preservation of our souls in a holy, humble, watchful frame.

Innumerable are the advantages, benefits, and effects of prayer, which are commonly spoken unto. Growth in grace and consolation is the substance of them. Where there is continuance in prayer, there will be spiritual growth in some proportion. For men to be earnest in prayer and thriftless in grace is a certain indication of prevalent corruptions, and want of being spiritually minded in prayer itself. If a man eat his daily food, let him eat never so much or so often, if he be not nourished by it, his body is under, the power of prevalent distempers; and so is his spiritual constitution who thriveth not in the use of the food of the new creature. But that which I fix upon, with respect unto the present inquiry, is the frame that it preserves the soul in. It will keep it humble and upon a diligent watch as unto its dispositions and actings. He who prays as he ought will endeavor to live as he prays. This none can do who doth not with diligence keep his heart unto the things he hath prayed about. To pray earnestly and live carelessly is to proclaim that a man is not spiritually minded in his prayer. Hereby, then, we shall know what is the spring of those spiritual thoughts which our minds are exercised withal in our supplications. If they are influenced unto a constant, daily watch for the preservation of that frame of spirit, those dispositions and inclinations unto spiritual things, which we pray for, they are from an internal spring of grace. If there be generally an unsuitableness in our minds unto what we seem to contend for in our prayers, the gift may be in exercise, but the grace is wanting. If a man

be every day on the exchange, and there talketh diligently and earnestly about merchandise and the affairs of trade, but when he comes home thinks no more of them, because, indeed, he hath nothing to do, no interest in them, he may be a very poor man notwithstanding his pretenses; and he may be spiritually very poor who is on occasions fervent in prayer, if, when he retires into himself, he is not careful and diligent about the matter of it.

(4.) When spiritual affections and due preparation of heart unto the duty do excite and animate the gift of prayer, and not the gift make impressions on the affections, then are we spiritually minded therein. Gifts are servants, not rulers, in the mind, — are bestowed on us to be serviceable unto grace; not to lead, but to follow it, and to be ready with their assistance on its exercise. For the most part, where they lead all, they are all alone. This is the natural order of these things: grace habitually inclineth and disposeth the heart unto this duty; providence and rule give the occasions for its exercise; sense of duty calls for preparation. Grace coming into actual exercise, gifts come in with their assistance. If they lead, all, all is out of order. It may be otherwise sometimes. A person indisposed and lifeless, engaging unto prayer in a way of obedience, upon conviction of duty, may, in and by the gift, have his affections excited and grace engaged unto its proper work. It may be so, I say, but let men take heed how they trust unto this order and method; for where it is so, there may be little or nothing of the exercise of true grace in all their fervor and commotion of affections. But when the genuine actings of faith, love, holy reverence, and gracious desires, do stir up the gift unto its exercise, calling in its assistance unto the expression of themselves, then are the heart and mind in their proper order.

(5.) It is so when other duties of religion are equally regarded and attended unto with prayer itself. He whose religion lies all in prayer and hearing, hath none at all. God hath an equal respect unto all other duties, and so must we have also. So is it expressed as unto the instance of alms, Acts 10:31; and James placeth all religion herein, because there is none without it, chap. 1:27. I shall not value his

prayers at all, be he never so earnest and frequent in them, who gives not alms according to his ability. And this in an especial manner is required of us who are ministers, that we be not like a hand set up in cross-ways, directing others which way to go, but staying behind itself.

This digression about the rise and spring of spiritual thoughts in prayer, I judged not unnecessary in such a time and season, wherein we ought to be very jealous lest gifts impose themselves in the room of grace, and be careful that they are employed only unto their proper end, which is, to be serviceable unto grace in its exercise, and not otherwise.

3. There is another occasion of thoughts of spiritual things, when they do not spring from a living principle within, and so are no evidence of being spiritually minded; and this is the discourse of others. "They that fear the LORD will be speaking one to another" of the things wherein his glory is concerned, Malachi 3:16. To declare the righteousness, the glory of God, is the delight of his saints: Psalm 145:3-8,

"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honor of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy."

And accordingly there are some who are ready on all occasions to be speaking or making mention of things divine, spiritual, and holy; and it is to be wished that there were more of them. All the flagitious sins that the world is filled withal are not a greater evidence of the degeneracy of the Christian religion than this is, that it is grown

unusual, yea, a shame or scorn, for men to speak together of the things of God. It was not so when religion was in its primitive power and glory, nor is it so with them who really fear God and are sensible of their duty. Some, I say, there are who embrace all occasions of spiritual communication. Those with whom they do converse, if they are not profligate, if they have any spiritual light, cannot but so far comply with what they say as to think of the things spoken, which are spiritual. Ofttimes the track and course of men's thoughts lie so out of the way, are so contrary, unto such things, that they seem strange unto them, they give them no entertainment. You do but cross their way with such discourses, whereon they stand still a little, and so pass on. Even the countenances of some men will change hereon, and they betake themselves unto an unsatisfied silence until they can divert unto other things. Some will make such replies of empty words as shall evidence their hearts to be far enough estranged from the things proposed unto them. But with others, such occasional discourses will make such impressions on their minds as to stir up present thoughts of spiritual things. But though frequent occasions hereof may be renewed, yet will such thoughts give no evidence that any man is spiritually minded; for they are not genuine, from an internal spring of grace.

From these causes it is that the thoughts of spiritual things are with many as guests that come into an inn, and not like children that dwell in the house. They enter occasionally, and then there is a great stir about them, to provide meet entertainment for them. Within a while they are disposed of, and so depart unto their own occasions, being neither looked nor inquired after any more. Things of another nature are attended unto; new occasions bring in new guests for a season. Children are owned in the house, are missed if they are out of the way, and have their daily provision constantly made for them. So is it with these occasional thoughts about spiritual things. By one means or other they enter into the mind, and there are entertained for a season; on a sudden they depart, and men hear of them no more. But those that are natural and genuine, arising from a living spring of grace in the heart, disposing the mind unto them, are as the

children of the house. They are expected in their places and at their seasons. If they are missing, they are inquired after. The heart calls itself unto an account whence it is that it hath been so long without them, and calls them over into its wonted converse with them.

## CHAPTER IV.

**Other evidences of thoughts about spiritual things arising from an internal principle of grace, whereby they are an evidence of our being spiritually minded — The abounding of these thoughts, how far, and wherein, such an evidence.**

The SECOND evidence that our thoughts of spiritual things do proceed from an internal fountain of sanctified light and affections, or that they are acts or fruits of our being spiritually minded, is, that they abound in us, that our minds are filled with them. We may say of them as the apostle doth of other graces, "If these things be in you, and abound, ye shall not be barren." It is well, indeed, when our minds are like the land of Egypt in the years of plenty, when it "brought forth by handfuls," — when they flow from the well of living water in us with a full stream and current; but there is a measure of abounding which is necessary to evidence our being spiritually minded in them.

There is a double effect ascribed here unto this frame of spirit, — first "life," and then "peace." The nature and being of this grace depend on the former consideration of it, — namely, its procedure from an internal principle of grace, the effect and consequence whereof is "life:" but that it is "peace" also depends on this degree and measure of the actings of this part of it in our spiritual thoughts; and this we must consider.



It is the character of all men in the state of depraved nature and apostasy from God, that "every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually," Genesis 6:5. All persons in that condition are not swearers, blasphemers, drunkards, adulterers, idolaters, or the like; these are the vices of particular persons, the effects of particular constitutions and temptations. But thus it is with them, all and every one of them: — all the imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts are evil, and that continually, some as unto the matter of them, some as unto their end, all as unto their principle; for out of the evil treasure of the heart can proceed nothing but what is evil. That infinite multitude of open sins which is in the world doth give a clear prospect or representation of the nature and effects of our apostasy from God; but he that can consider the numberless number of thoughts which pass through the minds of every individual person every day, all evil, and that continually, he will have a farther comprehension of it.

We can therefore have no greater evidence of a change in us from this state and condition, than a change wrought in the course of our thoughts. A relinquishment of this or that particular sin is not an evidence of a translation from this state; for, as was said, such particular sins proceed from particular lusts and temptations, and are not the immediate universal consequence of that depravation of nature which is equal in all. Such alone are the vanity and wickedness of the thoughts and imaginations of the heart. A change herein is a blessed evidence of a change of state. He who is cured of a dropsy is not immediately healthy, because he may have the prevailing seeds and matter of other diseases in him, and the next day die of a lethargy; but he who, from a state of sickness, is restored, in the temperature of the mass of blood and the animal spirits, and all the principles of life and health, unto a good crisis and temperature, his state of body is changed. The cure of a particular sin may leave behind it the seeds of eternal death, which they may quickly effect; but he who hath obtained a change in this character, which belongs essentially unto the state of depraved nature, is spiritually recovered. And the more the stream of our thoughts is

turned, the more our minds are filled by those of a contrary nature, the greater and more firm is our evidence of a translation out of that depraved state and condition.

There is nothing so unaccountable as the multiplicity of thoughts of the minds of men. They fall from them like the leaves of trees when they are shaken with the wind in autumn. To have all these thoughts, all the several figments of the heart, all the conceptions that are framed and agitated in the mind, to be evil, and that continually, what a hell of horror and confusion must it needs be! A deliverance from this loathsome, hateful state is more to be valued than the whole world. Without it neither life, nor peace, nor immortality, nor glory, can ever be attained.

The design of conviction is to put a stop unto these thoughts, to take off from their number, and thereby to lessen their guilt. It deserves not the name of conviction of sin which respects only outward actions, and regards not the inward actings of the mind; and this alone will for a season make a great change in the thoughts, especially it will do so when assisted by superstition, directing them unto other objects. These two in conjunction are the rise of all that devotional religion which is in the Papacy. Conviction labors to put some stop and bounds unto thoughts absolutely evil and corrupt, and superstition suggests other objects for them, which they readily embrace; but it is a vain attempt. The minds and hearts of men are continually minting and coining new thoughts and imaginations; the cogitative faculty is always at work. As the streams of a mighty river running into the ocean, so are the thoughts of a natural man, and through self they run into hell. It is a fond thing to set a dam before such a river, to curb its streams. For a little space there may be a stop made, but it will quickly break down all obstacles or overflow all its bounds. There is no way to divert its course but only by providing other channels for its waters, and turning them there into. The mighty stream of the evil thoughts of men will admit of no bounds or dams to put a stop unto them. There are but two ways of relief from them, the one respecting their moral evil, the other their natural

abundance. The first [is,] by throwing salt into the spring, as Elisha cured the waters of Jericho, — that is, to get the heart and mind seasoned with grace; for the tree must be made good before the fruit will be so. The other is, to turn their streams into new channels, putting new aims and ends upon them, fixing them on new objects: so shall we abound in spiritual thoughts; for abound in thoughts we shall, whether we will or no.

To this purpose is the advice of the apostle, Ephesians 5:18,19,

"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

When men are drunk with wine unto an excess, they make it quickly evident what vain, foolish, ridiculous imaginations it filleth their minds withal. In opposition hereunto the apostle adviseth believers to be "filled with the Spirit," — to labor for such a participation of him as may fill their minds and hearts, as others fill themselves with wine. To what end, unto what purpose, should they desire such a participation of him, to be so filled with him? It is unto this end, namely, that he by his grace may fill them with holy, spiritual thoughts, as, on the contrary, men drunk unto an excess are filled with those that are foolish, vain, and wicked. So the words of verse 19 do declare; for he adviseth us to express our abounding thoughts in such duties as will give an especial vent unto them.

Wherefore, when we are spiritually minded, we shall abound in spiritual thoughts, or thoughts of spiritual things. That we have such thoughts will not sufficiently evidence that we are so, unless we abound in them. And this leads us unto the principal inquiry on this head, namely, what measure we ought to assign hereof, how we may know when we abound in spiritual thoughts, so as that they may be an evidence of our being spiritually minded.

I answer, in general, among other Scriptures read over Psalm 119 with understanding. Consider therein what David expresseth of himself, as unto his constant delight in and continual thoughts of the law of God; which was the only means of divine revelation at that season. Try yourselves by that pattern; examine yourselves whether you can truly speak the same words with him, at least if not in the same degree of zeal, yet with the same sincerity of grace. You will say, "That was David. It is not for us, it is not our duty, to be like unto him, at least not to be equal with him." But as far as I know, we must be like him, if ever we intend to come to the place where he is. It will ruin our souls, if, when we read in the Scripture how the saints of God express their experience in faith, love, delight in God, and constant meditation on him, we grant that it was so with them, that they were good and holy men, but it is not necessary that it should be so with us. These things are not written in the Scripture to show what they were, but what we ought to be. All things concerning them were "written for our admonition," 1 Corinthians 10:11. And if we have not the same delight in God as they had, the same spiritual mindedness in thoughts and meditations of heavenly things, we can have no evidence that we please God as they did, or shall go to that place whither they are gone. Profession of the life of God passeth with many at a very low and easy rate. Their thoughts are for the most part vain and earthly, their communication unsavory, and sometimes corrupt, their lives at best uneven and uncertain as unto the rule of obedience; yet all is well, all is life and peace! The holy men of old, who obtained this testimony, that they pleased God, did not so walk before him. They meditated continually on the law; thought of God in the night seasons; spake of his ways, his works, his praise; their whole delight was in him, and in all things they "followed hard after him." It is the example of David in particular that I have proposed; and it is a promise of the grace to be administered by the gospel, that "he that is feeble shall be as David," Zechariah 12:8, and if we are not so in his being spiritually minded, it is to be feared we are not partakers of the promise. But that we may the better judge of ourselves therein, I shall add some few rules unto this direction by [way of] example: —

1. Consider what proportion your thoughts of spiritual things bear unto those about other things. Our principal interest and concern, as we profess, lies in things spiritual, heavenly, and eternal. Is it not, then, a foolish thing to suppose that our thoughts about these things should not hold some proportion with those about other things, nay, that they should not exceed there? No man is so vain, in earthly things, as to pretend that his principal concern lieth in that whereof he thinks very seldom in comparison of other things. It is not so with men in reference unto their families, their trades, their occasions of life. It is a truth not only consecrated by the testimony of him who is Truth, but evident also in the light of reason, that "where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also;" and the affections of our hearts do act themselves by the thoughts of our minds, Wherefore, if our principal treasure be, as we profess, in things spiritual and heavenly, (and woe unto us if it be not so!) on them will our affections, and consequently our desires and thoughts, be principally fixed.

That we may the better examine ourselves by this rule, we must consider of what sorts men's other thoughts are; and as unto our present purpose, they may be reduced unto these heads: —

(1.) There are such as are exercised about their callings and lawful occasions. These are numberless and endless, especially among a sort of men who rise early and go to bed late, and eat the bread of carefulness, or are particularly industrious and diligent in their ways. These thoughts men approve themselves in, and judge them their duty, as they are in their proper place and measure. But no heart can conceive the multitude of these thoughts, which partly in contrivances, partly in converse, are engaged and spent about these things; and the more men are immersed in them, the more do themselves and others esteem them diligent and praiseworthy. And there are some who have neither necessity nor occasion to be engaged much in the duties of any especial calling, who yet by their words and actions declare themselves to be confined almost in their thoughts unto themselves, their relations, their children, and their

self-concerns; which, though most of them are very impertinent, yet they justify themselves in them. All sorts may do well to examine what proportion their thoughts of spiritual things do bear unto those of other things. I fear with most it will be found to be very small, — with many next to none at all. What evidence, then, can they have that they are spiritually minded, that their principal interest lies in things above? It may be, it will be asked, whether it be necessary that men should think as much and as often about things spiritual and heavenly as they do about the lawful affairs of their callings? I say, more, and more often, if we are what we profess ourselves to be. Generally it is the best sort of men, as to the things of God and man, who are busied in their callings, some of one sort, some of another. But even among the best of these, many will continually spend the strength of their minds and vigor of their spirits about their affairs all the day long, and, so they can pray in the morning and evening, with some thoughts sometimes of spiritual things occasionally administered, do suppose they acquit themselves very well; as if a man should pretend that his great design is to prepare himself for a voyage unto a far country, where is his patrimony and his inheritance, but all his thoughts and contrivances are about some few trifles, which, if indeed he intend his voyage, he must leave behind him, and of his main design he scarce thinketh at all. We all profess that we are bound for heaven, immortality, and glory; but is it any evidence we really design it, if all our thoughts are consumed about the trifles of this world, which we must leave behind us, and if we have only occasional thoughts of things above? I shall elsewhere show, if God will, how men may be spiritually minded in their earthly affairs. If some relief may not be thence obtained, I cannot tell what to say or answer for them whose thoughts of spiritual things do not hold proportion with, yea, exceed, them which they lay out about their callings.

This whole rule is grounded on that of our Savior, Matthew 6:31,33,34,

"Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow."

When we have done all we can, when we have made the best of them we are able, all earthly things, as unto our interest in them, amount to no more but what we eat, what we drink, and wherewith we are clothed. About these things our Savior forbids us to take any thought, not absolutely, but with a double limitation; as, — First, That we take no such thought about them as should carry along with it a disquietude of mind, through a distrust of the fatherly care and providence of God. This is the design of the context. Secondly, No thought that, for constancy and engagement of spirit, should be like unto those which we ought to have about spiritual things. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," Let that be the principal thing in your thoughts and consciences. We may therefore conclude that at least they must hold an exceeding proportion with them.

Let a man industriously engaged in the way of his calling try himself by this rule every evening. Let him consider what have been his thoughts about his earthly occasions and what about spiritual things, and thereon ask of himself whether he be spiritually minded or no. Be not deceived; "as a man thiaketh, so is he." And if we account it a strange thing that our thoughts should be more exercised about spiritual things than about the affairs of our callings, we must not think it strange if, when we come to the trial, we cannot find that we have either "life" or "peace."

Moreover, it is known how often, when we are engaged in spiritual duties, other thoughts will interpose, and impose themselves on our minds. Those which are about men's secular concernments will do so. The world will frequently make an inroad on the way to heaven, to disturb the passengers and wayfaring men. There is nothing more

frequently complained of by such as are awake unto their duty and sensible of their weakness. Call to mind, therefore, how often, on the other hand, spiritual thoughts do interpose, and, as it were, impose themselves on your minds whilst you are engaged in your earthly affairs. Sometimes no doubt but with all that are true believers it is so. "Or ever I was aware," saith the spouse, "my soul made me as the chariots of Ammi-nadib," Song of Solomon 6:12. Grace in her own soul surprised her into a ready, willing frame unto spiritual communion with Christ, when she was intent on other occasion. But if these thoughts of heavenly things so arising in us bear no proportion with the other sort, it is an evidence what frame and principle is predominant in us.

(2.) There are a multitude of thoughts in the minds of men which are vain, useless, and altogether unprofitable. These ordinarily, through a dangerous mistake, are looked on as not sinful, because, as it is supposed, the matter of them is not so; and therefore men rather shake them off for their folly than their guilt. But they arise from a corrupt fountain, and woefully pollute both the mind and conscience. Wherever there are "vain thoughts," there is sin, Jeremiah 4:14. Such are those numberless imaginations whereby men fancy themselves to be what they are not, to do what they do not, to enjoy what they enjoy not, to dispose of themselves and others at their pleasure. That our nature is liable unto such a pernicious folly, which some of tenacious fancies have turned into madness, we are beholding alone to our cursed apostasy from God, and the vanity that possessed our minds thereon. Hence the prince of Tyrus thought he was a god, and "sat in the seat of God," Ezekiel 28:2. So it hath been with others, And in those in whom such imaginations are kept unto some better order and bounds, yet, being traced unto their original, they will be found to spring some of them immediately from pride, some from sensual lusts, some from the love of the world, all from self, and the old ambition to be as God, to dispose of all things as we think meet. I know no greater misery or punishment in this world than the debasing of our nature to such vain imaginations, and a perfect freedom from them is a part of the blessedness of heaven. It is not



my present work to show how sinful they are; let them be esteemed only fruitless, foolish, vain, and ludicrous. But let men examine themselves what number of these vain, useless thoughts night and day do rove up and down in their minds. If now it be apprehended too severe, that men's thoughts of spiritual things should exceed them that are employed about their lawful callings, let them consider what proportion they bear unto those that are vain and useless. Do not many give more time unto them than they do unto holy meditations, without an endeavor to mortify the one or to stir up and enliven the other? are they not more wonted to their seasons than holy thoughts are? And shall we suppose that those with whom it is so are spiritually minded

(3.) There are thoughts that are formally evil; they are so in their own nature, being corrupt contrivances to fulfill the desires of the flesh in the lusts thereof. These also will attempt the minds of believers. But they are always looked on as professed enemies to the soul, and are watched against. I shall not, therefore, make any comparison between them and spiritual thoughts, for they abound only in them that are carnally minded.

2. The second rule to this purpose is, That we should consider whether thoughts of spiritual things do constantly take possession of their proper seasons. There are some times and seasons in the course of men's lives wherein they retire themselves unto their own thoughts. The most busied men in the world have some times of thinking unto themselves; and those who design no such thing, as being afraid of coming to be wiser and better than they are, do yet spend time therein whether they will or no. But they who are wise will be at home as much as they can, and have as many seasons for such their retirements as is possible for them to attain. If that man be foolish who busieth himself so much abroad in the concerns of others that he hath no time to consider the state of his own house and family, much more is he so who spendeth all his thoughts about other things, and never makes use of them in an inquiry how it is with himself and his own soul. However, men can hardly avoid but

that they must have some seasons, partly stated, partly occasional, wherein they entertain themselves with their own thoughts. The evening and the morning, the times of waking on the bed, those of the necessary cessation of all ordinary affairs, of walking, journeying, and the like, are such seasons.

If we are spiritually minded, if thoughts of spiritual things do abound in us, they will ordinarily, and that with constancy, possess these seasons, look upon them as those which are their due, which belong unto them; for they are expressly assigned unto them in the way of rule, expressed in examples and commands. See Psalm 16:7,8; 92:2; Deuteronomy 6:7. If they are usually given up unto other ends and occasions, are possessed with thoughts of another nature, it is an open evidence that spiritual thoughts have but little interest in our minds, little prevalency in the conduct of our souls. It is our duty to afford unto them stated times, taken away from other affairs that call for them; but if, instead thereof, we rob them of what is as it were their own, which no other things or business can lay any just claim unto, how dwelleth the love of spiritual things in us? Most professors are convinced that it is their duty to pray morning and evening, and it is to be wished that they were all found in the practice of it; but if ordinarily they judge themselves in the performance of that duty to be discharged from any farther exercise of spiritual thoughts, applying them unto things worldly, useless, or vain, they can make no pretense to be spiritually minded.

And it must be observed (which will be found to be true), that if the seasons which are as it were due unto such meditations be taken from them, they will be the worst employed of all the minutes of our lives. Vain and foolish thoughts, corrupt imaginations, will make a common haunt unto the minds of men in them, and habituate themselves unto an expectation of entertainment, whence they will grow importunate for admission. Hence, with many, those precious moments of time which might greatly influence their souls unto life and peace, if they were indeed spiritually minded, make the greatest provision for their trouble, sorrow, and confusion; for the vain and

evil thoughts which some persons do accustom themselves unto in such seasons are, or ought to be, a burden upon their consciences more than they can bear. That which providence tenders unto their good is turned into a snare; and God doth righteously leave them unto the fruits of their own folly who so despise his gracious provision for their good. If we cannot afford unto God our spare time, it is evident that indeed we can afford nothing at all. Micah 2:1, "They devise iniquity upon their beds," — the season proper for holy contemplation they make use of to fill their minds with wicked imaginations; "and when the morning is light they practice it," walking all day on all occasions suitably unto their devices and imaginations of the night. Many will have cause to complain unto eternity of those leisure times, which might have been improved for their advantage unto eternal blessedness.

If we intend, therefore, to maintain a title unto this grace of being spiritually minded, if we would have any evidence of it in ourselves, — without which we can have none of life or peace, and what we pretend thereof is but an effect of security, — we must endeavor to preserve the claim and right of spiritual thoughts unto such seasons, and actually put them in possession of them.

3. Consider how we are affected with our disappointments about these seasons. Have we by negligence, by temptations, have we by occasional diversions or affairs of life, been taken off from thoughts of God, of Christ, of heavenly things, when we ought to have been engaged in them? how are we affected with a view hereof? A carnal mind is well enough satisfied with the omission of any duty, so it have the pretense of a necessary occasion. If it hath lost a temporal advantage through attendance unto a spiritual duty, it will deeply reflect upon itself, and, it may be, like the duty the worse afterward. But a gracious soul, one that is truly spiritually minded, will mourn under a review of such omissions, and by every one of them is stirred up unto more watchfulness for the future. "Alas," will it say, "how little have I been with Christ this day! how much time hath passed me without a thought of him! How foolish was I to be wanting to

such or such an opportunity! I am in arrears unto myself, and have no rest until I be satisfied."

I say, if indeed we are spiritually minded, we will duly and carefully call over the consideration of those times and seasons wherein we ought to have exercised ourselves in spiritual thoughts, and if we have lost them, or any of them, mourn over our own negligence. But if we can omit and lose such seasons or opportunities from time to time without regret or self-reflection, it is to be feared that we wax worse and worse. Way will be made hereby for farther omissions, until we grow wholly cold about them.

And, indeed, that woful loss of time that is found amongst many professors is greatly to be bewailed. Some lose it on themselves, by a continual track of fruitless, impertinent thoughts about their own concerns; some in vain converse with others, wherein for the most part they edify one another unto vanity. How much of this time might, nay ought to be redeemed for holy meditation! The good Lord make all professors sensible of their loss of former seasons, that they may be the more watchful for the future in this great concernment of their souls! Little do some think what light, what assurance, what joy, what readiness for the cross or for heaven, they might have attained, had they laid hold on all just seasons of exercising their thoughts about spiritual things which they have enjoyed, who now are at a loss in all, and surprised with every fear or difficulty that doth befall them.

This is the first thing that belongs unto our being spiritually minded: for although it doth not absolutely or essentially consist therein, yet it is inseparable from it, and the most undeceiving indication of it; and thus of abounding and abiding in thoughts about spiritual things, such as arise and spring naturally from a living principle, a spiritual frame and disposition of heart within.

## CHAPTER V.

**The objects of spiritual thoughts, or what they are conversant about, evidencing them in whom they are to be spiritually minded — Rules directing unto steadiness in the contemplation of heavenly things — Motives to fix our thoughts with steadiness in them.**

BEFORE I proceed unto the next general head, and which is the principal thing, the foundation of the grace and duty inquired after, some things must be spoken to render what hath been already insisted on yet more particularly useful; and this is, to inquire what are, or what ought to be, the special objects of those thoughts which, under the qualifications laid down, are the evidences of our being spiritually minded. And, it may be, we may be useful unto many herein, by helping them to fix their minds, which are apt to rove into all uncertainty: for this is befallen us, through the disorder and weakness of the faculties of our souls, that sometimes what the mind guides, leads, and directs unto, in things spiritual and heavenly, our wills and affections, through their depravation and corruption, will not comply withal, and so the good designings of the mind are lost; sometimes what the will and affections are inclined unto and ready for, the mind, through its weakness and inconstancy, cannot lead them to the accomplishment of. So to will is present with us, but how to perform that will we know not. So many are barren in this duty because they know not what to fix upon, nor how to exercise their thoughts when they have chosen a subject for their meditations. Hence they spend their time in fruitless desires that they could use their thoughts unto more purpose, rather than make any progress in the duty itself. They tire themselves, not because they are not willing to go, but because they cannot find their way. Wherefore, both these things shall be spoken unto, both what are the proper objects of our spiritual thoughts, and how we may be steady in our contemplation

of them. And I shall unto this purpose first give some general rules, and then some particular instances in way of direction: —

1. Observe the especial calls of providence, and apply your minds unto thoughts of the duties required in them and by them. There is a voice in all signal dispensations of providence:

"The LORD's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it," Micah 6:9.

There is a call, a cry in every rod of God, in every chastising providence, and therein [he] makes a declaration of his name, his holiness, his power, his greatness. This every wise, substantial man will labor to discern, and so comply with the call. God is greatly provoked when it is otherwise:

"LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed," Isaiah 26:11.

If, therefore, we would apply ourselves unto our present duty, we are wisely to consider what is the voice of God in his present providential dispensations in the world. Hearken not unto any who would give another interpretation of them, but that they are plain declarations of his displeasure and indignation against the sins of men. Is not his wrath in them revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of men, especially such as retain the truth in unrighteousness, or false, hypocritical professors of the gospel? Doth he not also signally declare the uncertainty and instability of earthly enjoyments, from life itself to a shoe-latchet? as also how vain and foolish it is to adhere inordinately unto them? The fingers that appeared writing on the wall the doom of Belshazzar did it in characters that none could read, and words that none could understand, but Daniel; but the present call of God in these things is made plain upon tables, that he may run who readeth it. If the heavens gather blackness with clouds,

and it thunder over us, if any that are on their journey will not believe that there is a storm coming, they must bear the severity of it.

Suppose, then, this to be the voice of providence, suppose there be in it these indications of the mind and will of God, what are the duties that we are called unto thereby? They may be referred unto two heads: —

(1.) A diligent search into ourselves, and a holy watch over ourselves, with respect unto those ways and sins which the displeasure of God is declared against. That present providences are indications of God's anger and displeasure, we take for granted. But when this is done, the most are apt to cast the causes of them on others, and to excuse themselves. So long as they see others more wicked and profligate than themselves, openly guilty of such crimes as they abhor the thoughts of, they cast all the wrath on them, and fear nothing but that they shall suffer with them. But, alas! when the storm came on the ship at sea, wherein there was but one person that feared God, upon an inquiry for whose sake it came, the lot fell on him, Jonah 1:7. The cause of the present storm may as well be the secret sins of professors as the open provocations of ungodly men. God will punish severely those which he hath known, Amos 3:2. It is therefore certainly our duty to search diligently, that nothing be found resting in us against which God is declaring his displeasure. Take heed of negligence and security herein. When our Savior foretold his disciples that "one of them should betray him," he who alone was guilty was the last that said, "Master, is it I?" Let no ground of hopes you have of your spiritual condition and acceptance with God, no sense of your sincerity in any of your duties, no visible difference between you and others in the world, impose themselves on your minds to divert them from diligence in this duty. "The LORD's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom will see his name."

(2.) A diligent endeavor to live in a holy resignation of our persons, our lives, our families, all our enjoyments, unto the sovereign will and wisdom of God, so as that we may be in readiness to part with all

things upon his call without repining. This, also, is plainly declared in the voice of present providences. God is making wings for men's riches, he is shaking their habitations, taking away the visible defenses of their lives, proclaiming the instability and uncertainty of all things here below; and if we are not minded to contend with him, we have nothing left to give us rest and peace for a moment but a holy resignation of all unto his sovereign pleasure.

Would you now know what you should fix and exercise your thoughts upon, so as that they may be evidences of your being spiritually minded? I say, be frequently conversant in them about these things. They lie before you, they call upon you, and will find you a just employment. Count them part of your business, allow them some part of your time, cease not until you have the testimony of your consciences that you have in sincerity stated both these duties in your minds; which will never be done without many thoughts about them. Unless it be so with you, God will be greatly displeased at the neglect of his coming and call, now it is so plain and articulate. Fear the woful dooms recorded, Proverbs 1:24-31, Isaiah 65:12, 66:4, to this purpose. And if any calamity, public or private, do overtake you under a neglect of these duties, you will be woefully surprised, and not know which way to turn for relief. This, therefore, is the time and season wherein you may have an especial trial and experiment whether you be spiritually minded or no. It is the wisdom of faith to excite and draw forth grace into exercise, according unto present occasions. If this grace be habitually resident in you, it will put itself forth in many thoughts about these present duties.

But, alas! for the most part, men are apt to walk contrary to God in these things, as the wisdom of the flesh is contrary unto him in all things. A great instance we have with respect unto these duties, especially the latter of them; for, —

[1.] Who almost makes a diligent search into and trial of his heart and ways with respect unto the procuring causes of the displeasure and judgments of God? Generally, when the tokens and evidences of



them do most abound, the world is full of outrageous, provoking sins. These visibly proclaim themselves to be the causes of the "coming of the wrath of God on the children of disobedience." Hence most men are apt to cast the whole reason of present judgments upon them, and to put it wholly from themselves Hence, commonly, there is never less of self-examination than when it is called for in a peculiar manner. But as I will not deny but that the open, daring sins of the world are the procuring cause of the wrath of God against it in temporal judgments, so the wisest course for us is to refer them unto the great judgment of the last day. This the apostle directs us unto, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10. Our duty it is to consider on what account "judgment begins at the house of God," and to examine ourselves with respect thereunto.

[2.] Again, the other part of our present duty, in compliance with the voice of providence, is an humble resignation of ourselves and all our concernments unto the will of God, sitting loose in our affections from all earthly, temporal enjoyments. This we neither do nor can do, let us profess what we will, unless our thoughts are greatly exercised about the reasons for it and motives unto it; for this is the way whereby faith puts forth its efficacy unto the mortification of self and all earthly enjoyments. Wherefore, without this we can make no resignation of ourselves unto the will of God. But, alas! how many at present do openly walk contrary unto God herein! The ways, the countenances, the discourses of men, do give evidence hereunto. Their love unto present things, their contrivances for their increase and continuance, do grow and thrive under the calls of God to the contrary. So it was of old: "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark." Can the generality of professors at this day give testimony unto the exercise of their thoughts upon such things as should dispose them unto this holy resignation? that they meditate on the calls of God, and thence make themselves ready to part with all at his time and pleasure? How can persons pretend to be spiritually minded, the current of whose thoughts lies in direct contrariety unto the mind of God ?

Here lies the ground of their self-deceivings: They are professors of the gospel in a peculiar manner, they judge themselves believers, they hope they shall be saved, and have many evidences for it. But one negative evidence will render a hundred that are positive useless. "All these things have I done," saith the young man. "Yet lackedst thou one thing," saith the Savior. And the want of that one rendered his "all things" of no avail unto him. Many things you have done, many things you do, many grounds of hope abide with you, neither yourselves nor others do doubt of your condition; but are you spiritually minded? If this one thing be wanting, all the rest will not avail you; you have, indeed, neither life nor peace. And what grounds have you to judge that you are so, if the current of your thoughts lies in direct contrariety unto the present calls of God? If, at such a time as this is, your love to the world be such as ever it was, and perhaps increased; if your desires are strong to secure the things of this life unto you and yours; if the daily contrivance of your minds be not how you may attain a constant resignation of yourselves and your all unto the will of God, which will not be clone without much thoughtfulness and meditations on the reasons of it and motives unto it, — I cannot understand how you can judge yourselves to be spiritually minded.

If any, therefore, shall say that they would abound more in spiritual thoughts, only they know not what to fix them upon, I propose this in the first place, as that which will lead them unto the due performance of present duties.

2. The special trials and temptations of men call for the exercise of their thoughts in a peculiar manner with respect unto them. If a man hath a bodily disease, pain, or distemper, it will cause him to think much of it whether he will or no, at least, if he be wise he will so do; nor will he always be complaining of the smart, but he will inquire into the causes, and seek their removal. Yet are there some distempers, as lethargies, which in their own nature take away all sense and thoughts of themselves; and some are of such a slow, secret progress, as hectic fevers, that they are not taken notice of; —

but both these are mortal. And shall men be more negligent about the spiritual distempers of their souls, so as to have multiplied temptations, the cause of all spiritual diseases, and take no thought about them? Is it not to be feared that where it is so, they are such as either in their own nature have deprived them of spiritual sense, or by their deceitfulness are leading on insensibly unto death eternal? Not to have our minds exercised about these things is to be stupidly secure, Proverbs 23:34,35.

There is, I confess, some difficulty in this matter, how to exercise our thoughts aright about our temptations; for the great way of the prevalency of temptations is by stirring up multiplied thoughts about their objects, or what they do lead unto. And this is done or occasioned several ways: —

(1.) From the previous power of lust in the affections. This will fill the mind with thoughts. The heart will coin imaginations in compliance therewith. They are the way and means whereby lust draws away the heart from duty and enticeth unto sin, James 1:14; the means at least whereby men come to have "eyes full of adultery," 2 Peter 2:14, or to live in constant contemplation of the pleasures of sin.

(2.) They arise and are occasioned by renewed representations of the object of sin. And this is twofold: —

[1.] That which is real, as Achan saw the wedge of gold and coveted it, Joshua 7:21; Proverbs 23:31. Against this is that prayer of the psalmist, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;" and the covenant of Job, chapter 31:1.

[2.] Imaginary, when the imagination, being tainted or infected by lust, continually represents the pleasure of sin and the actings of it unto the mind. Herein do men "make provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof," Romans 13:16.

(3.) From the suggestions of Satan, who useth all his wiles and artifices to stir up thoughts about that sin whereunto the temptation

leads. And temptation seldom fails of its end, when it can stir up a multitude of unprofitable thoughts about its object; for when temptations do multiply thoughts about sin, proceeding from some or all of these causes, and the mind hath willed itself to give them entertainment, those in whom they are do want nothing but opportunities and occasions, taking off the power of outward restraints, for the commission of actual sin. When men have so devised mischief, "they practice it" when it is "in the power of their hand," Micah 2:1. It is no way safe to advise such persons to have many thoughts about their temptations; they will all turn to their disadvantage.

I speak unto them only unto whom their temptations are their affliction and their burden. And such persons also must be very careful how they suffer their thoughts to be exercised about the matter of their temptation, lest it be a snare and be too hard for them. Men may begin their thoughts of any object with abhorrency and detestation, and, if it be a case of temptation, end them in complacency and approbation. The deceitfulness of sin lays hold on something or other that lust in the mind stays upon with delectation, and so corrupts the whole frame of spirit which began the duty. There have been instances wherein persons have entered with a resolution to punish sin, and have been ensnared by the occasion unto the commission of the sin they thought to punish. Wherefore, it is seldom that the mind of any one exercised with an actual temptation is able safely to conflict with it, if it entertain abiding thoughts of the matter of it or of the sin whereunto it leads; for sin hath "mille nocendi artes," and is able to transfuse its poison into the affections from every thing it hath once made a bait of, especially if it have already defiled the mind with pleasing contemplations of it. Yea, oftentimes a man, that hath some spiritual strength, and therein engageth unto the performance of duties, if in the midst of them the matter of his temptation is so presented unto him as to take hold of his thoughts, in a moment, as if he had seen (as they say) Medusa's head, is turned into a stone; his spirits are all frozen, his strength is gone, all actings of grace do cease, his armor falls from him, and he

gives up himself a prey to his temptation. It must be a new supply of grace that can give him any deliverance. Wherefore, whilst persons are exercised with any temptation, I do not advise them to be conversant in their thoughts about the matter of it; for sometimes remembrances of former satisfaction of their lusts, sometimes present surprisals, with the suitableness of it unto corruption not yet mortified, sometimes the craft of Satan fixing their imagination on it, will be too hard for them, and carry them unto a fresh compliance with that sin which they would be delivered from.

But this season calls in an especial manner for the exercise of the thoughts of men about the ways and means of deliverance from the snare wherein they are taken, or the danger they find themselves exposed unto. Think of the guilt of sin, that you may be humbled. Think of the power of sin, that you may seek strength against it. Think not of the matter of sin, the things that are in the world suited unto "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," lest you be more and more entangled. But the present direction is, Think much of the ways of relief from the power of your own temptation leading unto sin. But this, men, unless they are spiritually minded, are very loath to come unto. I speak not of them that love their shackles, that glory in their yoke, that like their temptations well enough, as those which give the most satisfactory entertainment unto their minds. Such men know not well what to do unless they may in their minds converse with the objects of their lusts, and do multiply thoughts about them continually. The apostle calls it "making provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." Their principal trouble is, that they cannot comply with them to the utmost, by reason of some outward restraints. These dwell near unto those fools who make a mock of sin, and will ere long take up their habitation among them.

But I speak, as I said before, of them only whose temptations are their afflictions, and who groan for deliverance from them. Acquaint such persons with the great, indeed only, way of relief in this distress, as it is expressed, Hebrews 2:17,18,

"He is a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining unto God; for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted;"

and chapter 4:15,16, "We have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;" — let them know that the only way for their deliverance is by acting faith in thoughts on Christ, his power to succor them that are tempted, with the ways whereby he administereth a sufficiency of grace unto that end, retreating for relief unto him on the urgency of temptations; — they can hardly be brought unto a compliance therewithal. They are ready to say, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?' Is it not better to betake ourselves and to trust unto our own promises, resolutions, and endeavors, with such other ways of escape as are in our own power?" I shall speak nothing against any of them in their proper place, so far as they are warranted by Scripture rule. But this I say, none shall ever be delivered from perplexing temptations, unto the glory of God and their own spiritual advantage, but by the acting and exercising of faith on Christ Jesus and the sufficiency of his grace for our deliverance: But when men are not spiritually minded, they cannot fix their thoughts on spiritual things. Therefore do men daily pine away under their temptations; they get ground upon them, until their breach grows great like the sea, and there be no healing of it.

I mention this only to show the weight and necessity of the duty proposed; for when men under the power of conviction are pressed with temptation, they will do any thing rather than betake themselves unto the only efficacious relief. Some will groan and cry out under their vexation from the torture they are put into in the conflict between their temptations and convictions; some will betake themselves unto the pretended relief that any false religion tenders unto them; but to apply themselves in thoughts of faith unto Jesus

Christ, whose grace alone is sufficient for all, that they will not be persuaded unto.

We are all of us liable unto temptations. Those who are not sensible of it are under the power of what the temptation leads unto. And they are of two sorts: — First, such as are extraordinary, when the hand of God is in them in a peculiar manner for our rebuke. It is true, God tempts none, as temptation formally leads unto sin; but he orders temptations so far forth as they are afflictive and chastisements. Thus it is when he suffers an especial corruption within to fall in conjunction with an especial temptation without, and to obtain a prevalency thereby. Of these there is no doubt but any man not judicially hardened may know both his disease and the remedy. But that ordinary course of temptations which we are exercised withal needs a diligent attendance for their discovery, as well as for our deliverance from them. And it is to be feared that many are kept in spiritual weakness, useless, and in darkness, all their days, through the power of their temptations, yet never know what they are or wherein they consist. These gray hairs are sprinkled on them, yet they know it not. Some approve themselves in those very things and ways which are their temptations. Yet in the exercise of due watchfulness, diligence, and prudence, men may know both the plague of their own hearts in their prevailing corruptions, and the ways whereby it is excited through temptation, with the occasions it makes use of and the advantages it takes. For instance, one may have an eminency in gifts, and usefulness or success in his labors, which give him great acceptance with others. Such an one shall hardly avoid a double temptation, — first, of spiritual pride and self-exaltation. Hence the apostle will not admit "a novice," one unexperienced in the ways of grace and deceits of sin, into the office of the ministry, lest he should be "lifted up with pride," and "fall into the condemnation of the devil," 1 Timothy 3:6; he himself was not without danger hereof, 2 Corinthians 12:1-7. The best of men can hardly fortify their minds against the secret workings of pride upon successes and applause, unless they keep themselves constantly balanced with thoughts of their own vileness in the sight of God.

And, secondly, remissness unto exact, universal mortification, which they countenance themselves against by their acceptance and success above others in the ministry. It were much to be desired that all who are ministers would be careful in these things; for although some of us may not much please others, yet we may so far please ourselves as to expose our souls unto these snares. And the effects of negligence herein do openly appear unto the disadvantage of the gospel. Others are much conversant in the world and the affairs of it. Negligence as unto a spiritual watch, vanity in converse, love of earthly things, with conformity unto the world, will on all occasions impose themselves upon them. If they understand not their temptations herein, spiritual mindedness will be impaired in them continually. Those that are rich have their especial temptations, which for the most part are many, plausible, and effectual; and those that are poor have theirs also. The snares of some lie in their constitutions; of others, in their society; of most, in the various circumstances of life. Those who are upon their watch in any due measure, who exercise any wisdom or observation concerning themselves, may know wherein their temptations do lie, what are the advantages whereby they perplex their minds and endanger their souls.

In these cases, generally, men are taught what are the ways and means of their deliverance and preservation. Wherefore there are three things required unto this duty, and spiritual wisdom unto them all: —

(1.) To know what are the especial temptations from whence you suffer, and whereby the life of God is obstructed in you. If this be neglected, if it be disregarded, no man can maintain either life or peace, or is spiritually minded.

(2.) To know your remedy, your relief, wherein alone it doth consist. Many duties are required of us unto this end, and are useful thereunto; but know assuredly that no one of them, not all of them in conjunction, will bring in relief, unto the glory of God and your own



peace, without application by faith unto Him who "is able to succor them that are tempted." Wherefore,

(3.) Herein lies your great duty with respect unto your temptations, namely, in a constant exercise of your thoughts on the love, care, compassion, and tenderness of Christ, with his ability to help, succor, and save them that do believe, so as to strengthen your faith and trust in him; which will assuredly prove successful and victorious.

The same duty is incumbent on us with respect unto any urgent prevalent general temptation. There are seasons wherein an hour of temptation comes on the earth to try them that dwell therein. What if a man should judge that now it is such an hour, and that the power of darkness is put forth therein? What if he should be persuaded that a general security, coldness, deadness, and decay in grace, especially as to the vigorous actings of zeal, love, and delight in God, with an indifferency unto holy duties, are the effects of this hour of temptation? I do not say determinately that so it is; let others judge as they see cause: but if any one do so judge, undoubtedly it is his duty to be exercised in his thoughts how he may escape in this day of trial, and be counted worthy to stand before the Son of man. He will find it his concernment to be conversant in his mind with the reasons and motives unto watchfulness, and how he may obtain such supplies of grace as may effectually preserve him from such decays.

3. All things in religion, both in faith and practice, are to be the objects of such thoughts. As they are proposed or occur in our minds in great variety, on all sorts of occasions, so we ought to give them entertainment in our meditations. To hear things, to have them proposed unto us, it may be in the way of a divine ordinance, and to let them slip out, or flow from us as water that is poured into a leaking vessel, is the ruin of many souls. I shall therefore choose out some instances, as was before proposed, of those things which I judge that they who would be spiritually minded ought to abide and abound in thoughts concerning.

It is our duty greatly to mind the things that are above, eternal things, both as unto their reality, their present state, and our future enjoyment of them. Herein consists the life of this grace and duty. To be heavenly minded, — that is, to mind the things of heaven, — and to be spiritually minded, is all one; or it is the effect of being spiritually minded as unto its original and essence, or the first proper actings of it. It is the cause of it as unto its growth and degrees, and it is the evidence of it in experience. Nor do I understand how it is possible for a man to place his chief interest in things above, and not have many thoughts of them. It is the great advice of the apostle, on a supposition of our interest in Christ and conformity unto him, Colossians 3:1,2,

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on"

(or your thoughts), mind much, "things above." It becomes those who, through the virtue of the resurrection of Christ, are raised unto newness of life to have their thoughts exercised on the state of things above, with respect unto the presence of Christ among them. And the singular use of our prospect into these things, or our meditations on them, he instructs us in: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18,

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Not to faint under the daily decays of our outward man, and the approaches of death thereby, to bear afflictions as things light and momentary, to thrive under all in the inward man, are unspeakable mercies and privileges. Can you attain a better frame? Is there any

thing that you would more desire, if you are believers? Is it not better to have such a mind in us than to enjoy all the peace and security that the world can afford? One principal means whereby we are made partakers of these things is a due meditation on things unseen and eternal. These are the things that are within the veil, whereon we ought to cast the anchor of our hope in all the storms we meet withal, Hebrews 6:19,20, whereof we shall speak more afterward.

Without doubt, the generality of Christians are greatly defective in this duty, partly for want of light into them, partly for want of delight in them; they think little of an eternal country. Wherever men are, they do not use to neglect thoughts of that country wherein their inheritance lies. If they are absent from it for a season, yet will they labor to acquaint themselves with the principal concernments of it. But this heavenly country, wherein lies our eternal inheritance, is not regarded. Men do not exercise themselves as they ought unto thoughts of things eternal and invisible. It were impossible, if they did so, that their minds should be so earthly, and their affections cleave so as they do unto present things. He that looks steadily on the sun, although he cannot bear the lustre of its beams fully, yet his sight is so affected with it that when he calls off his eyes from it, he can see nothing as it were of the things about him; they are all dark unto him. And he who looks steadily in his contemplations on things above, eternal things, though he cannot comprehend their glory, yet a veil will be cast by it on all the desirable beauties of earthly things, and take off his affections from them.

Men live and act under the power of a conviction that there is a state of immortality and glory to come. With a persuasion hereof they much relieve themselves in their sorrows, sufferings, and temptations; yet with many it is only a reserve when they can be here no more. But as unto daily contemplation of the nature and causes of it, or as unto any entrance into it by faith and hope, the most are strangers thereunto. If we are spiritually minded, nothing will be more natural unto us than to have many thoughts of eternal things, as those wherein all our own principal concerns do lie, as well as

those which are excellent and glorious in themselves. The direction thereon is, that we would make heavenly things, the things of the future state of blessedness and glory, a principal object of our thoughts, that we would think much about them, that we would meditate much upon them. Many are discouraged herein by their ignorance and darkness, by their want of due conceptions and steady apprehensions of invisible things. Hence one of these two things doth befall them when they would meditate on things above: —

1. The glory of them, the glory of God in them, being essentially infinite and incomprehensible, doth immediately overwhelm them, and, as it were, in a moment put them unto an utter loss, so that they cannot frame one thought in their minds about them. Or,

2. They want skill and ability to conceive aright of invisible things, and to dispose of them in such order in their minds as that they may sedately exercise their thoughts about them. Both these shall be afterward spoken unto. At present I shall only say, that, —

Whosoever shall sincerely engage in this duty according unto what he hath, and shall abide constant therein, he will make such a refreshing progress in his apprehension of heavenly things as he will be greatly satisfied withal. We are kept in darkness, ignorance, and unsteadiness of meditations about them, not from the nature of the things themselves, but from our own sloth, negligence, and readiness to be turned aside by apprehensions of difficulties, of the lion in the way. Wherefore, I shall consider two things:

- (1.) What are the principal motives unto this duty of fixing our thoughts on the things that are above, and the advantages which we receive thereby.

- (2.) Give some directions how, and on what in particular, we may exercise our thoughts on those things above: —

- (1.) [1.] Faith will be increased and strengthened by it. Invisible things are the proper objects of faith. It is "the evidence of things not

seen," Hebrews 11:1. Wherefore, in our thoughts of them faith is in its proper exercise; which is the principal means of its growth and increase. And hereon two things will ensue: —

1st. The soul will come unto a more satisfactory, abiding sense of the reality of them. Things of imagination, which maintain a value of themselves by darkness, will not bear a diligent search into them. They lose of their reputation on every serious inquiry. If rational men would but give themselves the liberty of free indagation by their own thoughts, it would quickly cashier the fool's paradise of Mohammed, the purgatory of the Papists, and all such creatures of imagination and superstition. But where things are real and substantial, the more they are inquired into, the more they evidence their being and subsistence. It is not, therefore, every profession of a faith of a future state of blessedness that will realize it in our minds; and therefore, for the most part, it is rather a notion that men have of heavenly things, which they do not contradict, than any solid satisfaction in or spiritual sense of their reality: for these are things that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor will enter into the heart of man to conceive," — whose existence, nature, and real state, are not easily comprehended. But through the continual exercise of holy thoughts about them, the soul obtains an entrance into the midst of them, finding in them both durable substance and riches. There is no way, therefore, to strengthen faith unto any degree but by a daily contemplation on the things themselves. They who do not think of them frequently shall never believe them sincerely. They admit not of any collateral evidence, where they do not evidence themselves unto our souls. Faith, as we said, thus exercised, will give them a subsistence; not in themselves, which they have antecedent thereunto, but in us, in our hearts, in the minds of them that do believe. Imagination creates its own object; faith finds it prepared beforehand. It will not leave a bare notion of them in the understanding, but give them a spiritual subsistence in the heart, as Christ himself dwells in our hearts by faith. And there are two things that will discover this subsistence of them in us: —

(1st.) When we find them in a continual readiness to rise up in our minds on all occasions wherein the thoughts and remembrance of them are needful and useful unto us. There are many seasons (some whereof shall be immediately spoken unto) and many duties, wherein and whereunto the faith and thoughts of things invisible and eternal are needful unto us, so as that we cannot fill up those seasons nor perform those duties in a due manner without them. If on all such occasions they do, from the inward frame of our minds, present themselves unto us, or, through our acquaintance and familiarity with them, we recur in our thoughts unto them, they seem to have a real subsistence given unto them in our souls. But if on such occasions, wherein alone they will yield us help and relief, we accustom ourselves to other thoughts, if those concerning them are, as it were, out of the way, and arise not in our minds of their own accord, we are yet strangers unto this effect of faith.

(2dly.) They are realized unto us, they have a subsistence in us, when the soul continually longeth to be in them. When they have given such a relish unto our hearts, as the first-fruits of glory, that we cannot but desire on all opportune occasions to be in the full enjoyment of them, faith seems to have had its effectual work herein upon us. For want of these things do many among us walk in disconsolation all their days.

(3dly.) It will gradually give the heart an acquaintance with the especial nature and use of these things. General thoughts and notions of heaven and glory do but fluctuate up and down in the mind, and very little influence it unto other duties; but assiduous contemplation will give the mind such distinct apprehensions of heavenly things as shall duly affect it with the glory of them.

The more we discern of the glory and excellency of them in their own nature; of their suitableness unto ours, as our only proper rest and blessedness, as the perfection and complement of what is already begun in us by grace; of the restless tendency of all gracious dispositions and inclinations of our hearts towards their enjoyment,

— the more will faith be established in its cleaving unto them. So in the contemplation of these things consists the principal food of faith, whereby it is nourished and strengthened. And we are not to expect much work where there is not provision of proper food for them that labor. No wonder if we find faith faint and weak in the work it hath to do, which oftentimes is great and weighty, if we neglect to guide it daily unto that which should administer strength unto it.

[2.] It will give life and exercise unto the grace of hope. Hope is a glorious grace, whereunto blessed effects are ascribed in the Scripture, and an effectual operation unto the supportment and consolation of believers. By it are we purified, sanctified, saved. And, to sum up the whole of its excellency and efficacy, it is a principal way of the working of Christ as inhabiting in us: Colossians 1:27, "Christ in you the hope of glory." Where Christ evidenceth his presence with us, he gives us an infallible hope of glory; he gives us an assured pledge of it, and worketh our souls into an expectation of it. Hope in general is but an uncertain expectation of a future good which we desire; but as it is a gospel grace, all uncertainty is removed from it, which would hinder us of the advantage intended in it. It is an earnest expectation, proceeding from faith, trust, and confidence, accompanied with longing desires of enjoyment. From a mistake of its nature it is that few Christians labor after it, exercise themselves unto it, or have the benefit of it; for, to live by hope they suppose infers a state not only beneath the life of faith and all assurance in believing, but also exclusive of them. They think to hope to be saved is a condition of men who have no grounds of faith or assurance; but this is to turn a blessed fruit of the Spirit into a common affection of nature. Gospel hope is a fruit of faith, trust, and confidence; yea, the height of the actings of all grace issues in a well-grounded hope, nor can it rise any higher, Romans 5:2-5.

Now, the reason why men have no more use of, no more benefit by, this excellent grace, is because they do not abide in thoughts and contemplation of the things hoped for. The especial object of hope is eternal glory, Colossians 1:27; Romans 5:2. The peculiar use of it is to

support, comfort, and refresh the soul, in all trials, under all weariness and despondencies, with a firm expectation of a speedy entrance into that glory, with an earnest desire after it. Wherefore, unless we acquaint ourselves, by continual meditation, with the reality and nature of this glory, it is impossible it should be the object of a vigorous, active hope, such as whereby the apostle says "we are saved." Without this we can neither have that evidence of eternal things, nor that valuation of them, nor that preparedness in our minds for them, as should keep us in the exercise of gracious hope about them.

Suppose sundry persons engaged in a voyage unto a most remote country, wherein all of them have an apprehension that there is a place of rest and an inheritance provided for them. Under this apprehension they all put themselves upon their voyage, to possess what is so prepared. Howbeit some of them have only a general notion of these things; they know nothing distinctly concerning them, and are so busied about other affairs that they have no leisure to inquire into them, or do suppose that they cannot come unto any satisfactory knowledge of them in particular, and so are content to go on with general hopes and expectations. Others there are who by all possible means acquaint themselves particularly with the nature of the climate whither they are going, with the excellency of the inheritance and provision that is made for them. Their voyage proves long and wearisome, their difficulties many, and their dangers great, and they have nothing to relieve and encourage themselves with but the hope and expectation of the country whither they are going. Those of the first sort will be very apt to despond and faint, their general hopes will not be able to relieve them; but those who have a distinct notion and apprehension of the state of things whither they are going, and of their incomparable excellency, have always in a readiness wherewith to cheer their minds and support themselves.

In that journey or pilgrimage wherein we are engaged towards a heavenly country, we are sure to meet with all kinds of dangers, difficulties, and perils. It is not a general notion of blessedness that



will excite and work in us a spiritual, refreshing hope. But when we think and meditate on future glory as we ought, that grace which is neglected for the most part as unto its benefit, and dead as unto its exercise, will of all others be most vigorous and active, putting itself forth on all occasions. This, therefore, is an inestimable benefit of the duty exhorted unto, and which they find the advantage of who are really spiritually minded.

[3.] This alone will make us ready for the cross, for all sorts of sufferings that we may be exposed unto.

There is nothing more necessary unto believers at this season than to have their minds furnished with provision of such things as may prepare them for the cross and sufferings. Various intimations of the mind of God, circumstances of providence, the present state of things in the world, with the instant peril of the latter days, do all call them hereunto. If it be otherwise with them, they will at one time or other be woefully surprised, and think strange of their trials, as if some strange thing did befall them. Nothing is more useful unto this end than constant thoughts and contemplations of eternal things and future glory. From hence alone can the soul have in a readiness what to lay in the balance against all sorts of sufferings. When a storm begins to arise at sea, the mariners bestir themselves in the management of the tackling of the ship, and other applications of their art, for their safety; but if the storm increase and come to extremity, they are forced to forego all other means and betake themselves unto a sheet-anchor, to hold their ship steady against its violence. So when a storm of persecution and troubles begins to arise, men have various ways and considerations for their relief; but if it once come to extremity, — if sword, nakedness, famine, and death, are inevitably coming upon them, — they have nothing to betake themselves unto that will yield them solid relief but the consideration and faith of things invisible and eternal.

So the apostle declares this state of things, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (the words before insisted on),

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

He lays all sorts of afflictions in one scale, and, on the consideration of them, declares them to be "light" and "but for a moment." Then he lays glory in the other scale, and finds it to be ponderous, weighty, and "eternal," — "an exceeding weight of glory." In the one is sorrow for a little while, in the other eternal joy; in the one pain for a few moments, in the other everlasting rest; in the one is the loss of some few temporary things, in the other the full fruition of God in Christ, who is all in all. Hence the same apostle casts up the account of these things, and gives us his judgment concerning them, Romans 8:18,

"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

There is no comparison between them, as if one had as much evil and misery in them as the other hath of good and blessedness; as though his state were any way to be complained of who must undergo the one whilst he hath an interest in the other; or as though to escape the one he hazard the enjoyment of the other.

It is inseparable from our nature to have a fear of and aversion from great, distressing sufferings, that are above the power of nature to bear. Even our Lord Jesus himself, having taken on him all the sinless properties of our nature, had a fear and aversion, though holy and gracious, with respect unto his own. Those who, through a stout-heartedness, do contemn them before their approach, boasting in themselves of their abilities to undergo them, censuring such as will not unadvisedly engage in them, are such as seldom glorify God when they are really [called] to conflict with them. Peter alone

trusted unto himself that he would not forsake his Master, and seemed to take the warning ill that they should all do so, and he alone denied him. All church stories are filled with instances of such as, having borne themselves high before the approach of trials, have shamefully miscarried when their trials have come. Wherefore, it is moreover allowed unto us to use all lawful means for the avoiding of them. Both rules and examples of the Scripture give sufficient warranty for it. But there are times and seasons wherein, without any tergiversation, they are to be undergone unto the glory of God and in the discharge of our duty, confessing Christ before men, as we would be owned by him before his Father in heaven. All things do now call us to prepare for such a season, to be martyrs in resolution, though we should never really lose our lives by violence. Nothing will give us this preparation but to have our minds exercised in the contemplation of heavenly things, of things that are invisible and eternal. He who is thus spiritually minded, who hath his thoughts and affections set on things above, will have always in a readiness what to oppose unto any circumstance of his sufferings.

Those views which such an one hath had by faith of the uncreated glories above, of the things in heavenly places where Christ sits at the right hand of God, of the glory within the veil, whereby they have been realized and made present unto his soul, will now visit him every moment, abide with him continually, and put forth their efficacy unto his supportment and refreshment. Alas! what will become of many of us, who are grovelling continually on the earth, whose bellies cleave unto the dust, who are strangers unto the thoughts of heavenly things, when distressing troubles shall befall us? Why shall we think that refreshing thoughts of things above will then visit our souls, when we resisted their admittance in days of peace? "Do ye come to me in your distress," saith Jephthah, "when in the time of your peace ye drove me from you?" When we would thus think of heavenly things to our refreshment, we shall hardly get them to make an abode with us. I know God can come in by the mighty power of his Spirit and grace to support and comfort the souls of them who are called and even surprised into the greatest of

sufferings; yet do I know also that it is our duty not to tempt him in the neglect of the ways and means which he hath appointed for the communication of his grace unto us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, as "the author and finisher of our faith, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame," Hebrews 12:2. His mediatory glory in the salvation of the church was the matter of the joy set before him. This he took the view and prospect of in all his sufferings, unto his refreshment and supportment. And his example, as "the author and finisher of our faith," is more efficaciously instructive than any other rule or precept. Eternal glory is set before us also; it is the design of God's wisdom and grace that by the contemplation of it we should relieve ourselves in all our suffering, yea, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. How many of those blessed souls now in the enjoyment of God and glory, who passed through fiery trials and great tribulations, were enabled to sing and rejoice in the flames by prepossession of this glory in their minds through believing! yea, some of them have been so filled with them as to take off all sense of pain under the most exquisite tortures. When Stephen was to be stoned, to encourage him in his suffering and comfort him in it, "the heavens were opened, and he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Who can conceive what contempt of all the rage and madness of the Jews, what a neglect of all the pains of death, this view raised his holy soul unto? To obtain, therefore, such views frequently by faith, as they do who are truly spiritually minded, is the most effectual way to encourage us unto all our sufferings. The apostle gives us the force of this encouragement in a comparison with earthly things: 1 Corinthians 9:25,

"Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."

If men, when a corruptible crown of vain honor and applause is proposed unto them, will do and endure all that is needful for the

attainment of it, and relieve themselves in their hardships with thoughts and imaginations of attaining it, grounded on uncertain hopes, shall not we, who have a crown immortal and invisible proposed unto us, and that with the highest assurance of the enjoyment of it, cheerfully undergo, endure, and suffer, what we are to go through in the way unto it.

[4.] This is the most effectual means to wean the heart and affections from things here below, to keep the mind unto an undervaluation, yea, a contempt of them, as occasion shall require; for there is a season wherein there is such a contempt required in us of all relations and enjoyments as our Savior calleth the "hating" of them, — that is, not absolutely, but comparatively, in comparison of him and the gospel, with the duties which belong unto our profession: Luke 14:26,

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

Some, I fear, if they did but consider it, would be apt to say, "This is a hard saying, who can bear it?" and others would cry out, with the disciples in another case, "Lord, who then can be saved?" but it is the word whereby we must be judged, nor can we be the disciples of Christ on any other terms. But here, in an especial manner, lies the wound and weakness of faith and profession in these our days: "The bellies of men cleave unto the dust," or their affections unto earthly things.

I speak not of those who, by rapine, deceit, and oppression, strive to enrich themselves; nor of those who design nothing more than the attainment of greatness and promotion in the world, though not by ways of open wickedness; least of all of them who make religion, and perhaps their ministry therein, a means for the attaining of secular ends and preferments. No wise man can suppose such persons, any of them, to be spiritually minded, and it is most easy to disprove all

their pretences. But I intend only those at present whose ways and means of attaining riches are lawful, honest, and unblamable; who use them with some moderation, and do profess that their portion lies in better things, so as it is hard to fasten a conviction on them in the matter of their conversation. Whatever may seem to reflect upon them, they esteem it to be that whose omission would make them foolish in their affairs or negligent in their duty. But even among these also there is oftentimes that inordinate love unto present things, that esteem and valuation of them, that concernment in them, as are not consistent with their being spiritually minded. With some their relations, with some their enjoyments, with most both in conjunction, are an idol which they set up in their hearts and secretly bow down unto. About these are their hopes and fears exercised, on them is their love, in them is their delight. They are wholly taken up with their own concerns, count all lost that is not spent on them, and all time misspent that is not engaged about them. Yet the things which they do they judge to be good in themselves; their hearts do not condemn them as to the matter of them. The valuation they have of their relations and enjoyments they suppose to be lawful, within the bounds which they have assigned unto it. Their care about them is, in their own minds, but their duty. It is no easy matter, it requires much spiritual wisdom, to fix right boundaries unto our affections and their actings about earthly things. But let men plead and pretend what they please, I shall offer one rule in this case, which will not fail; and this is, that when men are so confident in the good state and measure of their affections and their actings towards earthly things as that they will oppose their engagements into them unto known duties of religion, piety, and charity, they are gone into a sinful excess. Is there a state of the poor that requires their liberality and bounty, — you must excuse them, they have families to provide for; when what is expected from them signifies nothing at all as unto a due provision for their families, nor is what would lessen their inheritances or portions one penny in the issue. Are they called to an attendance on seasons of religious duties? — they are so full of business that it is impossible for them to have leisure for any such occasions. So by all ways declaring that they are under the power of a

prevalent, predominant affection unto earthly things. This fills all places with lifeless, sapless, useless professors, who approve themselves in their condition, whilst it is visibly unspiritual and withering.

The heart will have something whereon, in a way of pre-eminence, it will fix itself and its affections. This, in all its perpetual motions, it seeks for rest and satisfaction in. And every man hath an edge; the edge of his affections is set one way or other, though it be more keen in some than others. And whereas all sorts of things that the heart can fix upon or turn the edge of its affections unto are distributed by the apostle into "things above" and "things beneath," things heavenly and things earthly, if we have not such a view and prospect of heavenly things as to cause our hearts to cleave unto them and delight in them, let us pretend what we will, it is impossible but that we shall be under the power of a predominant affection unto the things of this world.

Herein lies the great danger of multitudes at this present season; for, let men profess what they will, under the power of this frame their eternal state is in hazard every moment. And persons are engaged in it in great variety of degrees; and we may cast them under two heads:

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1st. Some do not at all understand that things are amiss with them, or that they are much to be blamed. They plead, as was before observed, that they are all lawful things which their hearts do cleave unto, and which it is their duty to take care of and regard. "May they not delight in their own relations, especially at such a time, when others break and cancel all duties and bonds of relation in the service of and provision they make for their lusts? May they not be careful, in good and honest ways of diligence, about the things of the world, when the most either lavish their time away in the pursuit of bestial lusts, or heap them up by deceit and oppression? May they not contrive for the promotion of their children in the world, to add the other hundred or thousand pounds unto their advancement, that

they may be in as good condition as others, seeing he is worse than an infidel who provides not for his own family," By such reasonings and secret thoughts do many justify themselves in their earthly mindedness. And so fixed they are in the approbation of themselves, that if you urge them to their duty, you shall lose their acquaintance, if they do not become your enemies for telling them the truth. Yea, they will avoid one duty that lieth not against their earthly interest, because it leads unto another; — they will not engage in religious assemblies, or be constant unto their duty in them, for fear duties of charity should be required of them or expected from them. On what grounds such persons can satisfy themselves that they are spiritually minded, I know not. I shall leave only one rule with persons that are thus minded: — Where our love unto the world hath prevailed, by its reasonings, pleas, and pretenses, to take away our fear and jealousy over our own hearts lest we should inordinately love it, there it is assuredly predominant in us.

2dly. Others are sensible of the evil of their hearts, at least are jealous and afraid lest it should be found that their hearts do cleave inordinately unto these things. Hence they endeavor to contend against this evil, sometimes by forcing themselves unto such acts of piety or charity as are contrary unto that frame, and sometimes by laboring a change of the frame itself; especially they will do so when God is pleased to awaken them by trials and afflictions, such as write vanity and emptiness on all earthly enjoyments. But, for the most part, they strive not lawfully, and so obtain not what they seem to aim at.

This disease with many is mortal, and will not be thoroughly cured in any but by the due exercise of this part of spiritual mindedness. There are other duties required also unto the same end, — namely, of the mortification of our desires and affections unto earthly things, — whereof I have treated elsewhere; but without this, or a fixed contemplation on the desirableness, beauty, and glory, of heavenly things, it will not be attained. Farther to evince the truth hereof, we may observe these two things: —



(1st.) If by any means a man do seem to have taken off his heart from the love of present things, and be not at the same time taken up with the love of things that are heavenly, his seeming mortification is of no advantage unto him. So persons frequently, through discontent, disappointments, or dissatisfaction with relations, or mere natural weariness, have left the world, the affairs and cares of it, as unto their wonted conversations in it, and have betaken themselves to monasteries, convents, or other retirements suiting their principles, without any advantage to their souls.

(2dly.) God is no such severe lord and master as to require us to take off our affections from and mortify them unto those things which the law of our nature makes dear unto us, as wives, children, houses, lands, and possessions, and not propose unto us somewhat that is incomparably more excellent to fix them upon. So he invites the elect of the Gentiles unto Christ: Psalm 45:10,

"Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear;  
forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;"

that is, "Come into the faith of Abraham, who forsook his country and his father's house to follow God whithersoever he pleased." But he proposeth this for their encouragement, verse 11, "So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him." The love of the great King is an abundant satisfactory recompense for parting with all things in this world. So when Abraham's servant was sent to take Rebekah for a wife unto Isaac, he required that she should immediately leave father and mother, brothers, and all enjoyments, and go along with him; but withal, that she might know herself to be no loser thereby, he not only assured her of the greatness of his master, but also at present he gave her "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment," Genesis 24:53. And when our Savior requires that we should part with all for his sake and the gospel, he promiseth a hundredfold in lieu of them, even in this life, — namely, in an interest in things spiritual and heavenly. Wherefore, without an assiduous meditation on heavenly

things, as a better, more noble, and suitable object for our affections to be fixed on, we can never be freed in a due manner from an inordinate love of the things here below.

It is sad to see some professors, who will keep up spiritual duties in churches and in their families, who will speak and discourse of spiritual things, and keep themselves from the open excesses of the world, yet, when they come to be tried by such duties as intrench on their love and adherence unto earthly things, quickly manifest how remote they are from being spiritually minded in a due manner. Were they to be tried as our Savior tried the young man who made such a profession of his conscientious and religious conversation, "Go sell what thou hast, give to the poor, and follow me," something might be pleaded in excuse for their tergiversation; but, alas! they will decline their duty when they are not touched unto the hundredth part of their enjoyments.

I bless God I speak not thus of many of my own knowledge, and may say with the apostle unto the most unto whom I usually speak in this manner,

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak," Hebrews 6:9.

Yea, the same testimony may be given of many in this city which the same apostle gives unto the churches of Macedonia: 2 Corinthians 8:1-3, Understand

"the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves."

There hath been nothing done amongst us that may or can be boasted of; yet, considering all circumstances, it may be there have not been more instances of true, evangelical charity in any age or

place for these many years. For them who have been but useful and helpful herein, the Lord remember them for good, and spare them according to the multitude of his mercies! It is true, they have not, many of them, founded colleges, built hospitals, or raised works of state and magnificence; for very many of them are such as whose deep poverty comparatively hath abounded unto the riches of their liberality. The backs and bellies of multitudes of poor and needy servants of Christ have been warmed and refreshed by them, blessing God for them. "Thanks be unto God," saith the apostle in this case, "for his unspeakable gift," 2 Corinthians 9:15. Blessed be God, who hath not left the gospel without this glory, nor the profession of it without this evidence of its power and efficacy! Yea, God hath exalted the glory of persecutions and afflictions; for many, since they have lost much of their enjoyments by them, and have all endangered continually, have abounded in duties of charity beyond what they did in the days of their fullness and prosperity. So "out of the eater there hath come forth meat." And if the world did but know what fruits, in a way of charity and bounty, unto the praise of God and glory of the gospel, have been occasioned by their making many poor, it would abate of their satisfaction in their successes.

But with many it is not so. Their minds are so full of earthly things, they do so cleave unto them in their affections, that no sense of duty, no example of others, no concernment of the glory of God or the gospel, can make any impressions on them. If there be yet in them so much life and light of grace as to design a deliverance from this woful condition, the means insisted on must be made use of.

Especially this advice is needful unto those who are rich, who have large possessions, or abound in the goods of this world. The poor, the afflicted, the sorrowful, are prompted from their outward circumstances, as well as excited by inward grace, frequently to remember and to think of the things above, wherein lies their only reserve and relief against the trouble and urgency of their present condition; but the enjoyment of these things in abundance is

accompanied with a twofold evil, lying directly contrary unto this duty: —

A desire of increase and adding thereunto. Earthly enjoyments enlarge men's earthly desires, and the love of them grows with their income. A moderate stock of waters, sufficient for our use, may be kept within ordinary banks; but if a flood be turned into them, they know no bounds, but overflow all about them. The increase of wealth and riches enlargeth the desires of men after them beyond all bounds of wisdom, sobriety, or safety. He that labors hard for his daily bread hath seldom such earnest, vehement desires of an addition unto what he hath, as many have who already have more than they know how to use or almost what to do withal. This they must have more, and the last advantage serves for nothing but to stir them up to look out for another. And yet such men would, on other accounts, be esteemed good Christians, and spiritually minded, as all good Christians are.

They draw the heart to value and esteem them, as those which bring in their satisfaction, and make them to differ from those whom they see to be poor and miserable. Now, these things are contrary unto, and, where they are habitually prevalent, inconsistent utterly with, being spiritually minded. Nor is it possible that any who in the least degree are under their power can ever attain deliverance, unless their thoughts are fixed upon, and their minds thereby possessed with, due apprehensions of invisible things and eternal glory.

These are some few of those many advantages which we may obtain by fixing our thoughts and meditations, and thereby our affections, on the things that are above. And there are some things which make me willing to give some few directions for the practice of this duty; for whatever else we are and do, we neither are nor can be truly spiritually minded, whereon life and peace depend, unless we do really exercise our thoughts unto meditations of things above. Without it all our religion is but vain. And as I fear men are generally wanting and defective herein in point of practice, so I do also that many, through the darkness of their minds, the weakness of their

intellectuals, and ignorance of the nature of all things unseen, do seldom set themselves unto the contemplation of them. I shall therefore give some few directions for the practice of this duty.

## CHAPTER VI.

**Directions unto the exercise of our thoughts on things above, things future, invisible, and eternal; on God himself; with the difficulties of it, and oppositions unto it, and the way of their removal — Right notions of future glory stated.**

(2.) WE have treated in general before of the proper objects of our spiritual thoughts as unto our present duty. That which we were last engaged in is an especial instance in heavenly things, — things future and invisible, — with the fountain and spring of them all in Christ and God himself. And because men generally are unskilled herein, and great difficulties arise in the way of the discharge of this part of the duty in hand, I shall give some especial directions concerning it:

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[1.] Possess your minds with right notions and apprehensions of things above, and of the state of future glory. We are in this duty to "look at the things which are not seen," 2 Corinthians 4:18. It is faith only whereby we have a prospect of them; for "we walk by faith, and not by sight." And faith can give us no interest in them unless we have due apprehensions of them; for it doth but assent and cleave unto the truth of what is proposed unto it. And the greatest part of mankind do both deceive themselves and feed on ashes in this matter. They fancy a future state, which hath no foundation but in their own imaginations. Wherefore the apostle, directing us to seek

and mind the "things that are above," adds, for the guidance of our thoughts, the consideration of the principal concernment of them, "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," Colossians 3:1,2. He would lead us unto distinct apprehensions of those heavenly things, especially of the presence of Christ in his exaltation and glory. Wherefore the true notion of these things which we are to possess our minds withal may here be considered: —

1st. All that have an apprehension of a future state of happiness do agree in this matter, that it contains in it, or is accompanied with, a deliverance and freedom from all that is evil. But in what is so they are not agreed. Many esteem only those things that are grievous, troublesome, wasting and destructive unto nature, to be so; that is, what is penal, in pain, sickness, sorrow, loss, poverty, with all kinds of outward troubles, and death itself, are evil. Wherefore they suppose that the future state of blessedness will free them from all these things, if they can attain unto it. This they will lay in the balance against the troubles of life, and sometimes, it may be, against the pleasures of it, which they must forego; yea, persons profane and profligate will, in words at least, profess that heaven will give them rest from all their troubles: but it is no place of rest for such persons.

Unto all others also, unto believers themselves, these things are evil, such as they expect a deliverance from in heaven and glory. And there is no doubt but it is lawful for us and meet that we should contemplate on them, as those which will give us a deliverance from all outward troubles, death itself, and all that leads thereunto. Heaven is promised as "rest" unto them that are "troubled," 2 Thessalonians 1:7. It is our duty, under all our sufferings, reproaches, persecutions, troubles, and sorrows, to raise up our minds unto the contemplation of that state wherein we shall be freed from them all. It is a blessed notion of heaven, that "God shall therein wipe away all tears from our eyes," Revelation 7:17, or remove far from us all causes of sorrow. And it would be unto our advantage if we did accustom our minds more unto this kind of relief than we do, — if, upon the incursion of fears, dangers, sorrows, we did more readily

retreat unto thoughts of that state wherein we shall be freed from them all. Even this most inferior consideration of it would render the thoughts of it more familiar, and the thing itself more useful unto us. Much better it were than on such occasions to be exercised with heartless complaints, uncertain hopes, and fruitless contrivances.

But there is that which, unto them who are truly spiritually minded, hath more evil in it than all these things together; and that is sin. Heaven is a state of deliverance from sin, from all sin, in all the causes, concomitants, and effects of it. He is no true believer unto whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow, and trouble. Other things, as the loss of dear relations, or extraordinary pains, may make deeper impressions on the mind, by its natural affections, at some seasons than ever our sins did at any one time in any one instance, — so a man may have a greater trouble in sense of pain by a fit of the toothache, which will be gone in an hour, than in a hectic fever or consumption, which will assuredly take away his life, — but take in the whole course of our lives, and all the actings of our souls, in spiritual judgment as well as in natural affection, and I do not understand how a man can be a sincere believer unto whom sin is not the greatest burden and sorrow.

Wherefore, in the first place, it belongs unto the true notion of heaven, that it is a state wherein we shall be eternally freed from sin and all the concernments of it; but only [through] the exaltation of the glory of God's grace in Christ by the pardon of it. He that truly hates sin and abhors it, whose principal desire and design of life is to be freed from it so far as it is possible, who walks in self-abasement through a sense of his many disappointments, when he hoped it should act in him no more, cannot, as I judge, but frequently betake himself for refreshment unto thoughts of that state wherein he shall be freed from it, and triumph over it unto eternity. This is a notion of heaven that is easily apprehended and fixed on the mind, and which we may dwell upon unto the great advantage and satisfaction of our souls.

Frequent thoughts and meditations on heaven under this notion do argue a man to be spiritually minded; for it is a convincing evidence that sin is a burden unto him, that he longs to be delivered from it and all its consequents, that no thoughts are more welcome unto him than those of that state wherein sin shall be no more. And although men are troubled about their sins, and would desirously be freed from them, so far as they perplex their minds and make their consciences uneasy, yet if they are not much in the prospect of this relief, if they find not refreshment in it, I fear their trouble is not such as it ought to be. Wherefore, when men can so wrangle and wrestle with their convictions of sin, and yet take up the best of their relief in hopes that it will be better with them at some time or other in this world, without longing desires after that state wherein sin shall be no more, they can give no evidence that they are spiritually minded.

It is quite otherwise with sincere believers in the exercise of this duty. The consideration of the grace and love of God, of the blood of Christ, of the purity and holiness of that good Spirit that dwelleth in them, of the light, grace, and mercy, which they have attained through the promises of the gospel, are those which make the remainders of sin most grievous and burdensome unto them. This is that which even breaks their hearts, and makes some of them go mourning all the day long, — namely, that any thing of that which alone God hates should be found in them or be remaining with them. It is, in this condition, an evidence that they are spiritually minded, if, together with watchful endeavors for the universal mortification of sin, and utter excision of it, both root and branch, they constantly add these thoughts of that blessed state wherein they shall be absolutely and eternally freed from all sin, with refreshment, delight, and complacency.

These things belong unto our direction for the fixing of our thoughts and meditations on things above. This the meanest and weakest person who hath the least spark of sincerity and grace is capable of apprehending and able to practice; and it is that which the sense they



have of the evil of sin will put them on every day, if they shut not their eyes against the light of the refreshment that is in it. Let them who cannot rise in their minds unto fixed and stable thoughts of any other notion of these invisible things dwell on this consideration of them, wherein they will find no small spiritual advantage and refreshment unto their souls.

2dly. As unto the positive part of this glorious future state, the thoughts and apprehensions of men are very various; and that we may know as well what to avoid as what to embrace, we shall a little reflect on some of them: —

(1st.) Many are able to entertain no rational conceptions about a future state of blessedness and glory, no notions wherein either faith or reason is concerned. Imagination they have of something that is great and glorious, but what it is they know not. No wonder if such persons have no delight in, no use of, thoughts of heaven. When their imaginations have fluctuated up and down in all uncertainties for a while, they are swallowed up in nothing. Glorious, and therefore desirable, they take it for granted that it must be. But nothing can be so unto them but what is suitable unto their present dispositions, inclinations, and principles; and hereof there is nothing in the true spiritual glory of heaven or in the eternal enjoyment of God. These things are not suited unto the will of their minds and of the flesh; and therefore they cannot rise up unto any constant desires of them. Hence, to please themselves, they begin to imagine what is not; but whereas what is truly heaven pleaseth them not, and what doth please them is not heaven, nor there to be found, they seldom or never endeavor in good earnest to exercise their thoughts about it.

It were well if darkness and ignorance of the true nature of the future state and eternal glory did not exceedingly prejudice believers themselves as unto their delight in them and meditations about them. They have nothing fixed or stated in their minds, which they can betake themselves unto in their thoughts when they would contemplate about them. And, by the way, whatever doth divert the

minds of men from the power and life of spiritual worship, as do all pompous solemnities in the performance of it, doth greatly hinder them as unto right conceptions of a future state. There was a promise of eternal life given unto the saints under the old testament; but whereas they were obliged unto a worship that was carnal and outwardly pompous, they never had clear and distinct apprehensions of the future state of glory, for "life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel." Wherefore, although no man living can see or find out the infinite riches of eternal glory, yet it is the duty of all to be acquainted with the nature of it in general, so as that they may have fixed thoughts of it, love unto it, earnest desires after it; all under its own true and proper notion.

(2dly.) So great a part of mankind as the Mohammedans, unto whom God hath given all the principal and most desirable parts of the world to inhabit and possess, do conceive the state of future blessedness to consist in the full satisfaction of their sensual lusts and pleasures. And evidence this is that the religion which they profess hath no power or efficacy on their minds, to change them from the love of sin, or from placing their happiness in fulfilling the desires of the flesh. It doth not at all enlighten their minds to discern a beauty in spiritual things, nor excite their affections unto the love of them, nor free the soul to look after blessedness in such things as alone are suited unto its rational constitution; for if it did, they would place their happiness and blessedness in them. Wherefore, it is nothing but an artifice of the god of this world to blind the eyes of men, unto their eternal destruction.

(3dly.) Some of the philosophers of old did attain an apprehension that the blessedness of men in another world doth consist in the soul's full satisfaction in the goodness and beauty of the divine nature. And there is a truth in this notion, which contemplative men have adorned with excellent and rational discourses; and sundry who have been and are learned among Christians have greatly improved this truth by the light of the Scripture. From reason they take up with thoughts of the goodness, the amiableness, the self-sufficiency, the

all-sufficient satisfactoriness of the infinite perfections of the divine nature. These things shine in themselves with such a glorious light as that there is no more required unto a perception of them but that men do not willfully shut their eyes against it through bestial sensuality and love of sin. From reason also do they frame their conceptions concerning the capacity of the souls of men for the immediate enjoyment of God, and what is suited therein unto their utmost blessedness. No more is required unto these things but a due consideration of the nature of God and man, with our relation unto him and dependence on him. By the light of the Scripture they frame these things into that which they call the "beatifical vision;" whereby they intend all the ways whereby God, in the highest and immediate instances, can and doth communicate of himself unto the souls of men, and the utmost elevation of their intellectual capacities to receive those communications. It is such an intellectual apprehension of the divine nature and perfections, with ineffable love, as gives the soul the utmost rest and blessedness which its capacities can extend unto.

These things are so, and they have been by many both piously and elegantly illustrated; howbeit they are above the capacities of ordinary Christians, — they know not how to manage them in their minds, nor exercise their thoughts about them. They cannot reduce them unto present usefulness, nor make them subservient unto the exercise and increase of grace. And the truth is, the Scripture gives us another notion of heaven and glory, not contrary unto this, not inconsistent with it, but more suited unto the faith and experience of believers, and which alone can convey a true and useful sense of these things unto our minds. This, therefore, is diligently to be inquired into, and firmly stated in our thoughts and affections.

(4thly.) The principal notion which the Scripture gives us of the state of heavenly blessedness, and which the meanest believers are capable of improving in daily practice, is, that faith shall be turned into sight, and grace into glory. "We walk by faith, and not by sight," saith the apostle, 2 Corinthians 5:7. Wherefore, this is the difference

between our present and our future state, that sight hereafter shall supply the room of faith, 1 John 3:2; and if sight come into the place of faith, then the object of that sight must be the same with the present object of our faith. So the apostle informs us, 1 Corinthians 13:9,10,12,

"We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face."

Those things which we now see darkly, as in a glass, we shall then have an immediate sight and full comprehension of; for that which is perfect must come and do away that which is in part. What, then, is the principal present object of faith as it is evangelical, into whose room sight must succeed? Is it not the manifestation of the glory of the infinite wisdom, grace, love, kindness, and power of God in Christ, the revelation of the eternal counsels of his will and the ways of their accomplishment, unto the eternal salvation of the church, in and by him, with the glorious exaltation of Christ himself? Wherefore, in the full, satisfactory representation of these things unto our souls, received by sight, or a direct, immediate intuition of them, doth the glory of heaven principally consist. We behold them now darkly, as in a glass, — that is the utmost which by faith we can attain unto; in heaven they shall be openly and fully displayed. The infinite, incomprehensible excellencies of the divine nature are not proposed in Scripture as the immediate object of our faith; nor shall they be so unto sight in heaven. The manifestation of them in Christ is the immediate object of our faith here, and shall be of our sight hereafter. Only through this manifestation of them we are led even by faith ultimately to acquiesce in them, as we shall in heaven be led by love perfectly to adhere unto them with delight ineffable. This is our immediate objective glory in heaven; we hope for no other. And this, if God will, I shall shortly more fully explain.

Whoever live in the exercise of faith, and have any experience of the life, power, and sweetness, of these heavenly things, unto whom they

are a spring of grace and consolation, they are able to meditate on the glory of them in their full enjoyment. Think much of heaven, as that which will give you a perfect view and comprehension of the wisdom, and love, and grace of God in Christ, with those other things which shall be immediately declared.

Some perhaps will be ready to say, that if this be heaven, they can see no great glory in it, no such beauty as for which it should be desired. It may be so, for some have no instrument to take a view of invisible things but carnal imaginations. Some have no light, no principle, no disposition of mind or soul, whereunto these things are either acceptable or suitable. Some will go no farther in the consideration of the divine excellencies of God, and the faculties and actings of our souls, than reason will guide them; which may be of use. But we look for no other heaven, we desire none, but what we are led unto and prepared for by the light of the gospel; that which shall perfect all the beginnings of God's grace in us, not what shall be quite of another nature and destructive of them. We value not that heaven which is equally suited unto the desires and inclinations of the worst of men as well as of the best; for we know that they who like not grace here, neither do nor can like that which is glory hereafter. No man who is not acquainted experimentally, in some measure, with the life, power, and evidence of faith here, hath any other heaven in his aim but what is erected in his own imagination. The glory of heaven which the gospel prepares us for, which faith leads and conducts us unto, which the souls of believers long after, as that which will give full rest, satisfaction, and complacency, is the full, open, perfect manifestation of the glory of the wisdom, goodness, and love of God in Christ, in his person and mediation, with the revelation of all his counsels concerning them, and the communication of their effects unto us. He that likes it not, unto whom it is not desirable, may betake himself unto Mohammed's paradise or the philosophers' speculations; in the gospel heaven he hath no interest. These are the things which we see now darkly, as in a glass, by faith; in the view of them are our souls gradually changed into the likeness of God, and the comprehension of them is that which shall give us our utmost

conformity and likeness unto him whereof our natures are capable. In a sense and experience of their reality and goodness, given us by the Holy Ghost, do all our spiritual consolations and joys consist. The effects produced by them in our souls are the first-fruits of glory. Our light, sense, experience, and enjoyment of these things, however weak and frequently interrupted; our apprehensions of them, however dark and obscure, — are the only means whereby we are "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

To have the eternal glory of God in Christ, with all the fruits of his wisdom and love, whilst we are ourselves under the full participation of the effects of them, immediately, directly revealed, proposed, made known unto us, in a divine and glorious light, our souls being furnished with a capacity to behold and perfectly comprehend them, — this is the heaven which, according unto God's promise, we look for. But, as was said, these things shall be elsewhere more fully treated of.

It is true that there are sundry other things in particular that belong unto this state of glory; but what we have mentioned is the fountain and spring of them all. We can never have an immediate enjoyment of God in the immensity of his nature, nor can any created understanding conceive any such thing. God's communications of himself unto us and our enjoyment of him shall be in and by the manifestation of his glory in Christ. He who can see no glory, who is sensible of no blessedness, in these things, is a stranger unto that heaven which the Scripture reveals and which faith leads unto.

It may be inquired, What is the subjective glory, or what change is to be wrought in ourselves that we may enjoy this glory? Now, that consists principally as unto our souls, in the perfection of all grace which is initially wrought and subjectively resides in us in this world. The grace which we have here shall not be done away as unto its essence and nature, though somewhat of it shall cease as unto the manner of its operation. What soul could think with joy of going to heaven, if thereby he must lose all his present light, faith, and love of

God, though he be told that he should receive that in lieu of them which is more excellent, whereof he hath no experience, nor can understand of what nature it is? When the saints enter into rest, their good works do follow them; and how can they do so if their grace do not accompany them, from whence they proceed? The perfection of our present graces, which are here weak and interrupted in their operations, is a principal eminency of the state of glory. Faith shall be heightened into vision, as was proved before; which doth not destroy its nature, but cause it to cease as unto its manner of operation towards things invisible. If a man have a weak, small faith in this life, with little evidence and no assurance, so that he doubts of all things, questions all things, and hath no comfort from what he doth believe; if afterward, through supplies of grace, he hath a mighty prevailing evidence of the things believed, is filled with comfort and assurance; this is not by a faith or grace of another kind than what he had before, but by the same faith raised unto a higher degree of perfection. When our Savior cured the blind man and gave him his sight, Mark viii., at first he saw all things obscurely and imperfectly, — he saw "men as trees, walking," verse 24; but on another application of virtue unto him, "he saw every man clearly," verse 25. It was not a sight of another kind which he then received than what he had at first; only its imperfection, whereby he "saw men as trees, walking," was taken away. Nor will our perfect vision of things above be a grace absolutely of another kind from the light of faith which we here enjoy; only what is imperfect in it will be done away, and it will be made meet for the present enjoyment of things here at a distance and invisible. Love shall have its perfection also, and the least alteration in its manner of operation of any grace whatever; and there is nothing that should more excite us to labor after a growth in love to God in Christ than this, that it shall to all eternity be the same in its nature and in all its operations, only both the one and the other shall be made absolutely perfect. The soul will by it be enabled to cleave unto God unchangeably, with eternal delight, satisfaction, and complacency. Hope shall be perfect in enjoyment, which is all the perfection it is capable of. So shall it be as unto other graces.

This subjective perfection of our nature, especially in all the faculties, powers, and affections of our souls and all their operations, belongs unto our blessedness, nor can we be blessed without it. All the objective glory in heaven would not, in our beholding and enjoyment of it (if it were possible), make us blessed and happy, if our own natures were not made perfect, freed from all disorder, irregular motions, and weak, imperfect operations. What is it, then, that must give our natures this subjective perfection? It is that grace alone whose beginnings we are here made partakers of; for therein consists the renovation of the image of God in us, and the perfect communication of that image unto us is the absolute perfection of our natures, the utmost which their capacity is suited unto. And this gives us the last thing to be inquired into, — namely, by what means in ourselves we shall eternally abide in that state; and this is, by the unalterable adherence of our whole souls unto God, in perfect love and delight. This is that whereby alone the soul reacheth unto the essence of God, and the infinite, incomprehensible perfections of his nature. For the perfect nature hereof, divine revelation hath left it under a veil, and so must we do also; nor do I designedly handle these things in this place, but only in the way of a direction how to exercise our thoughts about them.

This is the notion of heaven which those who are spiritually minded ought to be conversant withal; and the true stating of it by faith is a discriminating character of believers. This is no heaven unto any others. Those who have not an experience of the excellency of these things in their initial state in this world, and their incomparable transcendency unto all other things, cannot conceive how heavenly glory and blessedness should consist in them. Unskilful men may cast away rough unwrought diamonds as useless stones; they know not what polishing will bring them unto. Nor do men unskilful in the mysteries of godliness judge there can be any glory in rough unwrought grace; they know not what lustre and beauty the polishing of the heavenly hand will give unto it.



It is generally supposed that however men differ in and about religion here, yet they agree well enough about heaven; they would all go to the same heaven. But it is a great mistake; they differ in nothing more; they would not all go to the same heaven. How few are they who value that heavenly state which we have treated of, or do understand how any blessedness can consist in the enjoyment of it! But this, and no other heaven, would we go unto. Other notions there may be, there are of it; which being but fruits and effects of men's own imaginations, the more they dwell in the contemplation of them, the more carnal they may grow, at best the more superstitious. But spiritual thoughts of this heaven, consisting principally in freedom from all sin, in the perfection of all grace, in the vision of the glory of God in Christ, and all the excellencies of the divine nature as manifested in him, are an effectual means for the improvement of spiritual life and the increase of all graces in us; for they cannot but effect an assimilation in the mind and heart unto the things contemplated on, when the principles and seeds of them are already inlaid and begun. This is our first direction.

2. Having fixed right notions and apprehensions of heavenly things in our minds, it is our duty to think and contemplate greatly on them and our own concernment in them. Without this all our speculations concerning the nature of eternal things will be of no use unto us. And unto your encouragement and direction take these few short rules relating unto this duty: —

1st. Here lies the great trial whether we are spiritually minded or no, by virtue of this rule,

"If we are risen with Christ, we will mind the things that are above," Colossians 3:1.

2dly. Here lies the great means whereby we may attain farther degrees in that blessed frame of mind, if it be already formed in us, by virtue of that rule,

"Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory," 2 Corinthians 3:18.

3dly. Here lies the great evidence whether we have a real interest in the things above or no, whether we place our portion and blessedness in them, by virtue of that rule, "Where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also." Are they our treasure, our portion, our reward, in comparison whereof all other things are "but loss and dung?" — we shall assuredly be conversant in our minds about them.

4thly. It cannot be imagined that a man should have in him a principle cognate and suited unto things above, of the same kind and nature with them, that his soul should be under the conduct of those habits of grace which strive and naturally tend unto perfection, laboring greatly here under the weight of their own weaknesses, as it is with all who are truly spiritually minded, and yet not have his thoughts greatly exercised about these things, 1 John 3:2,3.

It were well if we would try ourselves by things of so uncontrollable evidence. What can any object unto the truth of these things or the necessity of this duty? If it be otherwise with us, it is from one of these two causes: — either we are not convinced of the truth and reality of them, or we have no delight in them because we are not spiritually minded. Do we think that men may turmoil themselves in earthly thoughts all the day long, and, when they are freed of their affairs, betake themselves unto those that are vain and useless, without any stated converse with things above, and yet enjoy life and peace? We must take other measures of things if we intend to live unto God, to be like him, and to come unto the enjoyment of him.

What is the matter with men that they are so stupid? They all generally desire to go to heaven, at least when they can live here no longer. Some, indeed, have no other regard unto it but only that they would not go to hell. But most would "die the death of the righteous," and have their "latter end like his;" yet few there are who endeavor to attain a right notion of it, to try how it is suited unto their principles

and desires, but content themselves with such general notions of it as please their imaginations. It is no wonder if such persons seldom exercise their minds or thoughts about it; nor do they so much as pretend to be spiritually minded. But as for those who are instructed in these things, who profess their chiefest interest to lie in them, not to abound in meditation concerning them, it argues, indeed, that whatever they profess, they are earthly and carnal.

[3.] Again; meditate and think of the glory of heaven so as to compare it with the opposite state of death and eternal misery. Few men care to think much of hell, and the everlasting torments of the wicked therein. Those do so least who are in the most danger of falling thereinto. They put far from them the evil day, and suppose their covenant with death and hell to be sure. Some begin to advance an opinion that there is no such place; because it is their interest and desire that there should be none. Some, out of profaneness, make a scoff at it, as though a future judgment were but a fable. Most seem to think that there is a severity in thoughts about it, which it is not fit we should be too much terrified withal. Some transient thoughts they will have of it, but [they do] not suffer them to abide in their minds, lest they should be too much discomposed; or they think it not consistent with the goodness of Christ to leave any men in that condition, whereas there is more spoken directly of hell, its torments and their eternity, by himself than in all the Scripture besides. These thoughts, in most, proceed from an unwillingness to be troubled in their sins, and are useful unto none. It is the height of folly for men to endeavor the hiding of themselves for a few moments from that which is unavoidably coming upon them unto eternity, and the due consideration whereof is a means for an escape from it. But I speak only of true believers; and the more they are conversant in their thoughts about the future state of eternal misery, the greater evidence they have of the life and confidence of faith. It is a necessary duty to consider it, as what we were by nature obnoxious unto, as being "children of wrath;" what we have deserved by our personal sins, as "the wages of sin is death;" what we are delivered from through Jesus the deliverer, who "saves us from the wrath to come;"

what expression it is of the indignation of God against sin, who hath "ordained Tophet of old," — that we may be delivered from sin, kept up to an abhorrency of it, walking in humility, self-abasement, and the admiration of divine grace. This, therefore, is required of us, that in our thoughts and meditations we compare the state of blessedness and eternal glory, as a free and absolute effect of the grace of God in and through Christ Jesus, with that state of eternal misery which we had deserved; and if there be any spark of grace or of holy thankfulness in our hearts, it will be stirred up unto its due exercise.

Some, it may be, will say that they complained before that they cannot get their minds fixed on these things. Weakness, weariness, darkness, diversions, occasions, do prevalently obstruct their abiding in such thoughts. I shall speak farther unto this afterward. At present I shall only suggest two things: — First, If you cannot attain, yet continue to follow after. Get your minds in a perpetual endeavor after an abode in spiritual thoughts. Let your minds be rising towards them every hour, yea, a hundred times a day, on all occasions, in a continual sense of duty; and sigh within yourselves for deliverance when you find disappointments, or a not-continuance in them. It is the sense of that place, Romans 8:23-26. Secondly, Take care you go not backwards and lose what you have wrought. If you neglect these things for a season, you will quickly find yourselves neglected by them. So I observe it every day in the hearing of the word. Whilst persons keep up themselves to a diligent attendance on it, where they find it preached unto their edification, they find great delight in it, and will undergo great difficulties for the enjoyment of it; — let them be diverted from it for a season, after a while it grows indifferent unto them; any thing will satisfy them that pretends unto the same duty.

## **CHAPTER VII.**

**Especial objects of spiritual thoughts on the glorious state of heaven, and what belongs thereunto — First, of Christ himself — Thoughts of heavenly glory in opposition unto thoughts of eternal misery — The use of such thoughts — Advantage in sufferings.**

IT will be unto our advantage, having stated right notions of the glory of the blessed state above in our minds, to fix on some particulars belonging unto it as the especial objects of our thoughts and meditations. As, —

I. Think much of him who unto us is the life and center of all the glory of heaven; that is, Christ himself. I shall be very brief in treating hereof, because I have designed a peculiar treatise on this subject, of beholding the glory of Christ, both here and unto eternity. f16 At present, therefore, a few things only shall be mentioned, because on this occasion they are not to be omitted. The whole of the glory of the state above is expressed by being "ever with the Lord, where he is, to behold his glory;" for in and through him is the beatifical manifestation of God and his glory made for evermore, and through him are all communications of inward glory unto us. The present resplendency of heavenly glory consists in his mediatory ministry, as I have at large elsewhere declared; f17 and he will be the means of all-glorious communications between God and the church unto eternity. Wherefore, if we are spiritually minded, we should fix our thoughts on Christ above, as the center of all heavenly glory. To help us herein, we may consider the things that follow: —

1. Faith hath continual recourse unto him, on the account of what he did and suffered for us in this world; for thereon pardon of sin, justification, and peace with God, do depend. This ariseth, in the first place, from a sense of our own wants. But love of him is no less necessary unto us than faith in him; and although we have powerful motives unto love from what he did and was in this world, yet the formal reason of our adherence unto him thereby is what he is in himself as he is now exalted in heaven. If we rejoice not at the

remembrance of his present glory, if the thoughts of it be not frequent with us and refreshing unto us, how dwelleth his love in us?

2. Our hope is that ere long we shall be ever with him; and if so, it is certainly our wisdom and duty to be here with him as much as we can. It is a vain thing for any to suppose that they place their chiefest happiness in being for ever in the presence of Christ, who care not at all to be with him here as they may. And the only way of our being present with him here is, by faith and love acting themselves in spiritual thoughts and affections. And it is an absurd thing for men to esteem themselves Christians who scarce think of Christ all the day long; yet some, as one complained of old, scarce ever think or speak of him but when they swear by his name. I have read of them who have lived and died in continual contemplation on him, so far as the imperfection of our present state will admit; I have known them, I do know them, who call themselves unto a reproof if at any time he hath been many minutes out of their thoughts; and it is strange that it should be otherwise with them who love him in sincerity. Yet I wish I did not know more who give evidences that it is a rare thing for them to be exercised in serious thoughts and meditations about him; yea, there are some who are not averse upon occasions to speak of God, of mercy, of pardon, of his power and goodness, who, if you mention Christ unto them, with any thing of faith, love, trust in him, they seem unto them as a strange thing. Few there are who are sensible of any religion beyond what is natural. The things of the wisdom and power of God in Christ are foolishness unto them. Take some directions for the discharge of this duty: — In your thoughts of Christ, be very careful that they are conceived and directed according to the rule of the word, lest you deceive your own souls, and give up the conduct of your affections unto vain imaginations. Spiritual notions befalling carnal minds did once, by the means of superstition, ruin the power of religion. A conviction men had that they must think much of Jesus Christ, and that this would make them conformable unto him; but having no real evangelical faith, nor the wisdom of faith to exercise it in their thoughts and affections in a due manner, nor understanding what it was to be truly like unto him,

they gave up themselves unto many foolish inventions and imaginations, by which they thought to express their love and conformity unto him. They would have images of him, which they would embrace, adore, and bedew with their tears. They would have crucifixes, as they called them, which they would carry about them, and wear next unto their hearts, as if they resolved to lodge Christ always in their bosoms. They would go in pilgrimage to the place where he died and rose again, through a thousand dangers, and purchase a feigned chip of a tree whereon he suffered, at the price of all they had in the world. They would endeavor, by long thoughtfulness, lastings, and watchings, to cast their souls into raptures and ecstasies, wherein they fancied themselves in his presence. They came at last to make themselves like him, in getting impressions of wounds on their sides, their hands, and feet. Unto all these things, and sundry others of a like nature and tendency, did superstition abuse and corrupt the minds of men, from a pretense of a principle of truth; for there is no more certain gospel truth than this, that believers ought continually to contemplate on Christ by the actings of faith in their thoughts and affections, and that thereby they are changed and transformed into his image, 2 Corinthians 3:18. And we are not to forego our duty because other men have been mistaken in theirs, nor part with practical, fundamental principles of religion because they have been abused by superstition. But we may see herein how dangerous it is to depart in any thing from the conduct of Scripture light and rule, when for want thereof the best and most noble endeavors of the minds of men, even to love Christ and to be like unto him, do issue in provocations of the highest nature.

Pray, therefore, that you may be kept unto the truth in all things, by a diligent attendance unto the only rule thereof and conscientious subjection of soul unto the authority of God in it; for we ought not to suffer our affections to be entangled with the paint or artificial beauty of any way or means of giving our love unto Christ which are not warranted by the word of truth. Yet I must say that I had rather be among them who, in the actings of their love and affection unto

Christ, do fall into some irregularities and excesses in the manner of expressing it (provided their worship of him be neither superstitious nor idolatrous), than among those who, professing themselves to be Christians, do almost disavow their having any thoughts of or affection unto the person of Christ. But there is no need that we should foolishly run into either of these extremes. God hath in the Scripture sufficiently provided against them both. He hath both showed us the necessity of our diligent acting of faith and love on the person of Christ, and hath limited out the way and means whereby we may so do; and let our designs be what they will, where in any thing we depart from his prescriptions, we are not under the conduct of his Spirit, and so are sure to lose all that we do.

Wherefore, two things are required that we may thus think of Christ and meditate on him according to the mind and will of God: —

(1.) That the means of bringing him to mind be what God hath promised and appointed.

(2.) That the continued proposal of him as the object of our thoughts and meditations be of the same kind.

For both these ends the superstitious minds of men invented the ways of images and crucifixes, with their appurtenances, before mentioned; and this rendered all their devotion an abomination. That which tends unto these ends among believers is the promise of the Spirit and the institutions of the word. Would you, then, think of Christ as you ought, take these two directions: —

(1.) Pray that the Holy Spirit may abide with you continually, to mind you of him; which he will do in all in whom he doth abide, for it belongs unto his office.

(2.) For more fixed thoughts and meditations, take some express place of Scripture wherein he is set forth and proposed, either in his person, office, or grace, unto you, Galatians 3:1.



3. This duty lies at the foundation of all that blessed communion and intercourse that is between Jesus Christ and the souls of believers. This, I confess, is despised by some, and the very notion of it esteemed ridiculous; but they do therein no less than renounce Christianity, and turn the Lord Christ into an idol, that neither knoweth, seeth, nor heareth. But I speak unto them who are not utter strangers unto the life of faith, who know not what religion is unless they have real spiritual intercourse and communion with the Lord Christ thereby. Consider this, therefore, as it is in particular exemplified in the book of Canticles. There is not one instance of it to be found which doth not suppose a continued thoughtfulness of him. And in answer unto them, as they are actings of faith and love, wherein he is delighted, doth he by his Spirit insinuate into our minds and hearts a gracious sense of his own love, kindness, and relation unto us. The great variety wherein these things are mutually carried on between him and the church, the singular endearments which ensue thereon, and blessed estate in rest and complacency, do make up the substance of that holy discourse. No thoughts of Christ, then, proceeding from faith, accompanied with love and delight, shall be lost. They that sow this seed shall return with their sheaves; Christ will meet them with gracious intimations of his acceptance of them and delight in them, and return a sense of his own love unto them. He never will be, he never was, behind with any poor soul in returns of love. Those gracious and blessed promises which he hath made of "coming unto them" that believe in him, of "making his abode with them," and of "supping with them," — all expressions of a gracious presence and intimate communion, — do all depend on this duty. Wherefore, we may consider three things concerning these thoughts of Christ: —

(1.) That they are exceeding acceptable unto him, as the best pledges of our cordial affection: Song of Solomon 2:14,

"O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

When a soul through manifold discouragements and despondencies withdraws, and as it were hides itself from him, he calleth to see a poor, weeping, blubbered face, and to hear a broken voice, that scarce goes beyond sighs and groans.

(2.) These thoughts are the only means whereby we comply with the gracious invitations of his love mentioned before. By them do we hear his knocking, know his voice, and open the door of our hearts to give him entrance, that he may abide and sup with us. Sometimes, indeed, the soul is surprised into acts of gracious communion with Christ, Song of Solomon 6:12; but they are not to be expected unless we abide in those ways and means which prepare and make our souls meet for the reception and entertainment of him. Wherefore,

(3.) Our want of experience in the power of this holy intercourse and communion with Christ ariseth principally from our defect in this duty. I have known one who, after a long profession of faith and holiness, fell into great darkness and distress merely on this account, that he did not experience in himself the sweetness, life, and power, of the testimonies given concerning the real communications of the love of Christ unto, and the intimation of his presence with, believers. He knew well enough the doctrine of it, but did not feel the power of it; at least he understood there was more in it than he had experience of. God carried him by faith through that darkness, but taught him withal that no sense of these things was to be let in to the soul but by constant thoughtfulness and contemplations on Christ. How many blessed visits do we lose by not being exercised unto this duty! See Song of Solomon 5:1-3. Sometimes we are busy, sometimes careless and negligent, sometimes slothful, sometimes under the power of temptations, so that we neither inquire after nor are ready to receive them. This is not the way to have our joys abound.

4. Again (I speak now with especial respect unto him in heaven); the glory of his presence, as God and man eternally united; the discharge of his mediatory office, as he is at the right hand of God; the glory of his present acting for the church, as he is the minister of the

sanctuary and the true tabernacle which God hath fixed and not man; the love, power, and efficacy of his intercession, whereby he takes care for the accomplishment of the salvation of the church; the approach of his glorious coming unto judgment, — are to be the objects of our daily thoughts and meditations.

Let us not mistake ourselves. To be spiritually minded is, not to have the notion and knowledge of spiritual things in our minds; it is not to be constant, no, nor to abound, in the performance of duties: both which may be where there is no grace in the heart at all. It is to have our minds really exercised with delight about heavenly things, the things that are above, especially Christ himself as at the right hand of God.

5. Again; so think of eternal things as continually to lay them in the balance against all the sufferings of this life. This use of it I have spoken unto somewhat before, and it is necessary it should be pressed upon all occasions. It is very probable that we shall yet suffer more than we have done. Those who have gone before us have done so; it is foretold in the Scripture that if we will live godly in Christ Jesus we must do so; we stand in need of it, and the world is prepared to bring it on us. And as we must suffer, so it is necessary, unto the glory of God and our own salvation, that we suffer in a due manner. Mere sufferings will neither commend us unto God nor any way advantage our own souls. When we suffer according to the will of God, it is an eminent grace, gift, and privilege, Philippians 1:29. But many things are required hereunto. It is not enough that men suppose themselves to suffer for conscience' sake, — though if we do not so suffer all our sufferings are in vain; nor is it enough that we suffer for this or that way of profession in religion, which we esteem to be true and according to the mind of God, in opposition unto what is not so. The glory of sufferings on these accounts solely hath been much sullied in the days wherein we live. It is evident that persons, out of a natural courage, accompanied with deep radicate persuasions, and having their minds influenced with some sinister ends, may undergo things hard and difficult in giving testimony unto

what is not according to the mind of God. Examples we have had hereof in all ages, and in that wherein we live in an especial manner. See 1 Peter 4:14-16. We have had enough to take off all paint and appearance of honor from them who in their sufferings are deceived in what they profess. But men may from the same principles suffer for what is indeed according to the mind of God, yea, may give their bodies to be burned therein, and yet not to his glory nor their own eternal advantage. Wherefore we are duly to consider all things that are requisite to make our sufferings acceptable unto God and honorable unto the gospel.

I have observed in many a frame of spirit with respect unto sufferings that I never saw good event of when it was tried to the uttermost. Boldness, confidence, a pretended contempt of hardships, and scorning other men whom they suppose defective in these things, are the garments or livery they wear on this occasion. Such principles may carry men out in a bad cause, they will never do so in a good cause. Evangelical truth will not be honorably witnessed unto but by evangelical grace. Distrust of ourselves, a due apprehension of the nature of the evils to be undergone and of our own frailty, with continual prayers to be delivered from them or supported under them, and prudent care to avoid them without an inroad on conscience or neglect of duty, are much better preparations for an entrance into a state of suffering. Many things belong unto our learning aright this first and last lesson of the gospel, namely, of bearing the cross, or undergoing all sorts of sufferings for the profession of it; but they belong not unto our present occasion. This only is that which we now press as an evidence of our sincerity in our sufferings, and an effectual means to enable us cheerfully to undergo them, which is, to have such a continual prospect of the future state of glory as to lay it in the balance against all that we may undergo; for, —

1. To have our minds filled and possessed with thoughts thereof will give us an alacrity in our entrance into sufferings in a way of duty. Other considerations will offer themselves unto our relief, which will

quickly fade and disappear. They are like a cordial water, which gives a little relief for a season, and then leaves the spirits to sink beneath what they were before it was taken. Some relieve themselves from the consideration of the nature of their sufferings; they are not so great but that they may conflict with them and come off with safety. But there is nothing of that kind so small as will not prove too hard and strong for us unless we have especial assistance. Some do the same from their duration; they are but for ten days or six months, and then they shall be free; — some from the compassion and esteem of men. These and the like considerations are apt to occur unto the minds of all sorts of persons, whether they are spiritually minded or no. But when our minds are accustomed unto thoughts of the "glory that shall be revealed," we shall cheerfully entertain every way and path that leads thereunto, as suffering for the truth doth in a peculiar manner. Through this medium we may look cheerfully and comfortably on the loss of name, reputation, goods, liberty, life itself, as knowing in ourselves that we have better and more abiding comforts to betake ourselves unto. And we can no other way glorify God by our alacrity in the entrance of sufferings than when it ariseth from a prospect into and valuation of those invisible things which he hath promised as an abundant recompense for all we can lose in this world.

2. The great aggravation of sufferings is their long continuance, without any rational appearance or hope of relief. Many who have entered into sufferings with much courage and resolution have been wearied and worn out with their continuance. Elijah himself was hereby reduced to pray that God would take away his life, to put an end unto his ministry and calamities. And not a few in all ages have been hereby so broken in their natural spirits, and so shaken in the exercise of faith, as that they have lost the glory of their confession, in seeking deliverance by sinful compliances in the denial of truth. And although this may be done out of mere weariness (as it is the design of Satan to "wear out the saints of the Most High"), with reluctance of mind, and a love yet remaining unto the truth in their hearts, yet hath it constantly one of these two effects: — Some, by the

overwhelming sorrow that befalls them on the account of their failure in profession, and out of a deep sense of their unkindness unto the Lord Jesus, are stirred up immediately unto higher acts of confession than ever they were before engaged in, and unto a higher provocation of their adversaries, until their former troubles are doubled upon them, which they frequently undergo with great satisfaction. Instances of this nature occur in all stories of great persecutions. Others being cowed and discouraged in their profession, and perhaps neglected by them whose duty it was rather to restore them, have by the craft of Satan given place to their declensions, and become vile apostates. To prevent these evils, arising from the duration of sufferings without a prospect of deliverance, nothing is more prevalent than a constant contemplation on the future reward and glory. So the apostle declares it, Hebrews 11:35. When the mind is filled with the thoughts of the unseen glories of eternity, it hath in readiness what to lay in the balance against the longest continuance and duration of sufferings, which in comparison thereunto, at their utmost extent, are "but for a moment."

I have insisted the longer on these things, because they are the peculiar objects of the thoughts of them that are indeed spiritually minded.

## **CHAPTER VIII.**

**Spiritual thoughts of God himself — The opposition unto them and neglect of them, with their causes and the way of their prevalency — Predominant corruptions expelling due thoughts of God, how to be discovered, etc. — Thoughts of**

## **God, of what nature, and what they are to be accompanied withal, etc.**

II. I HAVE spoken very briefly unto the first particular instance of the heavenly things that we are to fix our thoughts upon, namely, the person of Christ; and I have done it on the reason before mentioned, namely, that I intend a peculiar treatise on that subject, or an inquiry how we may behold the glory of Christ in this life, and how we shall do so unto eternity. That which I have reserved unto the last place, as unto the exercise of their thoughts about who are spiritually minded, is that which is the absolute foundation and spring of all spiritual things, namely, God himself. He is the fountain whence all these things proceed, and the ocean wherein they issue; he is their center and circumference, wherein they all begin, meet, and end. So the apostle issues his profound discourse of the counsels of the divine will and mysteries of the gospel, Romans 11:36,

"Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever."

All things arise from his power, and are all disposed by his wisdom into a tendency unto his glory: "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." Under that consideration alone are they to be the objects of our spiritual meditation, — namely, as they come from him and tend unto him. All other things are finite and limited, but they begin and end in that which is immense and infinite. So God is "all in all." He therefore is, or ought to be, the only supreme, absolute object of our thoughts and desires; other things are from and for him only. When our thoughts do not either immediately and directly, or mediately and by just consequence, tend unto and end in him, they are not spiritual, 1 Peter 1:21.

To make way for directions how to exercise our thoughts on God himself, something must be premised concerning a sinful defect herein, with the causes of it: —

First, it is the great character of a man presumptuously and flagitiously wicked that "God is not in all his thoughts," Psalm 4; that is, he is in none of them. And of this want of thoughts of God there are many degrees, for all wicked men are not equally so forgetful of him: —

1. Some are under the power of atheistical thoughts. They deny or question, or do not avowedly acknowledge, the very being of God. This is the height of what the enmity of the carnal mind can rise unto. To acknowledge God, and yet to refuse to be subject to his law or will, a man would think were as bad, if not worse, than to deny the being of God; but it is not so. That is a rebellion against his authority, this a hatred unto the only Fountain of all goodness, truth, and being; and that because they cannot own it but withal they must acknowledge it to be infinitely righteous, holy, and powerful, which would destroy all their desires and security. Such may be the person in the psalm; for the words may be read, "All his thoughts are that there is no God:" howbeit the context describes him as one who rather despiseth his providence than denieth his being. But such there are, whom the same psalmist elsewhere brands for fools, though themselves seem to suppose that wisdom was born and will die with them, Psalm 14:1, 53:1.

It may be, never any age since the flood did more abound with open atheism, among such as pretended unto the use and improvement of reason, than that wherein we live. Among the ancient civilized heathen, we hear ever and anon of a person branded for an atheist, yet we are not certain whether it was done justly or no; but in all nations of Europe at this day, cities, courts, towns, fields, armies, abound with persons who, if any credit may be given unto what they say or do, believe not that there is a God. And the reason hereof may be a little inquired into.

Now this is no other, in general, but that men have decocted and wasted the light and power of Christian religion. It is the fullest revelation of God that ever he made; it is the last that ever he will



make in this world. If this be despised, if men rebel against the light of it, if they break the cords of it, and are senseless of its power, nothing can preserve them from the highest atheism that the nature of man is capable of. It is in vain to expect relief or preservation from inferior means when the highest and most noble are rejected. Reason or the light of nature gives evidences unto the being of God, and arguments are still well pleaded from them to the confusion of atheists; and they were sufficient to retain men in an acknowledgment of the divine power and Godhead who had no other, no higher evidences of them. But where men have had the benefit of divine revelation, where they have been educated in the principles of Christian religion, have had some knowledge and made some profession of them, and have, through the love of sin and hatred of every thing that is truly good, rejected all convictions from them concerning the being, power, and rule of God, they will not be kept unto a confession of them by any considerations that the light of nature can suggest.

There are therefore, among others, three reasons why there are more atheists among them who live where the Christian religion is professed and the power of it rejected, than among any other sort of men, even than there were among the heathens themselves: —

(1.) God hath designed to magnify his word above all his name, or all other ways of the revelation of himself unto the children of men, Psalm 138:2. Where, therefore, this is rejected and despised, he will not give the honor unto reason or the light of nature, that they shall preserve the minds of men from any evil whatever. Reason shall not have the same power and efficacy on the minds of men who reject the light and power of divine revelation by the word, as it hath or may have on them whose best guide it is, who never enjoyed the light of the gospel; and therefore there is oftentimes more common honesty among civilized heathens and Mohammedans than amongst degenerate Christians; and for the same reason the children of professors are sometimes irrecoverably profligate. It will be said, "Many are recovered unto God by afflictions who have despised the

word." But it is otherwise. Never any were converted unto God by afflictions who had rejected the word. Men may by afflictions be recalled unto the light of the word, but none are immediately turned unto God by them; — as a good shepherd, when a sheep wanders from the flock, and will not hear his call, sends out his dog, which steps him and bites him; hereon he looks about him, and, hearing the call of the shepherd, returns again to the flock, Job 33:19-25. But with this sort of persons it is the way of God, that when the principal means of the revelation of himself, and wherein he doth most glorify his wisdom and his goodness, are despised, he will not only take off the efficacy of inferior means, but judicially harden the hearts and blind the eyes of men, that such means shall be of no use unto them. See Isaiah 6:9,10; Acts 13:40,41; Romans 1:21,28; 2 Thessalonians 2:11,12.

(2.) The contempt of gospel light and Christian religion, as it is supernatural (which is the beginning of transgression unto all atheists among us), begets in and leaves on the mind such a depraved, corrupt habit, such a congeries of all evils that the hatred of the goodness, wisdom, and grace of God can produce, that it cannot but be wholly inclined unto the worst of evils, as all our original vicious inclinations succeeded immediately on our rejection and loss of the image of God. The best things, corrupted, yield the worst savor; as manna stunk and bred worms. The knowledge of the gospel being rejected, stinking worms take the place of it in the mind, which grow into vipers and scorpions. Every degree of apostasy from gospel truth brings in a proportionate degree of inclination unto wickedness into the hearts and minds of men, 2 Peter 2:21; and that which is total, unto all the evils that they are capable of in this world. Whereas, therefore, multitudes, from their darkness, unbelief, temptation, love of sin, pride and contempt of God, do fall off from all subjection of soul and conscience unto the gospel, either notionally or practically, deriding or despising all supernatural revelations, they are a thousand times more disposed unto downright atheism than persons who never had the light or benefit of such

revelations. Take heed of decays! Whatever ground the gospel loseth in our minds, sin possesseth it for itself and its own ends.

Let none say it is otherwise with them. Men grow cold and negligent in the duties of gospel worship, public and private; which is to reject gospel light. Let them say and pretend what they please, that in other things, in their minds and conversations, it is well with them: indeed it is not so. Sin will, sin doth, one way or other, make an increase in them proportionate unto these decays, and will sooner or later discover itself so to do; and themselves, if they are not utterly hardened, may greatly discover it, inwardly in their peace, or outwardly in their lives.

(3.) Where men are resolved not to see, the greater the light is that shines about them the faster they must close their eyes. All atheism springs from a resolution not to see things invisible and eternal. Love of sin, a resolved continuance in the practice of it, the effectual power of vicious inclinations in opposition unto all that is good, make it the interest of such men that there should be no God to call them to an account; for a supreme, unavoidable judge, an eternal rewarder of good and evil, is inseparable from the first notion of a Divine Being. Whereas, therefore, the most glorious light and uncontrollable evidence of these things shines forth in the Scripture, men that will abide by their interest to love and live in sin must close their eyes with all the arts and powers that they have, or else it will pierce into their minds unto their torment. This they do by downright atheism, which alone pretends to give them security against the light of divine revelation. Against all other convictions they might take shelter from their fears under less degrees of it.

It is not, therefore, unto the disparagement but honor of the gospel that so many avow themselves to be atheists, in those places wherein the truth of it is known and professed; for none can have the least inclination or temptation thereunto until they have beforehand rejected the gospel, which immediately exposeth them unto the worst of evils.

Nor is there any means for the recovery of such persons. The opposition that hath been made unto atheism, with arguments for the divine being and existence of God, taken from reason and natural light, in this and other ages, hath been of good use to cast contempt on the pretenses of evil men to justify themselves in their folly; but that they have so much as changed the minds of any I much doubt. No man is under the power of atheistical thoughts, or can be so long, but he that is ensnared into them by his desire to live securely and uncontrollably in sin. Such persons know it to be their interest that there should be no God, and are willing to take shelter under the bold expressions and reasonings of them who by the same means have hardened and blinded their minds into such foolish thoughts. But the most rational arguments for the being of the Deity will never prove an effectual cure unto a predominant love of and habitual course in sin, in them who have resisted and rejected the means and motives unto that end declared in divine revelation; and unless the love of sin be cured in the heart, thoughts in the acknowledgment of God will not be fixed in the mind.

2. There are those of whom also it may be said that "God is not in all their thoughts," though they acknowledge his essence and being; for they are not practically influenced in any thing by the notions they have of him. Such is the person of whom this is affirmed, Psalm 10:4. He is one who, through pride and profligacy, with hardness in sin, regards not God in the rule of the world, verses 4,5,11,13. Such is the world filled withal at this day, as they are described, Titus 1:16,

"They profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

They think, they live, they act in all things as if there were no God, at least as if they never thought of him with fear and reverence. And, for the most part, we need not seek far for evidences of their disregard of God, — the "pride of their countenances testifies against them," Psalm 10:4; and if they are followed farther, cursed oaths,

licentiousness of life, and hatred of all that is good, will confirm and evidence the same. Such as these may own God in words, may be afraid of him in dangers, may attend outwardly on his worship; but they think not of God at all in a due manner, — "he is not in all their thoughts."

3. There are yet less degrees of this disregard of God and forgetfulness of him. Some are so filled with thoughts of the world and the occasions of life that it is impossible they should think of God as they ought; for as the love of God and the love of the world in prevalent degrees are inconsistent, (for if a man love this world, how dwelleth the love of God in him?) so thoughts of God and of the world in the like degree are inconsistent. This is the state of many, who yet would be esteemed spiritually minded: They are continually conversant in their minds about earthly things. Some things impose themselves on them under the notion of duty; they belong unto their callings, they must be attended unto. Some are suggested unto their minds from daily occasions and occurrences. Common converse in the world engageth men into no other but worldly thoughts. Love and desire of earthly things, their enjoyment and increase, exhaust the vigor of their spirits all the day long. In the midst of a multitude of thoughts, arising from these and the like occasions, whilst their hearts and heads are reeking with the steam of them, many fall immediately in their seasons unto the performance of holy duties. Those times must suffice for thoughts of God. But notwithstanding such duties, what through the want of a due preparation for them, what through the fullness of their minds and affections with other things, and what through a neglect of exercising grace in them, it may be said comparatively that "God is not in all their thoughts."

I pray God that this, at least as unto some degrees of it, be not the condition of many among us. I speak not now of men who visibly and openly live in sin, profane in their principles, and profligate in their lives. The prayers of such persons are an abomination unto the Lord, neither have they ever any thoughts of him which he doth accept. But I speak of them who are sober in their lives, industrious in their

callings, and not openly negligent about the outward duties of religion. Such men are apt to approve of themselves, and others also to speak well of them, for these things are in themselves commendable and praiseworthy; but if they are traced home, it will be found, as to many of them, that "God is not in all their thoughts" as he ought to be. Their earthly conversation, their vain communication, with their foolish designs, do all manifest that the vigor of their spirits and most intense contrivances of their minds are engaged unto things below. Some refuse, transient, unmanaged thoughts are sometimes cast away on God; which he despiseth.

4. Where persons do cherish secret predominant lusts in their hearts and lives, God is not in their thoughts as he ought to be. He may be, he often is, much in the words of such persons, but in their thoughts he is not, he cannot be, in a due manner. And such persons no doubt there are. Ever and anon we hear of one and another whose secret lusts break forth into a discovery. They flatter themselves for a season, but God oftentimes so orders things in his holy providence that their iniquity shall be found out to be hateful. Some hateful lust discovers itself to be predominant in them: one is drunken, another unclean, a third an oppressor. Such there were ever found among professors of the gospel, and that in the best of times: among the apostles one was a traitor, "a devil." Of the first professors of Christianity, there were those

"whose god was their belly, whose end was destruction, who minded earthly things," Philippians 3:18,19.

Some may take advantage of this acknowledgment that there are such evils among such as are called professors; and it must be confessed that great scandal is given hereby unto the world, casting both them that give it and them to whom it is given under a most dreadful woe: but we must bear the reproach of it as they did of old, and commit the issue of all things unto the watchful care of God. However, it is good in such a season to be jealous over ourselves and others, to "exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, lest any

be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," Hebrews 3:13. See chapter 12:13-17. And because those with whom it is thus cannot be spiritually minded, [and] yet are there some difficulties in the case, as unto the predominancy of a secret lust or sin, I shall consider it somewhat more distinctly: —

(1.) We must distinguish between a time of temptation in some and the ordinary state of mind and affections in others. There may be a season wherein God, in his holy, wise ordering of all things towards us, and for his own glory, in his holy, blessed ends, may suffer a lust or corruption to break loose in the heart, to strive, tempt, suggest, tumultuate, unto the great trouble and disquietude of the mind and conscience; neither can it be denied but that, falling in conjunction with some vigorous temptation, it may proceed so far as to surprise the person in whom it is into actual sin, unto his defilement and amazement. In this case no man can say, "I am tempted of God;" for "God tempteth no man, but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." But yet temptations, of what sort soever they be, so far as they are afflictive, corrective, or penal, are ordered and disposed by God himself; for there is no evil of that nature and he hath not done it. And where he will have the power of any corruption to be afflictive in any instance, two things may safely be ascribed to him: —

[1.] He withholds the supplies of that grace whereby it might be effectually mortified and subdued. He can give in a sufficiency of efficacious grace to repel any temptation, to subdue any or all our lusts and sins; for he can and doth work in us to will and to do according to his pleasure. Ordinarily he doth so in them that believe; so that although their lusts may rebel and war, they cannot defile or prevail. But unto the continual supplies of this actual prevailing grace he is not obliged. When it may have a tendency unto his holy ends, he may and doth withhold it. When, it may be, a proud soul is to be humbled, a careless soul to be awakened, an unthankful soul to be convinced and rebuked, a backsliding soul to be recovered, a froward, selfish, passionate soul to be broken and meekened, he can

leave them for a season unto the sore exercise of a prevalent corruption; which, under his holy guidance, shall contribute greatly unto his blessed ends. It was so in the temptation of Paul, 2 Corinthians 12:7-9. If a man, through disorder and excesses, is contracting many habitual distempers of body, which gradually and insensibly tend unto his death, it may be an advantage to be cast into a violent fever, which threatens immediately to take away his life; for he will hereby be thoroughly awakened unto the consideration of his danger, and not only labor to be freed from his fever, but also for the future to watch against those disorders and excesses which cast him into that condition. And sometimes a loose, careless soul, that walks in a secure, formal profession, contracts many spiritual diseases, which tend unto death and ruin. No arguments or considerations can prevail with him to awaken himself, to "shake himself out of the dust," and to betake himself unto a more diligent and humble walking before God. In this state, it may be, through the permission of God, he is surprised into some open, actual sin. Hereon, through the vigorous actings of an enlightened conscience, and the stirrings of any sparks of grace which yet remain, he is amazed, terrified, and stirs up himself to seek after deliverance.

[2.] God may and doth in his providence administer objects and occasions of men's lusts, for their trial. He will place them in such relations, in such circumstances, as shall be apt to provoke their affections, passions, desires, and inclinations, unto those objects that are suited unto them.

In this state any lust will quickly get such power in the mind and affections as to manage continual solicitations unto sin. It will not only dispose the affections towards it, but multiply thoughts about it, and darken the mind as unto those considerations which ought to prevail unto its mortification. In this condition it is hard to conceive how God should be in the thoughts of man in a due manner. However, this state is very different from the habitual prevalency of any secret sin or corruption in the ordinary course of men's walking in the world, and therefore I do not directly intend it. If any one shall



inquire how we may know this difference, namely, that is between the occasional prevalency of any lust or corruption in conjunction with a temptation, and the power of sin in any instance habitually and constantly complied withal, or indulged in the mind, I answer, —

1st. It is no great matter whether we are able to distinguish between them or no; for the end why God suffers any corruption to be such a snare and temptation, such a thorn and brier, is, to awaken the souls of men out of their security, and to humble them for their pride and negligence. The more severe their apprehensions concerning it, the more effectual it will be unto this end and purpose. It is good, it may be, that the soul should apprehend more of what is sinful in it as it is a corruption than of what is afflictive in it as it is a temptation; for if it be conceived as a predominant lust, if there be any spark of grace remaining in the soul, it will not rest until in some measure it be subdued. It will also immediately put it upon a diligent search into itself, which will issue in deep self-abasement, the principal end designed. But, —

2dly. For the relief of them that may be perplexed in their minds about their state and condition, I say there is an apparent difference between these things. A lust or corruption arising up or breaking forth into a violent temptation is the continual burden, grief, and affliction of the soul wherein it is. And as the temptation, for the most part, which befalls such a person will give him no rest from its reiterated solicitations, so he will give the temptation no rest, but will be continually conflicting with it and contending against it. It fills the soul with an amazement at itself and continual self-abhorrency, that any such seeds of filth and folly should be yet remaining in it. With them in whom any sin is ordinarily prevalent it is otherwise. According to their light and renewed occasional convictions, they have trouble about it; they cannot but have so, unless their consciences are utterly seared. But this trouble respects principally, if not solely, its guilt and effects. They know not what may ensue on their compliance with it, in this world and another. Beyond this they

like it well enough, and are not willing to part with it. It is this latter sea of persons of whom we speak at present.

(2.) We must distinguish between the perplexing solicitation of any lust and the conquering predominancy of it. The evil that is present with us will be soliciting and pressing unto sin of its own accord, even where there is no such especial temptation as that spoken of before. So is the case stated, so are the nature and operations of it described, Romans 7, Galatians 5:17. And sometimes an especial, particular lust may be so warmed and fomented by men's constitutions within, or be so exposed unto provoking, exciting occasions without, as to bring perpetual trouble on the mind; yet this may be where no sin hath the predominancy inquired after. And the difference between the perplexing solicitation of any corruption unto sin and the conquering prevalency of it lies in this, that under the former, the thoughts, contrivances, and actings of the mind, are generally disposed and inclined unto an opposition unto it, and a conflict with it, how it may be obviated, defeated, destroyed, how an absolute victory may be obtained against it; yea, death itself is sweet unto such persons, under this notion, as it is that which will deliver them from the perplexing power of their corruptions. So is the state of such a soul at large represented, Romans 7. In the other case, namely, of its predominancy, it disposeth of the thoughts actually, for the most part, to make provision for the flesh, and to fulfill it in the lusts thereof. It fills the mind with pleasing contemplations of its object, and puts it on contrivances for satisfaction; yea, part of the bitterness of death unto such persons is, that it will make an everlasting separation between them and the satisfaction they have received in their lusts. It is bitter in the thoughts of it unto a worldly-minded man, because it will take him from all his enjoyments, his wealth, profits, and advantages. It is so unto the sensual person, as that which finally determines all his pleasures.

(3.) There is a difference in the degrees of such a predominant corruption. In some it taints the affections, vitiates the thoughts, and works over the will unto acts of a secret complacency in sin, but

proceeds no farther. The whole mind may be vitiated by it, and rendered, in the multitude of its thoughts, vain, sensual, or worldly, according as is the nature of the prevailing corruption; yet here God puts bounds unto the raging of some men's corruptions, and says to their proud waves, "Thus far shall ye proceed, and no farther." He either lays a restraint on their minds, that when lust hath fully conceived it shall not bring forth sin, or he sets a hedge before them in his providence, that they shall not be able in their circumstances to find their way unto what perhaps they do most earnestly desire. A woful life it is that such persons lead. They are continually tortured between their corruptions and convictions, or the love of sin and fear of the event. With others it pursues its course into outward actual sins: which in some are discovered in this world, in others they are not; for some men's sins go before them unto judgment, and some follow after. Some fall into sin upon surprisal, from a concurrence of temptation with corruption and opportunities. Some habituate themselves unto a course in sin. Though in many it be not discovered, in some it is. But among those who have received any spiritual light, and made profession of religion thereon, this seldom falls out but from the great displeasure of God; for when men have long given way unto the prevalency of sin in their affections, inclinations, and thoughts, and God hath set many a hedge before them to give bounds unto their inclinations and to shut up the womb of sin, sometimes by afflictions, sometimes by fears and dangers, sometimes by the word, and yet the bent of their spirits is towards their sin, God takes off his hand of restraint, removes his hinderances, and gives them up unto their own hearts' lusts, to do the things that are not convenient. All things hereon suit their desires, and they rush into actual sins and follies, setting their feet in the paths that go down to the chambers of death. The uncontrollable power of sin in such persons, and the greatness of God's displeasure against them, make their condition most deplorable.

Those that are in this state, of either sort, the first or the latter, are remote from being spiritually minded, nor is "God in all their thoughts" as he ought to be; for, —

First, They will not so think and meditate on God. Their delight is turned another way. Their affections, which are the spring of their thoughts, which feed them continually, do cleave unto the things which are most adverse unto him. Love of sin is gotten to be the spring in them, and the whole stream of the thoughts which they choose and delight in are towards the pleasures of it. If any thoughts of God come in, as a faint tide for a few minutes, and drive back the other stream, they are quickly repelled and carried away with the strong current of those which proceed from their powerful inclinations. Yet may such persons abide in the performance of outward holy duties, or attendance unto them. Pride of, or satisfaction in, their gifts may give them delight in their own performances, and something in those of others they may be exceedingly pleased withal, as it is expressly affirmed, Ezekiel 33:31,32. But in these things they have no immediate real thoughts of God, none that they delight in, none that they seek to stir up in themselves; and those which impose themselves on them they reject.

Secondly, As they will not, so they dare not, think of God. They will not, because of the power of their lusts; they dare not, because of their guilt. No sooner should they begin to think of him in good earnest, but their sin would lose all its desirable forms and appearances, and represent itself in the horror of guilt alone. And in that condition all the properties of the divine nature are suited to increase the dread and terror of the sinner. Adam had heard God's voice before with delight and satisfaction; but on the hearing of the same voice after he had sinned, he hid himself and cried that he was afraid. There is a way for men to think of God with the guilt of sin upon them which they intend to forsake, but none for any to do it with the guilt of sin which they resolve to continue in. Wherefore, of all these sorts of persons it may be said that "God is not in all their thoughts," and therefore are they far enough from being spiritually minded; for unless we have many thoughts of God we cannot be so. Yea, moreover, there are two things required unto those thoughts which we have of God, that there be an evidence of our being so: —

[1.] That we take delight in them: Psalm 30:4,

"Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."

The remembrance of God delighteth and refresheth the hearts of his saints, and stirs them up unto thankfulness: —

1st. They rejoice in what God is in himself. Whatever is good, amiable, or desirable; whatever is holy, just, and powerful; whatever is gracious, wise, and merciful, and all that is so, — they see and apprehend in God. That God is what he is, is the matter of their chiefest joy. Whatever befalls them in this world, whatever troubles and disquietment they are exercised withal, the remembrance of God is a satisfactory refreshment unto them; for therein they behold all that is good and excellent, the infinite center of all perfections. Wicked men would have God to be any thing but what he is; nothing that God is really and truly pleaseth them. Wherefore, they either frame false notions of him in their minds, as Psalm 1:21, or they think not of him at all, at least [not] as they ought, unless sometimes they tremble at his anger and power. Some benefit they suppose may be had by what he can do, but how there can be any delight in what he is they know not; yea, all their trouble ariseth from hence, that he is what he is. It would be a relief unto them if they could make any abatement of his power, his holiness, his righteousness, his omnipresence; but his saints, as the psalmist speaks, "give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."

And when we can delight in the thoughts of what God is in himself, of his infinite excellencies and perfections, it gives us a threefold evidence of our being spiritually minded: —

(1st.) In that it is such an evidence that we have a gracious interest in those excellencies and perfections, whereon we can say with rejoicing in ourselves, "This God," thus holy, thus powerful, thus just, good, and gracious, "is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide unto

death." So the psalmist, under the consideration of his own frailty and apprehensions of death in the midst of his years, comforts and refresheth himself with thoughts of God's eternity and immutability, with his interest in them, Psalm 102:23-28. And God himself proposeth unto us his infinite immutability as the ground whereon we may expect safety and deliverance, Malachi 3:6. When we can thus think of God and of what he is with delight, it is, I say, an evidence that we have a gracious covenant interest even in what God is in himself; which none have but those who are spiritually minded.

(2dly.) It is an evidence that the image of God is begun to be wrought in our own souls, and that we approve of and rejoice in it more than in all other things whatever. Whatever notions men may have of the divine goodness, holiness, righteousness, and purity, they are all but barren, jejune, and fruitless, unless there be a similitude and conformity unto them wrought in their minds and souls. Without this they cannot rejoice in the thoughts and remembrance of the divine excellencies. Wherefore, when we can do so, when such meditations of God are sweet unto us, it is an evidence that we have some experience in ourselves of the excellency of the image of those perfections, and that we rejoice in them above all things in this world.

(3dly.) They are so also in that they manifest that we do discern and judge that our eternal blessedness doth consist in the full manifestation and our enjoyment of God in what he is, and of all his divine excellencies. This men for the most part take for granted, but how it should be so they know not. They understand it in some measure whose hearts are here deeply affected with delight in them; they are able to believe that the manifestation and enjoyment of the divine excellencies will give eternal rest, satisfaction, and complacency unto their souls. No wicked man can look upon it otherwise than as a torment, to abide for ever with "eternal holiness," Isaiah 33:14. And we ourselves can have no present prospect into the fullness of future glory, when God shall be all in all, but through the

delight and satisfaction which we have here in the contemplation of what God is in himself as the center of all divine perfections.

I would therefore press this unknown, this neglected duty on the minds of those of us in an especial manner who are visibly drawing nigh unto eternity. The days are coming wherein what God is in himself (that is, as manifested and exhibited in Christ), shall alone be, as we hope, the eternal blessedness and reward of our souls. Is it possible that any thing should be more necessary for us, more useful unto us, than to be exercised in such thoughts and contemplations? The benefits we may have hereby are not to be reckoned; some of them only may be named: as, —

[1st.] We shall have the best trial of ourselves how our hearts really stand affected towards God; for if upon examination we find ourselves not really to delight and rejoice in God for what he is in himself, and that all perfections are eternally resident in him, how dwelleth the love of God in us? But if we can truly "rejoice at the remembrance of his holiness," in the thoughts of what he is, our hearts are upright with him.

[2dly.] This is that which will effectually take off our thoughts and affections from things here below. One spiritual view of the divine goodness, beauty, and holiness, will have more efficacy to raise the heart unto a contempt of all earthly things than any other evidences whatever.

[3dly.] It will increase the grace of being heavenly minded in us, on the grounds before declared.

[4thly.] It is the best, I had almost said it is the only, preparation for the future full enjoyment of God. This will gradually lead us into his presence, take away all fears of death, increase our longing after eternal rest, and ever make us groan to be unclothed. Let us not, then, cease laboring with our hearts, until, through grace, we have a

spiritually-sensible delight and joy in the remembrances and thoughts of what God is in himself.

2dly. In thoughts of God, his saints rejoice at the remembrance of what he is, and what he will be unto them. Herein have they regard unto all the holy relations that he hath taken on himself towards them, with all the effects of his covenant in Christ Jesus. To that purpose were some of the last words of David: 2 Samuel 23:5,

"Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire."

In the prospect he had of all the distresses that were to befall his family, he triumphantly rejoiced in the everlasting covenant that God had made with him. In these thoughts his saints take delight; they are sweet unto them, and full of refreshment: "Their meditations of him are sweet," and they are "glad in the LORD," Psalm 104:34. Thus is it with them that are truly spiritually minded. They not only think much of God, but they take delight in these thoughts, — they are sweet unto them; and not only so, but they have no solid joy or delight but in their thoughts of God, which therefore they retreat unto continually. They do so especially on great occasions, which of themselves are apt to divert them from them. As suppose a man hath received a signal mercy, with the matter whereof he is exceedingly affected and delighted; the minds of some men are apt on such occasions to be filled with thoughts of what they have received, and their affections to be wholly taken up with it, but he who is spiritually minded will immediately retreat unto thoughts of God, placing his delight and taking up his satisfaction in him. And so, on the other side, great distresses, prevalent sorrows, strong pains, violent distempers, are apt of themselves to take up and exercise all the thoughts of men about them; but those who are spiritually minded will in and under them all continually betake themselves unto thoughts of God, wherein they find relief and refreshment against all



that they feel or fear. In every state, their principal joy is in "the remembrance of his holiness."

[2.] That they be accompanied with godly fear and reverence. These are required of us in all wherein we have to do with God, Hebrews 12:28,29; and as the Scripture doth not more abound with precepts unto any duty, so the nature of God and our own, with the infinite distance between them, make it indispensably necessary even in the light of the natural conscience. Infinite greatness, infinite holiness, infinite power, all which God is, command the utmost reverential fear that our natures are capable of. The want hereof is the spring of innumerable evils; yea, indeed, of all that is so. Hence are blasphemous abuses of the holy name of God in cursed oaths and execrations; hence it is taken in vain, in ordinary exclamations; hence is all formality in religion.

It is the spiritual mind alone that can reconcile those things which are prescribed to us as our duty towards God. "To delight and rejoice in him always, to triumph in the remembrance of him, to draw nigh unto him with boldness and confidence," are on the one hand prescribed unto us; and on the other it is so "that we fear and tremble before him, that we fear that great and dreadful name the LORD our God, that we have grace to serve him with reverence and godly fear, because he is a consuming fire." These things carnal reason can comprehend no consistency in; — what it is afraid of it cannot delight in; and what it delights in it will not long fear. But the consideration of faith, concerning what God is in himself, and what he will be unto us, gives these different graces their distinct operations, and a blessed reconciliation in our souls. Wherefore, all our thoughts of God ought to be accompanied with a holy awe and reverence, from a due sense of his greatness, holiness, and power. Two things will utterly vitiate all thoughts of God and render them useless unto us, — vain curiosity and carnal boldness.

1st. It is unimaginable how the subtle disquisitions and disputes of men about the nature, properties, and counsels of God, have been

corrupted, rendered sapless and useless, by vain curiosity, and striving for an artificial accuracy in the expression of men's apprehensions. When the wits and minds of men are engaged in such thoughts, "God is not in all their thoughts," even when all their thoughts are concerning him. When once men are got into their metaphysical curiosities and logical niceties in their contemplations about God and his divine properties, they bid farewell, for the most part, unto all godly fear and reverence.

2dly. Others are so under the power of carnal boldness, that they think of God with no other respect than if they thought of worms of the earth like themselves. There is no holy awfulness upon their minds and souls in the mention of his name. By these things may our thoughts of God be so vitiated that the heart shall not in them be affected with a reverence of him, nor any evidence be given that we are spiritually minded.

It is this holy reverence that is the means of bringing in sanctifying virtue into our souls from God, upon our thoughts of him. None that thinks of God with a due reverence but he shall be sensible of advantage by it. Hereby do we sanctify God in our access unto him; and when we do so, he will sanctify and purify our hearts by those very thoughts in which we draw nigh to him.

We may have many sudden, occasional, transient thoughts of God, that are not introduced into our minds by a preceding reverential fear; but if they leave not that fear on our hearts in proportion unto their continuance with us, they are of no value, but will insensibly habituate us unto a common, bold frame of spirit, which he despises.

So is it in the case of thoughts of a contrary nature. Thoughts of sin, of sinful objects, may arise in our minds from the remainders of corruption, or be occasioned by the temptations and suggestions of Satan. If these are immediately rejected and cast out of us, the soul is not more prejudiced by their entrance than it is advantaged by their rejection, through the power of grace. But if they make frequent

returns into the minds of men, or make any abode or continuance in their soliciting of the affections, they greatly defile the mind and conscience, disposing the person unto the farther entertainment of them. So, if our occasional thoughts of God do immediately leave us, and pass away without much affecting our minds, we shall have little or no benefit by them; but if, by their frequent visits and some continuance with us, they dispose our souls unto a holy reverence of God, they are a blessed means of promoting our sanctification. Without this, I say, there may be thoughts of God unto no advantage of the soul.

There is implanted on our nature such a sense of a divine Power and Presence as that on all sudden occasions and surprisals it will act itself according unto that sense and apprehension. There is "*vox naturae clamantis ad Dominum naturae*," — a voice in nature itself, upon any thing that is suddenly too hard for it, which cries out immediately unto the God of nature. So men, on such occasions, without any consideration, are surprised into a calling on the name of God and crying unto him. And from the same natural apprehension it is that wicked and profane persons will break forth on all occasions into cursed swearing by his name. So men in such ways have thoughts of God without either reverence or godly fear, without giving any glory unto him, and, for the most part, unto their own disadvantage. Such are all thoughts of God that are not accompanied with holy fear and reverence.

There is scarce any duty that ought at present to be more pressed on the consciences of men than this of keeping up a constant holy reverence of God in all wherein they have to do with him, both in private and public, in their inward thoughts and outward communication. Formality hath so prevailed on religion, and that under the most effectual means of its suppression, that very many do manifest that they have little or no reverence of God in the most solemn duties of his worship, and less, it may be, in their secret thoughts. Some ways that have been found out to keep up a pretense and appearance of it have been and are destructive unto it.

But herein consists the very life of all religion. The fear of God is, in the Old Testament, the usual expression of all the due respect of our souls unto him, and that because where that is not in exercise, nothing is accepted with him. And hence the whole of our wisdom is said to consist therein; and if it be not in a prevalent exercise in all wherein we have to do with him immediately, all our duties are utterly lost, as to the ends of his glory and the spiritual advantage of our own souls.

## CHAPTER IX.

**What of God or in God we are to think and meditate upon — His being — Reasons of it; oppositions to it; the way of their conquest — Thoughts of the omnipresence and omniscience of God peculiarly necessary — The reasons hereof — As also of his omnipotence — The use and benefit of such thoughts.**

THESE things mentioned have been premised in general as unto the nature, manner, and way of exercise, of our thoughts on God. That which remains is, to give some particular instances of what we are to think upon in an especial manner, and what we will be conversant withal in our thoughts, if so be we are spiritually minded. And I shall not insist at present on the things which concern his grace and love in Christ Jesus, which belong unto another head, but on those which have an immediate respect unto the divine nature itself, and its holy essential properties.

First, Think much of the being and existence of God. Herein lies the foundation of all our relation and access unto him: Hebrews 11:6, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." This is the first object of faith, and it is the first act of reason; and being the sole foundation of all religion, it is our duty to be exercised unto multiplied thoughts about it, renewed on all occasions: for many who are not direct atheists, yet live without any solid, well-grounded assent unto the divine being; they do not so believe it as to be practically influenced with the consideration of it. It is granted that the inbred light of nature, in the due exercise of reason, will give any rational creature satisfaction in the being of God; but there is in the most an anticipation of any thoughts of this nature by tradition and education, which hath united men into an assent unto it they know not how. They never called it into question, nor have, as they suppose, any cause so to do. Nature itself startles at the first thought

of denying it. But if ever such persons, on any urgent occasions, come to have real thoughts about it, they are at a loss and fluctuate in their minds, as not having any certain, indubitable conviction of its truth. Wherefore, as our knowledge of the Divine Being is, as to the foundation of it, laid in the light of nature, the operation of conscience, and the due exercise of reason about the works and effects of infinite power and wisdom, so it ought to be increased and rendered useful by faith in divine revelations, and the experience of divine power through them. By this faith we ought to let in frequent thoughts of the divine being and existence, and that on two reasons, rendering the duty necessary in an eminent manner in this age wherein we live: —

1. The abounding of atheism, both notional and practical. The reasons of it have been given before, and the matter of fact is evident unto any ordinary observation. And on two accounts with respect hereunto we ought to abound in thoughts of faith concerning the being of God: —

(1.) An especial testimony is required in us in opposition to this cursed effect of hell. He, therefore, who is spiritually minded, cannot but have many thoughts of the being of God, thereby giving glory to him: Isaiah 43:9-12,

"Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth. Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no savior. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God."

Chap. 44:8,

"Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any."

(2.) We shall have occasion of them continually administered unto us. Those atheistical impieties, principles and practices, which abound amongst us, are grievous provocations unto all pious souls. Without frequent retreat unto thoughts of the being of God, there is no relief nor refreshment to be had under them. Such was the case of Noah in the old world, and of Lot in Sodom; which rendered their graces illustrious.

2. Because of the unaccountable confusions that all things are filled withal at this day in the world. Whatever in former times hath been a temptation in human affairs unto any of the people of God, it abounds at this day. Never had men profane and profligate greater outward appearances to strengthen them in their atheism, nor those that are godly greater trials for their faith, with respect unto the visible state of things in the world. The psalmist of old on such an occasion was almost surprised into unbelieving complaints, Psalm 123:2-5, etc.; and such surprisals may now also befall us, that we may be ready to say with him,

"Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning."

Hence, when the prophet Habakkuk was exercised with thoughts about such a state of things as is at this day in the world, which he declares, chap. 1:6-10, he lays the foundation of his consideration in the fresh exercise of faith on the being and properties of God, verses 12,13; and David makes that his retreat on the like occasion, Psalm 11:3-5.

In such a season as this is, upon both the accounts mentioned, those who are spiritually minded will much exercise their thoughts about the being and existence of God. They will say within themselves, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God who judgeth in the earth." Hence will follow such apprehensions of the immensity of his nature, of his eternal power and infinite wisdom, of his absolute sovereignty, as will hold their souls firm and steadfast in the highest storms of temptation that may befall them.

Yet are there two things that the weaker sort of believers may be exercised with, in their thoughts of the divine being and existence, which may occasion them some trouble: —

(1.) Satan, knowing the weakness of our minds in the immediate contemplation of things infinite and incomprehensible, will sometimes take advantage to insinuate blasphemous imaginations in opposition unto what we would fix upon and relieve ourselves withal. He will take that very time, trusting unto our weakness and his own methods of subtlety, to suggest his temptations unto atheism by ensnaring inquiries, when we go about to refresh our souls with thoughts of the divine being and excellencies, "But is there a God indeed? how do you know that there is a God? and may it not be otherwise?" will be his language unto our minds; for from his first temptation, by way of an ensnaring question, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" he proceeds still much in the same method. So he did with our Savior himself, "If thou be the Son of God." "Is there a God? how if there should be none?" In such a case the rule is given us by the apostle: "Above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked," Ephesians 6:16, \_\_\_\_\_, "of the wicked one;" that is, the devil. And two ways will faith act itself on this occasion: —

[1.] By a speedy rejection of such diabolical suggestions with detestation. So did our Savior in a case not unlike it: "Get thee behind me, Satan." Wherefore, if any such thoughts are suggested or seem to arise in your minds, know assuredly that they are no less



immediately from the devil than if he personally stood before you and visibly appeared unto you. If he did so, there is none of you but would arm yourselves with an utter defiance of what he should offer unto you. It is no less necessary on this occasion, when you may feel him, though you may see him not. Suffer not his fiery darts to abide one moment with you; entertain no parley or dispute about them; reject them with indignation; and strengthen your rejection of them with some pertinent testimony of Scripture, as our Savior did. If a man have a grenado or fire-ball cast into his clothes by his enemy, he doth not consider whether it will burn or no, but immediately shakes it off from him. Deal no otherwise with these fiery darts, lest by their abode with you they inflame your imagination unto greater disturbance.

[2.] In case they depart not utterly upon this endeavor for their exclusion and casting out, return immediately without farther dispute unto your own experience. When the devil hath asked you the question, if you answer him you will be ensnared; but if thereon you ask yourselves the question, and apply yourselves unto your own experience for an answer unto it, you will frustrate all his designs.

There are arguments to be taken, as was said, from the light of nature, and reason in its proper exercise, sufficient to defeat all objections of that kind; but these are not our proper weapons in case of our own temptation, which alone is now under consideration. It requires longer and more sedate reasoning than such a state will admit of; nor is it a sanctified medium for our relief.

It is what is suited unto suggestions on the occasion of our meditations that we inquire after. In them we are not to argue on such principles, but to take the shield of faith to quench these fiery darts. And if, on such occasions, Satan can divert us into long disputes about the being of God, he hath his end, by carrying us off from the meditation on him which we did design; and after a while he will prevail to make it a common road and trade, that no sooner

shall we begin to think of God but immediately we must dispute about his being.

Therefore the way in this case, for him who is really a believer, is, to retreat immediately unto his own experience; which will pour shame and contempt on the suggestions of Satan. There is no believer, who hath knowledge and time to exercise the wisdom of faith in the consideration of himself and of God's dealings with him, but hath a witness in himself of his eternal power and Godhead, as also of all those other perfections of his nature which he is pleased to manifest and glorify by Jesus Christ. Wherefore, on this suggestion of Satan that there is no God, he will be able to say, "He might better tell me that I do not live nor breathe, that I am not fed by my meat nor warmed by my clothes, that I know not myself nor any thing else; for I have spiritual sense and experience of the contrary:" like him of old, who, when a cunning sophister would prove unto him by syllogisms that there was no such a thing as motion, gave no answer unto his arguments, but rose up and walked! "How often," will he say, "have I had experience of the power and presence of God in prayer, as though I had not only heard of him by the hearing of the ear, but also seen him by the seeing of the eye! How often hath he put forth his power and grace in me by his Spirit and his word, with an uncontrollable evidence of his being, goodness, love, and grace! How often hath he refreshed my conscience with the sense of the pardon of sin, speaking that peace unto my soul which all the world could not communicate unto me! In how many afflictions, dangers, troubles, hath he been a present help and relief! What sensible emanations of life and power from him have I obtained in meditation on his grace and glory!" As he who had been blind answered the Pharisees unto their ensnaring and captious questions, "Be it what it will, 'one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see:'" so, "Whatever," saith such a soul, "be in this temptation of Satan, one thing I know full well, that whereas I was dead, I am alive, whereas I was blind, now I see, and that by the effect of divine power."

This shield of faith, managed in the hand of experience, will quench the fiery darts of Satan, and he will fall under a double defeat: —

1st. His temptations will be repelled by the proper way of resistance, whereon he will not only desist in his attempt, but even flee from you. "Resist the devil," saith the apostle, "and he will flee from you." He will not only depart and cease to trouble you, but will depart as one defeated and confounded. And it is for want of this resistance, lively made use of, that many hang so long in the briers of this temptation.

2dly. Recalling the experiences we have had of God will lead us unto the exercise of all kind of graces; which is the greatest disappointment of our adversary.

(2.) In thoughts of the divine being and existence, we are apt to be at a loss, to be as it were overwhelmed in our minds, because the object is too great and glorious for us to contemplate on. Eternity and immensity, every thing under the notion of infinite, take off the mind from its distinct actings, and reduce it as it were unto nothing. Hereon in some, not able to abide in the strict reasons of things, vain and foolish imaginations are apt to arise, and inquiries how those things can be which we cannot comprehend. Others are utterly at a loss, and turn away their thoughts from them, as they would do their eyes from the bright beams of the sun. Two things are advisable in this case: —

[1.] That we betake ourselves unto a holy admiration of what we cannot comprehend. In these things we cannot see God and live; nay, in life eternal itself they are not absolutely to be comprehended. Only what is infinite can fully comprehend what is so. Here they are the objects of faith and worship; in them we may find rest and satisfaction when inquiries and reasonings will disquiet us, and, it may be, overwhelm us. Infinite glory forbids us any near approach but only by faith. The soul thereby bowing down itself unto God's adorable greatness and incomprehensible perfections, finding

ourselves to be nothing and God to be all, will give us rest and peace in these things, Romans 11:33-36. We have but unsteady thoughts of the greatness of the world and all the nations and inhabitants of it; yet are both it and these "but as the small dust of the balance and the drop of a bucket, as vanity, as nothing," compared with God. What, then, can our thoughts concerning him issue in but holy admiration?

[2.] In case we are brought unto a loss and disorder in our minds on the contemplation of any one infinite property of God, it is good to divert our thoughts unto the effects of it, such as whereof we have or may have experience; for what is too great or high for us in itself is made suitable to our understandings in its effects. So the "invisible things of God" are known in and by the things that are seen. And there is, indeed, no property of the divine nature but we may have an experience of it, as unto some of its effects, in and upon ourselves. These we may consider, and in the streams taste of the fountain which we cannot approach. By them we may be led unto a holy admiration of what is in itself infinite, immense, incomprehensible. I cannot comprehend the immensity of God's nature; it may be I cannot understand the nature of immensity: yet if I find by experience, and do strongly believe, that he is always present wherever I am, I have the faith of it and satisfaction in it.

Secondly, With thoughts of the Divine Being, those of his omnipresence and omniscience ought continually to accompany us. We cannot take one step in a walk before him unless we remember that always and in all places he is present with us, that the frame of our hearts and our inward thoughts are continually in his view, no less than our outward actions. And as we ought to be perpetually under an awe of and in the fear of God in these apprehensions, so there are some seasons wherein our minds ought to be in the actual conception and thoughts of them, without which we shall not be preserved in our duty.

1. The first season of this nature is when times, places, with other occasions of temptation, and consequently of sinning, do come and

meet. With some, company doth constitute such a season; and with some, secrecy with opportunity do the same. There are those who are ready, with a careless boldness, to put themselves on such societies as they do know have been temptations unto them and occasions of sin. Every such entrance into any society or company, unto them who know how it hath formerly succeeded, is their actual sin; and it is just with God to leave them to all the evil consequents that do ensue. Others, also, do either choose or are frequently cast on such societies; and no sooner are they engaged in them but they forget all regard unto God, and give themselves up not only unto vanity, but unto various sorts of excess. David knew the evil and danger of such occasions, and gives us an account of his behavior in them: Psalm 39:1-3,

"I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue."

As for their evil words and ways, he would have no communication with them; and as unto good discourse, he judged it unreasonable to "cast pearls before swine." He was therefore silent as unto that also, though it was a grief and trouble to him. But this occasioned in him afterward those excellent meditations which he expresseth in the following verses. In the entrance of these occasions, if men would remember the presence of God with them in these places, with the holy severity of the eye that is upon them, it would put an awe upon their spirits, and imbitter those jollities whose relish is given them by temptation and sin. He doth neither walk humbly nor circumspectly who, being necessarily cast on the society of men wicked or profane, — on such occasions wherein the ordinary sort of men give more than ordinary liberty unto corrupt communication or excess in any kind, — doth not in his entrance of them call to mind the presence and all-seeing eye of God, and at his departure from them consider

whether his deportment hath been such as became that presence and his being under that eye. But, alas! pretenses of business and necessary occasions, engagements of trade, carnal relations, and the common course of communication in the world, with a supposition that all sorts of society are allowed for diversion, have cast out the remembrance of God from the minds of most, even then when men cannot be preserved from sin without it.

This hath sullied the beauty of gospel conversation amongst the most, and left in very few any prevalent evidence of being spiritually minded.

Wherefore, as unto them who, either by their voluntary choice or necessity of their occasions, do enter and engage promiscuously into all societies and companies, let them know assuredly that if they awe not their hearts and spirits continually with the thoughts and apprehensions of the omnipresence and omniscience of God, that he is always with them and his eye always upon them, they will not be preserved from snares and sinful miscarriages.

Yea, such thoughts are needful unto the best of us all, and in the best of our societies, that we behave not ourselves indecently in them at any time.

Again; unto some, privacy, secrecy, and opportunity, are occasions of temptation and sin. They are so unto persons under convictions, not wholly turned to God. Many a good beginning hath been utterly ruined by this occasion and temptation. Privacy and opportunity have overthrown many such persons in the best of their resolutions. And they are so unto all persons not yet flagitiously wicked. Cursed fruits proceed every day from these occasions. We need no other demonstration of their power and efficacy in tempting unto sin but the visible effects of them. And what they are unto any, they may be unto all, if not diligently watched against. So the apostle reflects on the shameful things that are done in the dark, in a concurrence of secrecy and opportunity. This, therefore, gives a just season unto

thoughts of the omnipresence and omniscience of God, and they will not be wanting in some measure in them that are spiritually minded.

God is in this place; the darkness is no darkness unto him, light and darkness are with him both alike, — are sufficient considerations to lay in the balance against any temptation springing out of secrecy and opportunity. One thought of the actual presence of the holy God and the open view of his all-seeing eye will do more to cool those affections which lust may put into a tumult on such occasions than any other consideration whatever. A speedy retreat hereunto, upon the first perplexing thought wherewith temptation assaults the soul, will be its strong tower, where it shall be safe.

2. A second season calling for the exercise of our minds in thoughts of the omnipresence and omniscience of God is made up of our solitudes and retirements. These give us the most genuine trials whether we are spiritually minded or no. What we are in them, that we are, and no more. But yet in some of them, as in walking and journeying, or the like, vain thoughts and foolish imaginations are exceeding apt to solicit our minds. Whatever is stored up in the affections or memory will at such a time offer itself for our present entertainment; and when men have accustomed themselves unto any sort of things, they will press on them for the possession of their thoughts, as it were whether they will or no. The psalmist gives us the way to prevent this evil: Psalm 16:7,8,

"I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand," etc.

His "reins," — that is, his affections and secret thoughts, — gave him counsel and instructed him in all such seasons. But whence had they that wisdom and faithfulness? In themselves they are the seat of all lusts and corruptions, nor could do any thing but seduce him into an evil frame. It was from hence alone, that "he set the LORD always before him." Continual apprehensions of the presence of God with

him kept his mind, his heart and affections, in that awe and reverence of him as that they always instructed him unto his duty. But, as I remember, I spake somewhat as unto the due management of our thoughts in this season before.

3. Times of great difficulties, dangers, and perplexities of mind thereon, are a season calling for the same duty. Suppose a man is left alone in his trials for the profession of the gospel, as it was with Paul, when "all men forsook him, and no man stood by him;" suppose him to be brought before princes, rulers, or judges, that are failed with rage and armed with power against him, all things being disposed to affect him with dread and terror; — it is the duty of such an one to call off his thoughts from all things visibly present, and to fix them on the omnipresence and omniscience of God. He sits amongst those judges, though they acknowledge him not; he rules over them at his pleasure; he knows the cause of the oppressed, and justifies them whenever the world condemns, and can deliver them when he pleaseth. With the thoughts hereof did those holy souls support themselves when they stood before the fiery countenance of the bloody tyrant on the one hand, and the burning fiery furnace on the other: Daniel 3:17,18,

"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Thoughts of the presence and power of God gave them not only comfort and supportment under their distress, when they were alone and helpless, but courage and resolution to defy the tyrant to his face. And when the apostle was brought before Nero, that monster of cruelty and villainy, and "all men forsook him," he affirms that "the Lord stood by him and strengthened him," 2 Timothy 4:17. He refreshed himself with thoughts of his presence, and had the blessed fruit of it.



Wherefore, on such occasions, when the hearts of men are ready to quake, when they see all things about them filled with dread and terror, and all help far away, it is, I say, their duty and wisdom to abstract and take off their thoughts from all outward and present appearances, and to fix them on the presence of God. This will greatly change the scene of things in their minds, and they will find that strength, and power, and wisdom, are on their side alone, all that appears against them being but vanity, folly, and weakness.

So when the servant of Elisha saw the place where they were compassed with a host, both horses and chariots, that came to take them, he cried out for fear, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" But upon the prayer of the prophet, the Lord opening the eyes of the young man to see the heavenly guard that he had sent unto him, the mountain being full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha, his fear and trouble departed, 2 Kings 6:15-17. And when, in the like extremity, God opens the eye of faith to behold his glorious presence, we shall no more be afraid of the dread of men. Herein did the holy martyrs triumph of old, and even despised their bloody persecutors. Our Savior himself made it the ground of his supportment on the like occasion: John 16:32, "Behold," saith he to his disciples, his only friends, "the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every one to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Can we but possess our souls with the apprehension that when we are left alone, in our trials and dangers, from any countenance of friends or help of men, yet that indeed we are not alone, because the Father is with us, it will support us under our despondencies, and enable us unto our duties.

4. Especial providential warnings call for thoughts of God's omnipresence and omniscience. So Jacob in his night vision instantly made this conclusion, "God is in this place, and I knew it not." We have frequently such warnings given unto us. Sometimes we have so in the things which are esteemed accidental, whence, it may be, we are strangely delivered; sometimes we have so in the things which we see to befall others, by thunder, lightning, storms at sea or land: for

all the works of God, especially those that are rare and strange, have a voice whereby he speaks unto us. The first thing suggested unto a spiritual mind in such seasons will be. "God is in this place," — "He is present that liveth and seeth," as Hagar confessed on the like occasion, Genesis 16:13,14.

Thirdly, Have frequent thoughts of God's omnipotency, or his almighty power. This most men, it may be, suppose they need not much exhortation unto; for none ever doubted of it. Who doth not grant it on all occasions? Men grant it, indeed, in general; for eternal power is inseparable from the first notion of the Divine Being. So are they conjoined by the apostle: "His eternal power and Godhead," Romans 1:20. Yet few believe it for themselves and as they ought. Indeed, to believe the almighty power of God with reference unto ourselves and all our concernments, temporal and eternal, is one of the highest and most noble acts of faith, which includes all others in it: for this is that which God at first proposed alone as the proper object of our faith in our entrance into covenant with him, Genesis 17:1, "I am the Almighty God;" that which Job arrived unto after his long exercise and trial. "I know," saith he, "that thou canst do every thing, and no thought of thine can be hindered," chapter 42:2. "God hath spoken once," saith the psalmist; "twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God," Psalm 62:11. It was that which God saw it necessary frequently to instruct him in; for we are ready to be affected with the appearances of present power in creatures, and to suppose that all things will go according unto their wills because of their power. But it is quite otherwise; all creatures are poor feeble ciphers, that can do nothing. Power belongs unto God; it is a flower of his crown imperial, which he will suffer none to usurp. If the proudest of them go beyond the bounds and limits of his present permission, he will send worms to eat them up, as he did to Herod.

It is utterly impossible we should walk before God, unto his glory, or with any real peace, comfort, or satisfaction in our own souls, unless our minds are continually exercised with thoughts of his almighty power. Every thing that befalls us, every thing that we hear of which

hath the least of danger in it, will discompose our minds, and either make us tremble like the leaves of the forest that are shaken with the wind, or betake ourselves to foolish or sinful relief, unless we are firmly established in the faith hereof. Consider the promises of God unto the church which are upon record, and as yet unaccomplished; consider the present state of the church in the world, with all that belongs unto it, in all the fears and dangers they are exposed unto, in all the evils they are exercised withal, — and we shall quickly find that unless this sheet-anchor be well fixed, we shall be tossed up and down at all uncertainties, and exposed to most violent temptations, Revelation 19:6. Unto this end are we called hereunto by God himself in his answer unto the despondent complaints of the church in its greatest dangers and calamities: Isaiah 40:28-31,

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Take one instance, which is the continual concernment of us all. We are obnoxious unto death every moment. It is never the farther from any of us because we think not of it as we ought. This will lay our bodies in the dust, from whence they will have no more disposition nor power in themselves to rise again than any other part of the mould of the earth.

Their recovery must be an act of external almighty power, when God shall have a desire to the work of his hands, when he shall call, and we shall answer him out of the dust. And it will transmit the soul into an invisible world, putting a final end unto all relations, enjoyments, and circumstances here below. I speak not of them who are stout-

hearted and far from righteousness, who live and die like beasts, or under the power of horrible presumption, without any due thoughts of their future and eternal state; but as unto others, what comfort or satisfaction can any man have in his life, whereon his all depends, and which is passing from him every moment, unless he hath continual thoughts of the mighty power of God, whereby he is able to receive his departing soul and to raise his body out of the dust?

Not to insist on more particulars, thus is it with them who are spiritually minded; thus must it be with us all if we pretend a title unto that privilege: They are filled with thoughts of God, in opposition unto that character of wicked men, that "God is not in all their thoughts." And it is greatly to be feared that many of us, when we come to be weighed in this balance, will be found too light. Men may be in the performance of outward duties; they may hear the word with delight, and do many things gladly; they may escape the pollutions that are in the world through lust, and not run out into the same compass of excess and riot with other men: yet may they be strangers unto inward thoughts of God with delight and complacency. I cannot understand how it can be otherwise with them whose minds are over and over filled with earthly things, however they may satisfy themselves with pretenses of their callings and lawful enjoyments, or that they are not any way inordinately set on the pleasures or profits of the world.

To "walk with God," to "live unto him," is not merely to be found in an abstinence from outward sins, and in the performance of outward duties, though with diligence in the multiplication of them. All this may be done upon such principles, for such ends, with such a frame of heart, as to find no acceptance with God. It is our hearts that he requireth, and we can no way give them unto him but by our affections and holy thoughts of him with delight. This it is to be spiritually minded, this it is to walk with God. Let no man deceive himself; unless he thus abound in holy thoughts of God, unless our meditation of him be sweet unto us, all that we else pretend unto will fail us in the day of our trial.

This is the first thing wherein we may evidence ourselves unto ourselves to be under the conduct of the minding of the Spirit, or to be spiritually minded; and I have insisted the longer on it, because it contains the first sensible egress of the Spirit of living waters in us, the first acting of spiritual life unto our own experience. I should now proceed unto the consideration of our affections, of whose frame and state these thoughts are the only genuine exposition; but whereas there are, or may be, some who are sensible of their own weakness and deficiency in the discharge of that part of this duty in being spiritually minded which we have passed through, and may fall under discouragements thereon, we must follow Him, as we are able, who "will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed," by offering something unto the relief of them that are sincere under the sense of their own weakness.

## CHAPTER X.

**Sundry things tendered unto such as complain that, they know not how, they are not able to abide in holy thoughts of God and spiritual or heavenly things, for their relief, instruction, and direction — Rules concerning stated spiritual meditation.**

SOME will say, yea, on many occasions do say, that there is not any thing in all their duty towards God wherein they are more at a loss than they are in this one, of fixing or exercising their thoughts or meditations on things heavenly or spiritual. They acknowledge it a duty; they see an excellency in it, with inexpressible usefulness: but although they often try and attempt it, they cannot attain unto any

thing but what makes them ashamed both of it and themselves. Their minds, they find, are unsteady, apt to rove and wander, or give entertainment unto other things, and not to abide on the object which they design their meditation towards. Their abilities are small, their invention barren, their memories frail, and their judgments, to dispose of things into right order, weak and unable. They know not what to think on, for the most part; and when they fix on any thing, they are immediately at a loss as unto any progress, and so give over. Hence other thoughts, or thoughts of other things, take advantage to impose themselves on them, and what began in spiritual meditation ends in carnal vanity. On these considerations oftentimes they are discouraged to enter on the duty, oftentimes give it over so soon as it is begun, and are glad if they come off without being losers by their endeavors, which often befalls them. With respect unto other duties it is not so with them. Unto such as are really concerned in these things, unto whom their want and defect is a burden, who mourn under it, and desire to be freed from it or refreshed in their conflict with it, I shall offer the things that ensue: —

First, That sense of the vanity of our minds which this consideration duly attended unto will give us, ought greatly to humble and abase our souls. Whence is it thus with us, that we cannot abide in thoughts and meditations of things spiritual and heavenly? Is it because they are such things as we have no great concernment in? It may be they are things worthless and unprofitable, so that it is to no purpose to spend our thoughts about them. The truth is, they alone are worthy, useful, and desirable; all other things in comparison of them are but "loss and dung." Or is it because the faculties and powers of our souls were not originally suited unto the contemplation of them and delight in them? This also is otherwise; they were all given unto us, all created of God for this end, all fitted with inclinations and power to abide with God in all things, without aversation or weariness. Nothing was so natural, easy, and pleasant unto them, as steadiness in the contemplation of God and his works. The cause, therefore, of all this evil lies at our own door. All this, therefore, and all other evils, came upon us by the entrance of sin. And therefore Solomon, in

his inquiry after all the causes and effects of vanity, brings it under this head,

"Lo, this only have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions," Ecclesiastes 7:29:

for hereby our minds, that were created in a state of blessed adherence unto God, were wholly turned off from him, and not only so, but filled with enmity against him. In this state, that vanity which is prevalent in them is both their sin and their punishment: their sin, in a perpetual inclination unto things vain, foolish, sensual, and wicked, — so the apostle describes it at large, Ephesians 4:17-19, Titus 3:3; and their punishment, in that, being turned off from the chiefest good, wherein alone rest is to be found, they are filled with darkness, confusion, and disquietment, being "like the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

By grace our minds are renewed, — that is, changed and delivered from this frame; but they are so partially only. The principle of vanity is no longer predominant in us, to alienate us from the life of God, or to keep us in enmity against him. Those who are so renewed do not "walk in the vanity of their minds," as others do, Ephesians 4:17. They go up and down, in all their ways and occasions, with a stream of vain thoughts in their minds. But the remainders of it are effectually operative in us, in all the actings of our minds towards God, affecting them with uncertainty and instability: as he who hath received a great wound in any principal part of his body, though it may be so cured as that death shall not immediately ensue thereon, yet it may make him go weak and lame all his days, and hinder him in the exercise of all the powers of life. The vanity of our minds is so cured as to deliver us from spiritual death; but yet such a wound, such a weakness doth remain, as both weakens and hinders us in all the operations of spiritual life. Hence those who have made any progress in grace are sensible of their vanity as the greatest burden of their souls, and do groan after such a complete renovation of their minds as whereby they may be perfectly freed from it. This is that

which they principally regard in that complaining desire, Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Yea, they groan under a sense of it every day, nor is any thing such a trouble unto them, observing how it defeats them in their designs to contemplate on heavenly things, how it frustrates their best resolutions to abide in the spiritual actings of faith and love, how they are imposed on by it with thoughts of things which, either in themselves or in their consequences, they most abhor. Nothing are they so afraid of, nothing is so grievous and burdensome unto them, nothing do they more groan for deliverance from. When there is war in any place, it behoveth them that are concerned to have an eye and regard unto all their enemies and their attempts against them; but if they are vigilant and diligent in their opposition unto those that are without that visibly contend with them, and in the meantime neglect such as traitorously act within among themselves, betraying their counsels and weakening their strength, they will be undoubtedly ruined. Wise men do first take care of what is within, as knowing if they are there betrayed, all they do against their open enemies is to no purpose. In the warfare wherein we are engaged, we have enemies of all sorts that openly and visibly, in various temptations, fight against our souls. These it is our duty to watch against, to conflict with, and to seek a conquest over. But it is this internal vanity of mind that endeavors in all things to betray us, to weaken us in all our graces, or to hinder their due operation, and to open the doors of our hearts unto our cursed enemies. If our principal endeavor be not to discover, suppress, and destroy this traitor, we shall not succeed in our spiritual warfare.

This, therefore, being the original cause of all that disability of mind, as unto steadiness in holy thoughts and meditations, whereof you do complain, when you are affected therewith turn unto the consideration of that from whence it doth proceed. Labor to be humbled greatly, and to walk humbly, under a sense of the remainders of this vanity of mind. So some wholesome fruit may be taken from this bitter root, and meat may come out of this eater. If, when you cannot abide in holy thoughts of God and your relation



unto him, you reflect on this cause of it, to your farther humiliation and self-abasement, your good design and purpose are not lost. Let such an one say, "I began to think of God, of his love and grace in Christ Jesus, of my duty towards him; and where now, in a few minutes, do I find myself? I am got unto the ends of the earth, into things useless and earthly, or am at such a loss as that I have no mind to proceed in the work wherein I was engaged. 'O wretched man that I am!' what a cursed enemy have I within me! I am ashamed of myself, weary of myself, I loathe myself. 'Who shall deliver me from this body of death?'" Such thoughts may be as useful unto him as those which he first designed.

True it is, we can never be freed absolutely from all the effects of this vanity and instability of mind in this world. Unchangeable cleaving unto God always, in all the powers and affections of our minds, is reserved for heaven. But yet great degrees may be attained in the conquest and expulsion of it, such as I fear few have experience of, yet ought all to labor after. If we apply ourselves as we ought to the increase of spiritual light and grace; if we labor diligently to abide and abound in thoughts of spiritual things, and that in love to them and delight in them; if we watch against the entertainment and approbation of such thoughts and things in our minds as whereby this vain frame is pleased and confirmed, — there is, though not an absolute perfection, yet a blessed degree of heavenly mindedness to be attained, and therein the nearest approach unto glory that in this world we are capable of. If a man cannot attain an athletic constitution of health, or a strength like that of Samson, yet, if he be wise, he will not omit the use of such means as may make him to be useful in the ordinary duties of life; and although we cannot attain perfection in this matter, — which yet is our duty to be continually pressing after, — yet, if we are wise, we will be endeavoring such a cure of this spiritual distemper as that we may be able to discharge all the duties of the life of God. But if men in all other things feed the vanity of their own minds; if they permit them to rove continually after things foolish, sensual, and earthly; if they willfully supply them with objects unto that end, and labor not by all means for the

mortification of this evil frame, — in vain shall they desire or expect to bring them at any time, on any occasion, to be steady in the thoughts of heavenly things. If it be thus with any, as it is to be feared it is with many, it is their duty to mind the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in the first place, "Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good," and not before. When the power of sanctifying grace hath made the mind habitually spiritual and heavenly, thoughts of such things will be natural unto it, and accompanied with delight; but they will not be so until the God of peace have sanctified us in our whole spirits, souls, and bodies, whereby we may be preserved blameless unto the coming of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Be always sensible of your own insufficiency to raise in your minds or to manage spiritual thoughts, or thoughts of things spiritual and heavenly, in a due manner. But in this case men are apt to suppose that as they may so they can think of what they please. Thoughts are their own, and therefore, be they of what sort they will, they need no assistance for them. They cannot think as they ought, they can do nothing at all; and nothing will convince them of their folly until they are burdened with an experience of the contrary, as unto spiritual things. But the advice given is expressly laid down by the apostle, in the instance of himself: 2 Corinthians 3:5,

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God."

He speaks principally of ministers of the gospel, and that of such as were most eminently furnished with spiritual gifts and graces, as he declares, verse 6. And if it be so with them, and that with respect unto the work and duties of their calling, how much more is it so with others who have not their graces nor their office! Wherefore if men, without regard unto the present actual grace of God and the supplies of his Spirit, do suppose that they can of themselves exercise their minds in spiritual thoughts, and so only fret at themselves when they fall into disappointment, not knowing what is the matter with them, they will live in a lifeless, barren frame all their days.

By the strength of their natural abilities, men may frame thoughts of God and heavenly things in their minds, according unto the knowledge they have of them. They may methodize them by rules of art, and express them elegantly unto others. But even while they do so, they may be far enough from being spiritually minded; for there may be in their thoughts no actings of faith, love, or holy delight in God, or any grace at all. But such alone are the things which we inquire after; they are such only as wherein the graces of the Spirit are in their proper exercise. With respect unto them we have no sufficiency in ourselves; all our sufficiency must be of God. There is no truth, among persons of light and knowledge, more generally granted in the notion of it than this, that of ourselves we can do nothing, and none more neglected in daily practice. Men profess they can do nothing of themselves, and yet go about their duties as if they could do all things.

Thirdly, Remember that I have not at present treated of solemn stated meditation, concerning which other rules and instructions ought to be given. By solemn or stated meditation, I intend the thoughts of some subject spiritual and divine, with the fixing, forcing, and ordering of our thoughts about it, with a design to affect our own hearts and souls with the matter of it, or the things contained in it. By this design it is distinguished from the study of the word, wherein our principal aim is to learn the truth, or to declare it unto others; and so also from prayer, whereof God himself is the immediate object. But in meditation it is the affecting of our own hearts and minds with love, delight, and humiliation. At present I have only showed what it is to be spiritually minded, and that in this instance of our thoughts as they proceed from the habitual frame of our hearts and affections, or of what sort the constant course of our thoughts ought to be with respect unto all the occasions of the life of God. This persons may be in a readiness for who are yet unskilful in and unable for stated meditation; for there is required thereunto such an exercise of our natural faculties and abilities as some, through their weakness and ignorance, are incapable of. But as unto what we have hitherto insisted on, it is not unattainable by any

in whom is the Spirit of faith and love; for it is but the frequent actings of them that I intend. Wherefore, do your hearts and affections lead you unto many thoughts of God and spiritual things? do they spring up in you as water in a well of living waters? are you ready on all occasions to entertain such thoughts, and to be conversant with them as opportunity doth offer itself? do you labor to have in a readiness what is useful for you with respect unto temptations and duties? is God in Christ, and the things of the gospel, the ordinary retreat of your souls? — though you should not be able to carry on an orderly, stated meditation in your minds, yet you may be spiritually minded.

A man may not have a capacity and ability to carry on a great trade of merchandise in the world, — the knowledge of all sorts of commodities and seasons of the world and nations of it, with those contrivances and accounts which belong unto such trade, may be above his comprehension, and he may quickly ruin himself in undertaking such an employment, — yet may the abilities of this man serve him well enough to carry on a retail trade in a private shop, wherein perhaps he may thrive as well and get as good an estate as any of those whose greater capacities lead them forth unto more large and hazardous employments. So it may be with some in this case. The natural faculties of their minds are not sufficient to enable them unto stated meditation; they cannot cast things into that method and order which is required thereunto, nor frame the conceptions of their minds into words significant and expressive: yet as unto frequency of thoughts of God, and a disposition of mind thereunto, they may thrive and be skillful beyond most others of greater natural abilities. Howbeit, because even stated meditation is a necessary duty, yea, the principal way whereby our spiritual thoughts do profitably act themselves, I shall have regard thereunto in the following direction. Wherefore, —

Fourthly, Whatever principle of grace we have in our minds, we cannot attain unto a ready exercise of it, in a way of spiritual

meditation, or otherwise, without great diligence, nor without great difficulty.

It was showed at the entrance of this discourse that there is a difference in this grace, between the essence, substance, or reality of it, which we would not exclude men from under many failings or infirmities, and the useful degrees of it, wherein it hath its principal exercise; as there is a difference in life natural and its actings in a weak, diseased, sickly body, and in that which is of a good constitution and in a vigorous health. Supposing the first, the reality of this grace, be wrought in us or implanted in our minds by the Holy Ghost, as a principal part of that new nature which is the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; yet unto the growth and improvement of it, as of all other graces, our own diligent care, watchfulness, and spiritual striving in all holy duties, are required. Unless the most fruitful ground be manured, it will not bring forth a useful crop. Let not any think that this frame of a spiritual mind, wherein there is a disposition unto and a readiness for all holy thoughts of God, of Christ, of spiritual and heavenly things, at all times and on all occasions, will befall him and continue with him he knows not how. As good it is for a poor man to expect to be rich in this world without industry, or for a weak man to be strong and healthy without food and exercise, as to be spiritually minded without an earnest endeavor after it. It may be inquired what is requisite thereunto; and we may name some of those things without which such a holy frame will not be attained: as, —

1. A continual watch is to be kept in and on the soul against the incursions of vain thoughts and imaginations, especially in such seasons wherein they are apt to obtain advantage. If they are suffered to make an inroad into the mind, if we accustom ourselves to give them entertainment, if they are wont to lodge within, in vain shall we hope or desire to be spiritually minded. Herein consists a principal part of that duty which our Savior so frequently, so emphatically chargeth on us all, namely, to "watch," Mark 13:37. Unless we keep a strict watch herein, we shall be betrayed into the hands of our

spiritual enemies; for all such thoughts are but making provision for the flesh, to fulfill its desires in the lusts thereof, however they may be disappointed as unto actual sin. This is the substance of the advice given us in charge, Proverbs 4:23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

2. Careful avoidance of all societies and businesses of this life which are apt, under various pretenses, to draw and seduce the mind unto an earthly or sensual frame. If men will venture on those things which they have found by experience, or may find by their observation, that they seduce and draw off their minds from a heavenly frame unto that which is contrary thereunto, and will not watch unto their avoidance, they will be filled with the fruit of their own ways. Indeed, the common converse of professors among themselves and others, walking, talking, and behaving themselves like other men, being as full of the world as the world is of itself, hath lost the grace of being spiritually minded within, and stained the glory of profession without. The rule observed by David will manifest how careful we ought to be herein: Psalm 39:1-3,

"I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue;"

— which place was spoken unto before.

3. A holy constraint put on the mind to abide in the duty of spiritual thoughts and meditations, pressing it continually with the consideration of their necessity and usefulness. The mind will be apt of itself to start aside from duties purely spiritual, through the mixture of the flesh abiding in it. The more inward and purely spiritual any duty is which hath no outward advantages, the more prone will the mind be to decline from it. It will be so more from

private prayer than public, more from meditation than prayer. And other things will be apt to draw it aside, by objects without, and various stirrings of the affections within. A holy constraint is to be put upon it, with a sudden rejection of what rises up to its diversion or disturbance. Wherefore, we are to call in all constraining motives, such as the consideration of the love of Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:14, to keep the mind steady unto its duty.

4. Diligent use of means to furnish the soul with that light and knowledge of heavenly things which may administer continual matter of holy thoughts and meditations from within ourselves. This hath been spoken unto at large before. And the want hereof is that which keeps many from the least proficiency in these duties: as a man may have some skill or ability for a trade, yet if he have no materials to work upon, he must sit still, and let his trade alone. And so must men do as unto the work of holy meditation. Whatever be the ability of the natural faculties, their inventions or memories, if they are not furnished with knowledge of things spiritual and heavenly, which are the subject-matter of such meditations, they must let their work alone. Hence the apostle prays for the Colossians, that "the word of Christ might dwell in them richly in all wisdom," chap. 3:16; that is, that they might abound in the knowledge of the mind of Christ, without which we shall be unfit for this duty.

5. Unweariedness in our conflict with Satan, who, by various artifices and the injection of fiery darts, labors continually to divert us from these duties. He is seldom or never wanting unto this occasion. He who is furnished in any measure with spiritual wisdom and understanding may find him more sensibly at work in his craft and opposition with respect unto this duty than any other way. When we stand thus before the Lord, he is always at our right hand to resist us, and oftentimes his strength is great. Hence, as was observed, oftentimes men design really to exercise themselves in holy thoughts, but end in vain imaginations, and rather take up with trifles than continue in this duty. Steadiness in the resistance of him on these occasions is one great part of our spiritual warfare. And we may know that he is

at work by his engines and methods; for they consist in his suggestions of vain, foolish, or corrupt imaginations. When they begin to rise in our minds at such times as we would engage them in spiritual meditation, we may know assuredly from whence they are.

6. Continual watchful care that no root of bitterness spring up and defile us, that no lust or corruption be predominant in us. When it is so, if persons, in compliance with their convictions, do endeavor sometimes to be exercised in these duties, they shall labor in the very fire, where all their endeavors will be immediately consumed.

7. Mortification unto the world in our affections and desires, with moderation in our endeavors after the needful things of it, are also necessary hereunto, yea, to that degree that without them no man can in any sense be said to be spiritually minded; for otherwise our affections cannot be so preserved under the power of grace as that spiritual things may be always savory unto us.

Some, it may be, will say, that if all these things are required thereunto, it will take up a man's whole life and time to be spiritually minded. They hope they may attain it at an easier rate, and not forego all other advantages and sweetnesses of life, which a strict observation of these things would cast them upon.

I answer, that however it may prove a hard saying unto some, yet I must say it, and my heart would reproach me if I should not say, that if the principal part of our time be not spent about these things, whatever we suppose, we have indeed neither life nor peace. The first-fruits of all were to be offered unto God; and in sacrifices he required the blood and the fat of the inwards. If the best be not his, he will have nothing. It is so as to our time. Tell me, I pray you, how you can spend your time and your lives better, or to better purpose, and I shall say, Go on and prosper. I am sure some spend so much of their time so much worse as it is a shame to see it. Do you think you came into this world to spend your whole time and strength in your employments, your trades, your pleasures, unto the satisfaction of



the "wills of the flesh and of the mind?" Have you time enough to eat, to drink, to sleep, to talk unprofitably, it may be corruptly, in all sorts of unnecessary societies, but have not enough to live unto God in the very essentials of that life which consists in these things? Alas! you came into the world under this law, "It is appointed to men once to die, and after this the judgment," Hebrews 9:27; and the end why your life is here granted unto you is that you may be prepared for that judgment. If this be neglected, if the principal part of your time be not improved with respect unto this end, you will fall under the sentence of it unto eternity.

But men are apt to mistake in this matter. They may think that these things tend to take them off from their lawful employments and recreations, which they are generally afraid of, and unwilling to purchase any frame of mind at so dear a rate. They may suppose that to have men spiritually minded, we would make them mopes, and to disregard all the lawful occasions of life. But let not any be mistaken; I am not upon a design that will be easily, or, it may be, honestly defeated. Men are able to defend themselves in their callings and enjoyments, and to satisfy their consciences against any persuasions to the contrary: yet there is a season wherein we are obliged to part with all we have, and to give up ourselves wholly to follow Christ in all things, Matthew 19:21; and if we neglect or refuse it in that season, it is an evidence that we are hypocrites. And there was a time when superstition had so much power on the minds of men, that multitudes were persuaded to forsake, to give up, all their interest in relations, callings, goods, possessions, and betake themselves unto tedious pilgrimages, yea, hard services in war, to comply with that superstition; and it is not to the glory of our profession that we have so few instances of men parting with all, and giving up themselves unto heavenly retirement. But I am at present on no such design; I aim not to take men out of their lawful earthly occasions, but to bring spiritual affections and thoughts into the management of them all. The things mentioned will deprive you of no time you can lay a claim unto, but sanctify it all.

I confess he must be a great proficient in spirituality who dares venture on an absolute retirement, and he must be well satisfied that he is not called unto a usefulness among men inconsistent therewith: unto them it may prove a disadvantage. Yet this also is attainable, if other circumstances do concur. Men under the due exercise of grace and the improvement of it may attain unto that fixedness in heavenly mindedness, that unconcernment in all things here below, as to give themselves up entirely and continually unto heavenly meditation, unto a blessed advancement of all grace, and a near approach unto glory. And I would hope it was so with many of them in ancient times who renounced the world, with all circumstances of relations, state, inheritances, and betook themselves unto retirement in wildernesses, to abide always in divine contemplation. But afterward, when multitudes, whose minds were not so prepared by a real growth in all grace and mortification unto the world as they were, betook themselves under the same pretenses unto a monastical retirement, the devil, the world, sensual lusts, superstition, and all manner of evils, pursued them, found them out, possessed them, unto the unspeakable damage and scandal of religion.

This, therefore, is not that which I invite the common sort of believers unto. Let them that are able and free receive it. The generality of Christians have lawful callings, employments, and businesses, which ordinarily they ought to abide in. That they also may live unto God in their occasions, they may do well to consider two things: —

(1.) Industry in men's callings is a thing in itself very commendable. If in nothing else, it hath an advantage herein, that it is a means to preserve men from those excesses in lust and riot which otherwise they are apt to run into. And if you consider the two sorts of men whereinto the generality of mankind are distributed, — namely, of them who are industrious in their affairs, and those who spend their time, so far as they are able, in idleness and pleasure, — the former sort are far more amiable and desirable. Howbeit it is capable of being greatly abused. Earthly mindedness, covetousness, devouring

things holy as to times and seasons of duty, uselessness, and the like pernicious vices, do invade and possess the minds of men. There is no lawful calling that doth absolutely exclude this grace of being spiritually minded in them that are engaged in it, nor any that doth include it. Men may be in the meanest of lawful callings and be so, and men may be in the best and highest and not be so. Consider the calling of the ministry: The work and duty of it calls on those that are employed in it to have their minds and thoughts conversant about spiritual and heavenly things. They are to study about them, to meditate on them, to commit them to memory, to speak them out unto others. It will be said, "Surely such men must needs be spiritually minded." If they go no farther than what is mentioned, I say they must needs be so as printers must needs be learned, who are continually conversant about letters. A man may with great industry engage himself in these things, and yet his mind be most remote from being spiritual. The event doth declare that it may be so. And the reasons of it are manifest. It requires as much if not more watchfulness, more care, more humility, for a minister to be spiritually minded in the discharge of his calling, than for any other sort of men in theirs; and that, as for other reasons, so because the commonness of the exercise of such thoughts, with their design upon others in their expression, will take off their power and efficacy. And he will have little benefit by his own ministry who endeavors not in the first place an experience in his own heart of the power of the truths which he doth teach unto others. And there is evidently as great a failing herein among us as among any other sort of Christians, as every occasion of trial doth demonstrate.

(2.) Although industry in any honest calling be allowable, yet unless men labor to be spiritually minded in the exercise of that industry, they have neither life nor peace. Hereunto all the things before mentioned are necessary; I know not how any of them can be abated; yea, more is required than is expressed in them. If you burn this roll, another must be written, and many like things must be added unto it. And the objection from the expense of time in the observance of them is of no force; for a man may do as much work whilst he is

spiritually minded as whilst he is carnal. Spiritual thoughts will no more hinder you in your callings than those that are vain and earthly, which all sorts of men can find leisure for in the midst of their employments. If you have filled a vessel with chaff, yet you may pour into it a great deal of water, which will be contained in the same space and vessel; and if it be necessary that you should take in much of the chaff of the world into your minds, yet are they capable of such measures of grace as shall preserve them sincere unto God.

Fifthly, This frame will never be preserved, nor the duties mentioned ever be performed in a due manner, unless we dedicate some part of our time peculiarly unto them. I speak unto them only concerning whom I suppose that they do daily set apart some portion of time unto holy duties, as prayer and reading of the word, and they find by experience that it succeeds well with them. For the most part, if they lose their seasons they lose their duties; for some have complained that the urgency of business and multiplicity of occasions driving them at first from the fixed time of their duties, hath brought them into a course of neglecting duty itself. Wherefore it is our wisdom to set apart constantly some part of our time unto the exercise of our thoughts about spiritual things in the way of meditation. And I shall close this discourse with some directions in this particular unto them who complain of their disability for the discharge of this duty: —

1. Choose and separate a fit time or season, a time of freedom from other occasions and diversions. And because it is our duty to redeem time with respect unto holy duties, such a season may be the more useful the more the purchase of it stands us in. We are not at any time to serve God with what costs us nought, nor with any time that comes within the same rule. If we will allow only the refuse of our time unto this duty, when we have nothing else to do, and, it may be, through weariness of occasions are fit for nothing else, we are not to expect any great success in it. This is one pregnant reason why men are so cold and formal, so lifeless in spiritual duties, — namely, the times and seasons which they allot unto them. When the body is wearied with the labor and occasions of the day, and, it may be, the

mind in its natural faculties indisposed, even by the means of necessary refreshment, men think themselves meet to treat with God about the great concernments of his glory and their own souls! This is that which God condemneth by his prophet: Malachi 1:8,

"If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?"

Both the law of nature and all the laws of holy institutions do require that we should serve God with the best that we have, as all the fat of the inwards was to be offered in sacrifice; and shall we think to offer that time unto God wherein we are unmeet to appear before an earthly ruler? Yet such, in my account, are the seasons, especially the evening seasons, that most men choose for the duties of their holy worship. And you may do well to consider beyond the day and time which he hath taken unto himself by an everlasting law, how little of the choice of your time you have offered unto God as a free-will offering, that you may be excited to future diligence. If, therefore, you seriously intend this duty, choose the seasons for it wherein you are most fit, when even the natural vigor of your spirits is most free and active. Possibly some will say this may be such a time as when the occasions of the world do call most earnestly for your attendance unto them. I say that is the season I would recommend; and if you can conquer your minds to redeem it for God at any rate, your endeavors in it will be prosperous. However, trust not to times that will offer themselves. Take them not up at hazard. Let the time itself be a free-will offering to God, taken from the top of the heap, or the choicest part of your useful time.

2. Preparation of mind unto a due reverence of God and spiritual things is required previously hereunto. When we go about this duty, if we rush into thoughts of heavenly things without a due reverential preparation, we shall quickly find ourselves at a loss See the rule, Ecclesiastes 5:1,2. "Grace to serve God with reverence and godly fear" is required in all things wherein we have to do with him, as in this

duty we have in an immediate and especial manner. Endeavor, therefore, in the first place, to get your hearts deeply affected with an awful reverence of God, and a holy regard unto the heavenly nature of the things you would meditate upon. Hereby your minds will be composed, and the roots of other thoughts, be they vain or earthly, which are apt to arise and divert you from this duty, will be cast out. The principles of these contrary thoughts are like Jacob and Esau; they struggle in the same womb, and oftentimes Esau will come first forth, and for a while seem to carry the birthright. If various thoughts do conflict in our minds, some for this world and some for another, those for this world may carry it for a season; but where a due reverence of God hath "cast out the bondwoman and her children," the workings of the flesh in its vain thoughts and imaginations, the mind will be at liberty to exercise itself on spiritual things

3. Earnest desires after a renewed sense and relish of spiritual things are required hereunto. If we engage into this duty merely on a conviction of the necessity of it, or set ourselves about it because we think we ought to do so, and it will not be well done utterly to neglect it, we may not expect to be successful in it; but when the soul hath at any time tasted that the Lord is gracious, when its meditations on him have been sweet, when spiritual things have had a savor and relish in the mind and affections, and hereon it comes unto this duty with earnest desires to have the like tastes, the like experience, yea, to have them increased, then is it in the way of a hopeful progress. And this also will make us persevere in our endeavors to go through with what we undertake, — namely, when we do know by former experience what is to be attained by it, if we dig and search for it as for a treasure.

If you shall think that the right discharge of this duty may be otherwise attained, if you suppose that it deserves not all this cost and charge about it, judge by what is past whether it be not advisable to give it over and let it alone. As good lie quietly on the ground as continually attempt to rise and never once effect it. Remember how many successful attempts you have made upon it, and all have come

to nothing, or that which is as bad as nothing. I cannot say that in this way you shall always succeed; but I fear you will never have success in this duty without such things as are of the same nature and use with it.

When, after this preparation, you find yourselves yet perplexed and entangled, not able comfortably to persist in spiritual thoughts unto your refreshment, take these two directions for your relief: —

1. Cry and sigh to God for help and relief. Bewail the darkness, weakness, and instability of your minds, so as to groan within yourselves for deliverance. And if your designed meditations do issue only in a renewed gracious sense of your own weakness and insufficiency, with application unto God for supplies of strength, they are by no means lost as unto a spiritual account. The thoughts of Hezekiah in his meditations did not seem to have any great order or consistency when he so expressed them: "Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me," Isaiah 38:14. When the soul labors sincerely for communion with God, but sinks into broken, confused thoughts under the weight of its own weakness, yet if he look to God for relief, his chattering and mourning will be accepted with God and profitable unto himself.

2. Supply the brokenness of your thoughts with ejaculatory prayers, according as either the matter of them or your defect in the management of them doth require. So was it with Hezekiah in the instance before mentioned. When his own meditations were weak and broken, he cries out in the midst of them, "O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me." And meditation is properly a mixture of spiritual apprehension of God and heavenly things in the thoughts and conceptions of the mind, with desires and supplications thereon.

It is good and profitable to have some special designed subject of meditation in our thoughts. I have at large declared before what things are the proper objects of the thoughts of them that are

spiritually minded; but they may be more peculiarly considered as the matter of designed meditation. And they may be taken out of some especial spiritual experience that we have lately had, or some warnings we have received of God, or something wherewith we have been peculiarly affected in the reading or preaching of the word, or what we find the present posture and frame of our minds and souls to require, or that which supplies all most frequently, — the person and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. If any thing of this nature be peculiarly designed antecedently unto this duty, and a season be sought for it with respect thereunto, the mind will be fixed and kept from wandering after a variety of subjects, wherein it is apt to lose itself and bring nothing to perfection.

Lastly, Be not discouraged with an apprehension that all you can attain unto in the discharge of this duty is so little, so contemptible, as that it is to no purpose to persist in it; nor be wearied with the difficulties you meet withal in its performance. You have to do with Him only in this matter who "will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax," whose will it is that none should "despise the day of small things." And "if there be" in this duty "a ready mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." He that can bring into this treasury only the mites of broken desires and ejaculatory prayers, so they be his best, shall not come behind them who cast into it out of their greater abundance in ability and skill. To faint and give out because we cannot rise unto such a height as we aim at is a fruit of pride and unbelief. He who finds himself to gain nothing by continual endeavors after holy, fixed meditations, but only a living, active sense of his own vileness and unworthiness, is a sufficient gainer by all his pains, cost, and charge. But ordinarily it shall not be so; constancy in the duty will give ability for it. Those who conscientiously abide in its performance shall increase in light, wisdom, and experience, until they are able to manage it with great success.

These few plain directions may possibly be of some use unto the weaker sort of Christians, when they find a disability in themselves



unto the discharge of this duty, wherein those who are spiritually minded ought to be peculiarly exercised.

## **PART II.**

### **CHAPTER XI.**

**The seat of spiritual mindedness in the affections — The nature and use of them — The ways and means used by God himself to call the affections of men from the world.**

IN the account given at the entrance of this discourse of what it is to be spiritually minded, it was reduced under three heads: —

The **FIRST** was, The habitual frame, disposition, and inclination of the mind in its affections.

The **SECOND** was, The usual exercise of the mind in its thoughts, meditations, and desires, about heavenly things.

Whereunto, **THIRDLY**, was added, The complacency of mind in that relish and savor which it finds in spiritual things so thought and meditated on.

The second of these hath hitherto alone been spoken unto, as that which leads the way unto the others, and gives the most sensible evidence of the state inquired after. Therein consists the stream, which, rising in the fountain of our affections, runs into a holy rest and complacency of mind.

The first and last I shall now handle together, and therein comprehend the account of what it is to be spiritually minded.

Spiritual affections, whereby the soul adheres unto spiritual things, taking in such a savor and relish of them as wherein it finds rest and satisfaction, is the peculiar spring and substance of our being spiritually minded. This is that which I shall now farther explain and confirm.

The great contest of heaven and earth is about the affections of the poor worm which we call man. That the world should contend for them is no wonder; it is the best that it can pretend unto. All things here below are capable of no higher ambition than to be possessed of the affections of men; and, as they lie under the curse, it can do us no greater mischief than by prevailing in this design. But that the holy God should as it were engage in the contest and strive for the affections of man, is an effect of infinite condescension and grace. This he doth expressly: "My son," saith he, "give me thine heart," Proverbs 23:26. It is our affections he asketh for, and comparatively nothing else. To be sure, he will accept of nothing from us without them; the most fat and costly sacrifice will not be accepted if it be without a heart. All the ways and methods of the dispensation of his will by his word, all the designs of his effectual grace, are suited unto and prepared for this end, — namely, to recover the affections of man unto himself. So he expresseth himself concerning his word: Deuteronomy 10:12,

"And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul?"

And as unto the word of his grace, he declares it unto the same purpose: chap. 30:6,

"And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul."

And, on the other side, all the artifices of the world, all the paint it puts on its face, all the great promises it makes, and the false appearances and attires it clothes itself withal by the help of Satan, have no other end but to draw and keep the affections of men unto itself. And if the world be preferred before God in this address which is made unto us for our affections, we shall justly perish with the world unto eternity, and be rejected by him whom we have rejected, Proverbs 1:24-31.

Our affections are upon the matter our all. They are all we have to give or bestow; the only power of our souls whereby we may give away ourselves from ourselves and become another's. Other faculties of our souls, even the most noble of them, are suited to receive in unto our own advantage; by our affections we can give away what we are and have. Hereby we give our hearts unto God, as he requireth. Wherefore, unto him we give our affections unto whom we give our an, — ourselves and all that we have; and to whom we give them not, whatever we give, upon the matter we give nothing at all.

In what we do unto or for others, whatsoever is good, valuable, or praiseworthy in it, proceeds from the affection wherewith we do it. To do any thing for others without an animating affection, is but a contempt of them; for we judge them really unworthy that we should do any thing for them. To give to the poor upon their importunity without pity or compassion, to supply the wants of the saints without love or kindness, with other actings and duties of the like nature, are things of no value, things that recommend us neither unto God nor men. It is so in general with God and the world. Whatsoever we do in the service of God, whatever duty we perform on his command, whatever we undergo or suffer for his name's sake, if it proceed not from the cleaving of our souls unto him by our affections, it is despised by him; he owns us not. As

"if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned," Song of Solomon 8:7,

— it is not to be bought or purchased with riches; so if a man would give to God an the substance of his house without love, it would in like manner be despised. And however, on the other hand, we may be diligent, industrious, and sedulous, in and about the things of this world, yet if it have not our affections, we are not of the world, we belong not unto it. They are the seat of all sincerity, which is the jewel of divine and human conversation, the life and soul of every thing that is good and praiseworthy. Whatever men pretend, as their affections are, so are they. Hypocrisy is a deceitful interposition of the mind, on various reasons and pretenses, between men's affections and their profession, whereby a man appears to be what he is not. Sincerity is the open avowment of the reality of men's affections; which renders them good and useful.

Affections are in the soul as the helm in the ship; if it be laid hold on by a skillful hand, he turneth the whole vessel which way he pleaseth. If God hath the powerful hand of his grace upon our affections, he turns our souls unto a compliance with his institutions, instructions, in mercy, afflictions, trials, all sorts of providences, and holds them firm against all winds and storms of temptation, that they shall not hurry them on pernicious dangers. Such a soul alone is tractable and pliable unto all intimations of God's will.

All others are stubborn and obstinate, stout-hearted and far from righteousness. And when the world hath the hand on our affections, it turns the mind, with the whole industry of the soul, unto its interest and concerns. And it is in vain to contend with any thing that hath the power of our affections in its disposal; it will prevail at last.

On all these considerations it is of the highest importance to consider aright how things are stated in our affections, and what is the prevailing bent of them. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend," saith the wise man, Proverbs 27:17.

Every man hath his edge, which may be, sharpened by outward helps and advantages. The predominant inclination of a man's affections is his edge. According as that is set, so he cutteth and works; that way he is sharp and keen, but blunt unto all other things.

Now, because it must be that our affections are either spiritual or earthly in a prevailing degree, that either God hath our hearts or the world, that our edge is towards heaven or towards things here below, before I come to give an account of the nature and operations of spiritual affections, I shall consider and propose some of those arguments and motives which God is pleased to make use of to call off our affections from the desirable things of this world; for as they are weighty and cogent, such as cannot be neglected without the greatest contempt of divine wisdom and goodness, so they serve to press and enforce those arguments and motives that are proposed unto us to set our affections on things that are above, which is to be spiritually minded.

First, He hath, in all manner of instances, poured contempt on the things of this world, in comparison of things spiritual and heavenly. All things here below were at first made beautiful and in order, and were declared by God himself to be exceeding good, and that not only in their being and nature, but in the use whereunto they were designed. They were then desirable unto men, and the enjoyment of them would have been a blessing, without danger or temptation; for they were the ordinance of God to lead us unto the knowledge of him and love unto him. But since the entrance of sin, whereby the world fell under the curse and into the power of Satan, the things of it, in his management, are become effectual means to draw off the heart and affections from God; for it is the world and the things of it, as summed up by the apostle, 1 John 2:15,16, that strive alone for our affections, to be the objects of them. Sin and Satan do but woo for the world, to take them off from God. By them doth the god of this world blind the eyes of them that believe not; and the principal way whereby he worketh in them is by promises of satisfaction unto all the lusts of the minds of men, with a proposal of whatever is dreadful

and terrible in the want of them. Being now in this state and condition, and used unto this end, through the craft of Satan and the folly of the minds of men, God hath showed, by various instances, that they are all vain, empty, unsatisfactory, and every way to be despised in comparison of things eternal: —

1. He did it most eminently and signally in the life, death, and cross of Christ. What can be seen or found in this world, after the Son of God hath spent his life in it, not having where to lay his head, and after he went out of it on the cross? Had there been aught of real worth in things here below, certainly he had enjoyed it; if not crowns and empires, which were all in his power, yet such goods and possessions as men of sober reasonings and moderate affections do esteem a competency. But things were quite otherwise disposed, to manifest that there is nothing of value or use in these things, but only to support nature unto the performance of service unto God; wherein they are serviceable unto eternity. He never attained, he never enjoyed, more than daily supplies of bread out of the stores of providence; and which alone he hath instructed us to pray for, Matthew 6:11. In his cross the world proclaimed all its good qualities and all its powers, and hath given unto them that believe its naked face to view and contemplate; nor is it now one jot more comely than it was when it had gotten Christ on the cross. Hence is that inference and conclusion of the apostle: Galatians 6:14,

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world;"

— "Since I have believed, since I have had a sense of the power and virtue of the cross of Christ, I have done with all things in this world; it is a dead thing unto me, nor have I any affection for it." This is that which made the difference between the promises of the old covenant and the new: for they were many of them about temporal things, the good things of this world and this life; those of the new are mostly of things spiritual and eternal. God would not call off the church wholly

from a regard unto these things, until he had given a sufficient demonstration of their emptiness, vanity, and insufficiency, in the cross of Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

Whither so fast, my friend? What meaneth this rising so early and going to bed late, eating the bread of carefulness? Why this diligence, why these contrivances, why these savings and hoardings of riches and wealth? To what end is all this care and counsel? "Alas!" saith one, "it is to get that which is enough in and of this world for me and my children, to prefer them, to raise an estate for them, which, if not so great as others, may yet be a competency; to give them some satisfaction in their lives and some reputation in the world." Fair pretenses, neither shall I ever discourage any from the exercise of industry in their lawful callings; but yet I know that with many this is but a pretense and covering for a shameful engagement of their affections unto the world. Wherefore, in all these things, be persuaded sometimes to have an eye to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Behold how he is set before us in the gospel, poor, despised, reproached, persecuted, nailed to the cross, and all by this world. Whatever be your designs and aims, let his cross continually interpose between your affections and this world. If you are believers, your hopes are within a few days to be with him for evermore. Unto him you must give an account of yourselves, and what you have done in this world. Will it be acceptable with him to declare what you have saved of this world, what you have gained, what you have preserved and embraced yourselves in, and what you have left behind you? Was this any part of his employment and business in this world? hath he left us an example for any such course? Wherefore, no man can set his affections on things here below who hath any regard unto the pattern of Christ, or is in any measure influenced with the power and efficacy of his cross. "My love is crucified," said a holy martyr of old: he whom his soul loved was so, and in him his love unto all things here below. Do you, therefore, find your affections ready to be engaged unto, or too much entangled with, the things of this world? are your desires of increasing them, your hopes of keeping them, your fears of losing them, your love unto

them and delight in them, operative in your minds, possessing your thoughts and influencing your conversations? — turn aside a little, and by faith contemplate the life and death of the Son of God; a blessed glass will it be, where you may see what contemptible things they are which you perplex yourselves about. Oh, that any of us should love or esteem the things of this world, the power, riches, goods, or reputation of it, who have had a spiritual view of them in the cross of Christ!

It may be it will be said that the circumstances mentioned were necessary unto the Lord Christ, with respect unto the especial work he had to do as the Savior and Redeemer of the church; and therefore it doth not hence follow that we ought to be poor and want all things, as he did. I confess it doth not, and therefore do all along make an allowance for honest industry in our callings. But this follows unavoidably hereon, that what he did forego and trample on for our sake, that ought not to be the object of our affections; nor can such affections prevail in us if he dwell in our hearts by faith.

2. He hath done the same in his dealings with the apostles, and generally with all that have been most dear unto him and instrumental unto the interest of his glory in the world, especially since life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel. He had great work to do by the apostles, and that of the greatest use unto his interest, and kingdom. The laying of the foundations of the glorious kingdom of Christ in the world was committed unto them. Who would not think that he should provide for them, if not principalities or popedoms, yet at least archbishoprics and bishoprics, with other good ecclesiastical dignities and preferments? Hereby might they have been made meet to converse with princes, and been freed from the contempt of the vulgar. But Infinite Wisdom did otherwise dispose of them and their concerns in this world; for as God was pleased to exercise them with the common afflictions and calamities of this life, which he makes use of to take off the sweetness of present enjoyments, so they lived and died in a condition of poverty, distress, persecution, and reproach. God set them forth as examples unto



other ends, — namely, of light, grace, zeal, and holiness in their lives, — so as to manifest of how little concernment unto our own blessedness or an interest in his love is the abundance of all things here below, as also that the want of them all may consist with the highest participation of his love and favor: 1 Corinthians 4:9, 11-13,

"I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."

And if the consideration hereof be not of weight with others, undoubtedly it ought to be so with them who are called to preach the gospel, and are the successors to the apostles. There can be nothing more uncouth, absurd, and shameful, nothing more opposite unto the intimation of the wisdom and will of God in his dealings with those first and most honorable dispensers of it, than for such persons to seek and follow greedily after secular advantages, in worldly power, riches, wealth, and honor. Hence there hath been in former ages an endeavor to separate such persons as were by any means dedicated unto the ministry of the gospel from all secular dignities and revenues; yea, some maintained that they were to enjoy nothing of their own, but were to live on alms or the free contributions of the people. But this was quickly condemned as heresy in Wycliffe and others. Yet another sort set up that would pretend thereunto as unto themselves, though they would not oblige all others unto the same rule. This produced some swarms of begging friars, whom they of the church, who were in possession of wealth and power, thought meet to laugh at and let alone. Of late years this contest is at an end. The clergy have happily gotten the victory, and esteem all due unto them that they can by any ways obtain; nor is there any greater crime than for a man to be otherwise minded. But these things are not our

present concernment. From the beginning it was not so; and it is well if, in such a way, men are able to maintain the frame of mind inquired after, which is life and peace.

3. God continues to cast contempt on these things, by giving always incomparably the greatest portion of them unto the vilest men and his own avowed enemies. This was a temptation under the old covenant, but is highly instructive under the new. None will judge those things to be of real value which a wise man casts out daily unto swine, making little or no use of them in his family. Those monsters of men, Nero and Heliogabalus, had more interest in, and more power over, the things of this world than ever had the best of men; — such villains in nature, so pernicious unto human society, that their not-being was the interest of mankind; but yet more of the world poured on them than they knew either how to enjoy, possess, use, or abuse. Look on all the principal treasures and powers of this world as in the hand of one of these monsters, and there disposed of by divine providence, and you may see at what rate God values them.

At this day, the greatest, most noble, wealthy, and fruitful parts of the earth are given unto the great Turk, with some other eastern potentates, either Mohammedans or Pagans, who are prepared for eternal destruction. And if we look nearer home, we may see in whose hands is the power of the chiefest nations of Europe, and unto what end it is used. The utmost of what some Christian professors among ourselves are intent and designing upon, as that which would render them wondrous happy, in their own apprehensions, put hundreds of them together, and it would not answer the waste made by the forementioned beasts every day.

Doth not God proclaim herein that the things of this world are not to be valued or esteemed? If they were so, and had a real worth in themselves, would the holy and righteous God make such a distribution of them? The most of those whom he loves, who enjoy his favor, not only have comparatively the meanest share of them, but are exercised with all the evils that the destitution and want of

them can be accompanied withal. His open and avowed enemies, in the meantime, have more than they know what to do withal Who would set his heart and affections on those things which God poureth into the bosoms of the vilest men, to be a snare unto them here and an aggravation of their condemnation forever? It seems you may go and take the world, and take the curse, death and hell, along with it, but "what will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" What can any man do on the consideration hereof, who will not forego all his hopes and expectations from God, but retreat unto the faith of things spiritual and eternal, as containing an excellency in them incomparably above all that he enjoyed here below?

4. He doth continue to give perpetual instances of their uncertainty and unsatisfactoriness, in the utter disappointment of men that have had expectations from them. The ways hereof are so various, and the instances so multiplied, as that most men in the world, — unless they are like the fool in the Gospel, who bade his soul take its ease for many years, because his barns were full, — live in perpetual fears and apprehensions that they shall speedily lose whatever they enjoy, or are under the power of stupid security. But as unto this consideration of them, there is such an account given by the wise man as unto which nothing can be added, or which no reason or experience is able to contradict, Ecclesiastes 2. By these and the like ways doth God cast contempt on all things here below, discovering the folly and falseness of the promises which the world makes use of to allure our affections unto itself. This, therefore, is to be laid as the foundation in all our considerations unto what or whom we shall cleave by our affections, that God hath not only declared the insufficiency of these things to give us that rest and happiness which we seek after, but also poured contempt upon them, in his holy, wise disposal of them in the world.

Secondly, God hath added unto their vanity by shortening the lives of men, reducing their continuance in this world unto so short and uncertain a season as it is impossible they should take any solid

satisfaction in what they enjoy here below. So it is expressed by the psalmist, "Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee." Hence he draws two conclusions: —

1. That "every man at his best state is altogether vanity."
2. That "every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them," Psalm 39:5,6.

The uncertainty and shortness of the lives of men render all their endeavors and contrivances about earthly things both vain and foolish. When men lived eight or nine hundred years, they had opportunity to suck out all the sweetness that was in creature-comforts, to make large provisions of them, and to have long projections about them; but when they had so, they all issued in that violence, oppression, and wickedness, which brought the flood on the world of ungodly men. And it still so abides. The more of and the longer men enjoy these things, the more, without the sovereign preservative of grace, will they abound in sin and provocation of God. But God hath reduced the life of man unto the small pittance of seventy years, casting what may fall out of a longer continuance into travail and sorrow. Besides, that space is shortened with the most, by various and innumerable incidences and occasions. Wherefore, in these seventy years, consider how long it is before men begin to have a taste or gust of the things of this life; how many things fall in cross, to make us weary of them before the end of our days; how few among us (not one of a thousand) attain that age; what is the uncertainty of all men living as to the continuance of their lives unto the next day; and we shall see that the holy, wise God hath left no such season for their enjoyment as might put a value upon them. And when, on the other hand, it is remembered that this man, who is of such short continuance in this world, is yet made for eternity, eternal blessedness or misery, which state depends wholly on his interest on things above, and setting his affections on them, they must forfeit all

their reason, as well as bid defiance unto the grace of God, who give them up unto things below.

Thirdly, God hath openly and fully declared the danger that is in these things, as unto their enjoyment and use. And what multitudes of souls miscarry by an inordinate adherence unto them! for they are the matter of those temptations whereby the souls of men are ruined forever; the fuel that supplies the fire of their lusts, until they are consumed by it.

Men under the power of spiritual convictions fall not into sin, fail not eternally, but by the means of temptation; that is the mire wherein this rush doth grow. [As] for others, who live and die in the madness and wildness of nature, without any restraint in their minds from the power of convictions, they need no external temptations, but only opportunities to exert their lusts. But [as] for those who, by any means, are convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment, so as to design the ordering of their lives with respect unto the sense they have of them, they fall not into actual sin but upon temptations. That, whatever it be, which causeth, occasioneth, and prevaileth on, a convinced person unto sin, that is temptation. Wherefore, this is the great means of the ruin of the souls of men.

Now, though there are many principles of temptation, many causes that actually concur unto its efficacy, as sin, Satan, and other men, yet the matter of almost all ruinous temptations is taken out of this world and the things of it. Thence doth Satan take all his darts; thence do evil men derive all the ways and means whereby they corrupt others; and from thence is all the fuel of sin and lust taken. And, which adds unto this evil, all that is in the world contributes its utmost thereunto.

"All that is in the world" is "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," 1 John 2:16.

It is not a direct, formal annumeration of the things that are in the world, nor a distribution of them under several heads, but it is so of the principal lusts of the minds of men, whereunto all things in the world are subservient. Wherefore, not only the matter of all temptations is taken out of the world, but every thing that is in the world is apt and fit to be abused unto that end; for it were easy to show that there is nothing desirable or valuable in this whole world, but it is reducible unto a subserviency unto one or other of these lusts, and is applicable unto the interest and service of temptations and sins.

When men hear of these things, they are apt to say, "Let the dream be unto them that are openly wicked, and the interpretation of it unto them that are profligate in sin." Unto unclean persons, drunkards, oppressors, proud, ambitious persons, it may be it is so; but as unto them, they use the things of this world with a due moderation, so as they are no snare unto them! But to own they are used unto what end soever, if the affections of men are set upon them, one way or other, there is nothing in the world but is thus a snare and temptation. However, we should be very careful how we adhere unto or undervalue that which is the cause and means of the ruin of multitudes of souls. By the warnings given us hereof doth God design, as unto the use of means, to teach us the vanity and danger of fixing our affections on things below.

Fourthly, Things are so ordered in the holy, wise dispensation of God's providence, that it requires much spiritual wisdom to distinguish between the use and the abuse of these things, between a lawful care about them and an inordinate cleaving unto them. Few distinguish aright here, and therefore in these things will many find their great mistake at the last day. [For] the disappointments that they will fall under, as to what concerns their earthly enjoyments, and the use of them wherewith they were intrusted, see Matthew 25:34, to the end of the chapter.

It is granted that there is a lawful use of these things, a lawful care and industry about them; so it is also acknowledged, it cannot be denied, that there is an abuse of them, springing from an inordinate love and cleaving unto them. But here men deceive themselves, taking their measures by the most crooked, uncertain rules. Some make their own inclinations the rule and measure of what is lawful and allowable; some, the example of others; some, the course of the world; some, their own real or pretended necessities. They confess that there is an inordinate love of those things, and an abuse of them, in excesses of various sorts, which the Scripture plainly affirms, and which experience gives open testimony unto; but as unto their state and circumstances, their care, love, and industry are all allowable. That which influenceth all these persons is self-love, which inveterate, corrupt affections and false reasonings do make an application of unto these occasions.

Hence we have men approving of themselves as just stewards of their enjoyments, whilst others judge them hard, covetous, earthly-minded, no way laying out what they are intrusted withal unto the glory of God in any due proportion. Others also think not amiss of themselves in this kind, who live in palpable excesses, either of pride of life, or sensual pleasures, vain apparel, or the like. So, in particular, most men in their feastings and entertainments walk in direct contempt of the rule which our Savior gives in that case, Luke 14:12-14, and yet approve themselves therein.

But what if any of us should be mistaken in our rule and the application of it unto our conditions? Men at sea may have a fair gale of wind, wherewith they may sail freely and smoothly for a season, and yet, instead of being brought into a port, be cast by it at last on destructive shelves or rocks.

And what if that which we esteem allowable love, care, and industry, should prove to be the fruit of earthly affections, inordinate and predominant in us? What if we miss in our measures, and that which we approve of in ourselves should be disapproved of God? We are

cast forever; we belong unto the world; and with the world we shall perish.

It may be said, that "if it be so difficult to distinguish between these things, — namely, the lawful use of things here below and their abuse, the allowable industry about them and the inordinate love of them, — on the knowledge whereof our eternal condition depends, it is impossible but men must spend their time in solicitous anxiety of mind, as not knowing when they have aright discharged their duty."

Ans. 1. I press these things at present no farther but only to allow how dangerous a thing it is for any to incline in his affections unto the things of this world, wherein an excess is ruinous and hardly discoverable. Surely no wise man will venture freely and frequently unto the edge of such a precipice. He will be jealous of his measures, lest they will not hold by the rule of the word. And a due sense hereof is the best preservative of the soul from cleaving inordinately unto things below. And when God in any instance, by afflictions or otherwise, shows unto believers their transgression herein, and how they have exceeded, Job 36:8,9, it makes them careful for the future. They will now or never be diligent that they fall not under that peremptory rule, 1 John 2:15.

2. When the soul is upright and sincere, there is no need in this case of any more solicitousness or anxiety of mind than there is unto or about other duties; but when it is biassed and acted by self-love, and its more strong inclinations unto things present, it is impossible men should enjoy solid peace, or be free from severe reflections on them by their own consciences, in such seasons wherein they are awakened unto their duty and the consideration of their state, nor have I any thing to tender for their relief. With others it is not so, and therefore I shall so far digress in this place as to give some directions unto those who, in sincerity, would be satisfied in this lawful use and enjoyment of earthly things, so as not to adhere unto them with inordinate affection: —



1. Remember always that you are not proprietors or absolute possessors of those things, but only stewards of them. With respect unto men, you are or may be just proprietors of what you enjoy; but with respect unto Him who is the great possessor of heaven and earth, you are but stewards. This stewardship we are to give an account of, as we are taught in the parable, Luke 16:1, 2. This rule always attended unto will be a blessed guide in all instances and occasions of duty.

But if a man be left in trust with houses and large possessions, as a steward for the right lord, owner, and proprietor of them, if he fall into a pleasing dream that they are all his own, and use them accordingly, it will be a woful surprisal unto him when he shall be called to account for all that he hath received and laid out, whether he will or no, and when indeed he hath nothing to pay. It will scarce be otherwise with them at the great day who forget the trust which is committed to them, and suppose they may do what they will with what they call their own,

2. There is nothing, in the ways of getting, enjoying, or using of these things, but giveth its own evidence unto spiritual wisdom whether it be within the bounds of duty or no. Men are not lightly deceived herein, but when they are evidently under the power of corrupt affections, or will not at all attend unto themselves and the language of their own consciences. It is a man's own fault alone if he know not wherein he doth exceed.

A due examination of ourselves in the sight of God with respect unto these things, the frame and actings of our minds in them, will greatly give check unto our corrupt inclinations and discover the folly of those reasonings whereby we deceive ourselves into the love of earthly things, or justify ourselves therein, and bring to light the secret principle of self-love, which is the root of all this evil.

3. If you would be able to make a right judgment in this case, be sure that you have another object for your affections, which hath a

predominant interest in your minds, and which will evidence itself so to have on all occasions. Let a man be never so observant of himself as unto all outward duties required of him with respect unto these earthly things; let him be liberal in the disposal of them on all occasions; let him be watchful against all intemperance and excesses in the use of them, — yet if he hath not another object for his affections, which hath a prevailing influence upon them, if they are not set upon the things that are above, one way or other it is the world that hath the possession of his heart: for the affections of our minds will and must be placed in chief on things below or things above. There will be a predominant love in us; and therefore, although all our actions should testify another frame, yet if God and the things of God be not the principal object of our affections, by one way or other unto the world we do belong. This is that which is taught us so expressly by our Savior, Luke 16:9-13,

"And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

4. Labor continually for the mortification of your affections unto the things of this world. They are, in the state of corrupted nature, set and fixed on them, nor will any reasonings or considerations effectually divert them, or take them off in a due manner, unless they are mortified unto them by the cross of Christ. Whatever change be otherwise wrought in them, it will be of no advantage unto us. It is mortification alone that will take them off from earthly things unto the glory of God. Hence the apostle, having given us that charge, "Set

your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth," Colossians 3:2, adds this as the only way and means we may do so, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth," verse 5. Let no man think that his affections will fall off from earthly things of their own accord. The keenness and sharpness of them in many things may be abated by the decay of their natural powers in age and the like; they may be mated by frequent disappointments, by sicknesses, pains, and afflictions, as we shall see immediately; they may be willing unto a distribution of earthly enjoyments, to have the reputation of it, wherein they still cleave unto the world, but under another shape and appearance; or they may be startled by convictions, so as to do many things gladly that belong to another frame: but, on one pretense or other, under one appearance or other, they will for ever adhere or cleave unto earthly things, unless they are mortified unto them through faith in the blood and cross of Christ, Galatians 6:14. Whatever thoughts you may have of yourselves in this matter, unless you have the experience of a work of mortification on your affections, you can have no refreshing ground of assurance that you are in any thing spiritually minded.

5. In all the instances of duty belonging unto your stewardship of earthly things, attend diligently unto the rule of the word. Without this the grace exhorted unto may be abused. So of old, under a pretense of a relinquishment of the things of this world, because of the danger in adhering unto them, their own superstition and the craft of other men prevailed with many to part with all they had unto the service of others, not better, it may be not so good as themselves. This evil wholly arose from want of attendance unto the rule of truth, which gives no such direction in ordinary cases. But there is not much seen in these days of an excess in this kind; but, on the other hand, in all instances of duties of this nature, most men's minds are habitually influenced with pretenses, reasonings, and considerations, that turn the scales as unto what they ought to do, in proportion in this duty, on the side of the world. If you would be safe, you must, in all instances of duty, — as in works of charity, piety, and compassion, — give authority in and over your souls unto the rule of the word. Let

neither self, nor unbelief, nor the custom and example of others, be heard to speak; but let the rule alone be attended unto, and to what that speaks yield obedience.

Unless these things are found in us, none of us, no man living, if it be not so with him, can have any refreshing evidence or assurance that he is not under the power of an inordinate, yea, and predominant love unto this world.

And, indeed, to add a little farther on the occasion of this digression, it is a sad thing to have this exception made against the state of any man on just grounds, "Yea, but he loves the world." He is sober and industrious, he is constant in duties of religion; it may be, an earnest preacher of them; a man of sound principles, and blameless as unto the excesses of life; — "but he loves the world!" The question is, How doth this appear? it may be, what you say is but one of those evil surmises which all things are filled withal. Wherefore, I speak it not at all to give countenance unto the rash judging of others, which none are more prone unto than those who, one way or other, are eminently guilty themselves; but I would have every man judge himself, that we be none of us condemned of the Lord. If, notwithstanding the things mentioned, any of us do center in self, which is supplied and filled with the world, — if we prefer self above all other things, do aim at the satisfaction of self in what we do well or ill, are useless unto the only good and blessed end of these earthly things, in supplying the wants of others according unto the proportions wherewith we are intrusted, — it is to be feared that the world and the things that are in it have the principal interest in our affections.

And the danger is yet greater with them who divert on the other extreme. Such are they who, in the pride of life, vanity in apparel, excess in drinking, pampering the flesh every day, tread close on the heels of the world, if they do not also fully keep company with it. Altogether in vain is it for such persons to countenance themselves with an appearance of other graces in them, or the sedulous

performance of other duties. This one rule will eternally prevail against them: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And, by the way, let men take heed how they walk in any instance against the known judgment and practice of the wiser or more experienced sort of Christians, to their regret and sorrow, if not unto their offense and scandal, or in any way whereunto they win the consent of their own light and conscience by such reasonings and considerations as will not hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary. Yet thus and no otherwise is it with all them who, under a profession of religion, do indulge unto any excesses wherein they are conformed unto the world.

Fifthly, God makes a hedge against the excess of the affections of men rational and any way enlightened unto the things of this world, by suffering the generality of men to carry the use of them, and to be carried by the abuse of them, into actings so filthy, so abominable, so ridiculous, as reason itself cannot but abhor. Men by them transform themselves into beasts and monsters, as might be manifested by all sorts of instances. Hence the wise man prayed against riches, lest he should not be able to manage the temptations wherewith they are accompanied, Proverbs 30:8,9.

Lastly, To close this matter, and to show us what we are to expect in case we set our affections on things here below, and they have thereby a predominant interest in our hearts, God hath positively determined and declared that if it be so, he will have nothing to do with us, nor will accept of those affections which we pretend we can and do spare for him and spiritual things. "If we abstain from open sins, if we abhor the lewdness and uncleanness of men in the world, if we are constant in religious duties, and give ourselves up to walk after the most strict sort in religion, like Paul in his Pharisaism, may we not," will some say or think, "find acceptance with God, though our hearts cleave inordinately unto the things of this world?" I say, God hath peremptorily determined the contrary; and if other arguments will not prevail with us, he leaves us at last unto this,

"Go, love the world and the things of it; but know assuredly you do it unto the eternal loss of your souls," 1 John 2:15; James 4:4.

These few instances have I given of the arguments and motives whereby God is pleased to deter us from fixing our affections on things here below; and they are most of them such only as he maketh use of in the administration of his providence. There are two other heads of things that offer themselves unto our consideration: —

1. The ways, means, arguings, and enticements, which the world makes use of to draw, keep, and secure, the affections of men unto itself.

2. The secret, powerful efficacy of grace, in taking off the heart from these things, and turning and drawing it unto God, with the arguments and motives that the Holy Spirit maketh use of in and by the word unto this end; wherein we must show what is the act of conquering grace, whereby the heart is finally prevailed on to choose and adhere unto God in love immutable. But these things cannot be handled in any measure, according to their nature and importance, without such length of discourse as I cannot here divert unto. I shall therefore proceed unto that which is the proper and peculiar subject before us.

## **CHAPTER XII.**

**What is required in and unto our affections that they may be spiritual — A three-fold work on the affections described.**

TO declare the interest of our affections in this frame of being spiritually minded, and what they contribute thereunto, I shall do these three things: — First, Declare what is required hereunto, that our affections may be spiritual, wherein lies the foundation of the whole duty; secondly, What are their actings when they are so spiritual; thirdly, What are the means whereby they may be kept and preserved in that frame; with sundry other things of the like nature.

How our affections are concerned in or do belong unto the frame of mind inquired after hath been before declared. Without spiritual affections we cannot be spiritually minded. And that they may be of this use, three things are required: —

I. Their principle;

II. Their object;

III. The way and manner of their application unto their proper object by virtue of that principle.

I. As unto the principle acting in them, that our affections may be spiritual and the spring of our being spiritually minded, it is required that they be changed, renewed, and inlaid with grace, spiritual and supernatural. To clear the sense hereof, we must a little consider what is their state by nature, and then by what means they may be wrought upon as unto a change or a renovation; for they are like unto some things which in themselves and their own nature are poisonous, but being corrected, and receiving a due temperament from a mixture of other ingredients, become medicinal and of excellent use.

By nature our affections, all of them, are depraved and corrupted. Nothing in the whole nature of man, no power or faculty of the soul, is fallen under greater disorder and depravation by the entrance of sin than our affections are. In and by them is the heart wholly gone and turned off from God, Titus 3:3. It were a long work to set forth this depravation of our affections, nor doth it belong unto our

present design. Some few things I shall briefly observe concerning it, to make way unto what is proposed concerning their change: —

1. This is the only corruption and depravation of our nature by the fall evident in and unto reason or the light of nature itself. Those who were wise among the heathen both saw it and complained of it. They found a weakness in the mind, but saw nothing of its darkness and depravation as unto things spiritual. But they were sensible enough of this disorder and tumult of the affections in things moral, which renders the minds of men "like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." This greatly aggravates the neglect of them who are not sensible of it in themselves, seeing it is discernible in the light of nature.

2. They are, as depraved, the seat and subject of all lusts, both of the flesh and of the spirit; yea, lust or evil concupiscence is nothing but the irregular motion and acting of our affections as depraved, defiled, corrupted, Romans 7:8. Hence no one sin can be mortified without a change wrought in the affections.

3. They are the spring, root, and cause of all actual sin in the world, Matthew 15:19. The "evil heart," in the Scripture, is the corrupt affections of it, with the imaginations of the mind, whereby they are excited and acted, Genesis 6:5. These are they which at this time fill the whole world with wickedness, darkness, confusion, and terror; and we may learn what is their force and efficacy from these effects. So the nature of the plague is most evident when we see thousands dying of it every week.

4. They are the way and means whereby the soul applies itself unto all sinful objects and actings. Hence are they called our "members," our "earthly members;" because as the body applies itself unto its operations by its members, so doth the soul apply itself unto what belongs unto it by its affections, Romans 6:13; Colossians 3:5.



5. They will not be under the conduct of the mind, its light or convictions. Rebellion against the light of the mind is the very form whereby their corruption acts itself, Job 24:13. Let the apprehensions of the mind and its notions of good and evil be what they will, they reject them, and lead the soul in pursuit of their inclinations. Hence, no natural man whatsoever doth in any measure answer the light of his mind or the convictions of his understanding, but he sees and approves of better things, following those that are worse; and there is no greater spiritual judgment than for men to be given up unto themselves and their own evil affections, Romans 1:26.

Many other instances might be given of the greatness of that depravation which our affections are fallen under by sin; these may suffice as unto our present purpose.

In general, this depravation of our affections by nature may be reduced unto two heads: —

1. An utter aversion from God and all spiritual things. In this lies the spring of all that dislike of God and his ways that the hearts of men are filled withal; yea, they do not only produce an aversion from them and dislike of them, but they fill the mind with an enmity against them. Therefore men say in their hearts unto God,

"Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" Job 21:14,15. See Romans 1:28, 8:7.

2. An inordinate cleaving unto things vain, earthly, and sensual, causing the soul to engage into the pursuit of them as the horse rushes into the battle.

Whilst our affectious are in this state and condition we are far enough from being spiritually minded, nor is it possible to engage them into an adherence unto or delight in spiritual things.

In this state they may be two ways wrought upon, and yet not so renewed as to be serviceable unto this end: —

1. There may be various temporary impressions made on them. Sometimes there is so by the preaching of the word. Hereon men may hear it with joy, and do many things gladly. Sometimes it is so by judgments, dangers, sicknesses, apprehensions of the approach of death, Psalm 128:35-37. These things take men off for a season from their greedy delight in earthly things, and the pursuit of the interest of lust in making provision for the flesh. On many other occasions, by great variety of causes, there may be temporary impressions made on the affections, that shall seem for a season to have turned the stream of them. And thereon we have many who any day will be wholly, as it were, for God, resolved to forsake sin and all the pleasures of it, but the next return unto all their former excesses; for this is the effect of those impressions, that whereas men ordinarily are predominantly acted by love, desire, and delight, which lead them to act according unto the true natural principles of the soul, now they are for a season acted by fear and dread, which put a kind of force on all their inclinations Hereon they have other thoughts of good and evil, of things eternal and temporal, of God and their own duty, for a season. And hereon some of them may and do persuade themselves that there is a change in their hearts and affections, which there is not; like a man who persuades himself that he hath lost his ague because his present fit is over. The next trial of temptation carries them away again unto the world and sin.

There are sometimes sudden impressions made on spiritual affections, which are always of great advantage to the soul, renewing its engagements unto God and duty. So was it with Jacob, Genesis 28:16-20; so is it often with believers in hearing the word, and on other occasions. On all of them they renew their clearings unto God with love and delight. But the effect of these impressions on unrenewed affections are neither spiritual nor durable; yea, for the most part, they are but checks given in the providence of God unto the raging of their lusts, Psalm 9:20.

2. They are liable unto an habitual change. This the experience of all ages gives testimony to. There may be an habitual change wrought in the passions and affections of the mind, as unto the inordinate and violent pursuit of their inclinations, without any gracious renovation of them. Education, philosophy, or reason, long afflictions, spiritual light and gifts, have wrought this change. So Saul, upon his call to be king, became "another man." Hereby persons naturally passionate and furious have been made sedate and moderate, and those who have been sensual have become temperate, yea, and haters of religion to be professors of it. All these things, and many more of the like nature, have proceeded from a change wrought upon the affections only, whilst the mind, will, and conscience, have been totally unsanctified.

By this change, when it is alone, no man ever became spiritually minded; for whereas there are two parts of the depravation of our affections, that whereby they are turned off from God, and that whereby they inordinately cleave unto other things, their change principally, if not only, respects the latter. They are brought into some order with respect unto present things. The mind is not continually tossed up and down by them as the waves of the sea, that are troubled, and east up mire and dirt. They do not carry those in whom they are into vicious, sensual actions, but they allow them to make virtue in moderation, sobriety, temperance, fidelity, and usefulness in several ways, to be their design; and it is admirable to think what degrees of eminency in all sorts of moral virtues, upon this one principle of moderating the affections, even many among the heathens attained unto. But as unto their aversation from God and spiritual things, in the true spiritual notion of them, they are not cured by this change; at least this change may be, and yet this latter not be wrought.

Again; this alteration doth but turn the course or stream of men's affections, it doth not change the nature of them. They are the same in their spring and fountain as ever they were, only they are habituated unto another course than what of themselves they are

inclined unto. You may take a young whelp of the most fierce and savage creature, as of a tiger or a wolf, and by custom or usage make it as tame and harmless as any domestic creature, — a dog, or the like: but although it may be turned into quite another way or course of acting than what it was of itself inclined unto, yet its nature is not changed; and therefore frequently, on occasion, opportunity, or provocation, it will fall into its own savage inclination, and having tasted of the blood of creatures, it will never be reclaimed. So is it with the depraved affections of men with respect unto their change: their streams are turned, they are habituated unto a new course; but their nature is not altered, at least not from rational unto spiritual, from earthly unto heavenly. Yet this is that which was most beautiful and desirable in nature, the glory of it, and the utmost of its attainments. He who has by any means proceeded unto such a moderation of his affections as to render him kind, benign, patient, useful, preferring public good before private, ordinate and temperate in all things, will rise up in judgment against those who, professing themselves to be under the conduct of the light of grace, do yet, by being morose, angry, selfish, worldly, manifest that their affections are not subdued by the power of that grace. Wherefore, that we may be spiritually minded, there is yet another work upon our affections required, which is their internal renovation, whereby not only the course of their actings is changed, but their nature is altered and spiritually renewed. I intend that which is expressed in that great evangelical promise, Isaiah 11:6-9,

"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain."

A change and alteration is promised in the natures, principles, and first inclinations, of the worst and most savage sinners who pass under the power of gospel grace.

This is that which is required of us in a way of duty, Ephesians 4:23, "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind." There is a renovation of the mind itself, by the communication of spiritual, saving light and understanding thereunto, whereof I have treated elsewhere at large. See Romans 12:2; Ephesians 1:17,18. But

"the spirit of the mind," that whereby it is enlivened, led, and disposed unto its actings, that is to be renewed also. "The spirit of the mind" is in this place opposed unto "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,"

or depraved affections, Ephesians 4:22. These, therefore, are that "spirit of the mind," which inclines, bends, and leads it to act suitably unto its inclinations, which is to be renewed. And when our affections are inclined by the saving grace of the Holy Spirit, then are they renewed, and not else. No other change will give them a spiritual renovation. Hereby those things which are only natural affections in themselves, in them that believe become fruits of the Spirit: Galatians 5:22,23, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," etc. They continue the same as they were in their essence, substance, and natural powers; but are changed in their properties, qualities, inclinations, whenever a new nature is given unto them. So the waters at Marah were the same waters still before and after their cure. But of themselves and in their own nature they were bitter, so as that the people could not drink them; on the casting of a tree into them, they were made sweet and useful, Exodus 15:25. So was it with the waters of Jericho, which were cured by casting salt into them, 2 Kings 2:19-22. Our affections continue the same as they were in their nature and essence; but they are so cured by grace as that their properties, qualities, and inclinations, are all cleansed or renewed. The tree or salt that is cast into these waters, whereby the cure is

wrought, is the love of God above all, proceeding from faith in him by Christ Jesus.

## CHAPTER XIII.

**The work of the renovation of our affections — How differenced from any other impression on or change wrought in them, and how it is evidenced so to be — The first instance, in the universality accompanying of affections spiritually renewed — The order of the exercise of our affections with respect unto their objects.**

THAT which is our concernment herein is, to inquire of what nature that work is which hath been on our own affections, or in them, and how it differs from those which, whatever they do or effect, yet will not render us nor themselves spiritual.

And we ought to use the best of our diligence herein, because the great means whereby multitudes delude and deceive their own souls, persuading themselves that there has been an effectual work of the grace of the gospel in them, is the change that they find in their affections; which may be on many occasions without any spiritual renovation: —

1. As unto the temporary and occasional impressions on the affections before mentioned, whether from the word or any other divine warning by afflictions or mercies, they are common unto all sorts of persons. Some there are whose "consciences are seared with a hot iron," 1 Timothy 4:2, "who" thereon, "being past feeling" (senseless of all calls, warnings, and rebukes), "have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness," Ephesians 4:19. Such persons, having hardened

themselves in a long course of sin, and being given up unto a reprobate mind, or vile affections, in a way of judgment, have, it may be, no such impressions on their affections on any occasion as to move them with a sense of things spiritual and eternal. They may be terrified with danger, sudden judgments, and other revelations of the wrath of God from heaven against the ungodliness of men, but they are not drawn to take shelter in thoughts of spiritual things. Nothing but hell will awaken them unto a due consideration of themselves and things eternal.

It is otherwise with the generality of men who are not profligate and impudent in sinning; for although they are in a natural condition and a course of sin, in the neglect of known duties, yet, by one means or other, — most frequently by the preaching of the word, — their affections are stirred towards heavenly things.

Sometimes they are afraid, sometimes they have hopes and desires about them. These put them on resolutions, and some temporary endeavors to change their lives, to abstain from sin and to perform holy duties. But, as the prophet complains, "their goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it goeth away." Yet by means hereof do many poor ignorant souls deceive themselves, and cry "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." And they will sometimes so express how they are affected, with complaints of themselves as unto their long neglect of spiritual things, that others may entertain good hopes concerning them; but all comes to nothing in the trial.

There is no difficulty unto spiritual light to distinguish between these occasional impressions on the affections and that spiritual renovation of them which we inquire after. This alone is sufficient to do it, that they are all of them temporary and evanid. They abide "for a while" only, as our Savior speaks, and every occasion defeats all their efficacy. They may be frequently renewed, but they never abide. Some of them immediately pass away, and are utterly lost between the place where they hear the word and their own habitations; and in vain shall they inquire after them again, — they are gone forever.

Some have a larger continuance, endure longer in the mind, and produce some outward effects. None of them will hold any trial or shock of temptation.

Yet I have somewhat to say unto those who have such impressions on their affections, and warnings by them: —

(1.) Despise them not, for God is in them. Although he may not be in them in a way of saving grace, yet he is in them in that which may be preparatory thereto. They are not common human accidents, but especial divine warnings.

(2.) Labor to retain them, or a sense of them, upon your hearts and consciences. You have got nothing by losing so many of them already; and if you proceed in their neglect, after a while you will hear of them no more.

(3.) Put no more in them than belongs unto them. Do not presently conclude that your state is good, because you have been affected at the hearing of the word, or under a sickness, or in a danger. Hereon you may think that now all is well with them, wherewith they please themselves, until they are wholly immersed in their former security.

2. We may consider the difference that is between the habitual change of the affections before described, and that renovation by grace which renders them spiritual. And this is of great concernment unto us all, to inquire into it with diligence. Multitudes are herein deceived, and that unto their ruin; for they resolve their present peace into, and build their hopes of eternal life on, such a change in themselves as will not abide the trial. This difference, therefore, is to be examined by Scripture light and the experience of them that do believe. And, —

(1.) There is a double universality with respect unto the spiritual renovation of our affections, — that which is subjective, with respect unto the affections themselves; and that which is objective, with respect unto spiritual things.



[1.] Sanctification extends itself unto the "whole spirit, and soul, and body," 1 Thessalonians 5:23. When we say that we are sanctified in part only, we do not say that any part, power, or faculty of the soul is unsanctified, but only that the work is not absolutely perfect in any of them. All sin may retain power in some one affection, as anger, fear, or love, as unto actual eruptions and effects, more than in all the rest, as one affection may be more eminently sanctified in some than in others; for it may have advantages unto this end from men's natural tempers and various outward circumstances. Hence, some find little difficulty in the mortification of all other lusts or corruptions in comparison of what they meet withal in some one inordinate affection or corruption. This, it may be, David had regard unto, Psalm 18:23. I have known persons shining exemplarily in all other graces who have been scarce free from giving great scandal by the excess of their passions and easy provocation thereunto. And yet they have known that the setting themselves unto the sincere, vigorous mortification of that disorder is the most eminent pledge of their sincerity in other things; for the trial of our self-denial lies in the things that our natural inclinations lie strongest toward. Howbeit, as was said, there is no affection where there is this work of renovation but it is sanctified and renewed; none of them is left absolutely unto the service of sin and Satan. And therefore, whereas, by reason of the advantages mentioned, sin doth greatly contend to use some of them unto its interest and service in a peculiar manner, yet are they enabled unto and made meet for gracious actings, and do in their proper seasons put forth themselves accordingly. There is no affection of the mind from whence the soul and conscience hath received the greatest damage, — that was, as it were, the field whereon the contest is managed between sin and grace, — but hath its spiritual use and exercise when the mind is renewed.

There are some so inordinately subject to anger, and passion therein, as if they were absolutely under the power and dominion of it; yet do they also know how to be "angry and sin not," in being angry at sin in themselves and others: "Yea, what indignation; yea, what revenge!" etc., 2 Corinthians 7:11. Yea, God is pleased sometimes to leave

somewhat more than ordinary of the power of corruption in one affection, that it may be an occasion of the continual exercise of grace in the other affections. Yet are they all sanctified in their degree, that which is relieved as well as that which doth relieve. And therefore, as the remainder of sin in them that believe is called "the old man," which is to be crucified in all the members of it, because of its adherence unto the whole person in all its powers and faculties; so the grace implanted in our natures is called "the new man," there being nothing in us that is not seasoned and affected with it. As nothing in our natures escaped the taint of sin, so nothing in our natures is excepted from the renovation that is by grace. He in whom any one affection is utterly unrenewed hath no one graciously renewed in him. Let men take heed how they indulge to any depraved affection, for it will be an unavoidable impeachment of their sincerity. Think not to say, with Naaman, "God be merciful unto me in this thing; in all others I will be for him."

He requires the whole heart, and will have it or none. The chief work of a Christian is to make all his affections, in all their operations, subservient unto the life of God, Romans 6:17,18; and he who is wise will keep a continual watch over those wherein he finds the greatest reluctancy thereunto. And every affection is originally sanctified according unto the use it is to be of in the life of holiness and obedience.

To be entire for God, to "follow him fully," to "cleave unto him with purpose of heart," to have the "heart circumcised to love him," is to have all our affections renewed and sanctified; without which we can do none of them. When it is otherwise, there is a "double heart," "a heart and a heart," which he abhors: "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty," Hosea 10:2.

So it is in the other change mentioned. Whatever is or may be wrought upon our affections when they are not spiritually renewed, that very change, as unto the extent of it, is not universal. It doth not affect the whole mind, in all its powers and affections, until a vital,

prevailing principle and habit of grace is implanted in the soul. Sin will not only radically adhere unto all the faculties, powers, and affections, but it will, under any change that may befall them, refer the rule and dominion in some of them unto itself. So was it with the young man that came unto our Lord Jesus Christ to know what he should do to obtain eternal life, Mark 10:17-22.

Thus there are many who in other things are reduced unto moderation, sobriety, and temperance, yet there remaineth in them "the love of money" in a predominant degree; which to them is "the root of all evil," as the apostle speaks. Some "seem to be religious," but they "bridle not their tongues;" through anger, envy, hatred, and the like, "their religion is vain."

The most of men, in their several ways of profession, pretend not only unto religion, but unto zeal in it, yet set no bounds unto their affections unto earthly enjoyments. Some of old, who had most eminently in all other things subdued their passions and affections, were the greatest enemies unto and persecutors of the gospel.

Some who seem to have had a mighty change wrought in them by a superstitious devotion, do yet walk in the spirit of Cain towards all the disciples of Christ, — as it is with the principal devotionists of the church of Rome; and elsewhere we may see some go soberly about the persecution and destruction of other Christians. Some will cherish one secret lust or other, which they cannot but know to be pernicious unto their souls. Some love the praise of men, which will never permit them to be truly spiritually minded: so our Savior testifieth of some, that they "could not believe, because they loved the praise of men." This was the known vice of all the ancient philosophers. They had, many of them, on the principles of reason and by severe exercise, subdued their affections unto great moderation about temporary things, but in the meantime were all of them slaves to vain-glory and the praise of men, until by the public observation of it, and some contradictions in their lives unto their pretenses unto virtue, they lost that also among wise and

considerative men. And, generally, if men not spiritually renewed were able to search themselves, they would find that some of their affections are so far from having any change wrought in them, as that they are a quiet habitation for sin, where it exerciseth its rule and dominion.

[2.] There is a universality that is objective in spiritual things, with respect unto the renovation of our affections; that is, affections spiritually renewed do fix themselves upon and cleave unto all spiritual things, in their proper places, and unto their proper ends: for the ground and reason of our adherence unto any one of them is the same with respect unto them all, — that is, their relation unto God in Christ. Wherefore, when our affections are renewed, we make no choice in spiritual things, cleaving unto some and refusing others, making use of Naaman's restraint; but our adherence is the same unto them all in their proper places and degrees. And if, by reason of darkness and ignorance, we know not any of them to be from God, — as, for instance, the observation of the Lord's day, — it is of unspeakable disadvantage unto us. An equal respect is required in us unto all God's commands. Yet there are various distinctions in spiritual things, and thereon a man may and ought to value one above another as unto the degrees of his love and esteem, although he is to be sincere with respect unto them all: —

1st. God himself, — that is, as revealed in and by Christ, — is in the first and chiefest place the proper and adequate object of our affections as they are renewed, lie is so for himself, or his own sake alone. This is the spring, the center, and chief object of our love. He that loves not God for himself, — that is, for what he is in himself, and what from himself alone he is and will be unto us in Christ (which considerations are inseparable), — hath no true affection for any spiritual thing whatever. And not a few do here deceive themselves, or are deceived; which should make us the more diligent in the examination of ourselves. They suppose that they love heaven and heavenly things, and the duties of divine worship, — which persuasion may befall them on many grounds and occasions which

will not endure the trial, — but as unto God himself, they can give no evidence that they have any love to him, either on the account of the glorious excellencies of his nature, with their natural relation unto him and dependence on him, or on the account of the manifestation of himself in Christ, and the exercise of his grace therein. But whatever may be pretended, there is no love unto God whereof these things are not the formal reason, that proceeds not from these springs. And because all men pretend that they love God, and defy them that think them so vile as not to do so, though they live in open enmity against him and hatred of him, it becomes us strictly to examine ourselves on what grounds we pretend so to do. Is it because indeed we see an excellency, a beauty, a desirableness, in the glorious properties of his nature, such as our souls are refreshed and satisfied with the thoughts of, by faith, and in whose enjoyment our blessedness will consist, so that we always rejoice at the remembrance of his holiness? Is it our great joy and satisfaction that God is what he is? Is it from the glorious manifestation that he hath made of himself and all his holy excellencies in Christ, with the communication of himself unto us in and by him? If it be so indeed, then is our love generous and gracious, from the renovation of our affections. But if we say we love God, yet truly know not why, or upon principles of education, and because it is esteemed the height of wickedness to do otherwise, we shall be at a loss when we are called unto our trial. This is the first object of our affections

2dly. In other spiritual things, renewed affections do cleave unto them according as God is in them. God alone is loved for himself; all other things for him, in the measure and degree of his presence in them. This alone gives them pre-eminence in renewed affections. For instance, God is in Christ, in the human nature of the man Christ Jesus, in a way and manner singular, in concern alike, incomprehensible, so as he is in the same kind in nothing else. Therefore is the Lord Christ, even as unto his human nature, the object of our affections in such a way and degree as no other thing, spiritual or eternal, but God himself, is or ought to be. All other spiritual things become so from the presence of God in them, and

from the degree of that presence have they their nature and use. Accordingly are they, or ought to be, the object of our affections as unto the degree of their exercise. Evidences of the presence of God in things and persons are the only attractives of renewed affections.

3dly. In those things which seem to stand in an equality as unto what is of God in them, yet on some especial occasions and reasons our love may go forth eminently unto one more than another. Some particular truth, with the grace communicated by it, may have been the means of our conversion unto God, of our edification in an especial manner, of our consolation in distress; it cannot be but that the mind will have a peculiar respect unto and valuation of such truths and the grace administered by them. And so it is as unto duties. We may have found such a lively intercourse and communion with God in some of them as may give us a peculiar delight in them.

But, notwithstanding these differences, affections spiritually renewed do cleave unto all spiritual things as such; for the true formal reason of their so doing is the same in them all, — namely, God in them: only they have several ways of acting themselves towards them, whereof I shall give one instance.

Our Savior distributes spiritual things into those that are heavenly and those that are earthly, that is comparatively so: John 3:12,

"If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"

The "heavenly things" are the deep and mysterious counsels of the will of God. These renewed affections cleave unto with holy admiration and satisfactory submission, captivating the understanding unto what it cannot comprehend. So the apostle declares it, Romans 11:33-36,

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who

hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

What the mind cannot comprehend the heart doth admire and adore, delighting in God, and giving glory unto him in all.

The "earthly things" intended by our Savior in that place are the work of God upon the souls of men in their regeneration, wrought here in the earth. Toward these the affections act themselves with delight and with great thanksgiving. The experience of the grace of God in and upon believers is sweet unto their souls. But one way or other they cleave unto them all; they have not a prevailing aversation unto any of them. They have a regard unto all God's precepts, a delight in all his counsels, a love to himself and all his ways.

Whatever other change is wrought on the affections, if they be not spiritually renewed, it is not so with them; for as they do not cleave unto any spiritual things, in their own true proper nature, in a due manner, because of the evidences of the presence of God in them, so there are always some of them whereunto those whose affections are not renewed do maintain an aversation and an enmity. And although this frame doth not instantly discover itself, yet it will do so upon any especial trial. So was it with the hearers of our Savior, John 6. There was a great impression made on their affections by what he taught them concerning "the bread of God, which came down from heaven and gave life unto the world;" for they cried thereon, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," verse 34: but when the mystery of it was farther explained unto them, they liked it not, but cried, "This is an hard saying, who can hear it?" verse 60; and thereon fell off both from him and his doctrine, although they had followed him so long as to be esteemed his disciples, verse 66. I say, therefore, whensoever men's affections are not renewed, whatever other change may have been wrought upon them, as they have no true delight in any spiritual things or truths for themselves and in their own nature, so

there are some instances wherein they will maintain their natural enmity and aversion unto them.

This is the first difference between affections spiritually renewed and those which, from any other causes, may have some kind of change wrought in them.

## CHAPTER XIV.

**The second difference between affections spiritually renewed and those which have been only changed by light and conviction — Grounds and reasons of men's delight in duties of divine worship, and of their diligence in their performance, whose minds are not spiritually renewed.**

THE second difference lieth herein, that there may be a change in the affections, wherein men may have delight in the duties of religious worship and diligence in their observance; but it is the spiritual renovation of the affections that gives delight in God through Christ, in any duty of religious worship whatever.

Where the truth of the gospel is known and publicly professed, there is great variety in the minds, ways, and practices, of men about the duties of religious worship. Many are profane in their minds and lives, who, practically at least, despise or wholly neglect the observance of them. These are stout-hearted and far from righteousness, Titus 1:16. Some attend unto them formally and cursorily, from the principles of their education, and, it may be, out of some convictions they have of their necessity. But many there are who, in the way they choose and are pleased withal, are diligent in their observance, and that with great delight, who yet give no evidence of the spiritual renovation of their minds; yea, the way



whereby some express their devotion in them, being superstitious and idolatrous, is inconsistent with that or any other saving grace. This, therefore, we must diligently inquire into, or search into the grounds and reasons of men's delight in divine worship, according unto their convictions of the way of it, [while they] yet continue in their minds altogether unrenewed. And, —

1. Men may be greatly affected with the outward part of divine worship, and the manner of the performance thereof, who have no delight in what is internal, real, and spiritual therein: John 5:35,

"He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light."

So, many were delighted in the preaching of Ezekiel, because of his eloquence and the elegancy of his parables, chapter 33:31,32. This gave them both delight and diligence in hearing, whereon they called themselves the people of God, though they continued to live in sin; their hearts went after covetousness. The same may befall many at present with reference unto the spiritual gifts of those by whom the word of God is dispensed. I deny not but that men may be more delighted, more satisfied, with the gifts, the preaching, of one than another, and yet be sincere in their delight in the dispensation of the word; for they may find more spiritual advantage thereby than in the gifts of others, and things so prepared as to be more suited unto their edification than elsewhere: but that which at present we insist on hath respect only unto some outward circumstances, pleasing the minds of men, 2 Timothy 3:5.

This was principally evident under the old testament, whilst they had carnal ordinances and a worldly sanctuary. Ofttimes under that dispensation the people were given up unto all sorts of idolatry and superstition; and when they were not so, yet were the body of them carnal and unholy, as is evident from the whole tract of God's dealing with them, by his prophets and in his providences: yet had they great delight in the outward solemnities of their worship, placing all their

trust of acceptance with God therein. They who did really and truly believe looked through them all unto Christ, whom they did foreshadow, without which the things were a yoke unto them and a burden almost insupportable, Acts 15:10; but those who were carnal delighted in the things themselves, and for their sakes rejected Him who was the life and substance of them all. And this proved the great means of the apostasy of the Christian church also: for, to maintain some appearance of spiritual affections, men introduced carnal incitements of them into evangelical worship, such as singing, with music and pompous ceremonies; for they find such things needful to reconcile the worship of God unto their minds and affections, and through them they appear to have great delight therein. Could some men but in their thoughts separate divine service from that outward order, those methods of variety, show, and melody, wherewith they are affected, they would have no delight in it, but look upon it as a thing that must be endured. How can it be otherwise conceived of among the Papists? They will with much earnestness, many evidences of devotion, sometimes with difficulty and danger, repair unto their solemn worship, and when they are present understand not one word whereby their minds might be excited unto the real workings of faith, love, and delight in God! Only order, ceremony, music, and other incentives of carnal affections, make great impression on them. Affections spiritually renewed are not concerned in these things; yea, if those in whom they are should be engaged in the use of them, they would find them means of diverting their minds from the proper work of divine worship, rather than an advantage therein. It will also appear so unto themselves, unless they are content to lose their spiritual affections, acting themselves in faith and love, embracing in their stead a carnal, imaginary devotion. Hence, two persons may at the same time attend unto the same ordinances of divine worship, with equal delight, on very distinct principles: as if two men should come into the same garden, planted and adorned with a variety of herbs and flowers, one ignorant of the nature of them, the other a skillful herbalist; both may be equally delighted, the one with the colors and smell of the flowers, the other with the consideration of their various natures, their uses in physical

remedies, or the like. So may it be in the hearing of the word. For instance, one may be delighted with the outward administration, another with its spiritual efficacy, at the same time. Hence Austin tells us that singing in the church was laid aside by Athanasius at Alexandria; not the people's singing of psalms, but a kind of singing in the reading of the Scripture and some offices of worship, which began then to be introduced in the church. And the reason he gave why he did it was, that the modulation of the voice and musical tune might not divert the minds of men from that spiritual affection which is required of them in sacred duties. What there is of real order in the worship of God, was there is that order which is an effect of divine wisdom, — it is suited and useful unto spiritual affections, because proceeding from the same Spirit whereby they are internally renewed: "Beholding your order," Colossians 2:5. Every thing of God's appointment is both helpful and delightful unto them. None can say with higher raptures of admiration, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!" Psalm 84:1,2, than they whose affections are renewed; yet is not their delight terminated on them, as we shall see immediately.

2. Men may be delighted in the performance of outward duties of divine worship, because in them they comply with and give some kind of satisfaction unto their convictions. When conscience is awakened unto a sense of the necessity of such duties, — namely, of those wherein divine worship doth consist, — it will give the mind no rest or peace in the neglect of them. Let them be attended unto in the seasons which light, conviction, and custom call for, it will be so far satisfied as that the mind shall find present ease and refreshment in it. And when the soul is wonted unto this relief, it will not only be diligent in the performance of such duties, it will not only not omit them, but it will delight in them as those which bring it in great advantage. Hence many will not omit the duty of prayer every morning, who upon the matter are resolved to live in sin all the day long. And there are but few who sedulously endeavor to live and walk in the frame of their hearts and ways answerable unto their own prayers; yet all that is in our prayers beyond our endeavors to answer

it in a conformity of heart and life, is but the exercise of gifts in answer to convictions Others find an allay of troubles in them, like that which sick persons may find by drinking cold water in a fever, whose flames are assuaged for a season by it. They make them as an antidote against the poison and sting of sin, which allayeth its rage but cannot expel its venom.

Or these duties are unto them like the sacrifices for sin under the law. They gave a guilty person present ease: but, as the apostle speaks, they made not men perfect; they took not away utterly a conscience condemning for sin. Presently, on the first omission of duty, a sense of sin again returned on them, and that not only as the fact, but as the person himself, was condemned by the law. Then were the sacrifices to be repeated, for a renewed propitiation. This gave that carnal people such delight and satisfaction in those sacrifices that they trusted unto them for righteousness, life, and salvation. So it is with persons who are constant in spiritual duties merely from conviction. The performance of those duties gives them a present relief and ease; though it heals not their wound, it assuageth their pain and dispelleth their present fears. Hence are they frequent in them, and that oftentimes not without delight, because they find ease thereby. And their condition is somewhat dangerous who, upon the sense of the guilt of any sin, do betake themselves for relief unto their prayers, which having discharged, they are much at ease in their minds and consciences, although they have obtained no real sense of the pardon of sin nor any strength against it.

It will be said, "Do not all men, the best of men, perform all spiritual duties out of a conviction of their necessity? do not they know it would be their sin to omit them, and so find satisfaction in their minds upon their performance?" I say, They do: but it is one thing to perform a duty out of conviction of a necessity as it is God's ordinance, which conviction respects only the duty itself; another thing to perform it to give satisfaction unto convictions of other sins, or to quiet conscience under its trouble about them; which latter we speak unto. This begins and ends in self; self-satisfaction is the sole

design of it. By it men aim at some rest and quietness in their own minds, which otherwise they cannot attain. But in the performance of duties in faith, from a conviction of their necessity as God's ordinance, and their use in the way of his grace, the soul begins and ends in God. It seeks no satisfaction in them, nor finds it from them, but in and from God alone by them.

3. The principal reason why men whose affections are only changed, not spiritually renewed, do delight in holy duties of divine worship, is, because they place their righteousness before God in them, whereon they hope to be accepted with him. They know not, they seek not after, any other righteousness but what is of their own working out. Whatever notions they may have of the righteousness of faith, of the righteousness of Christ, that which they practically trust unto is their own: and it discovers itself so to be in their own consciences on every trial that befalls them; yea, when they cry unto the Lord, and pretend unto faith in Christ, they quickly make it evident that their principal trust is resolved into themselves. Now, in all that they can plead in a way of duties or obedience, nothing carrieth a fairer pretense unto a righteousness than what they do in the worship of God, and the exercise of the acts of religion towards him. This is that which he expects at their hands, what is due unto him in the light of their consciences, the best that they can do to please him; which therefore they must put their trust in, or nothing. They secretly suppose not only that there is a righteousness in these things which will answer for itself, but such also as will make compensation in some measure for their sins; and therefore, whereas they cannot but frequently fall into sin, they relieve themselves from the reflection of their consciences by a multiplication of duties, and renewed diligence in them.

It is inconceivable what delight and satisfaction men will take in any thing that seems to contribute so much unto a righteousness of their own; for it is suitable unto and pleaseth all the principles of nature as corrupt, after it is brought under the power of a conviction concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.

This made the Jews of old so pertinaciously adhere unto the ceremonies and sacrifices of the law, and to prefer them above the gospel "the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof," Romans 10:3. They looked and sought for righteousness by them. Those who for many generations were kept up with great difficulty unto any tolerable observance of them, when they had learned to place all their hopes of a righteousness in them, would and did adhere unto them unto their temporal and eternal ruin, Romans 9:31-33. And when men were persuaded that righteousness was to be attained by works of munificence and supposed charity, in the dedication of their substance unto the use of the church, they who otherwise were covetous, and greedy and oppressing, would lavish gold out of the bag, and give up their whole patrimony, with all their ill-gotten goods, to attain it; so powerful an influence hath the desire of self-righteousness upon the minds of men. It is the best fortification of the soul against Christ and the gospel, — the last reserve whereby it maintains the interest of self against the grace of God.

Hence, I say, those that place their righteousness, or that which is the principal part of it, in the duties of religious worship, will not only be diligent in them, but oftentimes abound in a multiplication of them. Especially will they do so if they may be performed in such a way and manner as pleaseth their affections with a show of humility and devotion, requiring nothing of the exercise of faith or sincere divine love therein. So is it with many in all kinds of religion, whether the way of their worship be true or false, whether it be appointed of God or rejected by him. And the declaration hereof is the subject of the discourse of the prophet, Isaiah 1:11-17; also, Micah 6:6-8.

4. The reputation of devotion in religious duties may insensibly affect the unrenewed minds of men with great diligence and delight in their performance. However men are divided in their apprehension and practice about religion, however different from and contrary unto each other their ways of divine worship are; yet it is amongst all sorts of men, yea, in the secret thoughts of them who outwardly contemn these things, a matter of reputation to be devout, to be diligent, to be

strict, in and about those duties of religion which, according to their own light and persuasion, they judge incumbent on them. This greatly affects the minds of men whilst pride is secretly predominant in them, and they love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Especially will this consideration prevail on them when they suppose that the credit and honor of the way which they profess, in competition with others, depend much on their reputation as to their strictness in duties of devotion; for then will they not only be diligent in themselves, but zealous in drawing others unto the same observances. These two principles, their own reputation and that of their sect, constituted the life and soul of Pharisaism of old. According as the minds of men are influenced with these apprehensions, so will a love unto and a delight in those duties whereby their reputation is attained thrive and grow in them.

I am far from apprehending that any men are (at least, I speak not of them who are) such vile hypocrites as to do all that they do in religion to be seen and praised of men, being influenced in all public duties thereby; which some among the Pharisees were given up unto. But I speak of them who, being under the convictions and motives before mentioned, do also yet give admittance unto this corrupt end of desire of reputation or the praise of men; for every such end, being admitted and prevalent in the mind, will universally influence the affections unto a delight in those duties whereby that end may be attained, until the person with whom it is so be habituated unto them with great satisfaction.

5. I should, in the last place, insist on superstition. As this is an undue fear of the divine nature, will, and operations, built on false notions and apprehensions of them, it may befall the minds of men in all religions, true and false. It is an internal vice of the mind. As it respects the outward way and means of religious service, and consists in the devout performance of such duties as God indeed accepts not, but forbids, so it belongs only to religion as it is false and corrupt. How in both respects it will engage the minds of men into

the performance of religious duties, and for the most part with the most scrupulous diligence, and sometimes with prodigious attempts to exceed the measures of human nature in what they do design, is too long a work here to be declared. It may suffice to have mentioned it among the causes and reasons why men whose affections are not spiritually renewed may yet greatly delight in the diligent performance of the outward duties of religion. Our design in these things is, the discovery of the true nature of this grace and duty of being spiritually minded. Hereunto we have declared that it is necessary that our affections be spiritually and supernaturally renewed; and because there may be a great change wrought on the affections of men with respect unto spiritual things where there is nothing of this supernatural renovation, our present inquiry is, What are the differences that are between the actings of the affections of the one sort and of the other, whether spiritually renewed or occasionally changed? And whereas the great exercise of them consists in the duties of religious worship, I have declared what are the grounds and reasons whence men of unrenewed minds do delight oftentimes in the duties of divine worship and are diligent in the performance of them.

From these and the like considerations, it may be made manifest that the greatest part of the devotion that is in the world doth not spring from the spiritual renovation of the minds of men; without which it is not accepted with God. That which remains to give in instance, farther evidence unto the discovery we are in the pursuit of, is, what are the grounds and reasons whereon those whose minds and affections are spiritually renewed do delight in the institutions of divine worship, and attend unto their observance with great heed and diligence. And because this is an inquiry of great importance, and is of great use to be stated in other cases as well as that before us, I shall treat of it by itself in the ensuing chapter, that the reader may the more distinctly comprehend it, both in the nature of the doctrine concerning it and in the place it holds in our present discourse.





## CHAPTER XV.

### **Delight of believers in the holy institutions of divine worship — The grounds and reasons thereof — The evidence of being spiritually minded thereby, etc.**

THAT all true believers, whose minds are spiritually renewed, have a singular delight in all the institutions and ordinances of divine worship is fully evident, both in the examples of the saints in the Scripture and their own experience, which they will never forego; for this hath been the greatest cause of their suffering persecution, and martyrdom itself, in all ages. If the primitive Christians under the power of the pagan emperors, or the witnesses for Christ under the antichristian apostasy, would or could have omitted the observance of them (according to the advice and practice of the Gnostics), they might have escaped the rage of their adversaries. But they loved not their lives in comparison unto that delight which they had in the observance of the commands of Christ as unto the duties of evangelical worship. David gives us frequently an instance hereof in himself: Psalm 42:1-4,

"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday."

Psalm 63:1-5,

"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."

Psalm 84:1-4,

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah."

But "a greater than David is here." Our Lord Jesus Christ himself did, upon all occasions, declare his delight in and zeal for all the ordinances of divine worship which were then in force by virtue of divine institution and command; for although he severely reproved and rejected whatever men had added thereunto, under the pretense of a supererogating strictness of outward order, laying it all under that dreadful sentence, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be plucked up," and so cast into the fire, yet as unto what was of divine appointment, his delight therein was singular, and exemplary unto all his disciples. With respect hereunto was it said of him, that "the zeal of God's house had eaten him up," by reason of the affliction which he had in his spirit to see the worship of it neglected, polluted, and despised. This caused him to cleanse the temple, the seat of divine worship, from the polluters and pollutions of it, not long before his sufferings, in the face and unto the high provocation of all his adversaries. So with earnest desire he longed for the celebration of his last passover: Luke 22:15, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." And it is a sufficient evidence of the frame of spirit and practice of his

disciples afterward, in reference to the duties of evangelical worship by his appointment, that the apostle gives it as an assured token of an unsound condition, and that which tendeth to final, cursed apostasy, when any fall into a neglect of them, Hebrews 10:25-27.

These things are manifest and unquestionable. But our present inquiry is only, what it is which believers do so delight in in the ordinances and institutions of divine gospel worship, and what it is that engageth their hearts and minds into a diligent observance of them, as also how and wherein they do exercise their love and delight. And I say, in general, that their delight in all ordinances of divine worship, — as is evident in the testimonies before produced, — is in Christ himself, or God in Christ. This alone is that which they seek after, cleave unto, and are satisfied withal. They make use of the streams, but only as means of communication with the spring. When men are really renewed in the spirit of their minds it is so. Their regard unto ordinances and duties of divine worship is, as they are appointed of God a blessed means of communion and intercourse between himself in Christ and their souls. By them doth Christ communicate of his love and grace unto us; in and by them do we act faith and love on him. It is the treasure hid in the field, which when a man hath found he purchaseth the whole field; but it is that he may enjoy the treasure which is hid therein, Matthew 13:44. This field is the gospel and all the ordinances of it. This men do purchase sometimes at a dear rate, even with the loss of all they enjoy; but yet if they obtain nothing but the field, they will have little cause to rejoice in their bargain. It is Christ the treasure alone, that pearl of great price, that will eternally enrich the soul. The field is to be used only [so] as to find and dig up the treasure that is in it. It is, I say, Christ alone that, in the preaching of the gospel, renewed affections do cleave unto as the treasure, and unto all other things according as their relation is unto him or as they have a participation of him. Wherefore, in all duties of religion, in all ordinances of worship, their inquiry is after him whom their souls do love, Song of Solomon 1:7.

But yet we must treat more particularly and distinctly of these things. Those whose affections are spiritually renewed do love, adhere unto, and delight in, ordinances of divine service and duties of worship, on the grounds and reasons ensuing: —

1. In general they do so as they find faith, and love, and delight in God through Christ, excited and acted in and by them. This is the first and immediate end in their institution. It is a pernicious mistake to suppose that any external duties of worship, as hearing the word, prayer, or the sacraments, are appointed for themselves or accepted for themselves.

Such thoughts the Jews of old had concerning their sacrifices, — namely, that they were appointed for their own sake, and were acceptable service unto God merely on their own account. Wherefore God, to deliver them from this pernicious mistake, affirms oftentimes that he never appointed them at all; that is, for any such end, Jeremiah 7:22,23, Isaiah 1:12-14, etc. And now, under the gospel, sundry things destructive to the souls of men have proceeded from such a supposition. Some hereon have always satisfied and contented themselves with the external observance of them, without desiring or endeavoring any holy communion with God in them or by them. This constitutes the state and condition mentioned, Revelation 3:1. And by following this track the generality of Christians do wander out of the way; they cannot leave them, nor do they know how to use them unto their advantage, until they come wholly unto that woful state, Isaiah 29:13. And some, to establish this deceit, have taught that there is much more in the outward work of these duties than ever God put into them, and that they are sanctified merely by virtue of the work wrought.

But all the duties of the second commandment, as are all instituted ordinances of worship, are but means to express and exercise those of the first, as faith, love, fear, trust, and delight in God. The end of them all is, that through them and by them we may act those graces on God in Christ. Where this is not attended unto, when the souls of

men do not apply themselves unto this exercise of grace in them, let them be never so solemn as to their outward performance, be attended unto with diligence, be performed with earnestness and delight, they are neither acceptable unto God nor beneficial unto themselves, Isaiah 1:11. This, therefore, is the first general spring of the love of believers, of them whose affections are spiritually renewed, unto the ordinances of divine worship, and their delight in them: They have experience that in and by them their faith and love are excited unto a gracious exercise of themselves on God in Christ; and when they find it otherwise with them, they can have no rest in their souls. For this end are they ordained, sanctified, and blessed of God; and therefore are effectual means of it, when their efficacy is not defeated by unbelief.

And those who have no experience hereof in their attendance unto them do, as hath been said, fall into pernicious extremes. Some continue their observance with little regard unto God, in cursed formality. So they make them a means of their ruin by countenancing of them in their security. Others utterly reject them, at least the most solemn of them, — and therein both the wisdom, and grace, and authority of God, by whom they are appointed, — because, through the power of their own unbelief, they find nothing in them.

This being the immediate end of all divine institutions; this being the only way whereby we may give glory unto God in their observance, which is their ultimate end in this world; and this being the design in general of believers in that obedience they yield unto the Lord Christ in their diligent observation of them, — we may consider how, in what way, and by what means, those whose affections are spiritually renewed do and ought to apply their minds and souls unto their observance. And we may consider herein, first, what they do design,, and then what they endeavor to be found in the exercise and practice of in their use and enjoyment: —

(1.) They come unto them with this desire, design, and expectation, — namely, to be enabled, directed, and excited by them unto the

exercise of divine faith and love. When it is not so with any, where there is not this design, they do in various degrees take the name of God in vain in their observance. These are "approximationes Dei," the "ways of drawing nigh unto God," as they are everywhere called in Scripture. To suppose that a drawing nigh unto God may consist merely in the outward performance of duty, whatever be its solemnity, is to reject all due reverence of him.

"Forasmuch," saith the Lord, "as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, therefore, behold, I will proceed against them," Isaiah 29:13,14.

The mouth and lips are put, by a synecdoche, for all the means of outward worship and honor. These men may use, diligently attend unto, whilst their hearts are far from God, — that is, when they do not draw nigh to him by faith and love; but all this worship is rejected of God with the highest tokens of his displeasure and indignation against it.

Our souls, then, have no way of approach unto God in duties of worship but by faith; no way of adherence or cleaving unto him but by love; no way of abiding in him but by fear, reverence, and delight. Whenever these are not in exercise, outward duties of worship are so far from being a means of such an approach unto him, as that they set us at a greater distance from him than we were before; at least they are utterly useless and fruitless unto us. So, indeed, they are unto the most who come unto them they know not why, and behave themselves under them they care not how; nor is there any evil in the hearts and ways of men whereof God complaineth more in his word, as that which is accompanied with the highest contempt of him. And because these ordinances of divine worship are means which the wisdom and grace of God hath appointed unto this end, namely, the exercise and increase of divine faith and love, and therefore doth sanctify and bless them thereunto, I do not believe that they have any

delight in the exercise of these graces, nor do design growth in them, by whom these great means of them are despised or neglected.

And although I have seen those valleys of public worship forsaken, either on pretenses of higher attainments in faith, light, and love, than to stand in need of them any more; or on a foolish opinion that they cease upon the dispensation of the Spirit, which is given unto us to make them useful and effectual; or on some provocations that have been given unto some men, or which they have taken unto themselves, which they have thought they could revenge by a neglect of public administrations; or through slavish peace and negligence in times of difficulty, as is the manner of some who forsake the assemblies of the saints, Hebrews 10:25; — yet I never saw but it issued in a great decay, if not in an utter loss, of all exercise of faith and love, and sometimes in open profaneness: for such persons contemn the way and means which God, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, hath appointed for their exercise and increase, and this shall not prosper. We may therefore do well to consider that the principal way whereby we may sanctify the name of God in all duties of his worship, and obtain the benefit of them to our own souls, is by a conscientious approach unto them, with a holy desire and design to be found in the exercise of faith and love on God in Christ, and to be helped and guided therein by them.

To be under an efficacious influence from this design is the best preparation for any duty. So David expresseth his delight in the worship of God:

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God," Psalm 84:1,2.

He longed for the tabernacle and the courts of it; but it was the enjoyment of God himself, the living God, that he desired and sought after. This was that which made him so fervent in his desires after those ordinances of God. So he expresseth it, Psalm 63:2, "To see thy



power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary," David had had great communion with and delight in God, by faith and love, in the solemn duties of his worship; and this was that which inflamed him with desires after renewed opportunities unto the same end.

(2.) This design is not general, inactive, useless, and slothful; but such persons diligently endeavor, in the use of these ordinances and attendance unto them, to be found in the exercise of these graces. They have not only an antecedent design to be so, but a diligent actual endeavor after it, not suffering their minds by any thing to be diverted from the pursuit of that design, Ecclesiastes 5:1. Whatever is not quickened and enlivened hereby they esteem utterly lost. Neither outward administrations nor order will give them satisfaction when these things are wanting in themselves. Without the internal actings of the life of faith, external administrations of ordinances of worship are but dead things, nor can any believer obtain real satisfaction in them or refreshment by them without an inward experience of faith and love in them and by them; and it is that which, if we are wise, we shall continually attend unto the consideration of. A watchful Christian will be careful lest he lose any one duty by taking up with the carcass of it. And the danger of so doing is not small. Our affections are renewed but in part; and as they are still liable to be diverted and seduced from spirituality in duty even by things earthly and carnal, through the corruption that remaineth in them, so there is a disposition abiding in them to be pleased with those external things and religious duties which others, as we have showed before, who are no way graciously renewed, do satisfy themselves withal. The grace and oratory of the speaker in preaching of the word, especially in these days wherein the foppery of fine language, even in sacred things, is so much extolled; the order and circumstances of other duties; with inclination and love unto a party, — are apt to insinuate themselves with great complacency into our affections so far as they are unrenewed.

And these things discover the true grounds whence it is that the ordinances of divine worship are so useless as they are to many who

seem to attend unto them with diligence. They may be referred unto these three heads: —

[1.] They do not come unto them as the means appointed of God for the exercise of faith and love unto Christ, so as to make it their design in their approaches to them; without which all that is spoken of advantage in and by other duties is utterly lost.

[2.] They do not, in and under them, labor to stir up faith and love unto their due exercise.

[3.] They suffer their minds to be diverted from the exercise of these graces, partly by occasional temptations, partly by attendance unto what is outward only in the ordinances themselves,

Spiritual affections find no place of rest in any of these things, Such proposals of God in Christ, of his will and their own duty, as may draw out their faith, love, godly fear, and delight, into their due exercise, are that which they inquire after and acquiesce in.

Two things alone doth faith regard in all duties of worship, as unto the outward administration of it, — the one absolutely, the other comparatively, — both with respect unto the ends mentioned, or the exercise, growth, and increase of grace in us, The first is, that they may be of divine appointment. Where their original and observance are resolved into divine authority, there, and there alone, will they have a divine efficacy. In all these things faith hath regard to nothing but divine precepts and promises, Whatever hath regard to any thing else is not faith, but fancy; and therefore those un-commanded duties in religion, which so abound in the papal church as that if not the whole yet all the principal parts of their worship consist in them, are such as in whose discharge it is impossible faith should be in a due exercise. That which it hath comparative respect unto is, the spiritual gifts of them unto whom the administration of the ordinances of the gospel in the public worship of the church is committed. With respect unto them, believers may have more delight

and satisfaction in the ministry of one than of another, as was touched before. But this is not because one is more learned than another or more elegant than another, hath more ability of speech than another or more fervency in utterance than another, is more fervent or earnest in his delivery; but because they find the gifts of one more suited and more effectual to stir up faith and love unto a holy exercise in their minds and hearts than what they find in some others. Hence they have a peculiar value for and delight in the ministry of such persons, especially when they can enjoy it in due order, and without the offense of others. And ministers that are wise will, in holy administrations, neglect all other things, and attend unto this alone, how they may be helpful unto the faith, and love, and joy of believers, so far as they are the object of their ministry.

This is the first reason and ground whereon affections spiritually renewed cleave unto ordinances of divine worship with delight and satisfaction, — namely, because they are the means appointed and blessed of God for the exercise and increase of faith and love, with an experience of their efficacy unto that end.

2. The second is, because they are the means of the communication of a sense of divine love and supplies of divine grace unto the souls of them that do believe. So far as our affections are renewed, this is the most principal attractive to cleave unto them with delight and complacency.

They are, as was observed before, the ways of our approaching unto God. Now, we do not draw nigh to God, as himself speaks, as to a "dry heath or a barren wilderness," where no refreshment is to be obtained. To make a pretense of coming unto God, and not with expectation of receiving good and great things from him, is to despise God himself, to overthrow the nature of the duty, and deprive our own souls of all benefit thereby. And want hereof is that which renders the worship of the most useless and fruitless unto themselves. We are always to come unto God as unto an eternal spring of goodness, grace, and mercy, of all that our souls do stand in

need of, of all we can desire in order unto our everlasting blessedness. And all these things, as unto believers, may be reduced unto the two heads before mentioned: —

(1.) They come for a communication of a sense of his love in Jesus Christ. Hence doth all our peace, consolation, and joy, all our encouragement to do and suffer according to the will of God, all our supportments under our sufferings, solely depend; in these things do our souls live; and without them we are of all men the most miserable.

It is the Holy Spirit who is the immediate efficient cause of all these things in us. He "sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts," Romans 5:5; he witnesseth our adoption unto us, chapter 8:15,16; and thereby an interest in the love of the Father, in God as he is love. But the outward way and means whereby he ordinarily communicates these things unto us, and effects them in us, is by the dispensation of the gospel, or the preaching of it. He doth the same work also in prayer, and oftentimes in other holy administrations. For this end, for a participation of this grace, of these mercies, do believers come unto God by them. They use them as means to "draw water from the wells of salvation," and to receive in that spiritual sense of divine love which God by them will communicate.

So Christ by his word knocks at the door of the heart. If it be opened by faith, he cometh in and suppleth with men, giving them a gracious refreshment, by the testimony of his own love and the love of the Father, Revelation 3:20; John 14:23. This believers look for in, and this they do in various measures receive by, the ordinances of divine worship. And although some, through their fears and temptations, are not sensible hereof, yet do they secretly receive those blessed, gracious supplies whereby their souls are held in life, without which they would pine away and perish. So he dealeth with them, Song of Solomon 4:5,6. These are the gardens and galleries of Christ, wherein he gives us of his love, Song of Solomon 7:12. Those who are humble and sincere know how often their souls have been refreshed

in them, and how long sometimes the impressions they have received of divine grace and love have continued with them, unto their unspeakable consolation. They remember what they have received in the opening and application of the "exceeding great and precious promises" that are given unto them, whereby they are gradually more and more "made partakers of the divine nature," — how many a time they have received light in darkness, refreshment under despondencies, relief in their conflicts with dangers and temptations, in and by them. For this cause do affections that are spiritually renewed cleave unto them. Who can but love and delight in that which he hath found by experience to be the way and means of communicating unto him the most invaluable mercy, the most inestimable benefit, whereof in this life he can be made partaker? He who hath found a hidden treasure, although he should at once take away the whole of it, will yet esteem the place where he found it; but if it be of that nature that no more can be found or taken of it at once but what is sufficient for the present occasion, yet is so full and boundless as that whenever he comes again to seek for it he shall be sure to obtain present supply, he will always value it, and constantly apply himself unto it. And such is the treasure of grace and divine love that is in the ordinances of divine worship.

If we are strangers unto these things, if we have never received efficacious intimations of divine love unto our souls in and by the duties of divine worship, we cannot love them and delight in them as we ought. What do men come to hear the word of God for? What do they pray for? What do they expect to receive from him? Do they come unto God as the eternal fountain of living waters, — as the God of all grace, peace, and consolation? or do they come unto his worship without any design, as unto a dry and empty show? Do they fight uncertainly with these things, as men beating the air? or do they think they bring something unto God, but receive nothing from him? that the best of their business is to please him in doing what he commands, but to receive any thing from him they expect not, nor do ever examine themselves whether they have done so or no? It is not

for persons who walk in such ways ever to attain a due delight in the ordinances of divine worship.

Believers have other designs herein; and among the rest this in the first place, that they may be afresh made partakers of refreshing, comforting pledges of the love of God in Christ, and thereby of their adoption, of the pardon of their sins, and acceptance of their persons. According as they meet with these things in the duties of holy worship, public or private, so will they love, value, and adhere unto them. Some men are full of other thoughts and affections, so as that these things are not their principal design or desire, or are contented with that measure of them which they suppose themselves to have attained, or at least are not sensible of the need they stand in to have fresh communications of them made unto their souls, supposing that they can do well enough without a renewed sense of divine love every day. Some are so ignorant of what they ought to design, to look after, in the duties of gospel worship, as that it is impossible they should have any real design in them. Many of the better sort of professors are too negligent in this matter. They do not long and pant in the inward man after renewed pledges of the love of God; they do not consider how much need they have of them, that they may be encouraged and strengthened unto all other duties of obedience; they do not prepare their minds for the reception of them, nor come with expectation of their communication unto them; they do not rightly fix their faith on this truth, — namely, that these holy administrations and duties are appointed of God in the first place as the ways and means of conveying his love and a sense of it unto our souls. From hence spring all that lukewarmness, coldness, and indifferency in and unto the duties of holy worship, that are growing among us; for if men have lost the principal design of faith in them, and disesteem the chiefest benefit which is to be obtained by them, whence should zeal for them, delight in them, or diligence in attendance unto them, arise? Let not any please themselves under the power of such decays; they are indications of their inward frame, and those infallible! Such persons will grow cold, careless, and negligent, as unto the duties of public worship; they will put

themselves neither to charge nor trouble about them; every occasion of life diverts them, and finds ready entertainment in their minds; and when they do attend upon them, it is with great indifference and unconcernedness. Yet would they have it thought that all is still as well within as ever it was; they have as good a respect unto religion as any! But these things openly discover an ulcerous disease in the very souls of men, as evidently as if it were written on their foreheads. Whatever they pretend unto the contrary, they are under the power of woful decays from all due regard unto spiritual and eternal things. And I would avoid the society of such persons as those who carry an infectious disease about them, unless it were to help on their cure.

But herein it is that affections spiritually renewed do manifest themselves: When we do delight in and value the duties of God's worship, because we find by experience that they are and have been unto us means of communicating a sense and renewed pledges of the love of God in Christ, with all the benefits and privileges which depend thereon, then are our affections renewed in and by the Holy Ghost.

(2.) They come for supplies of internal, sanctifying, strengthening grace. This is the second great design of believers in their approaches unto God in his worship. The want hereof, as unto measures and degrees, they find in themselves, and are sensible of it; yea, herein lies the great burden of the souls of believers in this world. All that we do in the life of God may be referred unto two heads: —

[1.] The observance of all duties of obedience; and,

[2.] The conflict with and conquest over temptations.

About these things are we continually exercised. Hence the great thing which we desire, labor for, and pant after, is spiritual strength and ability for the discharge of ourselves in a due manner with respect unto these things. This is that which every true believer

groaneth after in the inward man, and which he preferreth infinitely above all earthly things. So he may have grace sufficient in any competent measure for these ends, let what will befall him, he desireth no more in this world. God in Christ is the only fountain of all this grace; there is not one drachm of it to be obtained but from him alone. And as he doth communicate it unto us of his own sovereign goodness and pleasure, so the ordinary way and means whereby he will do it are the duties of his worship: Isaiah 40:28-31,

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

All grace and spiritual strength is originally seated in the nature of God, verse 28. But what relief can that afford unto us who are weak, feeble, fainting? He will act suitably unto his nature in the communication of this grace and power, verse 29. But how shall we have an interest in this grace, in these operations? Wait on him in the ordinances of his worship, verse 31. The word as preached is the food of our souls, whereby God administereth growth and strength unto them, John 17:17. "Desire," says he, "the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." But what encouragement have we thereunto? "If so be," saith he, "ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," 1 Peter 2:2,3. If, in and by the dispensation of this word, you have had experience of the grace, the goodness, the kindness of God unto your souls, you cannot but desire it and delight in it; and otherwise you will not do so. When men have sat some good while under the dispensation of the word and in the enjoyment of other ordinances, without tasting in them and by them that "the Lord is gracious," they will grow weary of it and them. Wherefore, prayer is



the way of his appointment for the application of our souls unto him to obtain a participation of all needful grace; which, therefore, he has proposed unto us in the promises of the covenant, that we may know what to ask, and how to plead for it. In the sacraments the same promises are sealed unto us, and the grace represented in them effectually exhibited. Meditation confirms our souls in the exercise of faith about it, and is the especial opening of the heart unto the reception of it. By these means, I say, doth God communicate all supplies of renewing, strengthening, and sanctifying grace unto us, that we may live unto him in all holy obedience, and be able to get the victory over our temptations. Under this apprehension do believers approach unto God in the ordinances of his worship. They come unto them as the means of God's communication unto their souls. Hence they cleave unto them with delight, so far as their affections are renewed. So the spouse testifieth of herself, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight," Song of Solomon 2:3. In these ordinances is the protecting, refreshing presence of Christ. This she rested in with great delight.

3. As they come unto them with these designs and expectations, so they have experience of the spiritual benefits and advantages which they receive by them, which more and more engageth them unto them in their affections with delight. All these things, those who have a change wrought in their affections, but not a spiritual renovation, are strangers unto. They neither have the design before mentioned in coming to them, nor the experience of this efficacy now proposed in their attendance on them. But these benefits are great: as, for instance, when men find the worth and effect of the word preached on their souls, in its enlightening, refreshing, strengthening, transforming power; when they find their hearts warmed, their graces excited and strengthened, the love of God improved, their desponding spirits under trials and temptations relieved, their whole souls gradually more and more conformed unto Christ; when they find themselves by it extricated out of snares, doubts, fears, temptations, and brought unto sanctification and rest, — they cannot but delight in the dispensation of it, and rejoice in it as the food of

their souls. And it is a great hinderance unto the increase of spiritual life, and obstruction unto fruitfulness, thankfulness, and consolation, when we are negligent in our meditation about the benefits that we receive by the word and the advantages which we have thereby; for whilst it is so with us, we can neither value the grace of God in granting this inestimable privilege nor perform any duty with respect unto it in a right manner. This renders it an especial object of our affections as spiritually renewed. That secret love unto, and heavenly delight in, the statutes and testimonies of God, which David expresseth Psalm 119, arose from the spiritual benefit and advantage which he received by them, as he constantly declares. And the sole reason, on the other hand, why men grow so careless, negligent, and cold, in their attendance unto the preaching of the word, is because they have no experience of any spiritual benefit or advantage by it. They have been brought unto it by one means or another, — mostly by conviction of their duty; their minds have been variously affected with it, unto a joy in the hearing of it and readiness unto sundry duties of obedience: but after a while, when a sense of those temporary impressions is worn off, finding no real spiritual benefit by it, they lose all delight in it, and become very indifferent as unto its enjoyment. The frame which such persons at length arrive unto is described, Malachi 1:13, and 3:14. None can give any greater evidence of the decay of all manner of grace in them, or of their being destitute of all saving grace, than when they apostatize from some degree of zeal for, and delight in, the dispensation of the word of God, into such a cursed indifferency as many are overtaken withal. It cannot be otherwise; for seeing this is a way and means of the exercise of all grace, it will not be neglected but where there is a decay of all grace, however men may please themselves with other pretenses. And when they are thus ensnared, every foolish prejudice, every provocation, every wanton opinion and imagination, will confirm them in, and increase, their gradual backsliding.

And as it is with believers as unto the hearing of the word in general, so it is as unto the degrees of advantage which they find by it. When men have enjoyed the dispensation of the word in a peculiar manner,

spiritual and effectual, if they can be content to forego it for that which is more cold and lifeless, provided it possesseth the same time and outward form with the other, it is no great evidence that their souls do prosper. It is therefore those alone who have a sense of the efficacy of the word on their souls and consciences unto all the holy ends of it, who cleave unto it with spiritual love and delight. They continually remember what holy impressions it hath made on them, what engagements it hath brought their souls into, what encouragements unto faith and obedience it hath furnished them withal, and [they] long after [the] renewed sense of its enjoyment. When we do not find in ourselves this foundation of spiritual delight in the dispensation of the gospel, we can have no great evidence that our affections are renewed.

So also it is in the duties of prayer and meditation. When the soul of a believer hath had experience of the communion which it hath had with God in them, or either of them; of the spiritual refreshment which it hath had from them; of the benefits and mercies which are obtained by them, in recovery from temptations, snares, despondencies, in victory over sin and Satan, in spiritual impressions, working it into a holy, watchful frame, which hath abode in it in other ways and occasions; with the like advantages wherewith fervent and effectual prayer and sincere heavenly meditation axe accompanied, — it cannot but have love unto them and delight in them. But if indeed we have no experience of these things, if we find not these advantages in and by these duties, they cannot but be a burden unto us, nor do serve unto any other end but to satisfy convictions. He who had the benefit of a serene and wholesome air in a recovery from many diseases and distempers, with the preservation of his health so obtained, will love it and prize it; and so will he these duties who hath been partaker of any of those saving mercies and privileges wherewith they axe accompanied. Some have been delivered from the worst of temptations, and the nearest approach of their prevalency (as to destroy themselves), by a sudden remembrance of the frame of their souls and the intimations of God's love in such or such a prayer, at such a time. Some have had

the same deliverance from temptations unto sin; when they have been carried away under the power of their corruptions, and all circumstances have concurred under the apprehensions of it, a sudden thought of such a prayer or meditation, with engagement they made of themselves therein unto God, hath caused all the weapons of sin to fall out of its hands, and all the beauties of its allurements to disappear. When others have been under the power of such despondencies and disconsolations as that no present tenders of relief can approach unto them, they have been suddenly raised and refreshed by the remembrance of the intimate love and kindness between Christ and their souls that hath evidenced itself in former duties. Multitudes, in fears, distresses, and temptations, have found relief unto their spirits and encouragement unto their faith in the remembrance of the returns they have had unto former supplications in the like distresses. These are grounds of spiritual delight in these duties.

Heartless, lifeless, wordy prayers, the fruit of convictions and gifts, or of custom and outward occasions, however multiplied, and whatever devotion they seem to be accompanied withal, will never engage spiritual affections unto them. When these things are absent, when the soul hath not experience of them, prayer is but a lifeless form, a dead carcass, which it would be a torment unto a soul spiritually alive to be tied unto. There may be a season, indeed, when God will seem to hide himself from believers in their prayers, so as they shall neither find that life in themselves which they have done formerly, nor be sensible of any gracious communications from him; but this is done only for a time, and principally to stir them up unto that fervency and perseverance in prayer as may recover them into their former or a better estate than yet they have attained unto. The like may be said concerning all other duties of religion or ordinances of divine worship.

4. Believers, whose affections are spiritually renewed, do delight greatly in the duties of divine worship, because they are the great instituted way whereby they may give glory unto God. This is the first

and principal end of all duties of religion as they respect divine appointment, — namely, to ascribe and give unto God the glory that is his due; for in them all acknowledgment is made of all the glorious excellencies of the divine nature, our dependence on him and relation unto him. And this is that which, in the first place, believers design in all the duties of divine worship. And the pattern set us by our blessed Savior, in the prayer he taught his disciples, directs us thereunto. All the first requests of it concern immediately the glory of God, and the advancement thereof; for therein also all the blessedness and safety of the church are included. Those who fail in this design do err in all that they do; they never tend unto the mark proposed unto them. But this is that which principally animates the souls of them that believe, in all their duties; this their universal relation unto him, and love in that relation, makes necessary. Wherefore, that way and means whereby they may directly and solemnly ascribe and give glory unto God is precious and delightful unto them; and such are all the duties of divine worship. These are some of the things wherein the respect of affections spiritually renewed unto ordinances and duties of divine worship doth differ from the actings of affections toward the same object which are not so sanctified and renewed.

There are yet other things, accompanied with the same evidence of the difference between affections spiritually renewed and those which have only a general change wrought in them by convictions and some outward occasions, which must in one or two instances more be insisted on, with the consideration of such cases as derive from them; for my design herein is not only to declare when our minds are spiritually renewed, but also what is the nature and operation of our affections whereby we are constituted and denominated "spiritually minded," which is the subject of our whole inquiry. Herein, then, we shall proceed.

## CHAPTER XVI.

**Assimilation unto things heavenly and spiritual in affections spiritually renewed — This assimilation the work of faith; how, and whereby — Reasons of the want of growth in our spiritual affections as unto this assimilation.**

WHEN affections are spiritually renewed in their exercise, or fixing of themselves on spiritual things, there is an assimilation wrought in them, and in the whole soul, unto those spiritual and heavenly things, by faith. But when there is a change in them only from other causes and occasions, and not from renewing grace, there is an assimilation effected of spiritual and heavenly things themselves unto those affections, by imagination.

This must somewhat at large be spoken unto, as that which gives the most eminent distinction between the frames of mind whose difference we inquire into. And to that end we shall cast our consideration of it into the ensuing observations: —

1. Affections spiritually renewed are, in all their actings, in their whole exercise, under the guidance and conduct of faith. It is faith which, in its spiritual light, hath the leading of the soul in the whole life of God. We live here by faith, as we shall do hereafter by sight. If our affections deviate or decline in the least from the guidance of the faith, they degenerate from their spirituality, and give up themselves unto the service of superstition. Next unto corrupt secular interest in the management of crafty, selfish seducers, this hath been the great inlet of all superstition and false worship into the world. Blind affections groping in the dark after spiritual things, having not the saving light of faith to conduct them, have seduced the minds of men into all manner of superstitious imaginations and practices, continuing to do so at this day. And wherever they will lead the way, when faith goeth not before them to discover both way and end, they

that lead and the mind that is led must fall into one snare and pit or another.

Wherefore, affections that are spiritually renewed move not, act not, but as faith discovers their object and directs them unto it. It is faith that works by love. We can love nothing sincerely with divine love but what we believe savingly with divine faith. Let our affections unto any spiritual thing be never so vehement, if they spring not from faith, if they are not guided by it, they are neither accepted with God nor will promote the interest of spirituality and holiness in our own souls, Hebrews 11:6; Matthew 6:22,23. And this is the reason whence we oftentimes see great and plausible appearances of spiritual affections, which yet endure only for a season: They have been awakened, excited, acted, by one means or another, outward or inward; but not having the light of faith to guide them unto their proper object, they either wither and die, as unto any appearing of spiritual motions, or else keep the mind tossed up and down in perpetual disquietment, without rest or peace. "The foolish man wearie himself because he cannot find the way to the city." So was it with them who, on the account of their attendance unto the doctrine of Christ, are called his disciples, John 6. Having preached unto them about the bread which came down from heaven and giveth life unto them that feed, they were greatly affected with it, and cried out, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," verse 34; but when he proceeded to declare the mystery of it, they having not faith to discern and apprehend it, their affections immediately decayed, and they forsook both him and his doctrine, verse 66.

We may consider one especial instance of this nature. Persons every day fall under great and effectual convictions of sin, and of their danger or certain misery thereby. This stirs up and acts all their affections, especially their fears, hopes, desires, sorrow, self-revenge, according as their condition calls for them. Hence sometimes they grow restless in their complaints, and turn themselves every way for relief, like men that are out of the way and bewildered in the night. But in this state and condition, tell them of the only proper way and

means of their relief, — which, let the world say what it will, is Christ and his righteousness alone, with the grace of God in him, — and they quickly discover that they are strange things unto them, such as they do not understand, nor indeed approve. They cannot see them, they cannot discern them, nor any beauty in them for which they should be desired.

Wherefore, after their affections have been tossed up and down for a season under the power and torment of this conviction, they come unto one or other of these issues with them; for, either they utterly decay, and the mind loseth all sense of any impressions from them, so as that they wonder in themselves whence they were so foolish as to be tossed and troubled with such melancholy fancies, and so commonly prove as bad a sort of men as live upon the earth; or they take up in a formal, legal profession, whereto they never attain to be spiritually minded. This is the best end that our affections towards spiritual things, not guided by the light of faith, do come unto.

2. Faith hath a clear prospect into and apprehension of spiritual things, as they are in themselves and in their own nature. It is true, the light of it cannot fully comprehend the nature of all those things which are the objects of its affections: for they are infinite and incomprehensible, such as are the nature of God and the person of Christ; and some of them, as future glory, are not yet clearly revealed. But it discerns them all in a due manner, so as that they may in themselves, and not in any corrupt representation or imagination of them, be the objects of our affections. They are, as the apostle speaks, "spiritually discerned," 1 Corinthians 2:14; which is the reason why the natural man cannot receive them, — namely, because he hath not ability spiritually to discern them. And this is the principal end of the renovation of our minds, the principal work and effect of faith, — namely, the communication unto our minds and the acting in us of a spiritual, saving light, whereby we may see and discern spiritual things as they are in their own nature, kind, and proper use. See Ephesians 1:17-19,



"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and re-relation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power."

2 Corinthians 4:6,

"God shineth in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ,"

The end God designs is, to draw our hearts and affections unto himself; and unto this end he gives unto us a glorious internal light, whereby we may be enabled to discern the true nature of the things that we are to cleave unto with love and delight. Without this we have nothing but false images of spiritual things in our minds; not always as unto the truth or doctrine concerning them, but as unto their reality, power, and efficacy. This is one of the principal effects of faith, as it is the principal part of the renovation of our minds, — namely, to discover in the soul and represent unto the affections things spiritual and heavenly, in their nature, beauty, and genuine excellency. This attracts them if they be spiritually renewed, and causeth them to cleave with delight unto what is so proposed unto them. He that believes in Christ in a due manner, who thereon discovers the excellency of his person and the glory of his mediation, will beth love him, and, on his believing, "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." So is it in all other instances. The more steady is our view by faith of spiritual things, the more firm and constant will our affections be in cleaving unto them; and wherever the mind is darkened about them, by temptation or seduction from the truth, there the affections will be quickly weakened and impaired. Wherefore, —

3. Affections thus led unto and fixed on spiritual and heavenly things, under the light and conduct of faith, are more and more renewed, or made in themselves more spiritual and heavenly. They are, in their cleaving unto them and delight in them, continually changed and assimilated unto the things themselves, becoming more and more to be what they are, — namely, spiritual and heavenly.

This transformation is wrought by faith, and is one of its most excellent faculties and operations. See 2 Corinthians 3:18. And the means whereby it works herein are our affections. In them as we are carnal, we are conformed unto this world; and by them as we are sanctified are we "transformed by the renewing of our mind," Romans 12:2. And this transformation is the introduction of a new form or nature into our souls, diverse from that wherewith we were before endued. So is it described, Isaiah 11:6-9. A spiritual nature they were changed into. And it is twofold: — First, Original and radical as to the substance or essence of it, which is the effect of the first act of divine grace upon our souls when we are made new creatures. Herein our affections are passive; they do not transform us, but are transformed. Secondly, Gradual as unto its increase; and therein faith works in and by the affections.

Whenever the affections do cleave intensely unto any object they receive an impression from it, — as the wax doth from the seal when applied unto it, — which changeth them into its own likeness. So the apostle affirms of sensual, unclean persons, they "have eyes full of adultery," 2 Peter 2:14. Their affections are so wholly possessed and filled with their lustful objects as that they have brought forth their own likeness upon their imaginations. That blots out all others, and leaves them no inclinations but what they stir up in them. When men are filled with the "love of this world," which carries along with it all their other affections, their hopes, fears, and desires, unto a constant exercise about the same object, they become earthly minded. Their minds are so changed into the image of the things themselves, by the effectual working of the corrupt principles of sin, self-love and lust,

as if they were made up of the earth; and therefore have no savor of any thing else.

In like manner, when by faith men come to embrace heavenly things, through the effectual working of a principle of spiritual life and grace in them, they are every day made more and more heavenly: "The inward man is renewed day by day." Love is more sincere and ardent, delight is more ravishing and sensible, desires are more enlarged and intense, and by all a taste and relish of heavenly things is heightened into refreshing experience. See Romans 5:2-5.

This is the way whereby one grace is added unto another, 2 Peter 1:5-7, in degrees. Great is the assimilation between renewed affections and their spiritual objects that by this means may be attained.

The mind hereby becomes the temple of God, wherein he dwells by the Spirit; Christ also dwelleth in believers, and they in him: "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John 4:16.

Love in its proper exercise gives a mutual inhabitation unto God and believers. In brief, he whose affections are set upon heavenly things in a due manner will be heavenly minded, and in the due exercise of them will that heavenly mindedness be increased. The transformation and assimilation that is wrought is not in the objects or spiritual things themselves; they are not changed, neither in themselves nor in the representation made of them unto our minds; but the change is in our affections, which are made like unto them.

Two cases deriving from this principle and consideration may be here spoken unto, and shall be so, — the first in this, and the other in the following chapter. The one is concerning the slowness and imperceptibility of the growth of our affections in their assimilation unto heavenly things, with the causes and reasons of it. The other is the decays that frequently befall men in their affections unto

spiritual things, instead of growing and thriving in them, with the reasons and causes thereof.

1. The progress and growth of our affections into spirituality and heavenliness, into conformity unto the things they are set upon, is oftentimes very slow, and sometimes imperceptible; yea, for the most part, it is a hard thing to find it satisfactorily in ourselves or others. Our affections stand like shrubs in the wilderness, which see not when good cometh, and are not like plants in a garden enclosed, which is watered every day. But it is not so without our folly and our sin.

(1.) The folly that keeps many in this condition consists herein: The generality of Christians are contented with their present measures, and design little more than not to lose the ground they have gained. And a pernicious folly it is, that both ruins the glory of religion and deprives the souls of men of peace and consolation. But so it is. Men have some grounds of persuasion, or at least they hope and suppose they have such grounds, that they are "passed from death unto life," that they are in a state of grace and acceptance with God. This state they will endeavor to preserve by a diligent performance of the duties it requireth, and the avoidance of such sins as whereby they might make a forfeiture of it; but as for earnest, watchful endeavors and diligence to thrive in this state, to grow in grace, to be changed from glory to glory into the image of Christ, to press forward towards the mark of the high calling, and after perfection, to lay hold upon eternal life, to be more holy, more humble, more righteous, more spiritually minded, to have their affections more and more transformed into the likeness of things above, they am hut few that sincerely and diligently apply themselves unto it, or unto the means of these things. The measures which they have attained unto give satisfaction unto the church, and reputation in the world that they are professors; and some so speak peace unto their own souls. To be more holy and heavenly, to have their affections more taken up with the things above, they suppose somewhat inconsistent with their present occasions and affairs. By this means hath religion lost much

of its glory, and the souls of men have been deprived of the principal advantages of it in this world.

Such persons are like unto men who live in a country wherein they are not only pressed with poverty and all sorts of misery, but are also obnoxious unto grievous punishments, and death itself, if they are taken in it. In this condition, they are told and assured of another country, wherein, so soon as they are arrived, they shall be freed from all fear of danger of punishment; and if they pass farther into it, they shall meet with riches, plenty, and a fair inheritance provided for them. Hereon they betake themselves unto their voyage to obtain an entrance into it and possession of it; but no sooner do they come within the borders, and so are free from danger, or fear of punishment and death, but they sit down, and will go no farther to enjoy the good things of the country whereinto they are come. And it falls out with many of them, that, through their sloth, negligence, and ignorance, they take up short of the true bounds and limits of the country of liberty and peace which they aimed at, whereby danger and death surprise them unawares. This ruin could not have befallen them had they industriously endeavored to enter into the heart of the country, and have possessed the good things thereof. At best, being only on the borders, they lead a poor life all their days, exposed to wants and danger.

So it is in this ease. Men falling under the power of convictions, and those restless fears wherewith they are accompanied, will stir up themselves and inquire how they may "flee from the wrath to come," how they may be delivered from the state of sin, and the eternal misery which will ensue thereon.

In the gospel, not only mercy and pardon are proposed unto them on their believing, which is the first entrance into the heavenly country; but peace, and joy, and spiritual strength, upon their admission into it, and a progress made in it by faith and obedience. But many, when they have attained so far as that they have some hopes of pardon and freedom from the curse, so as to deliver them from their tormenting

fears, will endeavor to preserve those hopes and keep that state, but will not pass on to a full enjoyment of the precious things of the gospel, by growth in grace and spiritual affections. But how many of them fall under woful mistakes for supposing themselves to be in a gospel state, it proves in the issue that they never entered into it. They were not, it may be, far from the kingdom of heaven, in the same sense as it was spoken of him who never came thither. There is no way to secure an interest in the gospel, as to pardon and mercy, safety and deliverance, but by a growth in grace, holiness, and spirituality; which gives an entrance into the choicest mercies and privileges of it.

This folly of men in taking up with their measures, endeavoring only to maintain that state and condition which they hope they have attained, is the great reason why their affections do not daily grow up into spirituality, through an assimilation unto heavenly things. And a folly it is attended with innumerable aggravations; as, for instance, —

[1.] It is contrary and destructive unto the genuine and principal property of gospel grace; for it is everywhere compared by our Savior unto things which, from small seeds and beginnings, do grow up by a continual increase unto large measures, — as to a grain of mustard seed, a little leaven, and the like.

That grace in whose nature it is not to thrive and grow may justly be suspected, and ought diligently to be examined by them who take care of their own souls, and would not be eternally deceived.

[2.] It is contrary unto the most excellent or invaluable evangelical promises recorded in the Old Testament and the New, and which are amongst the principal supportments of the faith, hope, and comfort of believers. God hath given them unto us to encourage us unto an expectation of such supplies of grace as shall cause us to thrive and grow against all opposition, unto the utmost of our continuance in this world. And they are so multiplied as that there is no need to mention any of them in particular; God evidencing thereby how great

is the grace, and how precious, which he so often promiseth, and of what consideration it is unto ourselves. See Psalm 92:13-15; Isaiah 40:28-31. Wherefore, the folly of taking up with present measures of grace, holiness, and spirituality, is attended with two unspeakable evils: —

1st, A signal contempt of the love, grace, faithfulness, and wisdom of God, in giving of us such promises of grace, to make us to increase, thrive, and grow. How can it be done more effectually than by such a neglect of his promised grace?

2dly, An evidence that such persons love not, care not for, grace and holiness for their own sake, but merely to serve their turn at present, as they suppose; nor do desire the least of grace or privilege by Christ without which they can have any hopes to get to heaven. This sufficiently discovers men to be wholly under the power of self-love, and to center therein; for if they may have so much grace and mercy as may save them, they care for no more.

[3.] It is repugnant unto the honor of gospel grace, as though it would carry us so far, and no farther, in the way to glory: for it must be known that this sort of persons, who sit down in their present measures and attainments, either really have no true grace at all, or that which is of the lowest, meanest, and most imperceptible size and degree; for if any one hath attained any considerable growth in faith and love, in the mortification of sin, in heavenly mindedness, it is utterly impossible but that ordinarily he will be pressing forward towards farther attainments and farther degrees of spiritual strength in the life of God. So the apostle declares it in his own example, Philippians 3:12-14. What thoughts can these persons have concerning the glory, power, and efficacy of gospel grace, which they suppose they have received? If they measure them by the effects which they find in themselves, either as unto the mortification of sin, or strength unto and delight in duties of holiness, or as unto spiritual consolation, they can see no excellency nor beauty in them; for they

do not manifest themselves but in their success, as they transform the soul daily into the image of Christ.

[4.] It is that which hath lost the reputation and glory of religion in the world, and therein the honor of the gospel itself: for the most of professors do take up with such measures as put no lustre upon it, as give no commendation unto the religion they profess; for their measures allow them such a conformity unto the world, in their ways, words, and actions, in their gestures, apparel, and attire, as that they are no way visibly to be distinguished from it; yea, the ground and reason why the most do rest in their present measures is, because they will not be farther differenced from the world. This hath greatly lost the glory, honor, and reputation of religion amongst us. And, on the other side, if all visible professors would endeavor continually to grow and thrive in spirituality of mind and heavenliness of affections, with fruits suited thereunto, it would bring a conviction on the world that there is a secret invisible power accompanying the religion they profess, transforming them daily into the image and likeness of God.

[5.] Whatever is pretended unto the contrary, it is inconsistent with all solid peace of conscience; for no such thing is promised unto any who live in such a contempt of divine promises, nor is it attainable but by the diligent exercise of all those graces which lie neglected under this frame. Few men are able to judge whether they have real, internal, abiding peace or no, unless it be in case of trials and temptations. At other seasons, general hopes and confidences do or may supply the want of it in their minds; but when any fear, danger, trial, or word of conviction, befalls them, they cannot but inquire and examine how it is with them. And if they find their affections cold, dead, earthly, carnal, withering, not spiritual or heavenly, there will be an end of their supposed peace, and they will fall into woful disquietments; and they will then find that the root of all this evil lies in this frame and disposition: They have been so far satisfied with their present measures or attainments in religion, as that the utmost of their endeavors has been but to preserve their station, or not to



forfeit it by open sins, — to keep their souls alive from the severe reflections of the word, and their reputation fair in the church of God; spiritually to thrive, to prosper in their souls, to wax fat and flourishing in the inward man, to bring forth more fruit as age increaseth, to press towards perfection, are things they have not designed nor pursued.

Hence it is that so many among us are visibly at an unthrifty stand in the world, — that where they were one year, there they are another, like shrubs in the wilderness; not like plants in the "garden of God," not as vines planted in "a very fruitful hill." Yea, though many are sensible themselves that they are cold, lifeless, and fruitless, yet will they not be convinced that there is a necessity of making a daily progress in spirituality and heavenly mindedness, whereby the inward man may be renewed day by day, and grace augmented with the increase of God. This is a work, as they suppose, for them who have nothing else to do; not consistent with their business, callings, and occasions; not necessary, as they hope, unto their salvation; nor, it may be, to be attained by them if they should set themselves about it. This apprehension or imagination, upon the beginning of the declension and decay of Christian religion in the many, cast off holiness and devotion unto a sort of men who undertook to retire themselves utterly out of the world; amongst whom also the substance of religion was quickly lost, and a cloud or meteor of superstition embraced in the room of it. But this folly is ominous unto the souls of men.

Those who have made the greatest progress in the conformity of their affections unto things spiritual and heavenly know most of its necessity, excellency, and desirableness; yea, without some progress in it, these things will not be known. Such will testify that the more they attain herein, the more they see there is yet to be attained, and the more they do desire to attain what is before. Forgetting those things which are behind, they reach forth unto the things that are yet before them, like men running in a race, whose prize and reward is yet before them, Philippians 3:13, 14. It is a comely thing to see a

Christian weaned from the world, minding heavenly things, green and flourishing in spiritual affections; and it is the more lovely because it is so rare. The generality of them take up with those measures which neither glorify God nor bring in durable peace unto their own souls.

That which men pretend and complain of herein is, the difficulty of the work. They can, as they suppose, preserve their present station, but to press forward, to grow in grace, to thrive in their affections, this is too hard for them. But this complaint is unequal and unjust, and adds unto the guilt of their sloth. It reflects upon the words of our Savior, that "his yoke is easy and his burden light," that "his commandments are not grievous." It expresseth unbelief in the promises of God tendering such supplies of grace as to render all the ways of Wisdom easy, yea, mercy and peace. It is contrary unto the experience of all who have with any sincerity and diligence engaged in the ways of gospel obedience. And the whole cause of the pretended difficulty lies in themselves alone, which may be reduced unto these two heads: —

1st, A desire to retain some thing or things that is or are inconsistent with such a progress; for unless the heart be ready on all occasions to esteem every thing "as loss and dung, so as we may win Christ," the work will be accompanied with insuperable difficulties. This is the first principle of religion, of gospel obedience, that all things are to be despised for Christ

But this difficulty ariseth not from the thing itself, but from our indisposition unto it and unfitness for it. That which is an easy, pleasant walk unto a sound and healthy man is a toilsome journey to him that is diseased and infirm. In particular, whilst men will retain an inordinate respect unto the world, the vanities, the pleasures, the profits, the contentments of it; whilst self-love, putting an undue valuation on our persons, our relations, our enjoyments, our reputations, doth cleave unto us, — we shall labor in the fire when we engage in this duty, or rather, we shall not at all sincerely engage in

it. Wherefore the apostle tells us that in this case we must cast off every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, if we intend to run with joy the race that is set before us, Hebrews 12:1.

2dly, It is because men dwell continually upon the entrances of religion, in the first and lowest exercise of grace. Some are always beginning at religion, and the beginning of things are always difficult. They design not to be complete in the whole will of God, nor to give all graces their perfect work. They do not with use habituate grace unto a readiness in all the actings of it, which the apostle commends in them that are "perfect" or complete, Hebrews 5:14. Hence he calls such persons "babes and carnal," comparatively unto them that are "strong men and spiritual." Such persons do not oblige themselves unto the whole work and all the duties of religion, but only to what they judge necessary unto them in their present circumstances. In particular, they do not attempt a thorough work in the mortification of any sin, but are hewing and hacking at it, as their convictions are urgent or abate, the wounds whereof in the body of sin are quickly healed. They give not any grace its perfect work, but are always making essays, and so give over.

Whilst it is thus with any, they shall always be deluded with the apprehensions of insuperable difficulties as to the growth of their affections in spirituality and heavenliness. Remove these things out of the way, as they ought to be removed, and we shall find all the paths wherein we are to walk towards God to be pleasantness and peace.

This is the first cause whence it is that there may be affections truly spiritual and graciously renewed in some persons, who yet do not thrive in an assimilation and conformity unto heavenly things: Men take up with their present measures, and thereon pretend either necessary occasion or discouragements from difficulties in attempting spiritual growth in the inward man. But they may thank themselves if, as they bring no honor unto Christ, so they have no solid peace in their own souls.

(2.) As the evil proceedeth from folly, so it is always the consequent of sin, of many sins, of various sorts. Let us not dwell on heartless complaints that we do not find our affections lively and heavenly, that we do not find the inward man to thrive or grow. Let us not hearken after this or that relief or comfort under this consideration, as many things are usually insisted on unto this purpose. They may be of use when persons are under temptations; and not able to make a right judgment of themselves; but in the course of our ordinary walking with God, they are not to be attended nor retired unto. The general reason of this evil state is our own sinful carelessness, negligence, and sloth, with perhaps an indulgence unto some known lust or corruption. And we do in vain seek after refreshing cordials, as though we were only spiritually faint, when we stand in need of lancings and burnings, as nigh unto a lethargy. It would be too long to give instances of those sins which fail not effectually to obstruct the thriving of spiritual affections: but, in general, when men are careless as unto that continual watch which they ought to keep over their hearts; whilst they are negligent in holy duties, either as unto the seasons of them or the manner of their performance; when they are strangers unto holy meditation and self-examination; whilst they inordinately pursue the things of the world, or are so tender and delicate as that they will not undergo the hardship of a heavenly life, either as unto the inward or outward man; much more when they are vain in their conversation, corrupt in their communication, especially if under the predominant influence of any particular lust, — it is vain to think of thriving in spiritual affections. And yet thus it is with all who ordinarily and in their constant course are thriftless herein.

## **CHAPTER XVII.**

**Decays in spiritual affections, with the causes and danger of them — Advice unto them who are sensible of the evil of spiritual decays.**

2. IT must be acknowledged that there is yet that which is worse than what we have yet insisted on, and more opposite unto the growth of affections in conformity unto heavenly things, which is the proper character of those that are spiritually renewed; and this is their spiritual decay, manifesting itself in sensible and visible effects

Some there are, yea many, who, upon the beginning of a profession of their conversion unto God, have made a great appearance of vigorous, active, spiritual affections; yea, it is so with most, it may be all, who are really so converted. God takes notice of the love of the youth in his people, of the love of their espousals.

In some, this vigor of spiritual affections is from the real power of grace, exerting its efficacy on their hearts and in their minds. In others, it is from other causes; as, for instance, relief from conviction, by spiritual illumination, will produce this effect. And this falls out unto the advantage of such persons, that generally a change is wrought in their younger days; for then their affections in their natural powers are active, and bear great sway in the whole soul. Wherefore, the change that is made is most eminent in them, be it what it will. But as men increase in age, and thereon grow up in carnal wisdom and a great valuation of earthly things, with their care about them and converse in them, they abate and decay in their spiritual affections every day; they will abide in their profession, but have lost their first love.

It is a shame and folly unutterable that it should be so with any who make profession of that religion, wherein there are so many incomparable excellencies to endear and engage them to it more and more. But why should we hide what experience makes manifest in the sight of the sun, and what multitudes proclaim concerning themselves? Wherefore, I look upon it as a great evidence, if not

absolutely of the sincerity of grace, yet of the life and growth of it, when men as they grow up in age do grow in an undervaluation of present things, in contempt of the world, in duties of charity and bounty, and decay not in any of them. But I say it is usual that the entrances of men's profession of religion and conversion unto God are attended with vigorous, active affections towards spiritual things. Of them who really and sincerely believed, it is said that on their believing "they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" and of those who only had a work of conviction on them, improved by temporary faith, that "they received the word with joy, and did many things gladly."

In this state do many abide and thrive, until their affections be wholly transformed into the image and likeness of things above. But with many of all sorts it is not so. They fall into woful decays as unto their affections about spiritual things, and consequently, in their whole profession and conversation, their moisture becomes as the drought in summer. They have no experience of the life and actings of them in themselves, nor any comfort or refreshment from them; they honor not the gospel with any fruits of love, zeal, or delight, nor are useful any way unto others by their example. Some of them have had seeming recoveries, and are yet again taken into a lifeless frame. Warnings, afflictions, sicknesses, the word, have awakened them, but they are fallen again into a dead sleep, so as that they seem to be "trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots."

Some things must be spoken unto this woful condition in general, as that which is directly opposite unto the grace and duty of being spiritually minded, and contrary unto and obstructive of the growth of spiritual affections in an assimilation unto heavenly things. And what shall be spoken may be applied unto all the degrees of these decays, though all of them are not alike dangerous or perilous.

(1.) There may be a time of temptation, wherein a soul may apprehend in itself not only a decay in, but an utter loss of, all

spiritual affections, when yet it is not so. As believers may apprehend and judge that the Lord hath forsaken and forgotten them when he hath not done so, Isaiah 49:14, 15; so they may, under their temptations, apprehend that they have forsaken God, when they have not done so; as a man in the night may apprehend he hath lost his way, and be in great distress, when he is in his proper road: for temptation brings darkness and amazement, and leads into mistakes and a false judgment in all things. They find not, it may be, grace working in love, joy, and delight, as formerly, nor that activity of heart and mind in holy duties which spiritual affections gave unto them; but yet, it may be, the same grace works in godly sorrow, by mourning, humiliation, and self-abasement, no less effectually, nor less acceptably unto God. Such as these I separate from the present consideration.

(2.) There may be a decay in affections themselves as unto their actings towards any objects whatever, at least as unto the outward symptoms and effects of them; and on this ground their operations toward spiritual things may be less sensible. So men in their younger days may be more ready to express their sorrow by tears, and their joy by sensible exultation and motion of their spirits, than in riper years. And this may be so when there is no decay of grace in the affections as renewed. But, —

[1.] When it is so, it is a burden unto them in whom it is. They cannot but mourn and have a godly jealousy over themselves, lest the decays they find should not be in the outward but the inward, not in the natural but the spiritual man; and they will labor that in all duties, and at all times, it may be with them as in days of old, although they cannot attain that strength in them, that vigor of spirit, that life, joy, peace, and comfort, which many have had experience of.

[2.] There will be in such persons no decays in holiness of life, or as unto diligence in all religious duties. If the decay be really of grace in the affections, it will be accompanied with a proportionable decay in all other things wherein the life of God is concerned; but if it be only

as unto the sensible actings of natural affections, no such decay will ensue.

[3.] Grace will in this case more vigorously act itself in the other faculties and powers of the soul, as the judgment and the will, in their approbation of and firm adherence unto spiritual things. But, —

When men find, or may find, their affections yet quick, active, and intent on other things, as the lawful enjoyments and comforts of this life, it is in vain for them to relieve themselves that the decays they find are in their affections as natural, and not, as they ought to be, gracious. If we see a man in his old age grow more in love with the things of this world, and less in love with the things of God, it is not through the weakness of nature, but through the strength of sin.

On these, and, it may be, some other the like occasions, there may be an apprehension of a decay in spiritual affections when it may not be so, at least not unto the degree that is apprehended. But when it is so really, as it is evidently with many, I had almost said with the most in these days, it is a woful frame of heart, and never enough to be lamented. It is that which lies in direct contradiction unto that spiritual mindedness which is life and peace. It is a consumption of the soul, which threatens it with death every day.

It belongs not unto my design to treat of it in particular, yet I cannot let it pass without some remarks upon it, it being an evil almost epidemical among professors, and prevalent in some unto such a degree as that they seem to be utterly forsaken of all powers of spiritual life.

Now, besides all that folly and sin which we before discovered as the causes of the want of the growth of our affections in spirituality and heavenliness, which in this case of their decay are more abominable, there is a multiplication of evils wherewith this state of heart and mind is accompanied; for, —



(1.) It is that which, of all things, the Lord Christ is most displeased with in churches or professors. He pities them in their temptations, he suffers with them in their persecutions, he intercedes for them on their surprisal, but threatens them under their spiritual decays, Revelation 2:4,5; 3:1-3. This he cannot bear with, as that which both reflects dishonor upon himself, and which he knows to be ruinous unto those in whom it is, He will longer bear with them who are utterly dead than with those who abide under these decays, Revelation 3:15,16. This is the only case wherein he threatens to reject and cast off a professing church, to take away his candlestick from it, unless it be that of false worship and idolatry. He that spake thus unto the churches of old speaks now the same unto us; for he lives forever, and is always the same, and his word is living and unchangeable. There is not one of us who are under this frame, but the Lord Christ by his word and Spirit testifieth his displeasure against us; and if he be against us, who shall plead for us? Consider what he says in this ease, Revelation 2:5, 3:3. Oh! who can stand before these dreadful intimations of his displeasure? The Lord help us to mind it, lest he in whom we profess to place our only trust be in our trim found our greatest enemy! Take heed of such sins as Christ himself, our only advocate, hath put a mark upon as those which he will not save us in.

(2.) It is that wherewith, above all things, the Holy Spirit is grieved. His work it is to give grace an increase and progress in our souls; he begins it, and he carries it on. And there can be no greater grief unto a wise and gracious worker than to have his work decay and go backward under his hand. This is the occasion of those complaints of God which we find in the Scripture, of the unprofitableness and backsliding of men after the use of means and remedies for their fruitfulness and cure. "What," saith he, "could I have done more for my vineyard than I have done? Why, then, when I looked for grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?" Can any thing be apprehended to be such a just matter of grief and complaint unto the Holy Spirit, as to see and find those whom he had once raised up unto holy and heavenly affections, so as that their delights were in, and their

thoughts much upon, the things that are above, become earthly or sensual, to have no sensible actings of any of his graces in them? which is the state of them who are under the power of spiritual decays, And this is the only case wherein God speaks unto men in the way of complaint and expostulation, and useth all sorts of arguments to convince them of their folly herein.

When a wise, tender, and careful parent, [who] hath been diligent in the use of all means for the education of his child, and he for some time hath given good hopes of himself, finds him to slacken in his diligence, to be careless in his calling, to delight in evil company, — how solicitous is his heart about him! how much is he grieved and affected with his miscarriage! The heart of the Spirit of God is infinitely more tender towards us than that of the most affectionate parent can be towards an only child; and when he with cost and care hath nourished and brought us up unto some growth and progress in spiritual affections, wherein all his concerns in us do lie, for us to grow cold, dull, earthly minded, to cleave unto the pleasures or lusts of this world, — how is he grieved! how is he provoked! It may be this consideration of grieving the Holy Spirit is of no great weight with some; they should have little concernment herein if they could well free themselves in other respects: but let such persons know it is impossible for them to give a greater evidence of a profligate hardness in sin.

(3.) This is that which in an especial manner provoketh the judgments of God against any church, as was intimated before. When, in the order of profession and worship, any church hath a name to live, but as to the power of grace acting in the affections is dead; when it is not so cold as to forsake the external institutions of worship, nor so hot as to enliven their duties with spiritual affections, — the Lord Christ will not long bear with them; yea, judgment will suddenly break out towards such a house of God.

(4.) It is absolutely inconsistent with all comfortable assurance of the love of God. Whatever persons under the power of such a frame

pretend unto of that kind, it is sinful security, not gracious assurance or peace. And constantly as professors grow cold and decay in their spiritual affections, stupidity of conscience and security of mind do grow also upon them. It is so, I say, unless they are sometimes surprised or overtaken with some greater sin, which reflects severely on their consciences, and casts them for a time under troubles and distresses. But that peace with God and a comfortable assurance of salvation should be consistent with an habitual decay in grace, especially in those graces which should act themselves in our affections, is contrary to the whole tenor and testimony of the Scripture; and the supposition of it would be the bane and poison of religion. I do not say that our assurance and peace with God do arise wholly from the actings of grace in us; there are other causes of them, where-into they are principally resolved; — but this I say, under an habitual declension or decay of grace in the spirituality of our affections, no man can keep or maintain a gracious sense of the love of God, or of peace with him. And therefore there is no duty more severely to be pressed on all at this day than a diligent examination and trial of the grounds of their peace, lest it should be with any of them as it was with Laodicea, who was satisfied in her good state and condition, when it was most miserable and almost desperate. Yea, I must say that it is impossible that many professors whom we see and converse withal should have any solid peace with God. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" it is a fruit that will not grow on a vain, earthly, selfish frame of mind and conversation. And therefore such persons, whatever they pretend, are either asleep in a sinful security, or live on most uncertain hopes, which probably may deceive them. Nothing can be so ruinous unto our profession as once to suppose it is an easy matter, a thing of course, to maintain our peace with God. God forbid but that our utmost diligence and continued endeavors to thrive in every grace should be required hereunto! The whole beauty and glory of our religion depends hereon. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace."

(5.) Such a decay as that described is a dangerous symptom of an evil state and condition, and that those in whom it is will at last be found

to be but hypocrites. I know such persons will or may have pretended evidences unto the contrary, and that they are well enough satisfied of and with their own sincerity in many things, so as that it is impossible to fix upon them the sense and conviction of being but hypocrites. But this apprehension ariseth from a false notion of hypocrisy. No man, they suppose, is a hypocrite, but he that generally or universally pretends himself in religion to be what he is not, and what he knows himself not to be, or at least might easily do so; and it is true that this is the broadest notion of pharisaical hypocrisy: but take a hypocrite for him who, under light, profession, gifts, duties, doth habitually and willingly fail in any point of sincerity, he is no less a perishing hypocrite than the former, and it may alter the case with them. I do not say that every one in whom there is this prevalent decay in spiritual affections is a hypocrite; God forbid! I only say that when it continues without remedy, it is such a symptom of hypocrisy as that he who is wise and hath a care of his soul will not rest until he hath searched it unto the bottom. For it seems as if it were thus with such persons: They have had a false or imperfect work in that conversion unto God which they have professed. Conviction of sin, communication of spiritual light and gifts, alteration upon the affections, change of society and conversation, have made it up. Now, it is the nature of such a work greatly to flourish for a season, in all the principal parts and duties of profession; but it is in its nature also gradually to decay, until it be quite withered away. In some it is lost by the power of some vigorous temptations, and particular lusts indulged unto, ending in worldliness and sensuality; but in the most it decays gradually, until it hath lost all its savor and sap. See John 15:5. Wherefore, whilst men find this decay in themselves, unless they are fallen under the power of a destructive security, unless they are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, they cannot but think it their duty to examine how things stand with them, whether they ever effectually closed with Christ, and had the faith of God's elect, which works by love, seeing it is with them as though they had only a work of another nature: for a saving work, in its own nature and in the diligent use of means, thrives and groweth, as the whole Scripture testifieth; but it

is this false and imperfect working that hath no root, and is thus subject to withering.

(6.) Persons in such an estate are apt to deceive themselves with false hopes and notions, whereby the deceitfulness of sin doth put forth its power to harden them unto their ruin. Two ways there are whereby this pernicious effect is produced; — the one by the prevalency of a particular lust or sin; the other by a neglect of spiritual duties, and a vain conversation in the world, under which the soul pines away and consumes.

As unto the first of these, there are three false notions whereby the deceitfulness of sin deludes the souls of men: —

[1.] The first is, that it is that one sin alone wherein they would be indulged. Let them be spared in this one thing, and in all others they will be exact enough. This is the composition that Naaman would have made in the matters of religion, 2 Kings 5:18, and it is that which many trust unto. Hence it hath, by the event, been made to appear that some persons have lived long in the practice of some gross sin, and yet all the while used a semblance of great diligence in other duties of religion. This is a false notion, whereby poor sinners delude their own souls; for suppose it possible that a man should give himself up unto any lust, or be under the power of it, and yet be observant of all other duties, yet this would give him no relief as unto the eternal condition of his soul. The rule is peremptory unto this purpose, James 2:10,11. One sin willingly lived in is as able to destroy a man's soul as a thousand. Besides, it is practically false. There is no man that lives in any one known sin but he really lives in more, though that only bears the chiefest sway. With some such persons these sins appear unto others, who observe their frame and spirit, though they appear not to themselves; in some they are manifest in themselves, although they are hidden from others, 1 Timothy 5:24. But let no man relieve himself with thoughts that it is but one sin, whilst that one sin keeps him in a constant neglect of God. Hence, —

[2.] They deceive themselves hereby; for they judge that although they cannot as yet shake off their sin, yet they will continue still to love God and abound in the duties of his worship. They will not become haters of God and his ways and persecutors for all the world; and therefore hope that, notwithstanding this one Zoar, this lesser sin, which their constitution and their circumstances engage them in, it may be well with them at the last. This also is a false notion, a mere instrument in the hand of sin to act its deceit by; for no man that willingly liveth in any sin can love God at all, as is evident in that rule, 1 John 2:15. It is but a false pretense of love to God that any man hath who liveth in any known sin. Where God is not loved above all, he is not loved at all; and he is not so where men will not part with one cursed lust for his sake. Let not your light deceive you, nor your gifts, nor your duties, nor your profession; if you live in sin, you love not God.

[3.] They determine that at such or such a season or time, after such satisfaction given unto their lusts or pleasures, they will utterly give over, so as that iniquity shall not be their ruin. But this is a false notion also, an effectual instrument of the deceitfulness of sin. He that will not now give over, who will not immediately upon the discovery of the prevalency of any sin and warning about it endeavor sincerely and constantly its relinquishment, say what he will and pretend what he will, never intends to give over, nor is it probable, in an ordinary way, that ever he will do so. When men's decays are from the prevalency of particular sins, by these and the like false notions do they harden themselves unto ruin.

For those who are pining away under hectic consumption, a general decay of the vital spirits of religion, they have also false notions whereby they deceive themselves; as, —

[1.] That although they have some cause to mistrust themselves, yet indeed their condition is not so bad as some may apprehend it, or as they are warned it is. And this ariseth from hence, that they have not as yet been overtaken with any enormous sin which hath filled their

consciences with terror and disquietment. But this is a false notion also; for every decay is dangerous, especially such as the mind is ready to plead for and to countenance itself in.

[2.] They are prone to suppose that this decay doth not arise from themselves and the evil of their own hearts, but from their circumstances, businesses, present occasions, and state of life; which when they are freed from, they will at least return unto their former love and delight in spiritual things. But this is a false notion also, by virtue of that rule, Hebrews 3:12. Let men's circumstances and occasions of life be what they will, all their departures from God are from "an evil heart of unbelief."

[3.] They judge it no hard matter to retrieve themselves out of this state, but that which they can easily do when there is an absolute necessity for it. But this is a false notion also. Recovery from back sliding is the hardest task in Christian religion, and which few make either comfortable or honorable work of.

In this state, I say, men are apt by such false reasonings to deceive themselves unto their eternal ruin; which makes the consideration of it the more necessary.

Wherefore, I say, lastly, upon the whole, that whoso find themselves under the power of this wretched frame, whoso are sensible in themselves, or at least make it evident unto others, that they are under a decay in their spiritual condition, if they rest in that state, without groaning, laboring, endeavoring for deliverance from it, they can have no well-grounded hopes in themselves of life and immortality; yea, they are in those "paths which go down unto the chambers of death."

I cannot let this pass without something of advice unto them who find themselves under such decays, are sensible of them, and would be delivered from them, and I shall give it in a few words: —

First, Remember former things; call to mind how it was with you in the spring and vigor of your affections, and compare your present state, enjoyment, peace, and quiet, with what they were then. This will be a great principle of return unto God, Hosea 2:7. And to put a little weight upon it, we may consider, —

First, God himself makes it on his part a ground and reason of his return unto us in a way of mercy, and of the continuance of his love, Jeremiah 2:2. Even when a people are under manifold decays, whilst yet they are within the bounds of God's covenant and mercy, he will remember their first love, with the fruits and actings of it in trials and temptations; which moves his compassion towards them. And the way to have God thus remember it, is for us to remember it with delight, and longing of soul that it were with us as in those days of old, when we had the love of espousals for God in Christ, Jeremiah 31:18-20.

Secondly, It is the way whereby the saints of old have refreshed and encouraged themselves under their greatest despondencies. So doth the psalmist in many places; as, for instance, Psalm 42:6,

"O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar."

David in the time of his persecution by Saul, when he wandered up and down in deserts, wildernesses, and solitudes, had, under his fears, distresses, and exercises, great, holy, spiritual communion with God; as many of his psalms composed on such occasions do testify. And the greater his distresses were, the more fervent were his affections in all his addresses unto God; and he was never in greater than when he escaped out of the cave at Adul-lam, and went thence unto Mizpeh of Moab, to get shelter for his parents, 1 Samuel 22:3. Then was he in the land of the Hermonites, the hill Hermon being the boundary eastward of the Israelites' possession next to Moab, Deuteronomy 3:8,9. There, no doubt, David had a blessed exercise of



his. faith and of all his affections towards God, wherein his soul found great refreshment. Being now in great distress and disconsolation of spirit, among other things under a sense that God had forgotten him, Psalm 42:9, he calls to mind the blessed experience he had of communion with God, in the land of the Hermonites, wherein he now found support and refreshment. So at other times he called to remembrance "the days of old," and in them his "songs in the night," or the sweet refreshment he had in spiritual converse with God in former times. I have known one in the depth of distress and darkness of mind, who, going through temptation to destroy himself, was relieved and delivered in the instant of ruin by a sudden remembrance that at such a time, and in such a place, he had prayed fervently with the engagement of all his affections unto God.

Wherefore, you that are sensible of these decays, or ought so to be, take the advice of our Savior, "Remember whence you are fallen." Call to mind the former days. Consider if it were not better with you [then] than now, when in your lying down and your rising up you had many thoughts of God and of the things of God, and they were sweet and precious unto your souls; when you rejoiced at the remembrance of his holiness; when you had zeal for his glory, delight in his worship, and were glad when they said, "Let us go to the house of God together;" when you poured forth your souls with freedom and enlarged affections before him, and were sensible of the visits and refreshments of his love. Remember what peace, what tranquility of mind, what joy you had whilst it was so with you; and consider what you have gotten since you have forsaken God, in any measure or degree. Dare to deal plainly with yourselves. Is not all wherein you have now to do with God either form, custom, and selfishness, or attended with trouble, disquietment, and fears? Do you truly know either how to live or how to diet Are you not sometimes a terror unto yourselves? It must be so, unless you are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. What have all your lovers done for you, that you have entertained in the room of God in Christ and spiritual things? Speak plainly; have they not defiled you, wounded you, weakened you, and brought you into that condition

that you know not what you are nor to whom you do belong? What are your thoughts when you are most awake, when you are most yourselves? Do you not sometimes pant within yourselves, and say, "O that it were with us as in former days."

And if you can be no way affected with the remembrance of former things, then one of these two great evils you are certainly under; for either,

1. You never had a true and real work on your souls, whatever you professed, and so never had true and real communion with God in any duties. You had only a temporary work, which excited your affections for a season; which, now it is worn off, leaves no sweet remembrance of itself upon your minds. Had your faith and love been sincere in what you did, it were impossible but that the remembrance of their actings, in some especial instances, should be sweet and refreshing unto you. Or else,

2. You are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and there is no way left to give a sense or impression of spiritual things upon your minds. You have truly nothing left in religion but the fear of hell and trouble of duties. I speak not to such at present.

As unto those unto whom this frame is a burden, there is no more effectual means to stir them up unto endeavors for deliverance than a continual remembrance of former things, and experiences they have had of holy intercourse and communion with God. This will revive, quicken, and strengthen the things that are ready to die, and beget a self-aborreny in them in consideration of that woful frame and temper of mind which, by their sins and negligence, they have brought themselves into.

Secondly, Consider that as there are many things dreadfully pronounced in the Scripture against backsliding and backsliders in heart, as it is with you, yet also there are especial calls and promises given and proposed unto those in your condition; and know

assuredly that upon your compliance or non-compliance with them depends your everlasting blessedness or woe.

Consider both call and promise in that word of God's grace, Jeremiah 3:12-14, "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." Add hereunto this blessed promise, Hosea 14:4,

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him."

If you design to live and not die, it must be by yielding obedience unto this call, and pleading this promise before God, mixing it with faith. Your return must be by the word, Isaiah 57:18,19. Here lies your great encouragement and direction, herein lieth your only relief. As you value your souls, defer not the duty you are called unto one moment. You know not how soon you may be without the reach of calls and promises; and he that can hear them without stirring up himself in sincerity to comply with them hath made already a great progress towards that length.

Thirdly, As unto those who on these and the like considerations do not only desire but will endeavor also to retrieve themselves from this condition, I shall give no advice at present but this, Be in good earnest. As the prophet speaks in another case, if you will return, "return and come," make thorough work of it. You must do so at one time or another, or you will perish. Why not now? Why, is not this the best season? Who knows but it may be the only time you will have for it? It were easy to multiply all sorts of arguments unto this

purpose. Trifling endeavors, occasional resolutions and attempts, like the early cloud and morning dew, shifting with warnings and convictions, by renewed duties, until their impressions are worn out, will ruin your souls. Unless there be universal diligence and permanency in your endeavors, you are undone. "Then shall ye know the LORD, if ye follow on to know him."

But now to return. These things, I say, through our sloth, negligence, and sin, may befall us as unto our spiritually-renewed affections: Their progress in conformity unto spiritual and heavenly things may be slow, imperceptible, yea, totally obstructed for a season; and not only so, but they may fall under decays, and the soul therein be guilty of backsliding from God; but this is that which they are capacitated for by their renovation, this is that which the grace wherewith they are renewed doth lead unto, this is that which, in the diligent use of means, they will grow up unto, whereon our comfort and peace do depend, — namely, a holy assimilation unto those spiritual and heavenly things which they are set and fixed on, wherein they are renewed and made more spiritual and heavenly every day.

## **CHAPTER XVIII.**

### **[The state of spiritual affections.]**

IT remains only, as unto this head now spoken unto, that we briefly consider what is the state of spiritual affections thus daily exercised and improved. And this we shall do by showing, — first, What is their pattern; secondly, What is their rule; thirdly, What is their measure, or whereunto they may attain: —

FIRST, The pattern which we ought continually to bear in our eyes, whereunto our affections ought to be conformed, is Jesus Christ and

the affections of his holy soul. The mind is the seat of all our affections; and this is that we ought continually to design and endeavor, namely, that the "same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus," Philippians 2:5. To have our minds so affected with spiritual things as was the mind of Christ is the principal part of our duty and grace; nor do I think that any man can attain any considerable degree in spiritual mindedness who is not much in the contemplation of the same mind in Christ, 2 Corinthians 3:18. To this purpose ought we to furnish our minds with instances of the holy affections that were in Christ, and their blessed exercise on all occasions. The Scripture makes a full representation of them unto us, and we ought to be conversant in our meditations on them. What glorious things are spoken of his love to God and his delight in him, whence also he "delighted to do his will, and his law was in the midst of his bowels," Psalm 40:8, — seated in the throne of his affections! What pity and compassion had he for the souls of men, yea, for the whole human kind, in all their sufferings, pains, and distresses! How were all his affections always in perfection of order, under the conduct of the spirit of his mind! Hence was his self-denial, his contempt of the world, his readiness for the cross, to do or suffer according to the will of God. If this pattern be continually before us, it will put forth a transforming efficacy to change us into the same image. When we find our minds liable unto any disorders, cleaving inordinately unto the things of this world, moved with intemperate passions, vain and frothy in conversation, darkened or disturbed by the fumes of distempered lusts, let us call things to an account, and ask of ourselves whether this be the frame of mind that was in Christ Jesus. This, therefore, is an evidence that our affections are spiritually renewed, and that they have received some progress in an assimilation unto heavenly things, — namely, when the soul is delighted in making Christ their pattern in all things.

Secondly, The rule of our affections in their utmost spiritual improvement is the Scripture. And two things are respected in them: — their internal actings; their exercise in outward ways and means,

whereby they are expressed. Of them both the Scripture is the entire rule: —

1. And with respect unto the former, it gives us one general law or rule, that is comprehensive of all others, — namely, "That we love the LORD our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength." The acting of all our affections towards God in the utmost degree of perfection is required of us; that in all instances we prefer and value him above all things; that we inseparably cleave unto him, and do nothing whatever at any time that is not influenced and directed by the love of God. This perfection, as we shall see immediately, is not attainable absolutely in this life; but it is proposed unto us as that which the excellency of God's nature requires, and which the faculties and powers of our nature were created for, and which we ought in all things to design and aim at. But the indispensable obligation of this rule is, that we should always be in a sincere endeavor to cleave unto God continually in all things, to prefer him above all, and delight in him as our chiefest good. When this frame and disposition is habitually fixed in our minds, it will declare and act itself in all instances of duties, on all occasions of trial, when other things put in for a predominant interest in our affections, as they do every day; and if it be not so with us, we shall be at a continual loss in all our ways. This is that which makes us lifeless and heartless in duties, careless in temptations or occasions of them, forgetful of God, when it is impossible we should be preserved from sin without a due remembrance of his holiness. In brief, the want of a predominant love unto God, kept in continual exercise, is the spring of all that unprofitable profession of religion that the world is filled withal.

2. There are outward ways and duties whereby our spiritual affections are expressed. The rule of them also is the Scripture. The way marked out therein is the only channel wherein the stream of spiritual affections doth take its course unto God. The graces required therein are to act themselves by [them]; the duties it prescribes are those which they stir up and enliven; the religious

worship it appoints is that wherein they have their exercise. Where this rule hath been neglected, men's religious affections have grown irregular, yea, wild and ungovernable. All the superstitions that the world is filled withal owe their original principally unto men's affections set at loose from the rule of the word. There is nothing so fond, absurd, and foolish, but they have imbondaged the souls of men unto, nothing so horrid and difficult but they have engaged them in. And having once taken unto themselves this liberty, the corrupt minds of men are a thousand times more satisfied than in the regular exercise of them according to the word of God. Hence they will rejoice in such penances as are not without their austerities; in such outward duties of devotion as are troublesome and chargeable; in every thing that hath a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglect of the body. Hence will all their affections be more sensibly moved by images and pictures, and a melting devotion be more stirred up in them, than by all the motives and incentives which God proposeth unto them to draw their affections unto himself. Nothing is more extravagant than the affections of men, tinctured with some devotion, if they forsake the rule of the Scripture.

Thirdly, There is considerable concerning them the measure of their attainments, or what, through due exercise and holy diligence, they may be raised unto. Now, this is not absolute perfection: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after," as the apostle speaks, Philippians 3:12. But there is that attainable which those who pretend highly unto perfection seem to be strangers unto. And the state of our affections under a due exercise on heavenly things, and in their assimilation unto them, may be fixed on these three things: —

1. An habitual suitableness unto spiritual things upon the proposal of them. The ways whereby spiritual things are proposed unto our minds are various. They are so directly in all ordinances of divine worship; — they are so indirectly and in just consequence by all the especial providences wherein we are concerned, by our own thoughts

and stated meditations; — they are so by the motions of the Holy Spirit, when he causeth us to "hear a word behind us saying, This is the way, walk ye in it;" by holy converse with others; by all sorts of occurrences. And as the ways of their proposal are various, so the times and seasons wherein a representation of them is made unto us are comprehensive of all, at least are not exclusive of any, times and seasons of our lives. Be the way of their proposal what it will, and whenever be the season of it, if our affections are duly improved by spiritual exercises, they are suited unto them and will be ready to give them entertainment. Hence, or for want hereof, on the other hand, are tergiversations and shiftings in duties, proneness to comply with diversions, all to keep off the mind from closing with and receiving of those spiritual things which it is not suited unto. Wherefore, as unto the solemn way of proposing spiritual things unto our minds which is in and by the ordinances of divine worship, when men have a prevalent loathness to engage in them, or when they are satisfied with an outward attendance on them, but not enabled unto a vigorous stirring up of the inward man unto a holy, affectionate converse with spiritual and heavenly things, it is because they are carnal. When men can receive the fiery darts of Satan in his temptations into their bosoms, and suffer them to abide there, yea, foster and cherish them in thoughts of the lusts that they kindle, but quickly quench the motions of the Spirit stirring them up unto the embracing of heavenly things, they are carnal, and carnally minded. When providences of concernment, in afflictions, trials, deliverances, do not engage the mind unto thoughts of spiritual things, and excite the affections unto the entertainment of them, men are carnal and earthly. When every lust, corruption, or passion, as anger, envy, displeasure, at this or that person or thing, can divert the mind from compliance with the proposal of spiritual things that is made unto it, we are carnal.

It is otherwise when our affections are conformed unto things spiritual and heavenly. Upon every proposal of these, the mind finds a suitableness unto itself, like that which a well-disposed appetite finds unto savory meat. As "the full soul loatheth an honey-comb," so



a mind under the power of carnal affections hath an aversion unto all spiritual sweetness. But spiritualized affections desire them, have an appetite unto them, readily receive them on all occasions, as those which are natural unto them, as milk is unto new-born babes.

2. Affections so disposed constantly find a gust, a pleasant taste, a relish, in spiritual things. They do in them "taste that the Lord is gracious," 1 Peter 2:3. To taste of God's goodness, is to have an experience of a savory relish and sweetness in converse and communion with him. And persons whose affections are thus renewed and thus improved do taste a sweet savor in all spiritual things. Some of them, as a sense of the love of Christ, are sometimes as it were too hard for them, and overpower them, until they are "sick of love," and do "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Neither is there any of them, however condited with afflictions or mortifications, but is sweet unto them, Proverbs 27:7. Every thing that is wholesome food, that is good nourishment, though it be but bitter herbs, is sweet to him that is hungry. And when by our affections we have raised up in us a spiritual appetite unto heavenly things, however any of them in their own nature or in their dispensation may be bitter to flesh and blood, — as are all the doctrines of the cross, — they are all sweet unto us, and we can taste how gracious the Lord is in them. When the soul is filled with earthly things, the love of this world, or when the appetite is lost by spiritual sickness, or vitiated and corrupted by any prevalent sin, heavenly things are unsavory and sapless, or, as Job speaks, "like the white of an egg, wherein there is no taste." There may be in the dispensation of the word a taste or pleasing relish given unto the fancy, there may be so unto the notional understanding, when the affections find no complacency in the things themselves; but unto them who are spiritually minded unto the degree intended, they are all sweet, savory, pleasant, — the affections taste them immediately, as the palate doth meat.

3. They are a just repository of all graces, and therein the treasury of the soul. There are graces of the Spirit whose formal direct residence

is in the understanding and the will, as faith itself, and therein are all other graces radically comprised; they grow from that root. Howbeit, the most of them have their principal residence in the affections. In them are they preserved secure and ready for exercise on all occasions. And when they are duly spiritual, there is nothing that tends to their growth or improvement, to their cherishing or quickening, which they stand in need of continually, and which God hath made provision for in his word, but they readily receive it, lay it up, keep and preserve it. Hereby they come to be filled with grace, with all graces, — for there is room in them for all the graces of the Spirit to inhabit, — and do readily comply with the light and direction of faith unto their exercise. When faith discerns and determines that there is any thing to be done or suffered in a way of duty unto the glory of God, the affections thus disposed do not shut up or stifle the graces that are in them, but carefully offer them unto their proper exercise.

These are some of those things which our affections, conformed unto heavenly things, will attain unto. And thus it is with affections spiritually renewed: by being fixed on things spiritual and heavenly, they are more and more conformed unto them, made like them, and become more spiritual and heavenly themselves.

It is not thus with them whose affections have only an occasional change wrought upon them by the means before described, but are not spiritually renewed; yea, on the contrary, such persons do design to debase spiritual things, to bring down heavenly things into a conformity with their affections, which, however changed, are not spiritual, but carnal. To evince this we may observe, —

1. Their affections are under the light and conduct of such notions in the mind and understanding as do not give a clear, distinct representation of them in their own nature unto them: for where they are not themselves spiritually renewed, there the mind itself is carnal and unrenewed; and such a mind "perceiveth not the things of God, neither can do so, because they are spiritually discerned." They

cannot be discerned aright in their own beauty and glory, but in and by a spiritual, saving light, which the mind is devoid of. And where they are not thus represented, the affections cannot receive or cleave unto them as they ought, nor will ever be conformed unto them.

2. Those notions in such persons are oftentimes variously influenced and corrupted by fancy and imagination. They are merely "puffed up by their fleshly minds;" that is, they are filled with vain, foolish, proud imaginations about spiritual things, as the apostle declares, Colossians 2:18,19. And the work of fancy, in a fleshly mind, is to raise up such images of spiritual things as may render them suitable unto natural, unrenewed affections.

3. This, in the progress of it, produceth superstition, false worship, and idolatry; for they are all of them an attempt to represent spiritual things in a way suited unto carnal, unrenewed affections. Hence men suppose themselves to be excited by them unto love, joy, fear, delight in the things themselves, when they all respect that false representation of them whereby they are suited unto them as carnal. These have been the spring of all false worship and idolatry in the Christian world.

1. The mind and affections have been changed and tinctured with devotion by some of the means we have before insisted on. Herein they will, one way or other, be exercised about spiritual things, and are ready to receive impressions from any thing that superstition can impose upon them.

2. They are, by error and false information, set at liberty from the only rule of their actings and exercise; that is, the word of God. Men satisfied themselves, that so their affections were engaged about things spiritual and heavenly, it was no matter at all whether the way of their exercise was directed by the Scripture or no. Having thus lost their guide and their way, every "ignis fatuus," every wandering meteor, allures them to follow its conduct into foolish superstitions. Nothing almost is so ridiculous, nothing so horrid and difficult, that

they will not embrace under the notion of things spiritual and heavenly.

3. The carnal minds of men, having no proper, distinct apprehensions and notions of spiritual things in their own nature, do endeavor to represent them under such notions and images as may suit them unto their carnal, unrenewed affections; for it is implanted almost indelibly upon them, that the end of all knowledge of spiritual things is to propose them unto the embraces of the affections.

It were easy to manifest that from these three corrupt springs arose that flood of idolatry and false worship which spread itself over the church of Rome, and with whose machinations the minds of men are yet too much replenished.

4. Where it is not thus, yet carnal affections do variously debase spiritual things, to bring them into a conformity with themselves; and this may proceed so far, until men think wickedly that God is altogether like unto themselves. But I shall not insist on these things any farther.

Lastly, Where affections are spiritually renewed, the person of Christ is the center of them; but where they are changed only, they tend unto an end in self. Where the "new man" is put on, "Christ is all, and in all," Colossians 3:10,11. He is the spring, by his Spirit, that gives them life, light, and being; and he is the ocean that receives all their streams. God, even the Father, presents not himself in his beauty and amiableness as the object of our affections, but as he is in Christ, acting his love in him, 1 John 4:8,9. And as unto all other spiritual things, renewed affections cleave unto them according as they derive from Christ and lead unto him; for he is unto them "all, and in all." It is he whom the souls of his saints do love for himself, for his own sake, and all other things of religion in and for him. The air is pleasant and useful, that without which we cannot live or breathe; but if the sun did not enlighten it and warm it with its beams, if it were always one perpetual night and cold, what refreshment could be

received by it? Christ is the "Sun of Righteousness," and if his beams do not quicken, animate, and enlighten, the best, the most necessary duties of religion, nothing desirable would remain in them. This is the most certain character of affections spiritually renewed: They can rest in nothing but in Christ; they fix on nothing but what is amiable by a participation of his beauty; and in whatever he is, therein do they find complacency. It is otherwise with them whose affections may be changed but are not renewed. The truth is, — and it may be made good by all sorts of instances, — that Christ, in the mystery of his person and in the glory of his mediation, is the only thing that they dislike in religion. False representations of him by images and pictures they may embrace and delight in; false notions of his present glory, greatness, and power may affect them; a worship of their own devising they may give unto him, and please themselves in it; corrupt opinions concerning his office and grace may possess their minds, and they may contend for them: but those who are not spiritually renewed cannot love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, yea, they have an inward, secret aversion from the mystery of his person and his grace. It is self which all their affections center in, the ways whereof are too long here to be declared.

This is the first thing that is required to render our affections in such a state and condition as that from and by them we may be spiritually minded, — namely, that they themselves are spiritually and savingly renewed.

The things that remain will admit of a speedy despatch, as I suppose.

## **CHAPTER XIX.**

## **[The true notion and consideration of spiritual and heavenly things.]**

II. THE second thing required that we may be spiritually minded, as unto the interest of our affections therein, is, the object of them about which they are conversant and whereunto they do adhere. What this is materially, or what are the spiritual things which our affections are to be set upon, hath been declared already, under the consideration of the objects of our thoughts and meditations, for they are the same; yea, as hath been intimated, the fixing of our affections upon them is the spring and cause of our thoughts about them. But that which we shall now inquire into is, the true notion and consideration of spiritual and heavenly things, that which renders them the formal, proper object of spiritual affections, and is the reason of their adherence unto them; for, as was intimated before, men may have false notions of spiritual things, under which they may like them and embrace them with unrenewed affections. Wherefore we shall inquire into some of those considerations of heavenly things under which affections spiritually renewed do satisfactorily cleave unto them with delight and complacency.

1. And the first is, that as they comprehend God in Christ, and all other things as deriving from him and tending unto him, they have an infinite beauty, goodness, and amiableness in them, which are powerfully attractive of spiritual affections, and which alone are able to fill them, to satisfy them, to give them rest and acquiescency. Love is the most ruling and prevalent affection in the whole soul; but it cannot be fixed on any object without an apprehension, true or false, of an amiableness and desirableness in it, from a goodness suitable unto all its desires.

And our fear, so far as it is spiritual, hath divine goodness for its object, Hosea 3:5. Unless this be that which draws our hearts unto God and the things of God, in all pretense of love unto him, men do but frame idols to themselves "according to their own understanding," as the prophet speaks, Hosea 13:2. Wherefore, that

our affections may cleave unto spiritual things in a due manner, three things are required: —

(1.) That we apprehend and do find a goodness, a beauty, and thence an amiableness and desirableness, in them, Zechariah 9:17. Many pretend to love God and spiritual things, but they know not why. Why they love other things they know well enough, but why they love God they cannot tell. Many are afraid of him, and suppose they ought to love him, and therefore pretend so to do, though indeed they know they do not; they do but flatter him with their lips, when their hearts are far from him. Some are much affected with the benefits and mercies they receive from him, and suppose that they love him on that account; but this love is no other but what the devil falsely charged Job withal, chapter 1:8-11. Some have delight in the outward modes and rites of divine worship, wherewith they satisfy themselves that they love God and spiritual things, when they only please their own imaginations and carnal minds. Many have a traditional apprehension that they ought to love God, they know no reason why they should not, they know it will be ill for them if they do not; and these take it for granted that they do. How few are there who have that spiritual discerning and apprehension of the divine excellencies, that view of the excellency of the goodness and love of God in Christ, as thereby alone to be drawn after him, and to delight in him! yet is this the ground of all sincere, real love unto God. Two things are required that we may apprehend an amiable goodness in any thing, and cleave unto it with sincere affection: —

[1.] A real worth or excellency in itself;

[2.] A suitableness therein unto our condition, state, and desires after rest and blessedness.

The first of these is in God, from what he is in himself; the latter is from what he is unto us in Christ; — from both he is the only suitable object unto our affections. Under this apprehension do we love God for himself, or for his own sake, but not exclusively unto our own

advantage therein; for a desire of union and enjoyment, which is our only advantage, is inseparable from this love.

It may be, some cannot say that a distinct apprehension of these things was the first foundation and cause of their love to God; yet are they satisfied that they do love him in sincerity, with all their souls. And I say it may be so. God sometimes casts the skirt of his own love over the heart of a poor sinner, and efficaciously draws it unto himself, without a distinct apprehension of these things, by a mere sense of the love it hath received. So Elijah passed by Elisha, and cast his mantle upon him, as a transient act; but there was such a communication of virtue thereby that he ran after him, and would not be deferred, though Elijah said, "Go back again; for what have I done to thee?" 1 Kings 19:19,20. When God hath so cast his love on any soul, it follows after him with all its affections. And whereas God may seem at some times to say, "Go back again; for what have I done unto thee?" its answer is, "Lord, whither shall I go? I cannot leave thee; my heart is given up unto thee, and shall never be taken from thee."

But I say unto such, and to all others, that if we would have refreshing evidences of our love unto God that it is sincere, if we would have it thrive and flourish, be fervent and constant, we are to exercise ourselves unto the contemplation of the divine goodness, and the suitableness of it unto our souls, in and by Jesus Christ. Nor can we cleave unto any spiritual thing whatever with sincere affection but under these notions of it: — first, That it hath a real worth or excellency in itself; secondly, That it is suitable and desirable unto us. And it is to be bewailed to see how many walk at random in profession, that know neither what they do nor where they go.

(2.) As we must see a goodness and profitableness in spiritual things absolutely, so as that we may fix our affections on them in a due manner, so we must see it comparatively, with respect unto all other things, which gives them a preference in our affections before and



above them all. The trial of love lies in the prevailing degree, — on more or less. If we love other things, father, mother, houses, lands, possessions, more than Christ, we do not love him at all. Nor is there any equality allowed in this matter, that we may equally love temporal and spiritual things. If we love not Christ more than all these things, we love him not at all. Wherefore, that our affections may cleave unto them in a due manner, we must see an excellency in things spiritual and heavenly, rendering them more desirable than all other things whatever.

With what loving countenances do men look upon their temporal enjoyments! with what tenacious embraces do they cleave unto them! They see that in them which is amiable, which is desirable and suitable unto their affections. Let them pretend what they please, if they see not a greater goodness, that which is more amiable, more desirable, in spiritual things, they love them not in a due manner; it is temporal things that have the rule of their affections. One psalmist prefers "Jerusalem before his chief joy," Psalm 137:6. Another affirms that "the law of God's mouth was better unto him than thousands of gold and silver," Psalm 119:72.

"More to be desired are the statutes of the LORD than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb," Psalm 19:10.

"For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it," Proverbs 8:11.

This is the only stable foundation of all divine affections. A spiritual view and judgment of a goodness, an excellency in them, incomparably above whatever is in the most desirable things of this world, are required thereunto. And if the affections of many pretending highly to them should come to be weighed in this balance, I fear they would be found light and wanting. However, it is the duty of them who would not be deceived in this matter, — which is of eternal importance, — to examine what is that goodness and

excellency which is in spiritual things, which they desire in them, upon the account whereof they do sincerely value and esteem them above all things in this world whatever. And let not any deceive themselves with vain words and pretences. Whilst their esteem and valuation of present enjoyments doth evidently engage all their affections, their care, their diligence, their industry, so as that a man of a discerning spirit may even feel them turned into self; whilst they are cold, formal, negligent about spiritual things, — we must say, "How dwelleth the love of God in them?" Much more when we see men not only giving up the whole of their time and strength, with the vigor of their spirits, but sacrificing their consciences also, unto the attaining of dignities, honors, preferments, wealth, and ease in the world, who know in their own hearts that they perform religious duties with respect unto temporal advantages, I cannot conceive how it is possible they should discern and approve of a goodness and excellency in spiritual things above all others.

(3.) A due consideration is required hereunto, that all spiritual things do proceed from and are resolved into an infinite Fountain of goodness, so as that our affections may absolutely come unto rest and complacency, and find full assured satisfaction in them. It is otherwise as unto all temporal things. Men would very fain have them to be such as might give absolute rest and satisfaction unto all their affections; but they are every one of them so far from it that all of them together cannot compose their minds in rest and peace for one hour. They give sometimes a transport of affections, and seem for a season to have filled the whole soul, so as it hath no leisure to consider their emptiness and vanity: but a little composure of men's thoughts shows that they are but a diversion in a journey or labor; they are no rest. Hence are they called "broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Let a man prize them at the highest rate that it is possible for a rational creature to be seduced into the thoughts of, whereof there have been prodigious instances; let him possess them in abundance, beyond what ever any man enjoyed in this world or his own imagination could beforehand reach unto; let him be assured of the utmost peaceable continuance in the enjoyment of them that his

and their natures are capable of, — yet would he not dare to pretend that all his affections were filled and satisfied with them, that they afforded him perfect rest and peace. Should he do so, the working of his mind every day would convince him of his falsehood and his folly.

But all spiritual things derive from and lead unto that which is infinite; which is therefore able to fill all our affections, and to give them full satisfaction with rest and peace. They all lead us to the Fountain of living waters, the eternal Spring of goodness and blessedness

I do not say that our affections do attain unto this full rest and satisfaction in this life; but what they come short of herein ariseth not from any defect in the things themselves to give this rest and satisfaction, as it is with the whole world, but from the weakness of our affections themselves, which are in part only renewed, and cannot take in the full measures of divine goodness, which in another world they will receive. But whilst we are here, the more we receive them in our minds and souls, the more firmly we adhere unto them, the nearer approaches we make unto our rest and center.

2. Spiritual things are to be considered as they are filled with divine wisdom. I speak not of God himself, whose essential wisdom is one of the most amiable excellencies of his holy nature, but of all the effects of his will and grace by Jesus Christ. All spiritual truths, all spiritual and heavenly things, whereby God reveals and communicates himself unto the souls of men, and all the ways and means of our approach unto him in faith and obedience through Christ Jesus, I now intend. All these are filled with divine wisdom. See 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 3:10, 1:8,9. Now, wisdom in itself and in all the effects of it is attractive of rational affections. Most men are brutish in them and their actings, for the most part pouring them out on things fleshly, sensual, and carnal; but where they are at all reduced under the conduct of reason, nothing is so attractive of them, so suited unto them, which they delight in, as that which hath at least an appearance of wisdom. A wise and good man doth

command the affections of others; unless it be their interest to hate and oppose him, as commonly it is. And where there is true wisdom in the conduct of civil affairs, sober men cannot but approve of it, like it, delight in it; and men of understanding do bewail the loss of it, since craft, falsehood, treachery, and all sorts of villany, have driven it out of the world. So is divine wisdom attractive of divine, gracious affections. The psalmist declares his admiration of and delight in the works of God, because he hath "made them all in wisdom," Psalm 104:24. Those characters of divine wisdom which are upon them, which they are filled with, draw the souls of men into a delightful contemplation of them. But all the treasures, all the glory of this wisdom are laid up and laid forth in the great spiritual things of the gospel, in the mystery of God in Christ, and the dispensation of his grace and goodness unto us by him. The consideration hereof fills the souls of believers with holy admiration and delight, and thereon they cleave unto them with all their affections. When we see there is light in them, and all other things are in darkness, that wisdom is in them, in them alone, and all other things are filled with vanity and folly, then are our souls truly affected with them, and do rejoice in them with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Unto the most this wisdom of God is foolishness. It was so of old, as the apostle testifieth, 1 Corinthians 1:23,24; and so it continues yet to be. And therefore is the mystery of the gospel despised by them; they can see neither form nor comeliness in it for which it should be desired. Nor will ever any man have sincere spiritual affections unto spiritual things who hath not a spiritual view of the wisdom of God in them.

This is that which attracts our souls by holy admiration unto unspeakable delight. And the reason why men do so generally decline from any love unto the gospel, and lose all satisfaction in the mystery of it, is because they are not able to discern that infinite wisdom which is the spring, life, and soul of it. When our minds are raised unto the admiration of this wisdom in divine revelations, then will our affections cleave unto the things that are revealed.

3. The acting of our affections in their adherence unto spiritual things is perfective of our present state and condition. That which of all other things doth most debase the nature of man, wherein it makes the nearest approaches unto brutality, yea, whereby it becomes in some respects more vile than the nature of beasts, is the giving up of the affections unto things sensual, unclean, base, and unworthy of its more noble principles. Hence are men said to "debase themselves unto hell," Isaiah 57:9. And their affections do become vile, so as that their being under the power of them is an effect of revenging justice, punishing men for the worst of sins, Romans 1:26. There is nothing more vile, nothing more contemptible, nothing more like to beasts in baseness and to hell in punishment, than is the condition of them who have enslaved their nature unto brutish, sensual affections. I say, vile affections, fixed on and cleaving unto sensual objects, do debase the nature of man, and do both corrupt and enslave all the more noble faculties of it; the very consciences and minds of men are defiled by them. If you see a man whose affections are set inordinately on any thing here below, it is easy to discern how he goes off from his native worth, and debaseth himself therein.

But the fixing of spiritual affections on spiritual objects is perfective of our present state and condition; not that we can attain perfection by it, but that therein our souls are in a progress towards perfection. This may be granted. Look, how much vile affections, fixed on and furiously pursuing things carnal and sensual, do debase our nature beneath its rational constitution, and make it degenerate into bestiality; so much spiritual affections, fixed on and cleaving unto things spiritual and heavenly, do exalt our nature above its mere natural capacity, making an approach unto the state of angels and of just men made perfect. And as brutish affections, when they have the reins, as they say, on their necks, and are pursued with delight and greediness, do darken the mind, and disturb all the rational powers of the soul (for "whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart," as the prophet speaks, and wickedness altereth the understanding): so holy affections fixed on spiritual things do

elevate, raise, and enlighten the mind with true wisdom and understanding; for the "fear of the LORD, that is wisdom, and to depart from iniquity, that is understanding." And again, as the power of vile affections fills the soul and conscience with tumult, disorder, fear, and shame, where men are not utterly profligate, so as that the minds, thoughts, and consciences of persons under their power is a very hell for confusion and troubles: so spiritual affections, duly exercised on their proper objects, do preserve all things in order in the whole soul; they are life and peace. All things are quiet and secure in the mind; there is order and peace in the whole soul, in all its faculties and all their operations, whilst the affections are in a due prevailing manner fixed upon the things that are above. Hence many persons, after great turmoilings in the world, after they have endeavored by all means to come to rest and satisfaction therein, have utterly renounced all concernment in earthly things, and betaken themselves unto the contemplation of things above, and that only. Many of them, I confess, were mistaken as to the practical part of their devotions, having various superstitions imposed on their minds by the craft of others; but they missed it not in the principle that tranquility of mind was attainable only in setting our affections on things above. James 4:1,

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?"

— "Whence are all the disorders in your minds, your vexations and disquietments, your passions, breaking forth sometimes into unseemly brawlings? are they not from hence," (the question is put unto yourselves and your own consciences,) "namely, from your lusts, — that is, the disorderly affections that tumultuate in you? Do but search yourselves, and you will quickly see whence all your troubles and disquietments do arise. Your lusts, or corrupt and inordinate affections, do war in you, continually inclining you to things earthly or sensual." Hence many are best and most at quiet when they are in the world, worst when at home in their families; but

never are they in such confusion as when they are forced to retire into themselves.

The due exercise of our affections on heavenly things hath quite another tendency and effect. It so unites the mind unto them, it so bringeth them unto it, and gives them such a subsistence in it, as that all the powers and faculties of it are in a progress towards their perfection. See 2 Corinthians 7:1. True wisdom and understanding, with soundness of judgment in eternal things in the mind, holiness in the affections themselves, liberty in the will, power in the heart, and peace in the conscience, do in their measures all ensue hereon. Whatever tastes we may have of these things, whatever temporary experience we have of them, they will not flourish in us, they will not abide with us in any constancy, unless we are thus spiritually minded.

4. In the future enjoyment of the present objects of our spiritual affections doth our eternal blessedness consist. All men who are convinced of a future eternal condition do desire, when they depart hence, to enter into blessedness and glory. Howbeit, what that blessedness is, even as unto the general nature of it, they know nothing at all; and if they did, they would not know how to desire it: for heaven or blessedness is nothing but the full enjoyment of what we are here to love and delight in above all, of that which is the object of our affections as spiritually renewed. Herein have they neither interest nor concern. But this is that which giveth life unto the affections of believers; they know that in the enjoyment of God in Christ their eternal blessedness doth consist. How this is their happiness and glory, how it will give them an everlasting, overflowing satisfaction and rest, they understand in the first-fruits of it which they here receive. And this is the ultimate object of their affections in this world, and they go forth unto all other spiritual things in order hereunto. The more, therefore, their affections are fixed on them, the more they are kept up unto that due exercise, the nearer approaches they make unto this blessed state. When their minds are possessed with this persuasion, when it is confirmed in

them by daily experience of that sweetness, rest, and satisfaction, which they find in cleaving unto God with fervent love and delight, in vain shall any other objects rise up in competition to draw them off unto themselves. The more we love God, the more like we are unto him, and the more near the enjoyment of him.

## **CHAPTER XX.**

### **[The application of the soul unto spiritual objects.]**

III. HAVING considered the nature of spiritual affections as renewed by grace, and those notions of their objects under which they cleave unto them, it remains only that we inquire into the way of the soul's application of itself unto those objects by its affections, which belongs also unto our being spiritually minded; and I shall give an account hereof in some few particulars, with brief observations on them: —

1. It is required that our adherence unto all spiritual things with love and delight be firm and stable. The affections are the powers and instruments of the soul, whereby it makes application unto any thing without itself, and cleaves unto it. This is their nature and use with reference unto things spiritual. Transient thoughts of spiritual things, with vanishing desires, may rise out of present convictions, as they did with them who cried out unto our Savior, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," and immediately left him. Such occasional thoughts and desires axe common unto all sorts of men, yea, the worst of them: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his!" Fading satisfaction, with joy and delight, do often befall



men in their attendance on the word, who yet never come to have it rooted in their hearts.

There are sundry things wanting unto the sincerity of these affections: —

(1.) Those in whom they are never had a clear spiritual view of the things themselves in their own nature which they pretend to be affected withal.

(2.) They have not a sincere love unto them and delight in them for their own sakes, but are only affected with some outward circumstances and concernments of them.

(3.) They find not a suitableness in them unto the ruling principles of their minds. They do not practically, they cannot truly say, "The yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden is light; his commandments are not grievous;" or, with the psalmist, "O how love I thy law!"

(4.) Their affections are transient, unstable, vanishing, as unto their exercise and operations. They are on and off; now pleased and anon displeased; earnest for a little while, and then cold and indifferent. Hence the things which they seem to affect have no transforming efficacy upon their souls; they dwell not in them in their power.

But where our affections unto spiritual things are sincere, where they are the true, genuine application of the soul and adherence unto them, they are firm and stable; love and delight are kept up unto such a constant exercise as renders them immovable. This is that which we are exhorted unto, 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Transient affections, with their occasional operations, deceive multitudes; oftentimes they are as pregnant in their actions as those that are most sincere; and many effects, in joys, in mournings, in complaints, they will produce, especially when excited by any outward affliction, sickness, and the like; — but their

goodness is like the early cloud or morning dew. Let none, therefore, please themselves with the operations of transient affections with respect unto spiritual things, be they never so urgent, or so pleasant, or so frequent in their returns; those that are sincere are at all times firm and stable.

2. That the soul do find a spiritual relish and savor in the things which it so adheres unto. The affections are the palate of the soul, whereby it tastes of all things which it receiveth or refuseth, and it will not long cleave unto any thing which they find not a savor and relish in. Something was spoken before of that sweetness which is in spiritual things, and the taste of them consists in a gracious sense of their suitableness unto the affections, inclinations, and dispositions of the mind. Hence they have no relish unto men of carnal minds. Whoever, therefore, would know whether his affections do sincerely adhere unto spiritual things, let him examine what relish, what sweetness, what savor he findeth in them. When he is pleased with them, as the palate with suitable and proper food, when he finds that he receives nourishment by them in the inward man, then doth he adhere unto them in a due manner.

This spiritual taste is the ground of all experience. It is not what we have heard or understood only, but what we have tried and tasted, whereof we have experience. This makes us long for what we have formerly enjoyed, and strengthens faith as unto what we pray for and expect

In every darkness, in every damp of spirit, under every apprehension of deadness, or the withdrawing of the sense of divine love, the soul knoweth what it wants and what it doth desire. "Oh!" saith such an one, "that it were now with me as in former days. I know he who then gave me such refreshing tastes of his own goodness, who made every thing of himself sweet and pleasant unto me, can renew this work of his grace towards me; he can give me a new spiritual appetite and relish, he can make all spiritual things savory unto me again."

As a man under a languishing sickness, or when he is chastened with strong pain, so as that his soul abhorreth bread and his daily meat, can remember what appetite he had, with what gust and relish he was wont to take in his food in the days of his health, which makes him to know that there is such a condition, and to desire a return unto it; so is it with a sin-sick soul. It can find no relish, no gust, no sweetness, in spiritual things; he finds no savor in the bread of the word, nor any refreshment in the ordinances of the gospel, which yet in themselves are daily meat, "a feast of fat things, and of wine well refined:" yet doth it remember former days, when all these things were sweet unto him; and if he have any spark of spiritual life yet remaining, it will stir him up to seek with all diligence after a recovery. How is it with you who are now under spiritual decays, who find no taste or relish in spiritual things, unto whom the word is not savory, nor other ordinances powerful? Call to mind how it hath been with you in former days, and what ye found in these things: "If so be," saith the apostle, "that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." If you have not, it is to be feared that you have never yet had the least sincere love unto spiritual things; for where that is, it will give a spiritual relish of them. If you have, how is it you can give yourselves rest one moment without an endeavor after the healing of your blacksliding?

3. It is required that our affections be so set on spiritual things as to be a continual spring of spiritual thoughts and meditations. No man can be so forsaken of reason as to suppose that he hath any sincere affection for what he thinks little on or not at all, or that he can have a true affection for any thing which will not stir up and ingenerate in him continual thoughts about it. Let men try themselves as unto their relations, or their enjoyments, or the objects of their predominant lusts, and they will find how things are stated in their own minds. And, therefore, whereas all men pretend to love God, and Christ, and the ways of God, and yet know in their own hearts that they little think of them or meditate upon them, both their pretense and religion is vain. Where our affections are duly placed on heavenly things, so as that we are indeed spiritually minded, they

will be a constant spring of spiritual thoughts and meditations. But this also hath been before spoken unto.

4. When our affections are thus applied unto spiritual things, they will be prevalent and victorious against solicitations unto the contrary, or allurements to draw them off unto any other objects. The work of all our spiritual adversaries is to solicit and tempt our affections, to divert them from their proper object. There are some temptations of Satan that make an immediate impression on the mind and conscience. Such are his injection of diabolical, blasphemous thoughts concerning God, his being, nature, and will; and the distresses which he reduceth men unto in their consciences through darkness and misrepresentations of God and his goodness. But the high road and constant practice of all our spiritual adversaries, is by the solicitation of our affections unto objects that are in themselves, or in the degree of our affection towards them, evil and sinful. Of the first are all sensual pleasures of the flesh, as drunkenness, uncleanness, gluttony, chambering and wantonness, with all sorts of sensual pleasures. Of the latter is all our inordinate love unto self, our families, and the whole world, or the things of it. Unto this end every thing in the whole world that may make provision for lust is made use of. Herein consists the nature and efficacy of most of those temptations which we have to conflict withal. Solicitations they are of our affections, to draw them off from things spiritual and heavenly and to divert them unto other things. Hereby do our enemies endeavor to beguile us, as the serpent beguiled Eve, with fair and false representations of other beloveds, that our hearts be not preserved as a chaste virgin in all their affections for Christ.

And it is almost incredible how apt we are to be beguiled by the specious pretenses wherewith we are solicited.

That our affections, in the degree treated about, — suppose of love unto the world and the things of it, — are lawful and allowable, is one of the sophisms and artifices wherewith many are deluded. Hereon,

provided they run not out into scandalous excesses, they approve of themselves in such a worldly frame of mind, and acting according unto it, as renders them fruitless, useless, senseless, and is inconsistent with that prevailing adherence of affections unto spiritual things that ought to be in us. Others are deluded by a pretense that it is in one instance only they would be spared; it is but this or that object they would give out the embraces of the affections unto, in all other things they will be entire for God: the vanity of which pretense we have spoken unto before. Others are ruined by giving place unto their solicitations with respect unto any one affection whatever; as suppose it be that of fear. In times of danger for profession, multitudes have lost all their affection unto spiritual things through a fear of losing that which is temporal, as their lives, their liberties, their goods, and the like. When once Satan and the world have gotten, as it were, the mastery of this affection, or a prevalent interest in it, they will not fail to draw all others into a defection from Christ and the gospel. "He that loveth his life shall lose it."

Wherefore, it is no ordinary nor easy thing to preserve our affections pure, entire, and steady, in their vigorous adherence unto spiritual things, against all these solicitations. Watchfulness, prayer, faith in exercise, and a daily examination of ourselves, are required hereunto. For want of a due attendance unto these things, and that with respect unto this end, — namely, the preservation of our spiritual affections in their integrity, — many, even before they are aware, die away as to all power and vigor of spiritual life.

5. Affections thus fixed upon things spiritual and heavenly will give great relief against the remainders of that vanity of mind which believers themselves are oftentimes perplexed withal; yea, I do not know any thing that is a greater burden unto them, nor which they more groan for deliverance from. The instability of the mind, its readiness to receive impressions from things vain and useless, the irregularity of their thoughts, are a continual burden unto many. Nothing can give the soul any relief herein, nothing can give bounds

unto the endless variety of foolish imaginations, nothing can dry up the springs from whence they arise, or render the soil wherein they grow barren as unto their production and maintenance, but only the growth of spiritual affections, with their continual vigorous actings on heavenly things; for hereby the heart and mind will be so united unto them (that which the psalmist prays for, Psalm 86:11), as that they will not be ready to depart from them, and give entertainment unto vain, empty, foolish imaginations. Thoughts of other things, greater and better than what this world can contain, will be continually arising in the mind, not to be laid aside by any solicitations of vanity: for he that is wise cannot but know and consider that the spiritual things which it exerciseth its thoughts about have substance in them, are durable, profitable, always the same; that the advantage, peace, rest, riches, and reward of the soul, lieth in them; but other imaginations, which the foolish mind is apt to give entertainment unto, are vain, empty, fruitless, and such as end in shame and trouble.

Again; the vanity of the mind in an indulgence unto foolish imaginations ariseth from, or is animated and increased by, that gust and relish which it finds in earthly things and enjoyment of them, whether lawful or unlawful. Hence on all occasions, yea, in holy duties, it will be ready to turn aside and take a taste of them, and sometimes to take up with them: like a tippling traveler, who, though he be engaged in a journey on the most earnest occasion, yet he cannot but be bibbing here and there as he passes by, and it may be, at length, before he comes to his journey's end, lodgeth himself in a nasty ale-house. When men are engaged in important duties, yet if they always carry about them a strong gust and relish of earthly things, they will ever and anon in their thoughts divert unto them, either as unto such real objects as they are accustomed unto, or as unto what present circumstances do administer unto corrupt affections, or as to what they fancy and create in their own minds; and sometimes, it may be, after they have made them a few short visits, they take up with them, and lose wholly the work they were engaged in. Nothing, as was said, will give relief herein but the

vigorous and constant exercise of our affections on heavenly things; for this will insensibly take off that gust and relish which the mind hath found in things present, earthly, and sensual, and make them as a sapless thing unto the whole soul. They will so place the cross of Christ, in particular, on the heart as that the world shall be crucified unto it, losing all that brightness, beauty, and savor, which it made use of to solicit our minds unto thoughts and desires about it.

Moreover, this frame of spirit alone will keep us on our watch against all those ways and means whereby the vanity of the mind is excited and maintained. Such are the wandering and roving of the outward senses. The senses, especially that of the eye, are ready to become purveyors to make provision for the vanity and lusts of the mind. Hence the psalmist prays, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." If the eyes rove after vain objects the mind will ruminate upon them. And another affirms that he had "made a covenant with his eyes," to preserve them from fixing on such objects as might solicit lust or corrupt affections. And it were a useful labor, would this place admit of it, to discover the ready serviceableness of the outward senses and members of the body unto sin and folly, if not watched against, Romans 6:13,19. Of the same nature is the incessant working of the fancy and imagination, which of itself is evil continually and all the day long. This is the food of a vain mind, and the vehicle or means of conveyance for all temptations from Satan and the world. Besides, sundry occasions of life and conversation are usually turned or abused unto the same end, exciting and exercising of the vanity of the mind. Wherever our affections are fixed on spiritual things, our mind will constantly be under a warning or charge to keep diligent watch against all those things whereby that vanity which it so abhorreth, which it is so burdened withal, is maintained and excited. Nor without this prevalency in the mind will ever a work of mortification be carried on in the soul, Colossians 3:2, 4, 5.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### [Spiritual mindedness life and peace.]

HAVING declared wherein this duty of being "spiritually minded" doth consist, that which remains, in compliance with the text from whence the whole is educed, is to manifest how it is "life and peace," which is affirmed by the apostle. This shall be done with all brevity, as having passed through that which was principally designed.

And two things are we to inquire into: —

I. What is meant by "life and peace."

II. In what sense to be "spiritually minded" is both of them.

I. 1. That spiritual life whereof we are made partakers in this world is threefold, or there are three gospel privileges or graces so expressed:

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(1.) There is the life of justification. Therein the just by faith do live, as freed from the condemnatory sentence of the law. So "the righteousness of one cometh" on all that believe "unto justification of life," Romans 5:18. It gives unto believers a right and title to life; for "they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Christ Jesus," verse 17. This is not the life here intended, for this life depends solely on the sovereign grace of God by Jesus Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness unto us, unto pardon, the right to life and salvation.

(2.) There is a life of sanctification. As life in the foregoing sense is opposed unto death spiritual as unto the guilt of it and the condemnatory sentence of death wherewith it was accompanied, so in this it is opposed unto it as unto its internal power on and efficacy



in the soul, to keep it under an impotency unto all acts of spiritual life, yea, an enmity against them. This is that life wherewith we are "quickened" with Christ Jesus, when before we were "dead in trespasses and sins," Ephesians 2:1-5. Of this life the apostle treats directly in this place [Romans 8]; for having in the first four verses of the chapter declared the life of justification in the nature and causes of it, in the following he treats of death spiritual in sin, with the life of sanctification, whereby we are freed from it.

And to be spiritually minded is this life in a double sense: —

[1.] In that it is the principal effect and fruit of that life. The life itself consists in the infusion and communication of a principle of life, — that is, of faith and obedience, — into all the faculties and powers of our soul, enabling us to live unto God. To be spiritually minded, which is a grace whereunto many duties do concur, and that not only as to the actings of all grace in them, but as unto the degree of their exercise, cannot be this life formally; but it is that wherein the power of this principle of life doth in the first and chiefest place put forth itself. All actings of grace, all duties of obedience, internal and external, do proceed from this spring and fountain. Nothing of that kind is acceptable unto God but what is influenced by it and is an effect of it. But it principally puts forth its virtue and efficacy in rendering our minds spiritual; which if it effect not, it works not at all, — that is, we are utterly destitute of it. The next and immediate work of the principle of life in our sanctification is to renew the mind, to make it spiritual, and thereon gradually to carry it on unto that degree which is here called being spiritually minded.

[2.] It is the proper adjunct and evidence of it. Would any one know whether he be spiritually alive unto God with the life of sanctification and holiness? The communication of it unto him being by an almighty act of creating power, Ephesians 2:10, it is not easily discernible, so as to help us to make a right judgment of it from its essence or form; but where things are themselves indiscernible, we may know them from their proper and inseparable adjuncts, which

are therefore called by the names of the essence or the form itself. Such is this being spiritually minded with respect unto the life of sanctification; it is an inseparable property and adjunct of it, whereby it infallibly evidenceth itself unto them in whom it is, In these two respects it is the life of sanctification.

(3.) "Life" is taken for the comforts and refreshments of life. So speaks the apostle, 1 Thessalonians 3:8, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord;" — " Now our life will do us good; we have the comforts, the refreshments, and the joys of it." "Non est vivere, sed valere vita." The comforts and satisfactions of life are more life than life itself. It is "life;" that is, that which makes life to be so, bringing in that satisfaction, those refreshments unto it, which make it pleasant and desirable. And I do suppose this is that which is principally intended in the words of the apostle. It is "life," a cheerful joyous life, a life worth the living. In explication and confirmation whereof it is added that it is "peace" also.

2. "Peace" is twofold: —

(1.) General and absolute; that is, peace with God through Jesus Christ, which is celebrated in the Scripture, and which is the only original spring and fountain of all consolation unto believers, — that which virtually contains in it every thing that is good, useful, or desirable unto them. But it is not here precisely intended. It is not so as to the immediate ground and cause of it, which is our justification, not our sanctification: Romans 5:1, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." So Christ alone is "our peace," as he who hath "made peace through the blood of his cross," Ephesians 2:14,15, Colossians 1:20. Hereof our being spiritually minded is no way the cause or reason; only it is an evidence and pledge of it, as we shall see. [Nor is it so] as unto the formal nature of it. Peace with God through the blood of Christ is one thing, and peace in our minds through a holy frame in them is another. The former is communicated unto us by an immediate act of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, Romans 5:5; the latter is an effect on our minds,

begun and gradually carried on by the duties we have before at large declared. The immediate actings of the Holy Spirit, in sealing us, witnessing unto our adoption, and being an earnest of glory, are required unto the former; our own sedulity and diligence in duties, and in the exercise of all grace, are required unto the latter.

(2.) "Peace" is taken for a peculiar fruit of the Spirit, consisting in a gracious quietness and composure of mind in the midst of difficulties, temptations, troubles, and such other things as are apt to fill us with fears, despondencies, and disquietments. This is that which keeps the soul in its own power, free from transports by fears or passions, on all the abiding grounds of gospel consolation; for although this be a peculiar especial grace, yet it is that which is influenced and kept alive by the consideration of all the love of God in Christ, and all the fruits of it.

And whereas "peace" includes, in the first notion of it, an inward freedom from oppositions and troubles, which those in whom it is are outwardly exposed unto, there are two things from which we are secured by this peace, which is an effect of being spiritually minded:

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[1.] The first is offenses. There is nothing of whose danger we are more warned in the gospel than of offenses. "Woe to the world," saith the Savior, "because of offenses!" All ages, all times and seasons, are filled with them, and they prove pernicious and destructive to the souls of many. Such are the scandalous divisions that are among Christians. The endless differences of opinions and diversity of practices in religion and the worship of God; the falls and sins of professors, the fearful end of some of them; the reproaches that are cast on all that engage into any peculiar way of holiness and strictness of life; with other things of the like nature, — whereby the souls of innumerable persons are disquieted, subverted, or infected, — are to be reckoned unto this head. Against any hurtful or noxious influence on our minds from these things, against disquietments,

dejections of spirit, and disconsolations, are we secured by this peace. So the psalmist assures us: Psalm 119:165,

"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them."

The law, or the word of God, is the only way of the revelation of God and his will unto us, and the only outward way and rule of our converse and communion with him. Wherefore, to love the law is the principal part of our being heavenly minded, yea, virtually that which comprehends the whole. To such as do so, nothing, none of those things before mentioned, nor any other of the like nature, shall be an offense, a stumbling-block, or cause of falling into sin. And the reason is, because they have such an experience in themselves of the truth, power, efficacy, and holiness, of the gospel, as that the miscarriages of men under a profession of it shall never be unto them an occasion of falling, or being offended at Christ. And I look upon it as a sign of a very evil frame of heart, when men are concerned in the miscarriages of some that have made profession, whereby they are, it may be, damaged in their outward concerns, so as that they are surprised into reflections on that religion which they profess, professing the same themselves.

[2.] The second is afflictions, persecutions, and sufferings of all sorts. It is known by all (it were well if it were not so well known) what disquietments, dejections, and disconsolations, these things are apt to fill the minds of men withal; what fears, troubles, sorrows, they reflect upon them. Against all these effects of them, this peace intended gives us security. It makes us to preserve a peaceable, yea, a joyous life in our conflict with them. See John 16:33.

Both these, as here joined together, "life and peace," do comprise a holy frame of heart and mind, wherein the souls of believers do find rest, quietness, refreshment, and satisfaction in God, in the midst of temptations, afflictions, offenses, and sufferings. It is the soul's composure of itself in God, in his love in Christ Jesus, so as not

greatly to be put out of order, or to be cast down with any thing that may befall it, but affords men cheerfulness and satisfaction in themselves, though they walk sometimes in the valley of the shadow of death. Such persons have that in them, abiding with them, which will give them life and peace under all occurrences.

II. Our next inquiry is, how this "spiritual mindedness" is "life and peace," or what it contributes unto them, how it produceth the frame of heart and mind so expressed. And this it doth several ways: —

1. It is the only means on our part of retaining a sense of divine love. The love of God, in a gracious sense of it, as shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, is the first and only foundation of all durable comforts, such as will support and refresh us under all oppositions and distresses, — that is, of life and peace in our souls, in any condition. This God communicates by an act of sovereign grace, for the most part without any preparation for it in ourselves: "He createth the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace." But although divine love be in itself unchangeable and always the same, yet this sense of it may be lost, as it was in David, when he prayed that God would "restore unto him the joy of his salvation," Psalm 51:12; and so many others have found it by woful experience. To insist upon all that is required on our part that we may retain a gracious, refreshing sense of divine love, after it is once granted unto us, belongs not unto my present purpose; but this I say, there is not any thing wherein we are more concerned to be careful and diligent in than as unto what belongs to that end. For men who, by a mere act of sovereign grace, have tasted herein of the goodness of God, who have had the consolation and joys of it, to be negligent in the keeping and preserving it in their souls, is a provocation that they will at one time or other be sensible of. There is nothing doth more grieve the Holy Spirit than to have his especial work, whereby he seals us unto the day of redemption, neglected or despised; and it argues a mighty prevalency of some corruption or temptation that shall cause men willingly and by their own sloth to forfeit so inestimable a grace, mercy, and privilege; and it is that which there are but few of us who

have not reason to bewail our folly in. Every intimation of divine love is an inestimable jewel, which, if safely treasured up in our hearts, adds unto our spiritual riches; and being lost will at one time or another affect us with sorrow.

And I am afraid that many of us are very negligent herein, unto the great prejudice of our souls and spiritual state. Many of such intimations are given us by the Holy Ghost through the word, which we take little notice of. Either we know not the voice of Christ in them, or do not hearken unto him in a due manner, or refuse a compliance with him, when we cannot but know that he speaks unto us. See Song of Solomon 5:2,3. Or if we receive any impressions of a gracious sense of divine love in them, we quickly lose them, not knowing how much the life of our souls is concerned therein, and what use of them we may have in our following temptations, trials, and duties.

Now, the great means of retaining a sense of the love of God, which is the only spring of life and peace unto our souls, is this grace and duty of being spiritually minded. This is evident from the very nature of the duty; for, —

(1.) It is the soul's preserving of itself in a frame meet to receive and retain this sense of God's love. What other way can there be on our part, but that our minds, which are so to receive it and retain it, be spiritual and heavenly, always prepared for that holy converse and communion with himself which he is pleased to grant us through Jesus Christ. And, —

(2.) It will fix our thoughts and affections upon the grace and love of God, in communicating such an inestimable mercy unto us as is a sense of his love; which is the only means for the preservation of a relish of it in our hearts. He who is in this frame of mind will remember, call over, and ruminate upon, all such gracious pledges of divine favor, as David is often remembering and calling over what he received in such places as in the "land of the Hermonites and at the

hill Mizar," Psalm 42. This is the great way whereby this treasure may be preserved.

(3.) A person so minded, and he alone, will have a due valuation of such intimations and pledges of divine love. Those who are full of other things, whose affections cleave unto them, do never esteem heavenly mercies and privileges as they ought. "The full soul loatheth an honey-comb." And God is well pleased when a high valuation is put upon his kindness, as he is greatly provoked by the contrary frame; which, indeed, nothing but infinite patience could bear withal. It is a high provocation of God, when men are regardless of and unthankful for outward, temporal mercies, — when they receive them and use them as if they were their own, that they were lords of them, at least that they are due unto them. Much more is he provoked with our regardlessness of the least of those mercies which are the peculiar purchase of the blood of his Son, and the effects of his eternal love and grace. He alone who is spiritually minded valueth, prizeth, and lays up these inestimable jewels in a due manner.

(4.) Such persons only know how to use and improve all communications of a sense of divine love. These things are not granted unto us to lie by us without any use of them. They are gracious provisions wherewith we are furnished to enable us unto all other duties, conflicts, and trials. On all occasions are they to be called over for our spiritual relief and encouragement. Hereby are they safely retained: for in the due improvement of them they grow more bright in our minds every day, and are ready for use; in which posture they are safely preserved. But these things will yet be farther manifest in the instances that ensue.

2. This frame of mind casts out all principles and causes of trouble and disquietment, which are inconsistent with life and peace. There are in us by nature principles of contrariety and opposition unto spiritual life and peace, with sundry things whose abode and

prevalency in us is inconsistent with them. I shall give only one or two instances hereof: —

(1.) It will cast out all "filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness" from our minds. Without this we can receive no benefit by the means of grace, nor perform any duty in a right manner, James 1:27. This is that which stands in direct, immediate opposition and contrariety unto our being spiritually minded, so as they can have no consistency in the same person; and they expel one another like heat and cold. And where there is this "filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness," there is neither life nor peace. Unclean lusts of the flesh or of the spirit, working, tumultuating, acting themselves in the minds of men, will not suffer either the life of holiness to flourish in them or any solid peace to abide with them. The soul is weakened by them as unto all spiritual actings, and made like "the troubled sea, that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Where they are absolutely predominant, there is a hell within of darkness, confusion, and enmity against God, preparing men for a hell of punishment without unto eternity. And according as they remain or have any prevalency in us, so are spiritual life and peace impaired and obstructed by them. Now, the very nature of this grace and its universal exercise is suited to the casting out of all the relics of this "filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness." It brings in a principle into the mind directly contrary unto that from whence they do proceed. All the actings of it which we have described lie in direct tendency unto the extirpation of these causes of filthiness which ruin life and peace; nor will they by any other way be cast out. If the mind be not spiritual, it will be carnal; if it mind not things above, it will fix itself inordinately on things below.

(2.) That disorder which is by nature in the affections and passions of the mind, which is directly opposite unto spiritual life and peace, is cast out or cured hereby. It is a blessed promise of the times of the new testament, of the kingdom and rule of Christ, that, through the efficacy of gospel grace,



"the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid," Isaiah 11:6.

Persons of the most intemperate and outrageous passions shall be made meek and lowly. Where this is not in some measure effected, according unto the degrees of the prevalency of such passions in us, we have not been made partakers of evangelical grace. It were an easy task to demonstrate how the disorder of our affections and passions is destructive of spiritual life and peace. The contrariety that is in them, and contradiction unto one another, their violence, impetuosity, and restlessness, their readiness to receive and take in provocations on all occasions, and frequently on none at all but what imagination presents unto them, are sufficient evidences hereof.

Can we think that life and peace do inhabit that soul wherein anger, wrath, envy, excess in love unto earthly things, do dwell, and on all occasions exert themselves? there where there is a continual tumult, fighting, and rebellion, as there is where the passions of the mind are not under the conduct of reason or of grace?

The nature and principal effect of this spiritual mindedness is, to bring all the affections and passions of our minds into that holy order wherein they were created. This was that uprightness wherein God made us, — namely, the whole blessed order of all the powers, faculties, and affections of our souls, in all their operations, in order unto our living unto God. And this is restored unto us by this grace, this duty of being spiritually minded. And wherein it falls short of that perfection which we had originally (for the remainders of that disorder which befell us by sin will still in part continue), it is recompensed by the actings of that new principle of gospel grace which is exercised in it; for every act of our affections towards God in the power of grace exceeds, and is of another nature, above that we could do or attain unto in the state of nature uncorrupted. Hereby are life and peace brought into our souls, and preserved in them.

3. It is that whereby our hearts and minds are taken off from the world, and all inordinate love thereunto. Where this is in a prevalent degree, there is neither life nor peace; and every excess in it both weakens spiritual life and disturbs, yea, destroys, all solid spiritual peace. I have occasionally spoken unto it before, as also of the way whereby our minding of the things that are above in a due manner doth deliver and preserve our souls from the snares of it. And if we diligently examine ourselves, we shall find that, in our inordinate affections and cleaving unto these things, the principal causes why we thrive no more in the power of spiritual life, and whence we meet with so many disquietments and dejections of spirit, unto the disturbance of our peace and rest in God, are from hence; for there is no grace which is not impaired by it in its nature, or not obstructed by it in its exercise. Wherefore, "to be spiritually minded is life and peace," because it subdues and expels that inordinate love unto present things which is destructive of them both and inconsistent with them.

4. It preserves the mind in a due and holy frame in the performance of all other duties. This also is indispensably required unto the preservation of life and peace, especially unto the improvement of them. They will not abide, much less thrive and flourish, in any persons who are negligent in holy duties, or do not perform them in a due manner. And there are four things which impede or hinder us from such an attendance unto holy duties as may be advantageous unto our souls, against all which we have relief by being spiritually minded: — Distractions; Despondencies; Weariness; Unreadiness of grace for exercise.

(1.) Distraction of mind and thoughts hath this evil effect, which many complain of, but few take the right way of deliverance from; for this evil will not be cured by attendance unto any particular directions, without a change of the whole frame of our minds. Nothing can give us relief herein but a prevalent delight in being exercised about things spiritual and heavenly. For hence arise all our distractions; the want of fixing our minds on spiritual things with

delight makes them obnoxious to be diverted from them on all occasions, yea, to seek occasions for such diversions, It is this frame alone, — namely, of spiritual mindedness, — that will give us this delight; for hereby the soul is transformed into the likeness of spiritual thing, so as that they are suited unto it and pleasant unto our affections. The mind and the things themselves are thereby so fitted unto each other that on every occasion they are ready for mutual embraces, and not easily drawn off by any cause or means of the distractions so complained of; yea, they will all be prevented hereby.

(2.) Despondencies in duties arise from the frequent incursions of the guilt of sin. The remembrance hereof frequently solicits the minds of persons in their first entrances into duty, unless they are under especial actings of grace, stirring them up unto earnestness and fervency in what they undertake. At other seasons it renders men lifeless and heartless, so as that they know not whether they had best pray or no, when duty and opportunity call them thereunto. To be spiritually minded, we have manifested in many instances, is the great preservative against these disheartening incursions of sin. It is the soul's watch and guard against them, whencesoever they arise or proceed. No lust or corruption can be prevalent in a spiritual mind; and this is the principal cause of such incursions of sin as affect the soul with a disheartening sense of guilt. No affections can abide in any sinful disorder where the mind is so affected; this also gives sin an entrance unto a distracting sense of guilt. But the sole cure hereof lies in this grace and duty. The like may be said of all other ways, means, and occasions of such incursions of sin.

(3.) Weariness in, and of, spiritual duties abates their tendency unto the improvement of life and peace in us. This evil ariseth from the same cause with that of distraction before mentioned; and it is oftentimes increased by the weakness and indispositions of the flesh, or of the outward man. Sometimes the spirit is willing, but through the weakness of the flesh it is disappointed. The principal cure hereof lies in that delight which spiritual mindedness gives unto the soul in

spiritual things; for where there is a constant delight in any thing, there will be no weariness, at least not such as shall hinder any one from cleaving firmly unto the things wherein he doth delight. Whilst, therefore, we are exercised in a delight in spiritual things, weariness cannot prevalently assault the mind. And it is the only relief against that weariness which proceeds from the indispositions of the outward man; for as it will preserve the mind from attending too much unto their solicitations, crying, "Spare thyself," by filling and possessing the thoughts with other things, so it will offer a holy violence unto the complaints of the flesh, silencing them with a sense of and delight in holy duties.

(4.) The unreadiness of grace for its due and proper exercise is another thing which defeats us of the benefit of holy duties. The seasons of them are come, sense of duty carries men unto an attendance unto them and the performance of them; but when they should enter upon them, those graces of faith, love, fear, and delight, wherein the soul and being of them do consist, are out of the way, unready for a due exercise, so as that men take up and satisfy themselves with the mere outward performance of them. The heart and mind have been taken up with other things; due preparation hath been wanting; men come unto them with reeking thoughts of earthly occasions; and it is no easy matter in, or immediately out of, such a frame, to stir up grace unto a due exercise. But herein lieth the very life of being spiritually minded: The nature of it consists in the keeping and preserving all grace in a readiness for its exercise as our occasions require. And this is an effectual way whereby this grace comes to be "life and peace;" for they cannot be attained, they cannot be preserved, without such a constancy and spirituality in all holy duties as we shall never arrive at unless we are spiritually minded.

Lastly, This frame of mind brings the soul unto and keeps it at its nearest approaches unto heaven and blessedness, wherein lie the eternal springs of life and peace. According unto the degrees of this grace in us, such are those of our approaches unto God. Nearness unto him gives us our initial conformity unto him, by the renovation

of his image in us, as our presence with him will give us perfection therein; for when we see him, we shall be like unto him. He therefore alone, as he is in Christ, being the fountain of life and peace, by our drawing nigh unto him and by our likeness of him will they thrive and flourish in our souls.

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## MONERGISM BOOKS

The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded by John Owen,  
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